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Ancient Wisdom, Modern Choices:
The Confucian Influences on Political Attitudes and Behaviors

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Résumé

La recherche sur le comportement politique a souvent privilégié les données provenant des cultures occidentales, mais cette approche risque d'occulter les subtilités du comportement humain en dehors de ce cadre. Les chercheurs risquent ainsi de tomber dans le piège de généraliser à partir de contextes spécifiques, ce qui peut conduire à des conclusions erronées. Cette thèse aborde cette problématique en examinant les attitudes et les comportements politiques en Asie de l'Est à travers le prisme de la culture confucéenne. Son objectif principal est d'interroger certaines idées établies sur le comportement politique afin d'évaluer leur pertinence au-delà des frontières occidentales. Cette thèse est composée de trois chapitres empiriques distincts. Chacun d'entre eux aborde un domaine spécifique où la culture peut exercer son influence.

Le premier chapitre empirique (chapitre 2) se penche sur le biais de négativité dans les attitudes des citoyens envers l'autorité politique. Il est bien établi que les évaluations politiques des citoyens sont plus fortement influencées par des perceptions négatives que positives des caractéristiques, des événements et des résultats politiques. Dans ce chapitre, j'avance l'idée que la culture joue un rôle crucial mais souvent sous-estimé dans ces biais de négativité. Une analyse multiniveau utilisant la World Values Survey (WVS) met en lumière que le biais de négativité dans la satisfaction à l'égard des gouvernements nationaux diminue à mesure que le niveau de collectivisme dans une société augmente. En outre, j'explore l'impact des valeurs culturelles au niveau individuel en m'appuyant sur les données de l'Asian Barometer Survey (ABS). En accord avec les résultats de la WVS, je constate que le collectivisme atténue l'asymétrie négative-positive lorsque les citoyens évaluent l'autorité politique en fonction des performances gouvernementales. Ces découvertes soulignent l'importance de la prudence lorsqu'il s'agit de généraliser le biais de négativité comme un modèle décrivant uniformément les attitudes des citoyens envers l'autorité politique à travers le monde.

Le deuxième chapitre empirique (chapitre 3) plonge dans le phénomène du biais de négativité dans la construction de la confiance généralisée, soit la confiance que les individus accordent aux membres de la société. Les études antérieures ont démontré que la

confiance est relativement facile à ébranler, mais difficile à instaurer. Toutefois, je soutiens dans ce chapitre que la littérature sur le biais de négativité est ancrée dans des hypothèses individualistes et néglige les contextes collectivistes. À travers une expérience en ligne préenregistrée réalisée en Chine, je constate que l'exposition à des informations négatives sur le manque de fiabilité d'autres membres de la société a un impact plus marqué sur la confiance généralisée que l'exposition à des informations positives équivalentes sur la fiabilité de ces individus. Cependant, l'effet asymétrique de l'information sur la confiance est conditionné par les valeurs culturelles auto-attribuées par les participants. Les individus aux valeurs collectivistes élevées montrent moins de biais de négativité dans le processus de formation de la confiance. Ces résultats éclairent le rôle de la culture dans la compréhension de la dynamique de la confiance et appellent à une exploration plus approfondie des influences culturelles sur le biais de négativité.

Le troisième chapitre empirique (chapitre 4) explore l'écart de participation électorale entre hommes et femmes. En Asie de l'Est, la participation politique des femmes n'a pas évolué au même rythme que le développement économique de la région. Cet écart est souvent imputé à l'influence de la culture confucéenne qui met l'accent sur la hiérarchie, l'ordre et l'obéissance. Toutefois, ce chapitre nuance cette perspective en mettant en avant comment certains aspects du Confucianisme, tels que la méritocratie, peuvent en réalité renforcer le rôle des femmes dans la société moderne en Asie de l'Est. Centré sur le contexte chinois, notamment sur l'institution historiquement significative du système d'examen civil (*keju*) basée sur Confucius, ce chapitre met en lumière l'impact durable des héritages méritocratiques sur les comportements contemporains. À l'aide de données provenant d'archives historiques et de la China General Social Survey, je découvre une corrélation négative entre les performances des ancêtres d'une préfecture aux examens *keju* et l'écart entre les sexes dans la participation aux élections villageoises contemporaine.

Cette thèse contribue à notre compréhension de la relation entre la culture et l'engagement politique des citoyens. En se concentrant spécifiquement sur l'Asie de l'Est, cette étude représente l'une des rares investigations visant à étudier empiriquement l'influence culturelle sur les attitudes et les comportements politiques dans cette région. En plaidant en faveur d'une recherche qui va au-delà des échantillons "WEIRD", elle ouvre la voie à

de futures investigations dans des contextes globaux, ce qui permettra de développer des perspectives plus inclusives et nuancées dans le domaine de la recherche sur le comportement politique.

Mots-clés : Culture; Confucianisme; Collectivisme; Individualisme; Méritocratie; Biais de négativité; Satisfaction à l'égard du gouvernement; Confiance généralisée; Participation électorale; Asie de l'Est

Abstract

The political behavior literature has traditionally centered on data from Western cultures, but this tendency risks overlooking the complexities of human behavior outside the Western sphere. Researchers might fall into the trap of the exception fallacy when they propose generalized theory based on specific contexts. This dissertation addresses this issue by examining political attitudes and behaviors in East Asia through the lens of the Confucian culture. Its primary aim is to interrogate established theories of political behavior to determine their applicability beyond Western contexts. This dissertation is composed of three distinct empirical chapters. Each examines a specific domain where culture may exert its influence.

The first empirical chapter (Chapter 2) investigates the negativity biases in citizens' attitudes toward the political authority. In particular, we know that citizens' political evaluations tend to be more strongly influenced by negative than positive perceptions of traits, events and policy outcomes. In this chapter, I argue that culture is a significant yet understudied correlate of negativity biases. A multilevel analysis using the World Values Survey (WVS) demonstrates that the negativity bias in national government satisfaction weakens as a society's level of collectivism is higher. Next, I explore the effect of cultural values at the individual level with data from the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS). In line with the results from the WVS, I find that collectivism reduces the negative-positive asymmetry when citizens evaluate the incumbent authority on the basis of government performance. These results invite more caution when taking negativity biases as a general pattern that describes citizens' attitudes toward political authority everywhere.

The second empirical chapter (Chapter 3) examines the phenomenon of negativity bias in the formation of generalized trust, the trust that individuals have in the members of society. Previous research demonstrates that generalized trust is relatively easy to destroy but challenging to create. In this chapter, I argue that the negativity bias literature is based on individualist assumptions and overlooks collectivist contexts. Using a preregistered online experiment conducted in China, I find that receiving negative information about the untrustworthiness of other social members has a more profound impact on generalized trust

than receiving comparable positive information about their trustworthiness. Nevertheless, the asymmetric effect of information on trust is contingent on participants' self-rated cultural values. Individuals with higher collectivist values tend to exhibit less negativity bias in trust development. These results shed light on the role of culture in understanding the dynamics of trust formation and call for further exploration of cultural influences on negativity biases.

The third empirical chapter (Chapter 4) explores the gender gap in electoral participation. East Asian women's political participation has not kept pace with the region's economic development. This discrepancy is often attributed to the influence of Confucian culture, which emphasizes hierarchy, order, and obedience. This chapter nuances this perspective by highlighting how certain elements of Confucianism, such as meritocracy, may actually empower modern-day East Asian women. This chapter focuses on the Chinese context, particularly the historically significant Confucian-based meritocratic institution known as the civil examination system (*keju*). I argue that historical meritocratic legacies can have a lasting impact on contemporary behavior, specifically by reducing the gender gap in political participation in local village elections. Using data from historical archives and the China General Social Survey, I find a negative correlation between the performance of a prefecture's ancestors in the *keju* exams and the gender gap in village election turnout among present-day respondents.

This dissertation contributes to the understanding of the relationship between culture and political attitudes and behavior. In particular, this study represents one of the few investigations aimed at empirically studying the cultural influence on political attitudes and behaviors in this region. By advocating for research beyond "WEIRD" samples, it sets the stage for future endeavors that embrace global contexts and fosters more inclusive and nuanced perspectives in political behavior research.

Keywords: Culture; Confucianism; Collectivism; Individualism; Meritocracy; Negativity bias; Government satisfaction; Generalized trust; Electoral participation; East Asia

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List of Abbreviations

ABS: Asian Barometer Survey

ATE: Average Treatment Effect

CGSS: China General Social Survey

COL: Collectivism

CSC: Culture as Situated Cognition

EAB: East Asia Barometer

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

IND: Individualism

WEIRD: Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic

WVS: World Values Survey

献给未来的自己，韬光养晦，砥砺前行

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

> [In studies published in leading psychology journals,] 96% of subjects were from Western industrialized countries – which house just 12% of the world's population. Strange, then, that research articles routinely assume that their results are broadly representative, rarely adding even a cautionary footnote on how far their findings can be generalized.
>
> – "Most people are not WEIRD", opinion paper published in *Nature*, 2010

> We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. […] That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.
>
> – Declaration of Independence, 1776, USA

> When the Great Way was practiced, the world was for the public. Those with virtue and those with ability were selected and promoted to office. People valued trustworthiness and cultivated harmony with each other. Thus people did not treat only their parents like parents, nor did people treat only their sons like sons. […] Therefore all evil plotting was prevented and thieves and rebels did not arise, so that people could leave their outer gates unbolted. This was the age of Grand Unity.
>
> – Book of Rites, Han Dynasty China (202 BC – 8 AD)

I was born as the first child in the fourth generation of a large family in Shandong Province, Northern China.[1] At the close of the 20th century, the four-generations-under-the-same-

[1] During the preparation of this dissertation, the author declares having used OpenAI's ChatGPT 3.5 version to enhance the English language. After using this tool, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed

roof family structure was still common in China. During my childhood, I shared my home not only with my parents but also with my uncle, grandparents, and great-grandparents. Being the youngest family member, I received immense care and attention from the elders. However, a significant challenge for me during my early years was the complex system of appellations for different family members. In Chinese culture, it is customary for younger individuals to initiate greetings with elders, such as saying "Good morning, uncle". Yet, the Chinese language offers a much more complex vocabulary to describe relatives. To illustrate this complexity, I use the English word "uncle" as an example. In the Chinese context, "uncle" can refer to different relations. The father's older brother is called "*bo*", his younger brother is "*shu*", and brothers of the mother are referred to as "*jiu*". If the father or mother have multiple brothers, rankings are added to distinguish them by age, like "*ershu*" for the second youngest brother of the father or "*dajiu*" for the oldest brother of the mother. Of course, this is just the tip of the iceberg, as there are distinct Chinese terminologies for aunts, cousins, and even grandparents. Linking each family member to the correct appellation was challenging for me in my pre-school years. It was within this context that my younger self developed a sense of self-concept and an understanding of others. I was not just an individual but existed in constant relations with others – I was the son of my parents, the grandson of my grandparents, the nephew of my uncles, and the eldest among all my cousins. My parents emphasized the importance of not being "self-centered" and encouraged me to be attentive to and care for others in order to foster group cohesion: respect the elders, care for the younger ones, be loyal to friends, and be amicable to unknown individuals I encountered. During school conflicts with classmates, my parents told me to first introspect and consider my own actions rather than pointing fingers at others. The crucial lesson they imparted was to "be strict with yourself and lenient with others". These early experiences had a profound impact on me and have motivated me to study negativity biases – the tendency to give more weight to negative aspects than positive ones – through a cultural lens. In a predominantly collectivist context where individuals prioritize strong relationships and group harmony, would negativity bias still be a prevalent inclination in dealing with the social world?

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and takes full responsibility for the content of the dissertation. All opinions and analyses conducted in this dissertation are the author's own.

As I grew older and progressed through my schooling, I faced significant pressure for academic performance. China's elite schools and universities are public institutions renowned for their affordability and high education quality. The Chinese education system places a strong emphasis on exams, with the most crucial being the "upgrade exams" for the last year of primary, junior high, and senior high students. One of the most notable is the *Gaokao*, a highly competitive, nationally organized university entrance exam with profound social implications. The results of *Gaokao* determine students' access to various universities. From my early days at school, my parents stressed the importance of excelling in exams for securing a place in a good public middle school and eventually a prestigious university. They emphasized that, as common people with no special privileges, I needed to rely on my own efforts to succeed. Obtaining a good education was the key, and to attain that, hard work and success in exams were imperative. In a way, I lived up to my parents' aspirations, achieving high grades that secured admission to the best public high school in my hometown and later to an elite university in Shanghai. Reflecting on my journey, the combination of high-quality public schooling and a relatively fair exam-based selection system played a crucial role in my achievements. This was especially significant given the economic challenges that my family faced, with both of my parents losing their job due to public sector reforms in the early 2000s. Drawing from my personal experience, I firmly believe that a meritocratic system can offer avenues for individuals to improve social status through their own efforts. Meritocracy has deep roots in East Asia's traditions. This has motivated me to research whether the Confucian meritocratic culture could have an impact on political empowerment for the socially disadvantaged.

Subsequently, I had the opportunity to pursue my studies abroad, initially in France and then in Canada. These experiences proved to be incredibly enriching and eye-opening. This cross-cultural journey has ignited my deep interest in the study of culture as a lens through which we can understand patterns of human behavior. It has enlightened me on how our cultural upbringing leaves a lasting imprint on our attitudes and actions, often molding our thoughts and judgments in ways that may elude our recognition. We tend to perceive the world through the familiar lens of our own culture, making it challenging to conceive of alternative perspectives. In this sense, Western civilization's widespread influence, propelled by its academic eminence and the expertise of Western-trained scholars, has

contributed to an unconscious belief in the uniformity of human behavior based on Western experiences.

This prevailing belief significantly influences the mainstream study of political behavior, as evident in the enduring popularity of the rational choice approach (Blais, 2000; Downs, 1957). The rational choice approach contends that individuals across societies act based on rational calculations focused on maximizing utility. However, some critical questions emerge. How do we define utility? Is it centered on material or spiritual aspects? Furthermore, what is the unit of calculation for interests – individual, familial, or communal? Societies that are influenced by diverse cultures could provide significantly different answers to these fundamental questions. The late American political scientist Chalmers Johnson (1997) criticized the rational choice theory for its "sophomoric intention to transcend culture and reduce all human behavior to a few individual motivational uniformities". Indeed, this critique may extend well beyond the rational choice theory. Our grasp of political behavior has predominantly leaned on data from the Western cultural sphere, which covers regions such as North America, Europe, and Oceania. However, the temptation to generalize poses a notable risk – the pitfall of committing an exception fallacy. This error arises when evidence observed in one cultural context leads to theories that, despite asserting to explain universal behavior, only genuinely address the regularities observed in that particular cultural condition.

Consider this: what if citizens' motivations, reasoning, attitudes, and behaviors are not solely products of intuitive human nature but are deeply intertwined with their social and cultural contexts? When proposing general theories that refer to the role of "human instinct", researchers must exercise extreme caution. Merely demonstrating automatic behavior in a handful of countries is insufficient. As Ruth Benedict (1934) argued, understanding the interplay between culture and behavior requires exploring diverse cultural forms. In her seminal work, she compared the Zuñi, Dobu, and Kwakiutl cultures and revealed that each culture incorporates only a fraction of the vast spectrum of human behavior (Benedict, 1934). Consequently, culturally conditioned responses are equally, if not more, crucial than universal behavioral patterns in comprehending the complexities of human behavior.

In this dissertation, I study citizens' political attitudes and behavior in East Asia through the nuanced lens of culture. The primary objective of this dissertation is to consider the influence of culture on citizens' political attitudes and behavior. I aim to determine whether there are challenges to some established wisdom and insights primarily rooted in Western theories of political behavior.

First, this dissertation will address the cultural implications of negativity bias, which is a cognitive tendency to prioritize the negative over the positive (Rozin & Royzman, 2001). While existing literature often interprets this bias from an evolutionary perspective and argues for its adaptive role in survival (Rozin & Royzman, 2001; Hibbing et al., 2014), Chapters 2 and 3 will explore whether Confucian collectivist culture can mitigate negativity bias in evaluations of political authority and generalized trust, respectively.

Second, the dissertation will examine the influence of traditional culture on political modernization and investigate specifically the gender gap in political participation. Dominant (post-)modernization theories propose that economic development replaces traditional values with postmaterialist and emancipative ones, which fosters gender equality in politics (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). In contrast, Chapter 4 will investigate how traditional East Asian meritocratic culture may reduce contemporary gender gaps in elections.

Through this scholarly endeavor, I seek to contribute insights that encourage a more comprehensive and culturally sensitive understanding of political behavior and to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and the complex realities of diverse cultural contexts.

In the subsequent sections of this introductory chapter, I will first examine the cultural approach within political science and highlight a significant drawback in the political culture literature – the insufficient consideration of cultural diversity. Drawing on lessons from cultural psychology, I will then underscore the importance of addressing this oversight. Next, I will shift focus to East Asia, the region under investigation in this dissertation. I will expose the significance of studying this context and outline key elements of the dominant Confucian culture within the region. I will specifically explain why certain aspects of Confucian culture are particularly relevant to the study of political attitudes and

behaviors. Finally, I will discuss methodological considerations and choices, followed by a presentation of the dissertation's organizational structure.

1.1 Politics and Culture

The central theme weaving through the articles in this dissertation is culture. The study of culture in politics has a long history, dating back to the early days of political analysis. Aristotle explored the concept of a "state of mind" that could either incite political change or maintain stability; Montesquieu examined the national ethos, drawing connections with his climate theory; while Tocqueville emphasized the role of *moeurs* in shaping society's character. Despite these early insights, it is not until the end of World War II that the discipline of political science fully embraced culture as an integral part of its analytical framework. This shift occurs notably with the publication of *The Civic Culture* by Almond and Verba in 1963.

Almond and Verba's approach is strongly influenced by social action theory (Parsons & Shils, 1951), wherein the "orientation" of actors play a vital role in explaining institutional structures. Parsons and Shils define orientation as "attitudes toward the political system and its various parts, as well as attitudes toward the role of the self in the system" (1951, p. 12). According to this perspective, the political culture of a nation is "the particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of a nation" (p. 13). This Weberian view of culture lays the groundwork for methodological individualism.

To empirically investigate culture, Almond and Verba conducted surveys in five countries: Italy, Mexico, the United Kingdom, the United States, and West Germany. They identified three distinct prototypes of political culture: participant culture, where citizens understand and participate actively in politics; subject culture, where citizens predominantly comply but engage minimally, viewing themselves as subjects of the government; and parochial culture, where citizens lack knowledge and interest in politics and possess only vague awareness of the government. These prototypes reflect varying orientations toward political objects and processes and have consequential impacts on the fate of democracy.

For instance, according to the civic culture model, the success of democracy hinges on citizens' allegiance to the system, combined with a mild tendency of involvement in representative politics.

The Civic Culture model had a significant influence on the subsequent comparative study of political culture, bringing about the dominance of survey-based methods in investigating culture. Inglehart (1990; 1997), for example, utilized public opinion surveys in Europe and the United States to reveal a pivotal shift in the values of Western societies since the 1960s. Specifically, Inglehart described a transition from a primary emphasis on material well-being and physical security to a greater focus on self-expression and lifestyle choices. The postmaterialist values form the basis for the critical citizen model, which explains the declining support for incumbent authority and political institutions in post-modern Western societies (Dalton, 2004; Norris, 1999).

Furthermore, the proliferation of worldwide comparative survey data, notably the World Values Survey, enables cultural scholars to expand their observations to non-Western countries. Notably, Inglehart and Welzel have developed post-modernization and human development theories (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005; Welzel, 2013). Through comparative lenses, these researchers have underscored the critical role of culture in explaining modernization, democracy, and emancipation. The central argument in this line of research is that economic development and material security foster self-expressive and secular-rational values. The rise of these values is associated with a rejection of authority and hierarchy, a desire for individual initiative and emancipation, and increased attention to social issues such as abortion, divorce, homosexuality, and gender equality. According to this perspective, the accumulation of wealth contributes to the global emergence and consolidation of democracy.

The modernization/post-modernization approach is not without drawbacks. One of the major shortcomings lies in its implicit evolutionist epistemology. While earlier civic culture work does not imply that there will necessarily be a convergence in political cultures across diverse countries (Almond & Verba, 1963; Blondel & Inoguchi, 2002; Pye & Verba, 1965), much of the modernization and post-modernization work assumes a progressive sequence of cultural forms (Inglehart, 1977, 1990, 1997; Inglehart & Welzel,

2005; Norris, 1999; Welzel & Dalton, 2017; Welzel, 2013). It proposes traditional, modern, and post-modern cultural forms that are aligned with a country's developmental stage. The "modernization dynamic" is presented as a key influence in contemporary political, economic, and social development (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Comparative researchers thus seek to categorize cultures along specific dimensions and to construct a unified narrative of cultural and civilizational history, suggesting convergence of popular attitudes and orientations across countries worldwide. However, this perspective oversimplifies the complexities of diverse cultural traditions.

1.2 The Significance of Cultural Diversity

The human species possesses remarkably few genetic variations compared to other primates – the subtle genomic differences between human populations render attempts to identify distinct biological groups futile (Barbujani & Colonna, 2010; Barbujani et al., 2013). Despite the limited genetic variations within our species, humans have demonstrated amazing adaptability compared to other terrestrial animals and thrived in a wide range of environments from Arctic expanses to tropical jungles (Henrich & McElreath, 2003).

The cultural evolution approach elucidates this paradox by emphasizing humans' extraordinary cultural adaptations to different local environments (Henrich, 2016). Knowledge, techniques, skills, and beliefs that are transmitted between generations enable humans to acquire behaviors that are tailored to diverse natural settings. Cultural information that is learned from others serves as a decision-making heuristic and assists individuals in adapting to complex environments (Richerson & Boyd, 2006; Henrich & McElreath, 2003; Henrich, 2016). By relying on cultural beliefs about the "right" course of action in various situations, individuals may not always behave optimally, but they save on the costs associated with gathering information from the environment, which can be time-consuming and risky (Henrich, 2016). Indeed, empirical research from evolutionary anthropology offers evidence of humans' exceptional cultural learning capabilities. Although humans do not have a clear general cognitive advantage over other primates, such as chimpanzees and orangutans, we easily outcompete other animals in cultural

intelligence, being better communicators, imitators, and social learners (Hermann et al., 2007; Inoue & Matsuzawa, 2007).

Cultural diversity not only fosters behavioral adaptations to diverse environments but, grounded in the insightful gene-culture co-evolution thesis, it also creates varied social environments where genetic selection operates (Boyd & Richerson, 2005). Multiple lines of biological research offer support for the idea that culture can influence the evolutionary trajectory of human genetics (Laland et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2006). For instance, evidence suggests that the cultural practices of cattle domestication and dairying created a selective environment that facilitated the spread of alleles associated with adult lactose tolerance (Burger et al., 2007; Holden & Mace, 2009). The genetic mutation enabling the production of the lactase enzyme in adulthood has been significantly favored by the selection process. Individuals capable of digesting lactose in milk gain access to richer nutritional resources, thereby increasing their chances of survival, particularly in cultures reliant on cattle-raising (Ingram et al., 2012; Laland et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2006). Another intriguing example is the loss of body odor among East Asian ethnic groups. Extant research indicates that the gene ABCC11 is responsible for encoding an apical efflux pump crucial for the formation of characteristic axillary odor. However, a specific single-nucleotide polymorphism 538G>A located on exon 4 of the ABCC11 gene that is found among most individuals of the East Asian ethnic group leads to an almost complete loss of typical odor components in axillary sweat (Martin et al., 2010). The observed phenomenon is likely influenced by cultural factors, such as variations in diet and culturally approved hygiene practices (Di Cicco et al., 2023).

The pivotal role of culture in the human evolutionary process raises significant concerns about research that relies excessively or principally on samples from WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) societies to draw conclusions about human behavior (Henrich et al., 2010). Research in cultural psychology has illustrated that people across the globe do not think and behave uniformly (Heine, 2016; Nisbett, 2003; Spencer-Rodgers & Peng, 2018). Empirical evidence has highlighted systematic cultural variations in a number of psychological constructs, including personality traits (Yamaguchi et al., 1995), self-esteem (Kitayama et al., 1997), well-being (Ahuvia, 2002), emotional

experience (Miyamoto & Ma, 2011), attribution style (Morris & Peng, 1994), and relationality (Hui et al., 1991), among others.

Despite well-established findings in cultural psychology, which emphasize the significance of cultural diversity to understand human behavior, political science has shown limited efforts in exploring diverse (or similar) psychological patterns underpinning citizens' attitudes and behaviors through intercultural research. This disparity underscores the need for further development in the domain of political psychology.

1.3 Why East Asia?

To address the gap in cross-cultural investigations of citizens' political attitudes and behaviors, I focus on a non-WEIRD region of the world: East Asia. Historically, East Asia is often referred to by political scientists as the Sinic influence sphere under the tributary system during the era of the Chinese Empire (Huntington, 1996). Culturally, it includes societies that have historically used or still use Chinese characters in their official writing systems. More importantly, these societies share a common cultural heritage that is rooted in Confucian teachings, disseminated through the written language. Confucian values and norms have significantly shaped institutions and individuals' private lives in China and its neighboring countries for over two thousand years. The principles of filial piety, interpersonal harmony, respect for authority and learning, and self-cultivation through education have given rise to a distinct regional culture unique to East Asian nations (Shin, 2012). In this dissertation, I use East Asia to denote the region which includes present-day entities such as Mainland China, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and Singapore.

Studying East Asia is of much theoretical importance because it contrasts starkly with the traditions that dominate in the Anglo-American "West". The region's profound influence of traditional values, particularly Confucianism, distinguishes the core values of East Asia from those of the West, where values predominantly stem from Enlightenment philosophy. Confucianism places emphasis on equality over freedom, sympathy over rationality, civility over law, duty over rights, and human-relatedness over individualism (Tu, 2000).

This contrast allows for a comparative study which explores the cultural logic of politics within a vastly different context from the WEIRD societies. By looking into East Asia, scholars gain invaluable insights into alternative cultural frameworks and a deeper understanding of political dynamics beyond the familiar Western paradigms.

East Asia remains an enigma for scholars of (post-)modernization theory. Despite undergoing extensive economic and social transformations, the region has exhibited remarkable political stability. (Post-)modernization theorists assert that economic prosperity and higher education levels typically lead to a more demanding and participative citizenry, which renders democracy a more viable political arrangement (Inglehart, 1997). The spreading of postmaterialist values has been used to explain government instability in many liberal-democratic countries. Negativity bias, the tendency to focus more on negative than positive information, serves as a micro-level mechanism for citizens to hold the incumbent authority accountable for its policies, especially during challenging times (Soroka, 2014).

However, this dissertation contends that the prevailing account of negativity bias is grounded principally in contingent individualist assumptions. From a collectivist perspective, prioritizing group harmony and cooperation outweighs individual well-being in motivating people's behavior. In collectivist settings, the selective pressure for negativity biases, especially among ingroup members in the social sphere, is likely less imminent or even reversed. Excessive negativity in social life could jeopardize the stability of the group. The evolutionary mechanism of negativity bias is, therefore, less adapted to the collectivist way of life, which views community interest as more important than individual gain or loss. As a result, in the case of East Asia, Confucian collectivism may play a role in mitigating negativity biases in the evaluation of political authority. This inclination aligns with Fukuyama's perspective on Confucianism, as he recognizes its democratic potential to counterbalance the prevailing cynicism often found in individualist, atomized societies typical of Western-style liberal democracies (Fukuyama, 1995).

Moreover, post-modernization scholars often embrace a view of cultural evolution and view traditionalism as inherently hindering modernity and impeding economic and political development. This perspective appears to disregard potential alternative routes for

social, economic, and political progress. Inglehart and Welzel (2005), for example, contend that "a society's prevailing value orientations reflect an interaction between the driving forces of modernization and the retarding influence of tradition" (p. 5). Concerning gender equality, the (post-)modernization approach posits that gender equality naturally follows the decline of traditionalism (Inglehart & Norris, 2003).

This dissertation takes a distinctive perspective on the connection between culture and gender equality by examining the impact of Confucian meritocracy, which emphasizes personal cultivation, hard work, and superior performance as pathways to altering one's fate. The core moral tenet of Confucian meritocracy holds that individuals are not inherently superior or inferior from birth and can enhance their abilities through postnatal cultivation. This meritocratic belief has the potential to empower women. In a meritocratic system, the recognition of accomplishments transcends gender considerations – people are acknowledged and rewarded based on their qualifications and performance. This acknowledgment can boost women's confidence and motivate them to pursue challenging roles and responsibilities. This viewpoint suggests that traditional values can promote civic norms and contribute to political equality – values highly cherished by democratic theorists. Hence, from this standpoint, traditionalism may not inherently clash with post-modern values or hinder a nation's political development.

On a practical level, East Asia warrants more academic attention. The fluctuations in interest surrounding political culture as a research topic are closely tied to historical events. The collapse of constitutional regimes in Germany and Italy following WWII gave rise to the civic culture model, which aimed to explain the rise and fall of democracies. In the 1960s and 1970s, the emergence of social movements and new political parties in the Western world captivated cultural scholars, leading to the proposal of a cultural shift vision with the advent of post-materialist values. The third wave of democratization in the 1990s provided an incentive for the study of political culture. It was during this period that post-modernization theory emerged, seeking to comprehend the conditions for democratization and the stability of democratic regimes.

In the present era, we find ourselves amidst another pivotal moment in history. The global distribution of power is shifting eastwards. Since WWII, East Asia, home to 1.7 billion

people, has been one of the most economically dynamic places, marked by significant achievements such as the Japanese economic miracle (1950-1990), the miracle on the Han River (1961-1996) in South Korea, the Taiwan miracle (1960-1996), and the ongoing economic boom (1978-) in Mainland China. Notably, two of the three largest world economies, China and Japan, are situated in East Asia.[2] With the rise in economic power comes a growing confidence in the region's own historical legacy and identity. Countries in this region now aspire to be heard and taken seriously in the global arena, as evident from initiatives such as the "national rejuvenation" project under the presidency of Xi Jinping in China. This reflects an increasing cultural awareness and identity among the people of this region.

The confluence of these factors – the scientific value of reevaluating established theories through a cultural prism and the need to improve our understanding of a burgeoning center of global influence – motivates this dissertation's focus on East Asia. Indeed, the lack of knowledge regarding such a pivotal region is difficult to justify within the political behavior literature.

1.4 The Confucian Legacy

In the extensive history of East Asian, where numerous ideologies have risen and fallen, the teachings of Confucius, Mencius, and their followers have endured for centuries, and have shaped the cultural and institutional foundation of public and private life (Shin, 2012, p.22). Confucianism, although rooted in the era of its founder Confucius (551 - 479 B.C.), transcends the writings that Confucius left behind. Its essence and implications reach far beyond, embodying the result of continuous adaptations and interpretations by intellectuals and politicians over a span of more than 2000 years. Confucianism has also been profoundly influenced by indigenous cultural and spiritual sources such as Taoism, Buddhism, and Shintoism (Murphey & Stapleton, 2019). Through this intricate web of

[2] According to 2022 GDP data from the World Bank. Data retrieved on February 2, 2024 from https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD

influences, Confucianism has become a rich and multifaceted tradition, interwoven with the very fabric of East Asian societies.

In contemporary scholarship, two distinct Confucian traditions are often distinguished: political Confucianism and ethical Confucianism (Fukuyama, 1995). Political Confucianism revolves around teachings aimed at establishing political institutions and achieving kingly governance (*wangdao*). In contrast, ethical Confucianism primarily focuses on organizing harmonious human relations. Social researchers have found much evidence of the enduring influence of Confucianism on various aspects of East Asian life, including educational attainment (Stankov, 2010), family values (Park & Cho, 1995), work ethics (Viengkham et al., 2018), economic achievements (Minkov & Hofstede, 2012), interpersonal trust (Tang, 2016), and political participation (Kuan & Lau, 2002).

The influence of Confucianism in East Asian cultures has been profound, yet a unanimous definition of Confucianist values remains elusive due to their multifaceted nature. Various contemporary scholars and politicians have attempted to elucidate these values, leading to diverse interpretations and perspectives. Former Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, who is known for his advocacy of "Asian values", identified five essential Confucianist values that are crucial in East Asian culture: hierarchical collectivism, paternalistic meritocracy, interpersonal reciprocity and accommodation, communal interest and harmony, and familism (Zakaria, 1994). Drawing upon anthropological insights, Doh C. Shin applied a group-grid analysis to Confucianism and categorized East Asian countries into four distinct ways of life: individualism, hierarchism, egalitarianism, and fatalism (Shin, 2012). Meanwhile, Tianjian Shi employed data from the East Asia Barometer (EAB) and the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) to contribute theoretical insights by defining four key Confucianist norms: hierarchical orientation towards authority, allocentric definition of self-interest, avoidance of conflicts, and substantive understanding of justice (Shi, 2014).

The diverse array of these interpretations highlights the complicated nature of Confucianism and its relevance in contemporary East Asian societies. In this dissertation, I examine two specific aspects of Confucianist values that may significantly impact the

political attitudes and behaviors of contemporary East Asians: collectivism and meritocracy.

The first dimension that is explored in this dissertation is Confucian collectivism, which encompasses a group-based approach to understanding the society. In addressing the fundamental social coordination problem, Confucian scholars did not resort to social contracts or laws; instead, they advocated cultivating sincerity and goodwill among individuals to reduce transaction costs and facilitate social cooperation (Shi, 2014). Confucius and his followers argued that human nature is socially constructed and can be shaped through education, as demonstrated in the *Three Character Classic*. Education plays a pivotal role in instilling group-oriented values and norms that encourage people to collaborate with and assist others. For example, Confucius said, "the man of perfect virtue, wishing himself to be established, seeks also to establish others; wishing himself to succeed, seeks also to help others succeed" (*The Analects*, 6:29). According to Confucian moral teachings, individual self-interest is inseparable from the group. An individual's well-being is inextricably related to the well-being of their family, work unit, community, and society as a whole. Socialization over time shapes individuals' identities and establishes social norms that prompt them to consider a "larger self" as the unit of analysis in their interest calculations (Pye, 1988).

This facet of Confucianism aligns seamlessly with the individualism-collectivism (IND-COL) construct that is used in cultural psychology (Oyserman et al., 2002). In his influential work Individualism and Collectivism, Triandis (1995, pp.43-44) defined collectivism through four interconnected aspects: 1) the self is perceived as intricately connected and interdependent with others; 2) individual goals and communal goals are closely intertwined, with the latter accorded precedence; 3) social behavior is guided by norms, duties, and obligations; and 4) individuals are inclined to uphold relationships, even when they entail disadvantages. Hofstede's country-level individualism-collectivism ratings further substantiate that East Asia stands as one of the most collectivist regions in the world due to the profound influence of Confucian culture (Hofstede, 2001).

The second dimension under examination in this dissertation is meritocracy, a concept that is rooted in Confucian philosophy. Meritocracy advocates that societal progress should be

determined by an individual's skills and achievements rather than family lineage, wealth, or social standing (Kim & Choi, 2017). This principle finds profound resonance within Confucian classical texts, where the importance of virtuous individuals for ensuring long-lasting and peaceful governance is highlighted. For instance, Chapter 24 of the Confucian classic *Xunzi* articulates, "Valuing the virtuous leads to prosperity, respecting the virtuous leads to preservation, disregarding the virtuous leads to destruction; this principle applies throughout history." Moreover, these texts also elaborate on the cultivation of virtuous individuals (see *Great Learning* in the *Book of Rites*), and the meticulous selection of officials based on virtue and ability (see Chapter 12 in *Xunzi*).

The Confucian principle of meritocracy embraces the ideals of equal opportunity and impartial competition. First, Confucianism advocates for equal educational opportunities for all individuals, regardless of their social background (Bell, 2012). Confucius' teaching, "by nature, people are alike, by practice, people get to be wide apart" (*The Analects*, 17:2), underscores the moral belief that everyone possesses the potential for achieving excellence through self-improvement (Ying, 2021). Varied outcomes among individuals are attributed to the diverse efforts put into developing their inherent potential (Hong, 2019). Second, the principle of impartial competition was guaranteed by the organization of civil examinations (*keju*), which originated in Sui China (581-618 AD). Administered by the imperial court, *keju* enabled participation of ordinary people and recruited officials primarily based on exam performance (Zhang, 1993, p. 11). The *keju* system was renowned for its fairness and limited corruption, which provided individuals from modest backgrounds with an avenue for upward mobility. Notably, 42.3% of *jinshi* holders during the Ming-Qing period came from commoner families without prior government posts in three preceding generations (Ho, 1964, pp. 112-113). In contrast to hereditary systems in contemporaneous civilizations, the Confucian meritocratic institutions allowed individuals to transcend their social origins based on merit, freeing them from predetermined destinies.

In this dissertation, my focus is on these two key aspects of Confucianism. The empirical chapters look into their influence and explore the extent to which the Confucian heritage shapes contemporary political attitudes and behaviors. First, I propose that Confucian collectivism gives precedence to group harmony and well-being, thereby diminishing the

selective pressure for negativity biases. Second, I contend that Confucian meritocracy underscores personal cultivation, diligence, and performance as means to alter one's destiny, which has the potential to empower women in politics.

1.5 Methodological considerations

When studying the influence of culture, several methodological considerations come into play, each rooted in fundamental assumptions about cultural dynamics.

The first consideration centers on the level of measurement for culture. Theoretically, culture is predominantly perceived as a macro phenomenon. For instance, Triandis defines culture as "patterns characterized by shared beliefs, attitudes, norms, roles, and values that are organized around a theme and that can be found in certain geographic regions during a particular historic period" (1995, pp. 43-44). Similarly, Hofstede and colleagues view culture as the "collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (2010, p. 6). Inglehart conceptualizes culture as "a system of attitudes, values, and knowledge that is widely shared within a society and transmitted from generation to generation" (1990, p. 18). However, scholars also recognize the existence of significant individual differences within cultural entities. These differences contribute to the operationalization of culture as a "statistical tendency", derived from the distribution of individual-level cultural values (Hofstede et al., 2010; Triandis, 1995). Consequently, researchers commonly create and employ a number of cultural value scales, such as the individualism-collectivism scale (Hui, 1988; Singelis, 1994) or the materialism-postmaterialism scale (Inglehart & Abramson, 1999), to measure cultural values at the individual level in studies related to political culture and cultural psychology. Indeed, most empirical research in the literature focuses on investigating cultural structures at the individual level, because conducting cross-country comparisons at the aggregate level necessitates substantial resources to obtain reasonably representative samples from a wide range of countries (Oyseman et al., 2002). This inherent ambiguity regarding the measurement level in the literature underscores the rationale for employing measures at both individual and aggregate levels in this dissertation. In Study 2 of Chapter 2 and in

Chapter 3, individual-level cultural value scales are utilized to operationalize culture, while in Study 1 of Chapter 2 and in Chapter 4, aggregate-level indices are employed to capture cultural differences.

The second consideration revolves around the chronic versus situational understanding of culture. Traditionally, the chronic perspective posits that cultural differences between societies stem from long-term factors such as ecological, historical, or philosophical factors (Buggle, 2020; Fincher et al., 2008; Nisbett et al., 2001; Talhelm et al., 2014). Extensive evidence from the cultural psychology literature supports this viewpoint and demonstrates enduring cultural distinctions between East Asia and the Anglo-American West (Choi et al., 2007; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Nisbett, 2003; Oyserman et al., 2002; Peng and Nisbett, 1999; Singelis, 1994; Spencer-Rodgers & Peng, 2018; Triandis, 1995). In essence, these studies argue that Western cultures are characterized by individualism, independence, and analytic thinking style, whereas collectivism, interdependence, and holistic thinking style are more prominent in East Asian cultures. These differences significantly influence individuals' cognitive and affective processes. For example, research indicates that East Asian holistic thinkers prioritize contextual cues over internal dispositions when determining causality (Morris & Peng, 1994). Moreover, the salience and significance of positive emotions in social contexts are more crucial for collectivist East Asians than for individualist Caucasians (Deng et al., 2021). This chronic perspective emphasizes the deep-seated nature of culture, leading to methodological treatments of culture as a static trait that can be measured by means of country indices at the aggregate level (Hofstede, 2001) and survey scales at the individual level (Singelis, 1994).

The situational perspective of culture, in contrast, emphasizes the dynamic and adaptable nature of culture, and thinks of culture as contingent upon situational contexts (Oyserman, 2016). The Culture as Situated Cognition (CSC) model, a prominent framework within the situational vision of culture, draws on insights from situated cognition research (Bargh, 2006) and contends that, regardless of the mainstream culture, all societies provide individuals with sufficient experiences of diverse cultural scenarios. This allows different cultural mindset to be primed when situationally relevant (Oyserman & Lee, 2007). This perspective challenges the notion of fixed and rigid cultures and highlights their adaptable

and malleable nature. It suggests that individuals can readily shift between cultural mindsets based on contextual cues. A substantial body of empirical research supports this situational perspective and provides evidence for the successful activation of normative mindsets through on-site tasks among both Westerners and East Asians in controlled experimental conditions (Monga & John, 2008; Peng & Knowles, 2003). In a comprehensive meta-analysis conducted by Oyserman and Lee (2008) which analyzed 64 studies utilizing diverse experimental tasks, the authors found a significant effect of cultural priming in the hypothesized direction in 57 of these studies (89%). Aligning with this situational vision that treats culture more as a state, experimental methods using cultural priming to operationalize cultural values offer a controlled approach to examine the causal effect of culture on human behavior, which is a significant advantage over traditional cultural studies (Oyserman & Lee, 2008).

However, instead of being mutually exclusive, the contrasting perspectives that characterize culture as either chronic or situational both point out the complex nature of culture. The chronic viewpoint underscores the deeply rooted nature of cultural beliefs, but also acknowledges that there are no perfectly uniform values across all members and situations within a specific culture (Atran et al., 2005). Simultaneously, the situational approach emphasizes the adaptable nature of cultural beliefs, but it also recognizes the enduring significance of long-term cultural differences, which establishes varying baseline levels of cultural values for individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Oyserman & Lee, 2007). In this dissertation, I navigate this complexity by incorporating both chronic and situational lenses. Chapters 2 and 4 consider culture from a chronic standpoint, utilizing indices and scales to capture its multifaceted dimensions. These chapters provide an in-depth exploration of the enduring cultural traits that influence political attitudes and behaviors. Chapter 3 on the other hand embraces a situational vision and employs experimental priming techniques to investigate the causal effect of culture.

1.6 Organization of the dissertation

The dissertation examines the influence of Confucian culture on political attitudes and behaviors in East Asia, with a focus on two main research questions. The first research question investigates whether collectivist culture has an impact on negativity biases in citizens' formation of political attitudes, while the second one explores whether meritocratic culture is related to the gender gap in political participation.

Chapters 2 and 3 seek to answer the first research question. To do so, Chapter 2 utilizes observational data to examine whether collectivist societies and individuals exhibit less pronounced negativity biases when evaluating the national government. Chapter 3 on the other hand employs an experimental design to investigate whether a collectivist priming reduces negativity biases in generalized trust. Chapter 4 addresses the second research question by combining historical archive data with contemporary China General Social Survey data. Specifically, this chapter aims to study the relationship between the intensity of meritocratic culture and the gender gap in participation in local village elections. The dissertation concludes with a discussion of the findings from each empirical chapter and their implications for major debates in political behavior and public opinion. Additionally, the concluding chapter reflects on the limitations of the dissertation and proposes avenues for future research. In what follows, a brief description of each empirical chapter is provided.

1.6.1 Chapter 2. The Relevance of Culture: Collectivism Reduces Negativity Biases in Government Evaluation

Negativity biases, indicating a proclivity to attribute greater importance to negative information over positive information (Rozin & Royzman, 2001), are discernible in citizens' evaluations of authority. This inclination is revealed in studies on economic voting (Bloom & Price, 1975), political trust (Niven, 2000), public service satisfaction (Olsen, 2015), and candidate evaluations (Soroka, 2014). Negative perceptions of traits, events, or policy outcomes exert a more substantial influence on evaluations of authority.

This chapter examines whether the negativity bias in evaluations of the authority is a universal trait or contingent on culture. The current empirical evidence in political science does not allow answering this question, because it mostly relies on samples from Western cultural contexts (but see Fournier et al., 2020; Soroka et al., 2019). The objective of this chapter is to bridge this gap by expanding the inquiry to a global perspective. Focusing on Asian countries, I contend that culture significantly shapes individuals' negativity biases in government evaluations. Individuals in collectivist societies or those embracing collectivist values should display a diminished negativity bias.

To empirically test this hypothesis, I integrate Hofstede's individualism score (Hofstede, 2001) with the World Values Survey (WVS) and investigate the extent to which national-level culture is linked to negativity bias in government evaluations across 41 countries. In a second step, I use data from the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) to explore the effects of cultural values on negativity biases at the individual level within Asian countries. Findings from both analyses converge, suggesting that collectivism reduces the disparity between negative and positive considerations in citizens' evaluations of the national government.

This chapter contributes to political psychology, a field heavily dependent on geographically confined Western samples (Hibbing et al., 2014). By drawing extensively from cross-national data, particularly Asian data, this chapter identifies culture as a pivotal source of heterogeneity in understanding people's inclination toward negativity. Negativity biases should not be universally applied to citizens' attitudes toward political authority; instead, cultural differences in negativity biases imply culturally-specific citizen-government relationships.

1.6.2 Chapter 3. Is Bad Always Stronger Than Good? Culture and Negativity Biases in Generalized Trust

Generalized trust refers to individuals' confidence in their fellow members of society (Carl & Billari, 2014). It plays a pivotal role in social capital by fostering coordinated actions that enhance societal efficiency (Almond & Verba, 1963; Putnam, 2000). A large body of literature has shown that generalized trust is associated with a range of positive outcomes,

including economic growth (Knack & Zak, 2003), democratic development (Paxton, 2002), institutional performance (Uslaner, 2002), and subjective well-being (Helliwell, 2003).

Despite the myriad advantages attributed to generalized trust, research highlights its vulnerability (Cvetkovich et al., 2002; Slovic, 1993). Negative information or events wield a more substantial influence in diminishing trust than positive occurrences have in elevating it, which suggests the existence of a negativity bias. This chapter reevaluates the asymmetry account of trust using a Chinese sample and emphasizes the relevance of cultural values in comprehending the role of negativity biases in trust development. Cultural priming methods are adopted to study the causal effect of individualism and collectivism on negativity biases. While experimental manipulations yield null results, the study reveals significant individual-level variability in the use of positive information when forming trust. Particularly, individuals with collectivist values exhibit a reduced inclination to manifest negativity biases compared to those with individualist values due to their heightened attention to positive information.

The outcomes of this study suggest that culture might be significantly linked to negativity biases in trust formation, a dimension often overlooked in prior research exploring the negativity bias in trust formation (Cvetkovich et al., 2002; Slovic, 1993). Furthermore, the paper introduces a potential mechanism that could elucidate the observed high level of trust in China, as noted in various empirical cross-national investigations (Inglehart, 1999; Seligson, 2002).

1.6.3 Chapter 4. Cultural Sources of Gender Gaps: Confucian Meritocracy Reduces Gender Inequalities in Political Participation

The political involvement of East Asian women has not kept pace with the region's economic development. This discrepancy is often attributed to the prevailing patriarchal tradition in East Asia that hampers gender equality in political participation (Edwards, 2007; Jennings, 1988; True et al., 2014). This explanation seems straightforward, considering that East Asian Confucianism places emphasis on hierarchy, order, and obedience, thereby relegating women to a subordinate position compared to men (Gardner, 2014; Li, 2000;

Yao, 2000). However, the cultural explanation for gender inequalities in East Asia has primarily relied on theoretical arguments, with limited empirical evidence supporting the idea that culture negatively influences gender gaps in political participation.

This chapter challenges the notion of equating Confucian heritage with gender inequalities and advocates for a more nuanced approach to understanding how traditional culture shapes political behavior, specifically the gender gap in political participation. While Confucianism may contain elements that compromise women's societal status, it also carries legacies that can potentially empower modern women to attain equal status. I argue that a crucial legacy of Confucianism, meritocracy, which advocates for cultivation, hard work, and superior performance as means to alter one's fate, serves as such an empowering factor.

Drawing from legacy studies in other contexts, this chapter asserts that the meritocratic culture and its related institutions persistently influence contemporary Chinese society and contribute to the reduction of gender-related inequalities in political participation. To test this argument empirically, I rely on the Chinese case and examine the civil examination system (*keju*), a significant Confucian-based meritocratic institution. By combining historical *keju* results with individual data from the China General Social Survey, the study finds that the success or lack of success of ancestors during the Ming-Qing period predicts the turnout gender gap in 21st-century village elections.

This research stands as one of the pioneering empirical investigations into the impact of Confucian heritage on gender inequalities in political participation. It underscores the need for greater theoretical nuance when assessing Confucianism's legacies regarding gender inequalities. The findings challenge the (post-)modernization perspective, suggesting that traditionalism need not inherently conflict with modernity. Additionally, the study contributes to ongoing discussions about Confucianism and democracy, a topic sparking vigorous debate in both academic circles and society at large (Fukuyama, 1995; Shin, 2012).

Chapter 2 – The Relevance of Culture: Collectivism Reduces Negativity Biases in Government Evaluation

Negativity biases designate the inclination to give greater weight to negative than positive information (Rozin & Royzman, 2001). A general focus on negativity seems to be the norm when citizens are evaluating the incumbent authority. This is evident from work that studies economic voting (Bloom & Price, 1975), political trust (Niven, 2000), public service satisfaction (Olsen, 2015), and candidate evaluations (Soroka, 2014). Such research finds that citizens' reactions to contextual factors are asymmetric: their evaluations of the authority tend to be more strongly influenced by negative perceptions of traits, events or policy outcomes.

The question that guides this paper is whether this negativity bias is a universal pattern or a culturally-bound phenomenon. Unfortunately, the available empirical evidence in political science is insufficient to provide insights on this question, because most investigations related to this issue are conducted with samples from the Western cultural context (but see Fournier et al., 2020; Soroka et al., 2019).

This paper aims to fill that void, by expanding the scope of investigation to countries from a world-wide perspective. I argue that culture is a significant yet understudied factor related to the strength of individuals' negativity biases. I expect people who live in a collectivist society or who hold collectivist values to show less negativity bias in their evaluations of the authority.

To empirically test my argument, I combine Hofstede's individualism vs collectivism dimension score (Hofstede, 2001) with the World Values Survey (WVS), exploring to what extent culture at the national level is connected to negativity bias in government evaluations across 41 countries from five continents. To increase the reliability of my findings, in a second step I leverage another source of data, the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS), and investigate the effects of cultural values on negativity biases at the individual level within

countries. The results from both sets of analyses converge in suggesting that collectivism narrows the gap between negative considerations and positive considerations when citizens evaluate the incumbent authority.

This study contributes to the field of political psychology, where research relies heavily on geographically-constrained samples from the Western hemisphere (Hibbing et al., 2014). The scarcity of evidence from other cultural backgrounds entails the risk of committing an exception fallacy. More precisely, negativity biases in authority evaluations might be contingent on features that are particular to Western cultures, which we can only find out by examining the negative-positive asymmetry elsewhere. This study provides new evidence from large-scale cross-national data and identifies culture as an important source of heterogeneity for understanding people's recourse to negativity. Negativity biases should not be considered a general pattern that describes citizens' attitudes toward political authority worldwide. Instead, the presence of cultural differences in negativity biases imply culturally-specific citizen-government relationships.

2.1 Negativity Biases in Authority Evaluations

In political science, there is a broad literature that investigates the negativity bias in citizens' evaluations of authority. Electoral research provides much evidence suggesting that constituencies are more sensitive to losses than to gains. Economic downturns have a pronounced effect on the vote for the incumbent party, while economic upturns affect the vote less (Bloom & Price, 1975; Dassonneville & Lewis-Beck, 2014). Similarly, subjective disapproval of the incumbent government's work is also shown to be a stronger predictor of voting against the incumbent party than approval is of voting for it (Kernell 1977).

In addition to voting behavior, research has documented negativity biases in attitudinal authority evaluations as well. For leader ratings, Soroka (2014, Chapter 3) finds that negative assessments of leader traits correlate more strongly with the thermometer scores of leaders than positive assessments. For trust in the government, Niven (2000) argues that Americans' high and sometimes unrealistic expectations for their lives and their world lead to distrust vis-à-vis the government when these expectations are not met by policymakers.

For public service perceptions, Olsen (2015) finds that a patient dissatisfaction frame has a larger impact than a satisfaction frame on citizens' evaluations of hospital services. Skogan (2006) furthermore notes that the relationship between police encounters and citizens' general confidence in the police is asymmetrical; the impact of having a bad experience on assessments of the police is substantially greater than that of having a positive experience.

Notwithstanding the plethora of research, investigations of the negativity bias in authority evaluations are scant outside the Western cultural zone. To my knowledge, only one study explores this issue elsewhere, in the context of East Asia (Shinohara, 2023). Furthermore, this research does not find powerful links between bad performance and negative perceptions in two Japanese towns. In fact, Shinohara (2023) reports that a local fiscal crisis has no effect on citizens' service satisfaction and trust in the mayor, council, and administrators.

2.2 Cultural Account of Negativity Biases

The mainstream explanation of negativity biases is that the negative-positive asymmetry is a general tendency endowed with adaptive values in the Darwinian natural selection sense (Baumeister et al., 2001). Negative events (illness, combat, hunger, etc.) are unusual and can threaten an individual's existence, while positive events often do not have the same immediacy (Hibbing et al., 2014). The fact that individuals react more strongly to unexpected negative stimuli is considered a reflection of a built-in mechanism that has been developed through the process of evolution and that helped protect our ancestors from diverse risks under complicated prehistoric circumstances (Baumeister et al., 2001; Rozin & Royzman, 2001). Supporting this argument, a number of studies find similar negativity biases in animal behavior (Brosnan et al., 2007; Hunt & Campbell, 1997).

On the other hand, modern evolutionists believe that genetic and cultural evolution processes can interact with each other. There is much work that aims to model these complicated interactions known as the culture-gene coevolution or the dual inheritance theory (Boyd & Richerson, 2005; Creanza et al., 2017; Feldman & Laland, 1996; Henrich

& McElreath, 2003; Richerson et al., 2010). One of the core arguments of this culture-gene coevolution model holds that culture is central to the evolution of human species. That is, diverse living environments give rise to different culturally evolved adaptations that are transmitted through social learning from generation to generation; and these cultural traits can in turn create selective pressure for genetic evolution (Henrich, 2016). The lactose persistence in adulthood illustrates how culture shapes the biological evolution of humans. The cultural practices of cattle domestication and dairying have played a significant role in promoting the genetic mutation that allows the production of the lactase enzyme during adulthood. This mutation has been strongly favored by the selection process, as individuals capable of digesting lactose in milk have access to greater nutritional resources, increasing their chances of survival in cattle-raising cultures (Ingram et al., 2012; Laland et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2006).

Researchers studying negativity biases, however, even though they acknowledge the evolutionary roots of these biases, have not explored the potential influence of cultural diversity as a significant contributor to variations in negativity biases. In this paper, I investigate the relationship between negativity biases and the individualism-collectivism (IND-COL) construct, which is arguably one of the most influential cultural dimensions and has given rise to a considerable body of research in cross-cultural studies (Oyserman et al., 2002).

The IND-COL dimension describes a fundamental difference in how to construe the relationship between the self and the group (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede et al., 2010; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Singelis, 1994; Schwartz 1990; Triandis, 1995). The key premise of individualism posits that individuals are independent of one another. For instance, Hofstede (1980) defines individualism as prioritizing rights over duties, focusing on oneself and one's immediate family, valuing personal autonomy and self-fulfillment, and deriving one's identity from personal achievements. Conversely, collectivism operates on the core assumption that individuals are bound and mutually obligated within groups. Schwartz (1990) proposes that collectivist societies exhibit a communal nature, characterized by diffuse and reciprocal obligations and expectations rooted in ascribed statuses. In

collectivist societies, social units with shared destinies, objectives, and values are centralized, and personal identity is subordinate to the collective whole.

In this paper, I argue that the predominant account of negativity biases is founded on contingent individualist assumptions. In the individualist world view, individual goals and achievements are of paramount importance. In such a setting, negativity biases are useful mechanisms since they help individuals to stay alert and take quick actions (eg., fight or flight) against the perceived source of threat. However, centering on the self sometimes means losing some favorable relationships with others by mistake. For example, some work suggests that interpersonal trust is easy to destroy and difficult to create (Poortinga & Pidgeon, 2004; Slovic, 1993; White & Eiser, 2006), because negative information or events often have a much stronger effect on decreasing trust than do positive ones on increasing it. It follows that in the social context, negativity biases not only protect the self from potential harm, but can also hinder the prospect of people binding together. Collectivism, on the other hand, insists on group primacy and interrelatedness. Maintaining group harmony and cooperation weighs more than individual well-being in motivating collectivist people's behavior. As a result, the selective pressure for negativity biases (at least among ingroup members in the social sphere) is likely to be less imminent or even reversed in collectivist settings, because too much negativity in the social life could jeopardize stability of the group. The evolutionary mechanism of negativity bias is, therefore, less adapted to the collectivist way of life which views community interest as more important than individual gain or loss.

The second reason to doubt the persistence of negativity bias in collectivist cultures relates to the psychological roots of negativity biases. Work in psychology has shown that healthy humans hold mildly optimistic expectations on average (Strunk et al., 2006). Consequently, negative stimuli attract more of people's attention because of their further distance from the reference point (expectancy contrast theory, e.g., Helson, 1964), or because of their more extreme character compared to normality (frequency weight theory, e.g., Fiske, 1980). However, mild optimism might not always be the norm and could be a function of cultural factors. Some evidence suggests that, in contrast to individualist people, collectivist people tend to have weak self-enhancing motivations, and even to self-criticize, so as to get more

easily accepted by other members of the group (Heine & Hamamura, 2007; Kastenmüller et al., 2010; Kitayama et al., 1997; Lee et al., 2010). Several strands of work also demonstrate that collectivism reduces subjective well-being (Ahuvia, 2002; Suh & Oishi, 2002) and leads to a stronger tendency toward pessimism (Chang, 1996a, 1996b; Chang et al., 2003; Sun et al., 2004). If collectivist individuals are not mildly optimistic to begin with, then negative information provides less of a contrast, which should weaken negativity bias.

Since collectivism reduces both the necessity for and the psychological mechanism of negativity biases in the social context, my main expectation is that ***negativity biases should be moderated by collectivism in the case of evaluations of political authority***, a crucial actor responsible for social coordination to achieve collective goals.

To examine the cultural relevance for negativity bias in authority evaluations, I conduct two studies that each rely on a different dataset: the World Values Survey (WVS) and the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS).

2.3 Study 1: Evidence from the World Values Survey

2.3.1 Data

The WVS covers 79 countries worldwide and contains standardized survey questions, which allows for a global-scale analysis of the strength of negativity bias (Inglehart et al., 2014). I make use of the 1994-1998 and 1999-2004 waves because they include a question asking respondents' satisfaction with the national government (the dependent variable). I combine individual data from the WVS with information on a country's level of collectivism measured through Hofstede's individualism-collectivism scores (Hofstede, 2001). Hofstede's IND-COL dimension is one of the six national cultural dimensions he obtained through factor analysis of IBM employee responses from 78 countries (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede et al., 2010). The dimension is a bipolar construct that reflects to what extent a society is individualist or collectivist. Notwithstanding some caveats, Hofstede's

country-level IND-COL ratings are one of the most frequently-used proxies for individualism-collectivism in cross-country research (Oyserman et al., 2002).

2.3.2 Measurement

The key moderating variable of this research is the IND-COL cultural dimension. I reverse Hofstede's individualism to create a collectivism score, in this way facilitating interpretations of the final results. Higher values of the collectivism score indicate stronger collectivism and weaker individualism tendencies. The scale ranges from 0 to 100. For instance, South Korea's score is 82, indicating a predominantly collectivist culture, whereas the United States has a score of 9 and is deemed a very individualist culture. The distribution of this country-level variable is presented in the histogram of Figure 2.1. The variable has a mean of 55.44 and a standard deviation of 23.24. In general, the final dataset for use covers 41 countries with sufficient cultural variations from the five continents. Interested readers are invited to consult Figure A4.1 for more information about the list of countries included in the analysis.

The dependent variable is satisfaction with the national government, measured on a four-point scale. Higher values indicate more satisfactory evaluations. To operationalize negativity biases, I analyze national government satisfaction as a function of performance perceptions. The negativity bias account predicts that negative perceptions should correlate more strongly to government satisfaction than equivalent positive perceptions. The WVS has an egotropic measure of respondents' perceptions of the economic condition.[3] They are asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 10 their level of satisfaction with their household's financial situation. Following some previous work that studies asymmetric effects of variables (Dassonneville & Lewis-Beck, 2014; Soroka, 2014), I employ the linear spline method, a non-parametric regression technique that involves dividing the datasets into intervals or points known as knots. Each interval is assigned a separate fit, enabling flexible modeling of the data. This method allows for evaluating the segmented effects of positive and negative financial perceptions on government satisfaction. Precisely, I choose the mid-

[3] Research shows that economic sociotropic measures have more explanatory power on political approval (Lewis-Beck & Stegmaier 2013), but the WVS only contains an egotropic question about respondents' economic perceptions.

point of the satisfaction scale (5.5) as the knot and create two splined variables named "Financial Situation (-)", which captures only variation below the mid-point of the original variable, and "Financial Situation (+)", which captures only variation above the mid-point.

Wording of survey questions can be found in Appendix A1. All individual-level attitudinal variables are normalized to run between 0 and 1. Summary statistics of all variables used in the main analyses are presented in Appendix A2.

2.3.3 Methods

I estimate multilevel linear models with random intercepts. The models have three levels – individual respondents are at level one, country-year pairs are at level two, and countries are at the highest level. Random slopes are specified for the splined variables in the interaction model, because theoretically I expect that the individual-level effects of negative and positive perceptions should vary between countries, depending on the society's collectivism score.

In the baseline specification (Model 1), "Financial Situation (-)" and Financial Situation (+)" are included to examine whether negative perceptions of performance are a stronger predictor of government satisfaction than positive perceptions. In the interaction specification (Model 2), I add cross-level interactions between the IND-COL measure and the splined variables to test my principal hypothesis, according to which collectivism reduces citizens' negativity bias in government evaluations.

The models account for classic socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, level of education, and employment status. In addition, respondents' political ideology is controlled for as a proxy of their party identity, because work examining the role of partisanship in opinion formation shows that party attachments can color individuals' perceptions of political facts (Bolsen & Leeper, 2013; Bolsen & Palm, 2019).

At the aggregate level, I control for the country's logged GDP per capita in the year of the survey, because the (post)modernization literature contends that economic development may trigger cultural shifts (Inglehart, 1997; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Furthermore, V-Dem's Electoral Democracy Index (Coppedge et al., 2022) in the survey year is also taken

into account, since previous work suggests that political institutions might exert some influence on culture (Alesina & Giuliano, 2015; Fagen, 1969).

2.3.4 Results

The main results are summarized in Table 2.1. Model 1 confirms the existence of a negativity bias in citizens' evaluations of the political authority. The coefficient of negative perceptions is larger than that of positive perceptions. Going from neutral to very positive perceptions contributes to a 3.5 percentage-point rise in government satisfaction, while going from neutral to very negative perceptions reduces government satisfaction by almost 9.1 percentage points. More importantly, a test of coefficient equivalence shows that the difference between the negative and positive coefficients is statistically significant at the 0.001 level. These findings suggest that citizens attach significantly more importance to negative considerations when they evaluate the national government.

Model 2 reveals a moderation role for collectivism on the impact of splined perceptions on government satisfaction. The interaction between Financial Situation (-) and collectivism is significantly smaller than zero, while there is no interaction effect between Financial Situation (+) and collectivism.

Table 2.1. Determinants of Government Satisfaction (WVS)

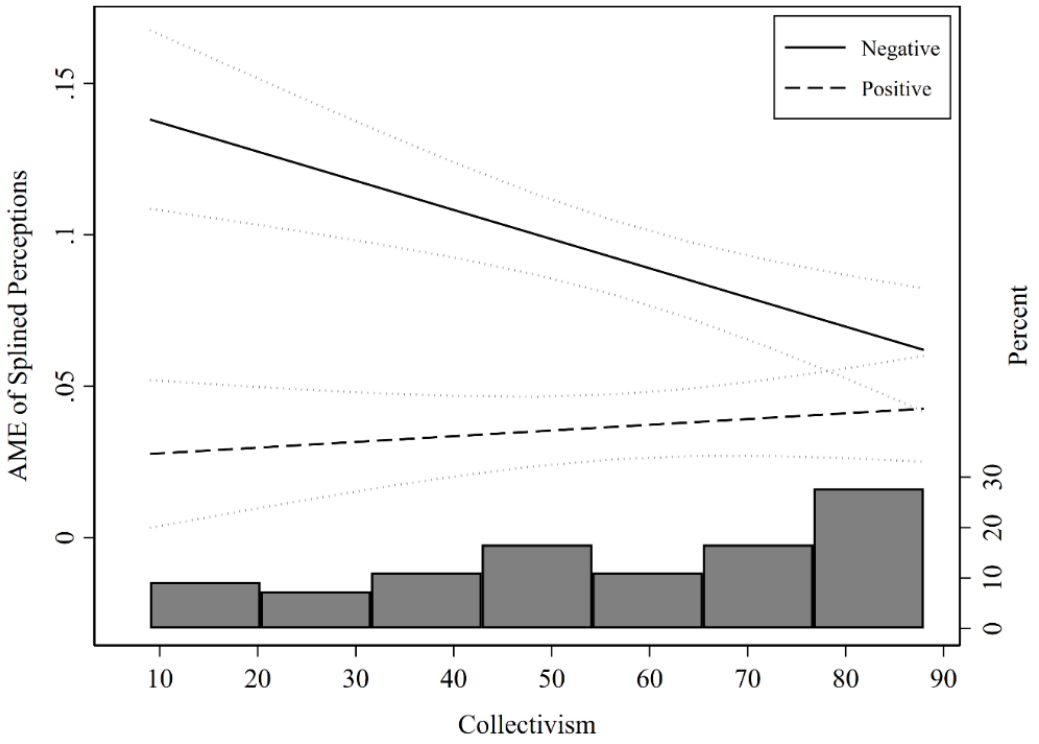
	Model 1	Model 2
Age	0.011	0.010
	(0.007)	(0.007)
Woman	-0.007**	-0.006**
	(0.002)	(0.002)
Employed	-0.006**	-0.006**
	(0.002)	(0.002)
Education (Ref.: Lower)		
Middle	-0.023***	-0.023***
	(0.003)	(0.003)
Upper	-0.034***	-0.033***
	(0.003)	(0.003)
Political Ideology	0.066***	0.065***
	(0.004)	(0.004)
Financial Situation (-)	0.091***	0.147***
	(0.004)	(0.017)
Financial Situation (+)	0.035***	0.026
	(0.004)	(0.014)
Electoral Democracy Index	-0.127	-0.145
	(0.098)	(0.102)
GDP per Capita (Logged)	-0.011	-0.026
	(0.024)	(0.027)
Collectivism		-0.000
		(0.001)
Financial Situation (-) × Collectivism		-0.001***
		(0.000)
Financial Situation (+) × Collectivism		0.000
		(0.000)
Test of Equivalence		
χ^2 (Negative = Positive)	68.92***	
σ^2 *Country*	0.004	0.004
σ^2 *Country-Year*	0.008	0.007
σ^2 *Financial Situation (-)*		0.001
σ^2 *Financial Situation (+)*		0.001
N Country	41	41
N Country-Year	54	54
N Individual	56219	56219

Note. Coefficients of random intercept multilevel linear models, random slope specified for splined perceptions in Model 2. Standard errors in parentheses. Data from World Values Survey, 1994-1998, 1999-2004. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

To facilitate the interpretation, I plot in Figure 2.1 the average marginal effects of negative and positive perceptions, conditional on Hofstede's collectivism score. Figure 2.1 shows a tendency for the negativity bias to shift with the change in the cultural measure. The general pattern is that, for countries that score very low on collectivism, there is a pronounced difference between the effect of negative perceptions and that of positive perceptions, thus

a significant negativity bias in authority evaluations. As collectivism rises, however, we observe that the effect of negative perceptions significantly decreases, while that of positive perceptions remains stable, thus contributing to the closing of negative-positive asymmetry. For countries that are at the collectivist end of the scale, almost no negativity bias is detectable. In this sense, my principal hypothesis is supported by the data.

Figure 2.1. Marginal Effects of Splined Perceptions on Government Satisfaction, Conditional on Collectivism (WVS)



Note. Estimates and 95 percent confidence intervals come from Model 2 in Table 2.1. Histogram summarizes the distribution of Hofstede's collectivism at the country level.

2.4 Study 2: Evidence from the Asian Barometer Survey

Theoretically, culture is viewed as a macro phenomenon. Triandis (1995, pp.43-44), for example, defines culture as "patterns characterized by shared beliefs, attitudes, norms, roles, and values that are organized around a theme and that can be found in certain geographic regions during a particular historic period.". Hofstede and colleagues (2010, p. 6) sees

culture as "collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others". Most empirical research in cultural psychology, however, investigates the IND-COL structure at the individual level, because cross-country comparison requires enormous resources to produce reasonably representative samples from a wide range of countries (Oyseman et al., 2002). Furthermore, scholars acknowledge that there are important individual differences within cultural entities, contributing to the operationalization of culture as a "statistical tendency" obtained from the distribution of individual-level cultural values (Hofstede et al., 2010; Triandis, 1995). Therefore, it is a common practice to measure cultural values at the individual level to study the role of culture in the field of cultural psychology.

To complement the aggregate-level WVS analysis and to increase the reliability of my findings, Study 2 uses the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) to investigate at the individual level the moderating effect of IND-COL on negativity biases.

2.4.1 Data

The ABS is arguably the most important cross-national survey project in Asia with a specific attention to measuring respondents' cultural values.[4] To date, five waves of data covering 16 Asian societies (plus Australia) are available.[5] I use the 2010-2012, the 2014-2016, and the 2018-2021 waves in this study, since these three waves included consistent individual-level measures of IND-COL values. In what follows, in line with Triandis and colleagues (1985), I label individualist-collectivist tendencies at the individual level as idiocentrism-allocentrism.[6]

[4] The Asian Barometer Project is co-directed by Professors Fu Hu and Yun-han Chu. It received major funding support from Taiwan's Ministry of Education, Academia Sinica and National Taiwan University.
[5] Countries/regions used in this research are Australia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, Japan, Cambodia, South Korea, Myanmar, Mongolia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Taiwan. Mainland China and Vietnam are excluded. The ABS team did not ask questions about government satisfaction or party identity in these two entities because it is impossible to have unbiased answers from the respondents.
[6] Although some influential work contends that idiocentrism and allocentrism should be two orthogonal constructs at the individual level (Singelis, 1994; Triandis, 1995), the ABS does not contain questions tapping the idiocentric construct. Also, for parsimonious consideration, I methodologically take allocentrism and idiocentrism as two opposites of the same dimension, which is in line with Hofstede's treatment of the concept at the national level and some other work treating individual level IND-COL as a single dimension (e.g., Yoo et al., 2011).

2.4.2 Measurement

For the measurement of the IND-COL construct, I rely on three common items from the ABS's traditionalism scale which taps respondents' idiocentric-allocentric value preferences. The items ask whether one should prioritize collective interest (that of the family, of the group, and of the nation respectively) over individual interest. The scale has good internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.66. Exploratory factor analysis using the principal component method shows that one factor stands out, explaining about 60% of the total variance. I thus take the sum of each respondent's answer across the three items to create a summated rating scale, which indicates the respondent's level of idiocentrism-allocentrism. A higher value on the scale corresponds to a more allocentric orientation, and a lower score indicates a more idiocentric orientation. Precise wording of the items and factor loadings can be found in Appendix A3.

The dependent variable is the same as in the WVS. The respondents are asked to indicate their satisfaction with the national government on a four-point scale. As for the independent variables, the ABS has more measures on performance perceptions compared to the WVS used in Study 1. Previous research using the ABS dataset has shown that government responsiveness and anti-corruption effort have strong effects on political support in East Asia (Chu et al., 2013). As such, perceptions of government responsiveness (1-4) and anti-corruption effectiveness (1-4) are also included in this analysis, in addition to the more commonly used sociotropic retrospective economic perceptions (1-6). I examine the presence of negativity bias with a focus on each of these independent variables. As in the WVS analysis, I use the spline regression method to examine the effects of positive and negative perceptions separately. All attitudinal variables are normalized to run between 0 and 1.

2.4.3 Methods

I use ordinary least squares models with country and wave fixed effects in order to account for the heterogeneity of regimes and the disparity in socio-economic development across Asia. By doing so, only the variation between citizens *within* the same country and wave is exploited.

In the baseline specifications (Models 1, 3 and 5), splined perceptions of economic situation, government responsiveness, and anti-corruption effectiveness are included respectively into the models to examine whether negative perceptions correlate more strongly to government satisfaction than positive perceptions. In the interaction specifications (Models 2, 4 and 6), I add interactions between the individual-level cultural measure and the splined variables to test the principal hypothesis.

2.4.4 Results

Table 2.2 presents results from the fixed effects linear models. Models 1, 3, and 5 tend to show that negativity biases are not an important phenomenon in Asian citizens' evaluations of the political authority. Although negative perceptions about the economy and the government's responsiveness have larger effects than corresponding positive perceptions, the differences are too slim to reach the conventional threshold of statistical significance, as the tests of coefficient equivalence indicate. Furthermore, with regard to citizens' perceptions of anti-corruption effectiveness, we observe that the negative spline and the positive spline have very similar coefficients. Moving from neutral to very positive perceptions and from neutral to very negative perceptions both lead to a 14.5 percentage-point change in government satisfaction. Hence, these results do not allow us to reject the null hypothesis that negative and positive considerations have the same weight in citizens' evaluations of the national government. This observation is coherent with what we have learned from the WVS data. Since most Asian countries are collectivist societies, it seems reasonable to find attenuated – or even absent – negativity biases overall.

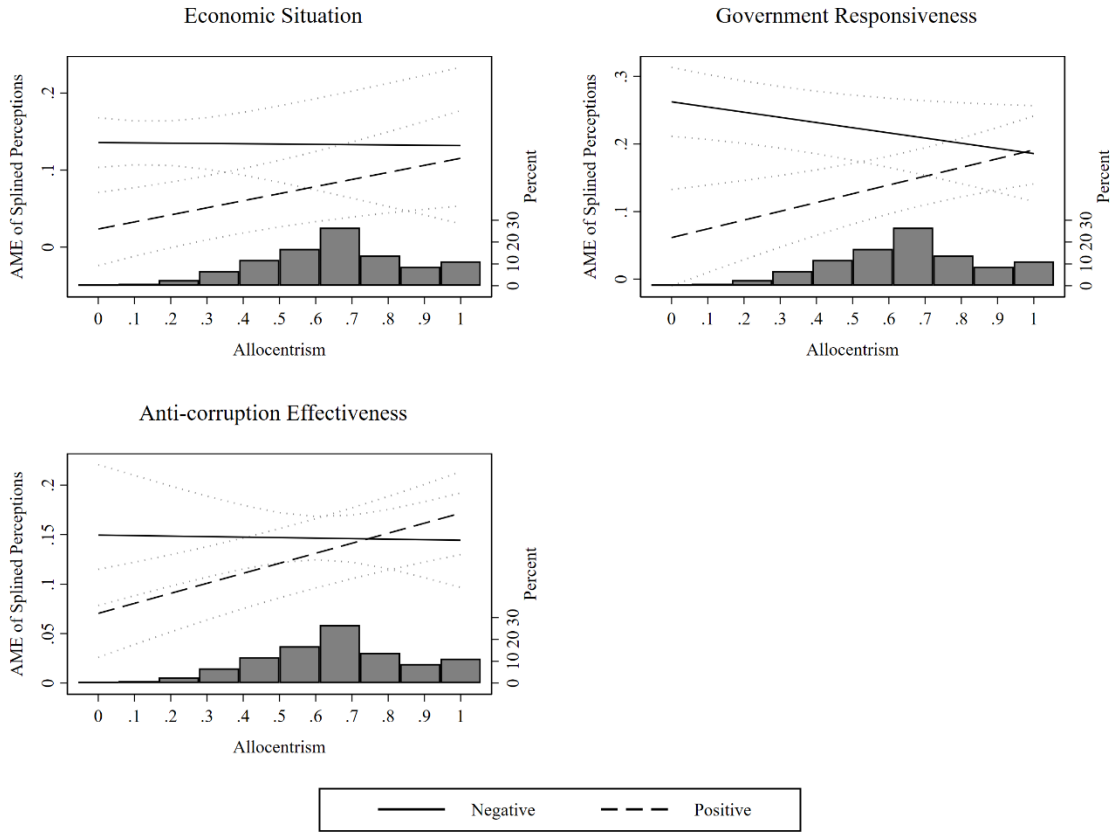
Table 2.2. Determinants of Government Satisfaction (ABS)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Economy (-)	0.132***	0.136***				
	(0.029)	(0.016)				
Economy (+)	0.091**	0.024				
	(0.026)	(0.023)				
Responsiveness (-)			0.213***	0.262***		
			(0.027)	(0.025)		
Responsiveness (+)			0.158***	0.062		
			(0.023)	(0.035)		
Anti-corruption (-)					0.145***	0.150***
					(0.011)	(0.035)
Anti-corruption (+)					0.146***	0.070**
					(0.021)	(0.022)
Allocentrism		0.102*		0.119**		0.072
		(0.042)		(0.043)		(0.055)
Economy (-) × Allo.		-0.004				
		(0.056)				
Economy (+) × Allo.		0.092*				
		(0.034)				
Responsiveness (-) × Allo.				-0.077		
				(0.038)		
Responsiveness (+) × Allo.				0.130**		
				(0.042)		
Anti-corruption (-) × Allo.						-0.005
						(0.054)
Anti-corruption (+) × Allo.						0.101***
						(0.025)
Control Variables	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Country FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wave FE	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Test of Equivalence						
F (Negative = Positive)	3.47		1.33		0.00	
Observations	39633	39633	39633	39633	39633	39633
R^2	0.246	0.252	0.303	0.307	0.277	0.282

Note. OLS coefficients. Robust standard errors clustered on countries and waves in parentheses. Models control for age, gender, level of education, employment status, and party identification. Data from Asian Barometer Survey, 2010-2012, 2014-2016, 2018-2021.
* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Models 2, 4, and 6 introduce interaction terms and test a moderation role for idiocentrism-allocentrism on the impact of splined perceptions on government satisfaction. Across the three models, the interactions between negative perceptions and allocentrism are smaller than zero (though not significantly so), while the interactions between positive perceptions and allocentrism are significantly larger than zero.

Figure 2.2. Marginal Effects of Splined Perceptions on Government Satisfaction, Conditional on Allocentrism (ABS)



Note. Estimates and 95 percent confidence intervals come from Models 2, 4, and 6 in Table 2.2. Histograms summarize the distribution of the individual-level allocentrism scores.

Figure 2.2 plots the average marginal effects of negative and positive perceptions conditional on respondents' allocentrism scores. There is some evidence for the negativity bias to shift with the change in the respondents' levels of allocentrism. For individuals who score very low on allocentrism, the difference between the effect of negative perceptions and that of positive perceptions is evident. As individuals become more allocentric, however, the negative effects tend to decrease slightly (although not significantly), while the positive effects tend to increase. Among the most allocentric individuals, the negative-positive asymmetries are completely wiped out. Only the positive spline interaction is significant for each of the three independent variable, yet the coefficients of the negative spline interactions are always in the expected directions. Taken together, the empirical

evidence from the ABS seems to suggest that collectivist cultural values tend to eliminate negativity biases in government evaluations.

To sum up, data from two sources focusing on two levels of analysis converge on the fact that collectivism (or allocentrism at the individual level) reduces the negative-positive asymmetry. Note, however, that the dynamics that underly the closing gap differ somewhat between the WVS and the ABS analyses. In the WVS, the disappearing negativity bias is driven almost entirely by the decrease of negative perceptions' effect as a country's level of collectivism increases. While in the ABS, higher individual levels of allocentrism are associated mainly with an increase of positive perceptions' effect.

2.5 Robustness Checks

I verify the robustness of both sets of analyses in a number of ways. For the WVS, a major concern is that aggregate-level outliers may drive the effects. I calculate the best linear unbiased predictions (BLUPs) of random slopes in the interaction model (Model 2 from Table 2.1), and present country-year specific marginal effects for negative and positive perceptions on government satisfaction in Appendix A4. Even though there are some obvious aberrant points, such as Chile 2000 and India 2001, there is no sign that the moderating role of culture is caused by these outliers.

As for the ABS, I carry out a jackknife resampling test by leaving each of the countries out of the sample at a time. I find no evidence that the interaction effects (Models 2, 4, 6 in Table 2.2) are driven by specific country outliers. This test is reported in Table A4.1 of the Appendix. Furthermore, following Hainmueller and colleagues (2019), I verify the robustness of multiplicative interactions using a binning estimator. The strategy consists of breaking the continuous allocentrism variable into three bins (corresponding respectively to the low, medium, and high values) represented by dummy variables and interacting these dummy variables with the splined perceptions. In this way, I can test whether the linear estimates obtained in the main analyses are free from biases caused by non-linearity or lack of common support. The results that are reported in Figure A4.1 of the Appendix offer no indication of such concerns.

2.6 Discussion

This paper examines the negativity bias in government evaluations from a world-wide perspective, and emphasizes the important role played by culture in explaining citizens' negativity biases. First, using data from the World Values Survey, I find that the more a society is collectivist, the less likely its citizens are to exhibit negativity bias when they evaluate the government on the basis of economic conditions. Second, by relying on individual-level indicators of allocentrism that are available in the Asian Barometer Survey, I uncover a similar moderation effect of cultural values on the relative weight of positive/negative considerations in the process of government evaluations. The greater the level of allocentrism, the less frequently negativity biases are used in shaping citizens' satisfaction toward the incumbent authority.

This study contributes to our understanding of negativity biases by highlighting the relevance of culture. The cultural evolution theory holds that culture is an important factor in the modeling of human evolution (Boyd & Richerson, 2005; Richerson et al., 2010). This paper suggests that culture might be one source to explain the variations of modern humans' negativity biases. Individualist and collectivist societies may have exposed individuals to very different social environments under which specific psychological or physiological mechanisms are adapted for more or less negativity bias. I thus advocate for incorporating culture as a legitimate element in future theorization of negativity biases.

Furthermore, this paper invites some reflections on the implications that cultural heterogeneity of negativity biases has for citizen-government relationships. Negativity biases constitute a useful mechanism for citizens to penalize the incumbent authority, making the government accountable for its bad policies. Compared to support earned by achievements, politicians more easily get blamed and lose favor for their wrong deeds (Soroka, 2014). The mechanism helps explain government alternation, especially during "bad times". The cultural variation of negativity biases that is uncovered in this paper thus induces different patterns of citizen-government relationships. It seems that idiocentric citizens from individualist societies with more pronounced negativity biases are more likely to develop critical attitudes toward the government than allocentric citizens from collectivist cultures.

As all research, this paper suffers from some limitations. First, while empirical analyses from the two data sources tend to show that negativity biases weaken with the rising of collectivism/allocentrism, the dynamic behind the reducing negative-positive effect gap seems different. The World Values Survey analysis demonstrates that the disappearing negativity bias is mainly due to the decrease in the weight of negativity, while the Asian Barometer Survey analysis finds that it might be the result of the increase of positivity's weight. There are no speculative explanations I can think of to account for the seemingly divergent evidence concerning how negativity biases are modified by collectivist features.

Another important limitation consists of the nature of data that is analyzed. The data are cross-sectional, which means that causal identification cannot be easily achieved. One concern in this regard relates to the operationalization of negativity biases. Studying government satisfaction as a function of splined performance perceptions could suffer from endogeneity problems. I cannot rule out the possibility that people report performance perceptions on the basis of whether they like the incumbent or not. For instance, Lodge and Taber (2013) have argued that citizens' conscious deliberation is an inherently biased search for information that confirms preexisting preferences. Maybe a larger coefficient of negative perceptions does not mean that citizens tend to be unsatisfied with the government for its bad performance, but that they tend to report bad performance perceptions because of their unsatisfaction with the government. However, what is crucial for the purpose of this paper is not the causal relationships, but the mere correlations between splined performance perceptions and government satisfaction. If one believes that performance perceptions cause government evaluations, then the asymmetric coefficients reflect the fact that citizens give negative perceptions more weight when they evaluate the government. If, alternatively, one believes that it is government evaluations that cause performance perceptions, then we can make the interpretation that citizens tend to perceive very badly the performance of a government they are unsatisfied with, while they form only slightly positive performance perceptions of a government they are satisfied with. Either way, the psychological mechanism of judgement asymmetry should be captured by this operationalization.

Another criticism of the same kind could be about the endogeneity of the moderating variable, culture. Although I speculate that different cultures may have created different social environments that allowed for the selection and transmission of traits favoring or curbing negativity bias tendencies, there is no empirical proof that the causal relationship cannot be the other way round. In other words, cultural development itself might be constrained by some genetic or psychological predispositions.

With cross-sectional data from the WVS and the ABS, I admit that no causal claim can be justified and that there is no clear answer to these doubts regarding endogeneity. Further studies should consider using experimental methods to explore the relationship between culture and negativity biases. By providing participants with objective information rather than using subjective perceptions as input, researchers could avoid endogeneity problems related to the independent variable. Furthermore, to deal with cultural endogeneity problem, one possible approach could be the culture-as-situated cognition (CSC) model (Oyserman & Lee, 2007; Oyserman, 2016). The CSC model argues that it is possible to prime the salience of individualist or collectivist mindsets by manipulating the accessibility of individualist or collectivist semantic content, goals, or mental procedures (Oyserman, 2016). Priming cultural salience as experimental conditions would be one way to help better establish the causal relationship between culture and negativity biases.

Chapter 3 – Is Bad Always Stronger than Good? Culture and Negativity Biases in Generalized Trust

Generalized trust, also referred to as social trust or interpersonal trust, denotes the confidence that individuals place in their fellow members of society (Carl & Billari, 2014). It is considered a crucial element of social capital that enhances societal efficiency by facilitating coordinated actions (Almond & Verba, 1963; Putnam, 2000). Extensive literature presents compelling evidence of the beneficial consequences that generalized trust can bring to both societies and individuals. Noteworthy among the well-established findings are the positive correlations between trust and economic growth (Knack & Zak, 2003), democratic development (Paxton, 2002), institutional performance (Uslaner, 2002), and subjective well-being (Helliwell, 2003).

Despite the many advantages of generalized trust, existing research reveals its fragility (Cvetkovich et al., 2002; Slovic, 1993). Negative information or events often exert a significantly stronger influence in reducing trust than positive ones do in increasing it, which indicates the presence of a negativity bias. This paper reexamines the asymmetry account of trust using a Chinese sample and argues for the relevance of cultural values in comprehending the role of negativity biases in trust development. The findings demonstrate a more pronounced impact of negative information on generalized trust within the entire sample, while also revealing considerable individual-level variability in this effect. Specifically, individuals with collectivist values are less prone to exhibiting negativity biases compared to those with individualist values.

The results of this study suggest that culture might be a significant, yet understudied, factor associated with negativity biases in trust formation. By identifying culture's relevance, this research contributes to the field of political psychology, where empirical evidence on negativity biases is predominantly drawn from geographically-constrained Western samples (Hibbing et al., 2014). Additionally, this paper offers a potential mechanism that

could elucidate the observed high level of trust in China, as noted in various empirical cross-national investigations (Inglehart, 1999; Seligson, 2002).

3.1 Negativity Bias in Trust Development

Research identifies several psychological barriers that hinder the development of trust (Kramer, 2018), and one such barrier is negativity biases. Notably, the level of generalized trust an individual holds is not merely the simple arithmetic mean of all their previous experiences. Instead, positive and negative events carry different weight. Empirical evidence supports this notion, demonstrating that trust is relatively easy to erode but challenging to establish (Cvetkovich et al., 2002; Poortinga & Pidgeon, 2004; Slovic, 1993; White & Eiser, 2005). Changes in trust levels are more likely to be influenced by negative events and information than by comparable positive ones. A single negative experience can break a trusting relationship, whereas several positive experiences are often required to repair it. Slovic (1993) terms this phenomenon "trust asymmetry", which reflects a negativity bias in human impression formation processes (Skowronski & Carlston, 1989; Taylor, 1991).

This asymmetry has been primarily explained as a general tendency with adaptive value in the context of Darwinian natural selection (Baumeister et al., 2001). Such biases arise due to the rarity and threatening nature of negative events (e.g., illness, combat, hunger) as compared to positive events, which often lack immediate urgency (Hibbing et al., 2014). Individuals' heightened reactions to unexpected negative stimuli are believed to stem from an inherent mechanism developed through evolution that protected our ancestors from diverse risks in complex prehistoric circumstances (Baumeister et al., 2001; Rozin & Royzman, 2001). The presence of similar negativity biases in animal behavior provides further support for this perspective (Brosnan et al., 2007; Hunt & Campbell, 1997).

Building on this line of research, which underscores the adaptive necessity of emphasizing negativity in trust development, I propose that ***information concerning the trustworthiness of other social members has a weaker impact on generalized trust than comparable information about untrustworthiness (Hypothesis 1).***

3.2 Culture and Trust Asymmetry

It is crucial to recognize that many scholars are careful to emphasize that negativity biases are not necessarily deterministic in nature. Rather, these biases are often regarded as tendencies or inclinations in the way individuals process and react to external information and events (Soroka et al., 2019). They should not be regarded as absolute traits and can be subject to influence by various factors. For example, empirical work has revealed many individual-level sources of heterogeneity in negativity biases, including political ideology (Dodd et al., 2012; Hibbing et al., 2014; but see Fournier et al., 2020; Osmundsen et al., 2022), gender (Soroka et al., 2016), and personality traits (Bachleda et al., 2020; Kiken & Shook, 2011). Other work suggests that contexts can also moderate the presence and the strength of negativity biases. Soroka and Krupnikov (2021) show that, under the predominantly negative pandemic situation, the prevalence of positive news in the media increases. In addition, Fay and colleagues (2021) find that higher social connectivity weakens the bias to transmit negative information.

However, researchers investigating negativity biases have not thoroughly explored the potential impact of culture as a significant factor contributing to variations in negativity biases. In this paper, I borrow the individualism-collectivism (IND-COL) construct from cultural psychology to explore whether culture predicts negativity biases in generalized trust.

The IND-COL dimension signifies a fundamental distinction in how individuals perceive their relationship with the group (Hofstede, 1980; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). Individualism rests on the premise that individuals are autonomous entities. For instance, Hofstede (1980) defines individualism as prioritizing personal rights over duties, focusing on oneself and immediate family, valuing personal autonomy and self-fulfillment, and deriving identity from individual achievements. Conversely, collectivism operates on the core belief that individuals are interconnected and mutually obligated within groups. Schwartz (1990) suggests that collectivist societies exhibit a communal nature, characterized by diffuse and reciprocal obligations and expectations rooted in ascribed statuses. In such societies, the collective takes precedence, and personal identity is

subordinate. Consequently, the primary focus of analysis lies within the in-group (Triandis, 1995).

I argue that the asymmetry principle in generalized trust is rooted in individualist assumptions, while often overlooking collectivist cultural traits. Within the individualist worldview, individual goals and achievements hold paramount importance. In such a context, negativity biases serve as useful mechanisms, alerting individuals and prompting quick actions, such as fight or flight responses, against perceived threats. Distrusting others in the face of untrustworthy signals, rather than trusting them erroneously, may shield us from potential harm caused by ill-intentioned individuals. However, this self-centered approach may sometimes lead to unintentional loss of favorable relationships with others.

In contrast, collectivist norms prioritize group goals over individual well-being. Maintaining group harmony and cooperation takes precedence over short-term individual gains or losses in motivating the behavior of collectivist individuals. Negativity biases in the social context can hinder the establishment of positive relationships among people. As a result, the selective pressure for negativity biases in trust development is likely to be less imminent in collectivist situations, where the unit of interest calculation shifts from the self to the ingroup community.

Consequently, my second hypothesis is that ***the asymmetric influence of information on generalized trust depends on cultural contexts. Negativity biases should be reduced in collectivist conditions (Hypothesis 2).***

3.3 Priming Individualism and Collectivism

Theoretical discussions on culture often conceptualize it as a macro construct. Triandis defines culture as "patterns characterized by shared beliefs, attitudes, norms, roles, and values that are organized around a theme and that can be found in certain geographic regions during a particular historic period" (Triandis, 1995, pp.43–44). Similarly, Hofstede describes culture as the "collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 6). However, obtaining cultural scores at the aggregate level presents empirical challenges, as

it requires significant resources to contact reasonably representative samples from a large number of countries, which are necessary for meaningful cross-country comparisons (Oyseman et al., 2002). Moreover, researchers recognize significant individual differences within cultural entities, leading to the operationalization of culture as a "statistical tendency" derived from the distribution of individual-level cultural traits (Hofstede et al., 2010; Triandis, 1995). As a result, a predominant amount of empirical research focuses on assessing culture at the individual level to study its macro implications in cultural psychology (Oyseman et al., 2002). Cultural priming, along with measuring IND-COL using rating scales, is one of the major approaches to investigate the effect of culture at the individual level.

The priming perspective of culture acknowledges that each society may have a dominant culture (e.g., American society may be characterized as individualist, Chinese society as collectivist) based on its ecological, historical, or philosophical traditions (Nisbett, 2003; Talhelm et al., 2014). However, this approach underlines that there is also considerable variability where different cultural knowledge is deemed appropriate within a cultural entity (Oyserman, 2016). For instance, certain situations in Chinese society may be better characterized as individualist, such as during an exam when individual performance matters. The culture as situated cognition (CSC) model, a leading framework of the priming studies, leverages insights from situated cognition research (Bargh, 2006) and employs experimental methods to study the effect of culture. It posits that regardless of the mainstream culture, all societies provide individuals with experiences of both individualism and collectivism, allowing either cultural mindset to be primed when situationally relevant (Oyserman & Lee, 2007). As a result, when collectivist (or individualist) cues are salient, people are more likely to temporarily think and act in collectivist (or individualist) patterns (Oyserman, 2016). This priming perspective challenges the notion that cultural effects are fixed and rigid, and it emphasizes the dynamic and malleable nature of cultural influence. It suggests that individuals can readily switch between cultural mindsets based on contextual cues, shedding light on the adaptability of human behavior within diverse social settings.

A substantial body of empirical research has provided compelling evidence for the successful activation of spontaneous normative mindsets through on-site tasks among both Westerners and East Asians in controlled experimental conditions (Monga & John, 2008; Peng & Knowles, 2003). In a comprehensive meta-analysis conducted by Oyserman and Lee (2008), which analyzed a diverse set of 64 studies employing various experimental tasks, 57 of these studies (89%) demonstrated a significant effect of cultural priming in the hypothesized direction.

Therefore, this research adopts the dynamic priming perspective to operationalize IND-COL through experimental manipulations. The utilization of cultural priming provides a more controlled approach to examine how cultural influences shape human behavior. By leveraging this priming method, the study can better isolate and explore the causal mechanisms that underlie cultural effects. The experimental design enhances the validity and precision of the findings, which is difficult to achieve by using observational scale rating methods.

3.4 Experiment Design

The experiment utilizes a 2 × 3 factorial design: the salience of participants' cultural considerations (collectivism vs. individualism) and the valence of the received information concerning the trustworthiness of others (positive vs. control vs. negative).

For the cultural priming treatment, I have followed the approach of Westjohn and colleagues (2022) and employ an adapted version of the similarities/differences with family and friends task originally introduced by Trafimow et al. (1991). Participants are randomly assigned to either the collectivism condition or the individualism condition. In the collectivist priming condition, participants are asked to describe three points they have in common with their family or friends, followed by recalling a past event in which they sacrificed something for the group. On the other hand, in the individualist priming condition, participants are instructed to describe three things that make them different from their family or friends, and then to recall a past event in which they accomplished a goal independently.

To assess the effectiveness of the manipulation, I utilize Yoo and colleagues' parsimonious six-item individualism-collectivism scale (2011).[7] This scale demonstrates excellent internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.81. The results of the principal component factor analysis reveal that the scale comprises only one significant factor. To create the scale measuring self-reported individualist-collectivist values, I sum up participants' responses across the six items. A higher value on the scale indicates a more collectivist orientation. Furthermore, the summated scale is normalized to have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. The wording of the scale items and their corresponding factor loadings can be found in Appendix B1 for reference.

The information treatment involves participants reading a local news report on a prominent public issue in China, food safety, with a particular focus on edible oil safety. To ensure the reliability and authenticity of the news reports, established Chinese language news outlets such as *Yanzhao Wanbao* and *Xinjing Bao* are utilized. These news reports are carefully adapted to maintain similar lengths and revolve around the same central topic.

The key distinction between the two experimental conditions lies in the behavior of the protagonist within the news story. In the positive news condition, the protagonist is portrayed as a reliable and trustworthy seller of fried dough sticks, who takes additional measures to safeguard the health of his customers by changing frying oil on a daily basis. On the contrary, the negative news condition features an untrustworthy restaurant manager who is revealed to have violated food safety regulations by neglecting to replace the edible oil for an extended period. While the news conditions are designed to evoke contrasted emotional responses (positive versus negative), they are supposed to be equivalent in valence, as they deal with the same topic of food safety in a similar situation.

For comparison purposes, there is a control condition which does not include any news story. The control group ensures a baseline for evaluating the impact of the information treatment. The complete news reports can be found in Appendix B2.

[7] While some influential work contends that individualism and collectivism should be orthogonal constructs at the individual level (Singelis, 1994; Triandis, 1995), I adopt the perspective of Yoo and colleagues (2011) and consider them as two opposing ends of the same dimension for the sake of parsimony. This approach is also widely used by applied researchers investigating the psychological implications of individualism and collectivism (Oyserman et al., 2002).

The dependent variable, generalized trust, is assessed using a standard question adapted from the China General Social Survey: "Generally speaking, would you say that most people in society can be trusted?". To enhance the measurement validity of generalized trust, some research suggests employing minimally balanced wording and longer scales (Lundmark et al., 2016). Therefore, in this study, the original scale's two endpoints are modified, retaining only the endpoint "most people can be trusted" and omitting the alternative endpoint "need to be very careful in dealing with people". Furthermore, to capture a more nuanced assessment of trust, the measurement employs a seven-point scale instead of a dichotomous response format. To facilitate meaningful comparison and analysis, the dependent variable is rescaled to have a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. The question wording is available in Appendix B2 for reference.

Analyses are conducted using ordinary least squares regression. To examine Hypothesis 1, a regression model is constructed with the dependent variable, generalized trust, regressed on two dummy variables representing the information groups to which individuals are assigned (positive vs. negative vs. control). The control group is set as the reference category for comparison. I anticipate that the effect of receiving negative information will be significantly more substantial than that of receiving positive information, or $|\beta_1| > |\beta_2|$.

$$\text{Trust} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{Negative} + \beta_2\text{Positive} + \varepsilon$$

To examine the moderation effect of culture in Hypothesis 2, I introduce interaction terms between the information stimuli and the cultural priming in the regression model. I anticipate a reduced effect gap between the negative and positive information conditions among participants who receive collectivist priming. However, regarding how collectivism would specifically impact negativity biases, my theoretical expectations are not definitive. There are several possibilities for the influence of collectivism on negativity biases. It might increase the significance of positivity ($\beta_5 > 0$), decrease the significance of negativity ($\beta_4 > 0$), or even both. Given the lack of strong theoretical expectations, this aspect of the analysis remains exploratory and open to interpretation.

$$\text{Trust} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{Negative} + \beta_2\text{Positive} + \beta_3\text{Collectivism} +$$

$$\beta_4\text{Negative} \times \text{Collectivism} + \beta_5\text{Positive} \times \text{Collectivism} + \varepsilon$$

3.5 Experiment Implementation

This study was preregistered at AsPredicted.org one day before the data collection process.[8] The data collection took place from February 8th to 11th, 2023, in Mainland China, using *Credamo*, a prominent Chinese online survey platform that combines features of both *Qualtrics* and *MTurk*. Notably, many prior studies have successfully utilized this platform to recruit participants (e.g., Chen et al., 2022; Gong et al., 2022; Li et al., 2022), attesting to the platform's capability of providing high-quality respondents who offer valid responses.

The decision to employ a Chinese sample in this paper is primarily driven by the appeal made by Henrich and colleagues (2010), who advocated for the inclusion of non-WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic) experiment samples in response to the generalization crisis. Given that most of the WEIRD countries are characterized by individualist cultures, selecting a collectivist case like China becomes meaningful for exploring the robustness of previous findings concerning negativity biases.

A total of 2000 individuals completed the survey, out of which 27 were excluded from the analyses due to not passing the attention check. The geographic distribution of respondents covers all 31 provincial level administrative divisions (excluding Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan). However, it is important to note that the sample exhibits some demographic disparities compared to the average Chinese population, which is typical for online recruited samples. Specifically, the participants in the study are notably younger, with a mean age of 29. A substantial majority of the sample (82%) possesses a higher education background. In addition, the sample is predominantly composed of women (67%).

Table B3.1 in Appendix B3 presents the balance tests, which demonstrate equivalence across the treatment and control conditions concerning age, gender, and education level. Moreover, Figure B4.1 in Appendix B4 illustrates the results of the manipulation check. The outcomes of a t-test indicate that, consistent with my expectation, participants in the collectivist priming condition have a significantly higher average self-reported score on the

[8] To access the anonymized preregistered document, please visit https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=1WS_L5N

IND-COL scale compared to those in the individualist priming condition ($p < 0.001$). This result confirms the successful manipulation of cultural priming.

3.6 Main Results

In Table 3.1, Model 1 provides evidence supporting the existence of a negativity bias among Chinese citizens in developing generalized trust based on information about others' trustworthiness. When compared to the control group, the positive information stimulus leads to an increase in generalized trust by 0.23 standard deviation, whereas the negative stimulus results in a decrease of 0.43 standard deviation. The negative effect is nearly twice as substantial as the positive effect. Furthermore, a linear combination of coefficients reveals that the difference in effect size is statistically significant, which indicates a notable contrast in the impact of positive and negative information on generalized trust.

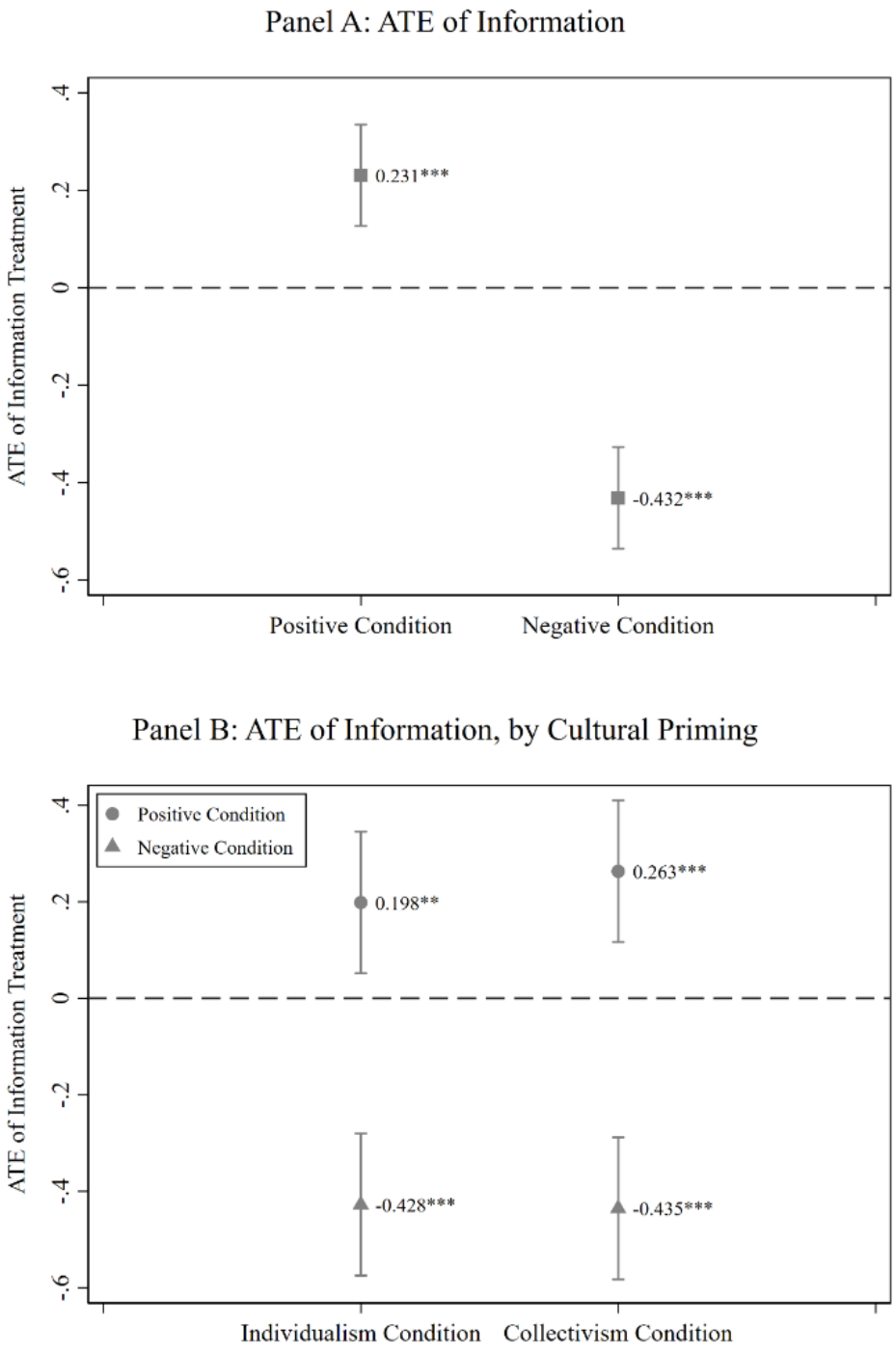
Panel A of Figure 3.1 visually illustrates this positive-negative asymmetry. The distance between the negative coefficient and the zero line is noticeably larger than that between the positive coefficient and the zero line. This graphical representation strengthens the support for the first hypothesis and underscores the significance of negativity biases in shaping individuals' trust in the context of information about others' trustworthiness.

Table 3.1. Main Results

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Information Stimuli (Ref.: Control)			
Positive Condition	0.231***	0.198**	0.242***
	(0.053)	(0.075)	(0.047)
Negative Condition	-0.432***	-0.428***	-0.421***
	(0.053)	(0.075)	(0.047)
Cultural Priming (Ref.: Individualism)			
Collectivism Condition		0.116	0.021
		(0.075)	(0.039)
Collectivism Condition × Positive Condition		0.065	
		(0.106)	
Collectivism Condition × Negative Condition		-0.008	
		(0.106)	
IND-COL Values			0.356***
			(0.034)
Positive Condition × IND-COL Values			0.114*
			(0.046)
Negative Condition × IND-COL Values			-0.003
			(0.048)
Age			0.014***
			(0.002)
Female			-0.159***
			(0.041)
University			0.033
			(0.050)
Linear Combination of Coefficients			
Positive Condition + Negative Condition	-0.201*		
	(0.092)		
Observations	1973	1973	1973
R^2	0.075	0.080	0.285

Note. Entries are OLS regression coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses.
* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Figure 3.1. Average Treatment Effect of Information



Note. The graph reports the ATE of information treatment. Panel A displays the ATE of information treatment in the whole sample. Panel B specifies the ATE of information treatment conditional on cultural priming. 95% confidence intervals.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

In Model 2, the analysis tests for the moderation effect of cultural priming on the information stimuli. The interaction coefficient between collectivist priming and the positive stimulus is positive, indicating that the average treatment effect (ATE) of the positive stimulus is larger in the collectivist priming condition. While the moderation effect is in the hypothesized direction, it does not reach statistical significance ($p = 0.54$). Moreover, the interaction coefficient between collectivist priming and the negative stimulus is almost zero, suggesting that cultural priming does not alter the ATE of the negative stimulus on trust.

Panel B in Figure 3.1 presents the ATE of information stimuli under different cultural priming conditions. It seems that respondents primed for collectivism exhibit somewhat less negativity bias compared to those primed for individualism, as the absolute values of the positive and negative coefficients are more similar in the collectivist condition. Participants primed with collectivism may be slightly more receptive to positive stimuli. However, the interaction terms are not statistically significant, and the results from Model 2 do not support the second hypothesis. There is insufficient evidence to suggest that cultural considerations impact people's negativity biases in generalized trust.

It is possible that the lack of statistical significance in the moderation test results from methodological limitations. Figure B4.1 indicates that priming has a statistically significant impact on the salience of cultural considerations, but the magnitude of this change (0.3 standard deviation) might be too small to produce a meaningful moderation effect. Indeed, it reveals that the priming method using a three-minute online task has a relatively weak effect on people's thoughts and actions compared to the influence of deeply rooted values and beliefs formed over decades.

Overall, while there are some indications of cultural priming influencing negativity biases, the current analysis fails to establish a statistically significant effect. The study's findings underscore the complexity of cultural influences on negativity biases and emphasize the need for further research to explore this phenomenon with more robust experimental designs.

3.7 Exploratory Analyses

Falling short of finding a causal relationship between cultural priming and negativity biases, I conduct some exploratory analyses that were not predetermined in the preregistration to investigate whether any correlations could be identified. In Model 3, I employ the self-reported IND-COL scale, measured after the cultural priming treatment, as the moderating variable. To mitigate post-treatment biases, Model 3 controls for the cultural treatment dummy and sociodemographic features of respondents.

The results of these exploratory analyses reveal a positive and significant interaction between cultural values and the positive information treatment. Specifically, a one-standard-deviation increase in the IND-COL scale amplifies the ATE of the positive stimulus by 0.114. However, the interaction between cultural values and the negative stimulus remains close to zero and statistically non-significant. This suggests that the individualism-collectivism values can alter the strength of positive information while they do not have a significant impact on negative information.

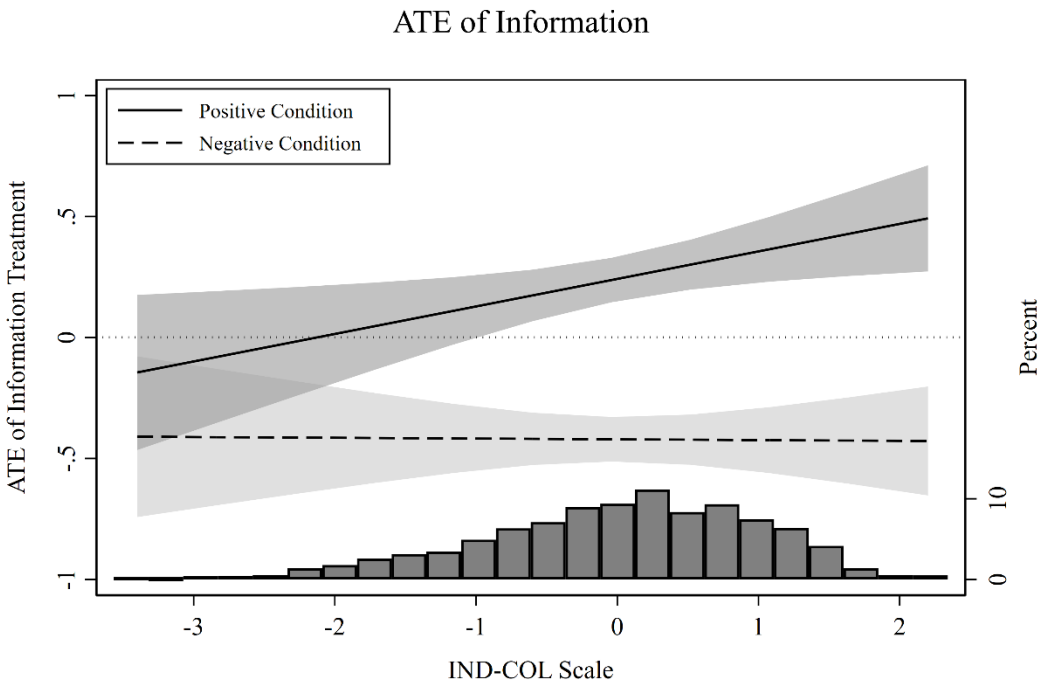
To facilitate the interpretation of the results, I plot the ATEs of negative and positive stimuli in Figure 3.2, conditional on respondents' IND-COL level. The findings reveal a tendency for the negativity bias to shift with changes in cultural values. Specifically, for individuals who score very low on the IND-COL scale, the effect size of the positive stimulus is indistinguishable from zero.[9] Among the same group, the effect size of the negative stimulus is approximately -0.41. This contrast indicates that for individuals who have closer alignment with individualist values, negative information strongly reduces their level of generalized trust while positive information has almost no effect on trust. A negativity bias is thus detected for the most individualist respondents of the survey.

As respondents become more collectivist, the effect of negative information remains relatively constant, while the effect of positive information tends to increase in size. This suggests that collectivist values can increase the strength of positive information. Among the most collectivist participants, the effect of the positive stimulus reaches approximately

[9] Respondents who score two standard deviations below the mean are considered "very low". Similarly, the criterion for "the most collectivist participants" is two standard deviations above the mean.

0.47 and the effect of negative stimulus is around -0.43. This pattern shows that the ATEs of positive and negative stimuli approach a similar level in terms of absolute effect sizes among the most collectivist individuals, suggesting a correction of the previously observed negativity bias. Negative information reduces generalized trust as much as positive information increases it.

Figure 3.2. Moderation Effect of IND-COL Values



Note. The graph reports the ATE of information treatment conditional on respondents' self-reported IND-COL values. 95% confidence intervals.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the reduction of the positive-negative asymmetry is primarily driven by a heightened sensitivity to positive stimuli. Indeed, research in cultural psychology has found that East Asians tend to experience higher levels of positive emotional activation in interpersonal contexts compared to Caucasians (Deng et al., 2021; Uchida et al., 2009). This cultural difference in emotional response may help explain the higher impact of positivity among collectivist respondents found here. These insights indicate that cultural values may play a role in shaping individuals' responses to positive

information. However, further research is needed to confirm and validate these exploratory findings and to explore the underlying mechanisms behind this intriguing relationship between cultural values and negativity biases.

3.8 Discussion

This study digs into the concept of generalized trust through the lens of cultural values. Consistent with previous research, the experiment confirms that Chinese citizens are more influenced by negative information in their trust development. Negative news featuring ill-intentioned others has a significantly stronger impact on generalized trust than comparable positive news.

Importantly, this paper introduces the idea that culture is related to the negativity bias. The self-rated IND-COL scale shows a significant correlation with the negativity bias in trust development. It demonstrates that individuals who lean toward collectivism might be more likely to exhibit symmetric patterns when developing trust based on external information. In other words, their responses to positive and negative information become more balanced and aligned as they become more collectivist. However, caution is warranted in interpreting these results due to several methodological limitations. First, the findings stem from a non-preregistered exploratory analysis, which introduces the risk of potential data-driven biases. Furthermore, the use of a post-treatment variable in the moderation model compromises the benefits of a random experimental design. It is thus impossible to establish causal relationships between cultural priming and negativity biases. Finally, the sample used in the study is not representative of the general population, which raises concerns about the external validity of the results.

This research fails to validate the second hypothesis, which posits a causal effect of culture on negativity biases in trust development. This highlights the challenge of determining whether cultural contexts shape social settings that condition people's psychological responses, or whether cultural development itself is constrained by certain psychological predispositions. The limitations of the priming methods, which may not substantially alter participants' deeply rooted values and beliefs forged over decades, call for more

sophisticated experimental designs in future research to fully grasp the complex relationship between culture and negativity biases.

Despite these limitations, this paper contributes to our understanding of negativity biases by introducing the role of culture. It suggests that negativity biases in the social context might be a more coherent psychological mechanism for individuals with individualist values compared to those with collectivist values. Therefore, future theorizations of negativity biases should consider incorporating culture as a factor. Moreover, this study sheds light on the high level of generalized trust observed in collectivist China. While prior research has suggested that collectivism might directly promote trust (Westjohn et al., 2022; Zeffane, 2017), this study proposes another mechanism – collectivism may reduce individuals' tendency to distrust due to negativity biases.

Chapter 4 – Cultural Sources of Gender Gaps: Confucian Meritocracy Reduces Gender Inequalities in Political Participation

Mao Zedong famously stated, "women hold up half the sky," during a period of significant transformation in many East Asian countries after World War II. However, despite experiencing economic prosperity for several decades, East Asian women have not yet achieved their rightful place in the political sphere. The representation of women in decision-making roles remains low. According to the data from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) as of January 2023, East Asian countries rank in the lower-middle portion among the 186 countries in terms of the percentage of women in their national legislative bodies. China ranks 95th, with only 24.9% of women in the National People's Congress. South Korea ranks 120rd, with 19.1% of women in the National Assembly. Japan even ranks 164th, with a mere 10% representation of women in the House of Representatives. Moreover, at the citizen level too, women in East Asia display lower levels of political engagement compared to men. A recent comparative study (Liu, 2022) demonstrates that the gender gap in political participation in East Asia is pervasive and consistent across various forms of political action, except voting (see also True et al., 2014).

In line with the research conducted by Inglehart and Norris on gender gaps in political participation (Inglehart & Norris, 2000; 2003; Norris & Inglehart, 2001), scholars who study East Asia commonly cite the region's patriarchal tradition as a key obstacle to achieving gender equality in political participation (Edwards, 2007; Jennings, 1988; True et al., 2014). This explanation appears self-evident, given that East Asian Confucianism accentuates hierarchy, order, and obedience, thereby relegating women to an inferior position compared to men (Gardner, 2014; Li, 2000; Yao, 2000). However, up until now, the cultural explanation for gender inequalities has predominantly relied on theoretical arguments, and empirical evidence supporting the notion that culture negatively affects gender gaps in political participation in East Asia is scarce.

In this paper, I argue against equating Confucian heritage with gender inequalities. A more nuanced approach is necessary to comprehend how traditional culture influences political behavior, particularly the gender gap in political participation. While Confucianism contains elements that weaken women's status in society, it also carries legacies that can potentially empower modern-day women. One crucial legacy relates to the concept of meritocracy, which advocates for personal cultivation, hard work, and superior performance as a means to alter one's fate. I propose that Confucian meritocracy can serve as an empowering factor for women to attain equal status to men. Furthermore, drawing from legacy studies in other contexts (e.g., Acharya et al., 2016; Lupu and Peisakhin, 2017; Voigtlander and Voth, 2012), I assert that the meritocratic culture and its related institutions are likely to exert a persistent influence on contemporary Chinese society. Consequently, these influences may contribute to reducing gender-related inequalities in political participation.

To test my argument empirically, I utilize the Chinese case and focus on the civil examination system (*keju*), an important Confucian-based meritocratic institution. By combining historical *keju* results at the prefectural level with individual data from the China General Social Survey (CGSS), I find that the success (or lack of success) of ancestors during the Ming-Qing period predicts the turnout gender gap in 21st-century village elections. Specifically, greater success of ancestors in a prefecture corresponds to a smaller gender gap in turnout among contemporary CGSS respondents.

This paper represents a first empirical investigation into the impact of Confucian heritage on gender inequalities in political participation. The results prompt the need for greater theoretical nuance when assessing the legacies of Confucianism regarding gender (in)equalities. While some aspects of Confucianism may impede women's attainment of equal status as men, elements like meritocracy, on the contrary, may aid women in their quest for equality. This research challenges the (post-)modernization perspective, which posits that gender equality naturally follows the decline of traditionalism (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). My findings offer a different outlook, suggesting that traditionalism need not inherently conflict with modernity. Additionally, this study contributes to the ongoing

discussions about Confucianism and democracy, a topic that has sparked vigorous debate both in academic circles and society at large (Fukuyama, 1995; Shin, 2012).

4.1 Cultural Sources of Gender Gaps

Electoral studies have long examined the disparity between men's and women's participation in elections. Early work on the topic reported evidence of women's under-participation (Almond & Verba, 1963; Schlozman et al., 1994). However, contemporary research in established Western democracies shows a gradual closure of the gender gap in voter turnout during major elections in recent decades (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Kostelka et al., 2019; Smets & van Ham, 2013).

In contrast, in new democracies in Africa and Latin America, a traditional gender gap in elections persists (Isaksson et al., 2014; Kuenzi & Lambright, 2011; Morgan, 2015). For the Chinese case, prior work based on local survey analyses and focus group interviews suggests that women tend to vote substantially less than men in village elections (He, 2007; Zhang, 2006).

One influential explanation for the gender gap in political participation posits that cultural barriers contribute to women's under-participation (Bennett & Bennett, 1992; Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Norris & Inglehart, 2001; Paxton & Kunovich, 2003). According to this cultural account, traditional gender norms lead women to embrace passive, intimate, and compassionate roles, while men adopt autonomous, public, and assertive roles (Coffé & Bolzendahl, 2010; Fraile & Gomez, 2017). Gender role socialization reinforces these norms, encouraging girls to focus on private domains like childrearing and family life, and boys to pursue achievement-oriented goals (Fridkin & Kenney, 2007). Empirical evidence supports the notion that culture plays a significant role in women's political involvement. Women in more gender-equal contexts are more likely to develop an interest in politics (Fraile & Gomez, 2017), participate in elections (Inglehart & Norris, 2003), and vote according to their socio-economic interests (Inglehart & Norris, 2000) compared to those in traditional gender cultures.

Scholars studying East Asia also argue that cultural traditionalism hampers women's political participation (Edwards, 2007; He, 2007; Guo et al., 2009; Jennings, 1988; Tong, 2003; True et al., 2014; Wang & Dai, 2013). This perspective stems from Confucianism's rather bad historical record of treating women (Gardner, 2014; Li, 2000; Yao, 2000). Confucian ideals emphasize a harmonious society based on distinct roles and rankings that place women in a disadvantaged social position primarily confined to family services. For instance, Confucian norms outline five fundamental human relationships, known as *wulun*. Concerning the husband-wife relationship, Mencius stated the importance of "attention to their separate roles" (*Mengzi*, 3A:4). This Confucian perspective upholds a division of labor, with men responsible for external affairs and women for internal matters (Yao, 2000). Accordingly, women's duties are centered on their homes, supporting their husbands, and educating their children. Throughout East Asia's extensive pre-modern history, women were excluded from public life, including political actions or holding government positions. Consequently, the observed disengagement of women from public affairs is often linked to deeply rooted gender inequalities stemming from this patriarchal heritage.

4.2 Confucian Meritocracy and Women's Empowerment

While it is evident that Confucianism has historically had negative implications for women (e.g., Gardner, 2014; Yao, 2000), it is not entirely anti-women. Some existing research highlights Confucianism's positive legacies in promoting equal status for women. For example, Clark and Wang (2004) conducted an analysis of canonical Confucian texts and emphasized the metaphysical concept of yin-yang harmony as the foundation for asserting women's equal competency and virtue alongside men. Based on both Chinese and Korean Confucian classics, Koh (2008) presented a defense of Confucianism's alignment with gender equality at a scriptural level. Additionally, in a philosophical exploration of feminist concerns within Confucianism, Li (2000) observed that certain aspects of Confucianism, notably the provision of equal opportunities for learning and the cultivation of an attitude of openness and flexibility, resonate with contemporary feminist values.

Inspired by this line of research, this paper conceives the principle of meritocracy as a key Confucianist legacy that contributes to promoting gender equality. Meritocracy is a social system that promotes societal advancement based on an individual's capabilities and merits, rather than on family, wealth, or social background (Kim & Choi, 2017). The Confucian notion of meritocracy is founded on principles of equality of opportunity and impartiality of competition.

First, Confucianism upholds the principle of equality of opportunity, rooted in the belief that every individual should receive an education (Bell, 2012). While Confucians recognize that there are differences in morality and capacity between people, they contend that each person possesses an innate potential to develop themselves and become a morally superior *junzi*. Confucius famously stated, "by nature, people are alike, by practice, people get to be wide apart" (*The Analects*, 17:2). Mencius similarly asserted, "sages and we are of the same kind" (*Mengzi*, 6A:7). Furthermore, according to Song China's neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi, "(in the ideal times) everyone, from the king's court and feudal capitals down to the smallest lane or alley, had schooling" (de Bary & Bloom, 1999, pp. 722-725). Confucianism thus advocates for a moral egalitarianism that encourages all individuals to pursue wisdom through self-cultivation regardless of their social status (Ying, 2021). The differing outcomes among individuals, some emerging as superior and others as inferior, are attributed to the varying efforts put into cultivating their equal innate potential (Hong, 2019).

Second, the impartiality of competition is institutionalized through the civil examination system (*keju*), which originated during Sui China (581-618 AD) and later spread to neighboring Korea, Vietnam, and Japan to a lesser extent (Bell, 2012). *Keju* is a government official selection system orchestrated by the imperial court, which allowed civilians to participate freely and recruited primarily based on exam results (Zhang, 1993, p. 11). In China, the system reached its peak during the Ming-Qing period (1368-1905 AD). The exams tested candidates on their knowledge of Confucian classics and their ability to analyze public issues and were organized at three levels. The prefectural exam (*tongshi*) was the entry level, with those who succeeded entitled *shengyuan*. *Shengyuan* qualification was a necessary condition to participate in the next level's provincial exam (*xiangshi*).

Provincial exam nominees got the *juren* degree and were allowed to take the national exam (*huishi*). Those who passed this final stage became *jinshi* holders. *Juren* and *jinshi* holders were eligible to serve as government officials (Guo, 2015), with the latter enjoying extraordinary fame and power that almost guaranteed a mid-to-high-level post in the bureaucratic system (Zhang, 1993). *Keju* operated as a merit-based and relatively fair institution, known for its minimal corruption (Chen et al., 2020). It provided ordinary people with an opportunity for upward mobility if they excelled in the exams. Notably, Ho estimated that 42.3% of *jinshi* holders during the Ming-Qing period came from commoner backgrounds, families that hadn't produced holders of higher degrees (*shengyuan* and above) or government posts in the three preceding generations (Ho, 1964, pp. 112–113). Unlike hereditary systems in other civilizations at the same time, the merit-based *keju* institution empowered individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, offering them the opportunity to transform their lives by proving their capabilities instead of being constrained by predetermined destinies.

Confucian meritocracy, as architected by Confucius' followers during the imperial era, had limitations too. Equal access to education for all remained largely a moral ideal, and women were excluded from the learning process, the *keju* system, and officialdom as a whole. However, it is crucial to recognize that the exclusion of women from meritocratic institutions should be understood as a consequence of traditional gender roles governed by Confucian rites (*li*) within society, rather than being an inherent anti-women essence of meritocracy itself. In fact, Confucian scholars throughout history have argued that Confucian principles are not the creation of divine beings but were prescribed for a certain period, allowing them to adapt to changing times and circumstances (Li, 1992).

Given the modern Chinese context, the respective roles of men and women can be accommodated to align with contemporary values. The fundamental moral belief of Confucian meritocracy, which asserts that nobody is born inherently superior or inferior and that everyone can improve through post-birth cultivation, therefore holds the potential to empower women. Meritocracy recognizes and rewards women's achievements based on their qualifications and performance, rather than merely considering their gender. This recognition can bolster women's self-confidence and encourage them to pursue

challenging roles and responsibilities. Consequently, a meritocratic culture challenges traditional gender role stereotypes by emphasizing the irrelevance of gender in determining one's success in life. In fact, extent empirical research reveals that impartial institutions, particularly when manifested as meritocracy within public administration, are more likely to promote gender equality in the society (Rothstein, 2018).

In light of this, I expect that the meritocratic elements of Confucianism can prompt women to take proactive actions to improve their situation, rather than accepting the status quo of gender inequalities prevalent in today's society. In the realm of politics, women living in a more meritocratic culture should have greater incentive to participate in public affairs, voicing their concerns and defending their interests more confidently.

4.3 Persistence of the Meritocratic Culture

A growing theoretical literature emphasizes that cultural norms wield significant influence over individual behavior and can persist over extended periods (Acemoglu & Jackson, 2015; Bisin & Verdier, 2000; 2001; Tabellini, 2008). This argument on persistence aligns with insights from cultural evolution theory, which defines culture as "information capable of affecting individuals' behavior that they acquire from other members of their species through teaching, imitation, and other forms of social transmission" (Richerson & Boyd, 2006, p. 5). Cultural information learned from others serves as decision-making heuristics, aiding individuals in adapting to their complex environment (Richerson & Boyd, 2006; Henrich & McElreath, 2003; Henrich, 2016). By relying on cultural beliefs about the "right" course of action in various situations, individuals may not always behave optimally, but they save on the costs associated with gathering information directly from the environment, which can be time-consuming and risky (Henrich, 2016). The intergenerational transmission of cultural information is, therefore, a vital adaptive strategy responsible for the survival and success of our species in the evolutionary process.

Extensive research offers ample empirical evidence of the enduring impact of cultural norms and related institutions. For instance, Dell (2010) reveals that a colonial forced labor system in Peru and Bolivia resulted in lower levels of modern-day household consumption

and childhood growth. Nunn and Wantchekon (2011) demonstrate that Africans whose ancestors were affected by the slave trade display higher levels of mistrust today compared to other Africans. Furthermore, Homola and coauthors (2020) find that current political intolerance, xenophobia, and voting for radical right-wing parties are linked to proximity to former Nazi concentration camps in Germany. These legacy studies typically emphasize socialization as the primary mechanism that transmits the effects of historical events, norms, or institutions across generations (Bisin & Verdier, 2000; 2001). Socialization can occur both within families, directly from parents, and outside families through imitation and learning from peers, teachers, and role models (Campbell, 2006; Clark & Worthington, 1990; Jennings & Markus, 1984).

Following this framework, I argue that the meritocratic culture in China, rooted in Confucian ideology and institutionalized through the civil examination system spanning over 1300 years, continues to impact contemporary Chinese society. The *keju* system allowed ordinary individuals to access fame and power through relatively free and fair exams. *Juren* and *jinshi* holders, especially esteemed in a traditional society largely comprising peasants, held significant social status. Many historically influential figures, like Du Yan, Fan Zhongyan, and Ouyang Xiu, emerged from humble backgrounds and became government officials through the *keju* system (Zhang, 1993). Anecdotes of their perseverance and success in the civil exams have become widespread and well-known among the general populace.[10] Furthermore, *keju* successors also received recognition in family genealogies and local gazettes (Chang, 2006; Dai, 2021). They served as role models for their communities and influenced local residents' beliefs in the value of education and self-endeavor to shape their destinies. These beliefs are likely transmitted across generations through parental and peer influence, a mechanism of long-term attitude persistence identified in the literature on historical legacies (e.g., Acharya et al., 2016; Lupu and Peisakhin, 2017; Voigtlander and Voth, 2012). Hence, the success (or lack of success) of ancestors could trickle down and affect how contemporary descendants perceive the role of meritocracy.

[10] Their influence is so important that some anecdotes describing their hard work even became part of the Chinese language, such as *duanji huazhou* (断齑画粥).

Moreover, imperial China had a systematic household registration system known as the *baojia* system (Dutton, 1988). The primary purposes of the dynastic household register were state tax collection, corvée extraction, and conscription into the army. Under this system, geographical mobility was tightly controlled, and large-scale population migration was rare unless driven by famine, war, or government policies. Even after the transition to the PRC era, China retained the household registration system, known as the *huji* system, with only some relaxations introduced in 1998 to break the original static population structure (Ge, 2014). The relative continuity of Chinese people living on their ancestors' land makes the intergenerational transmission of shared norms substantially easier.

In summary, the preceding sections argue that the meritocratic culture can empower women by fostering their belief in equality with men and encouraging them to strive for change through their efforts. Additionally, the historical meritocratic cultural norms and institutions may have persistent effects on contemporary beliefs. Considering the influential role model effect of *juren* and *jinshi*, the proportion of individuals succeeding in the competitive civil exams in imperial China can influence their contemporary descendants' meritocratic beliefs through intergenerational socialization. Therefore, my primary hypothesis is that ***the success of ancestors in the imperial keju exams should enhance contemporary women's political participation compared to men***.

4.4 Village Elections in China

As an empirical case-study, this paper examines participation in Chinese village elections, which lead to the formation of village committees responsible for managing local affairs in rural China. While communist regimes have been associated with non-competitive elections, the 1980s witnessed the emergence of reform plans aimed at promoting rural residents' self-governance through grassroots elections after the collapse of the former collective commune system (Almen, 2003). According to Article 111 of the 1982 Constitution, village committees are considered grassroots mass self-governing organizations, with their director, deputy director, and members elected by residents. The 1987 Provisional Organic Law of the Village Committees provides further details about

the election process.[11] For instance, Article 15 stipulates that candidates must be nominated directly by registered voters, and the number of candidates should exceed the number of available positions. The elections should utilize secret ballots and include public counting of ballots. These regulations ensure a minimum of freedom of choice, competitiveness of elections, secrecy of votes, and fairness of results.

These significant changes have attracted the attention of both Chinese and international scholars and resulted in a rich literature on China's local electoral politics (He, 2007; Manion, 2000; O'Brien & Han, 2009; Shi, 1999a; 1999b). The nature of village elections has been debated, with some scholars questioning the meaningfulness of such elections and suggesting that they are instrumentalized by the authoritarian state to legitimize its rule (Diamond & Myers, 2000; Zhong & Chen, 2002). On the other hand, there are also researchers who see some democratic value in the organization of these semi-competitive grassroots elections and view them as significant and sincere initiatives that merit serious consideration (Carter Center, 1998; He, 2012; O'Brien & Han, 2009).

Undeniably, village elections in China face several limitations, including the presence of a powerful government party, the lack of independent advocacy groups, and weak mass media (Jennings, 1998). Practical issues, such as electoral corruption, clan conflicts, and domination by authoritarian figures, have also weakened the quality and legitimacy of these elections (He, 2007). Nonetheless, these direct elections provide a voice to around 500 million Chinese citizens in local affairs that directly impact their daily lives through democratic means. Empirical research has furthermore shown that the progress of village elections effectively reduces rent-seeking by local leaders (Brandt & Turner, 2003), removes incapable or corrupt officials (Shi, 1999b), enhances the accountability of village committees (Wang & Yang, 2010), and promotes the impartiality of local policy implementation (Kennedy et al., 2004). In addition, the electoral procedures serve an important educative purpose for democracy by familiarizing citizens with democratic practices (He, 2007), increasing their political efficacy (Li, 2003), and fostering a sense of political participation (O'Brien & Han, 2009).

[11] The provisional law became Organic Law of the Village Committees in 1998.

Therefore, even with their limitations, Chinese village elections are regarded as significant institutions imbued with democratic features that enable regular citizens to impact local matters. It is within this framework that this paper explores the gender gaps in political participation.

4.5 Data

To test my hypothesis, I utilize data from two sources. The individual-level data on electoral participation in village elections are obtained from the China General Social Survey (CGSS). The CGSS is an ongoing cross-sectional survey project initiated in 2003 by the National Survey Research Center at Renmin University. It aims to study changes in fundamental social and economic attitudes and behaviors among the Chinese population through nationally representative samples. Since 2010, the CGSS has included a question that captures respondents' past voting behavior. Rural respondents are asked whether they participated in the last village committee election.[12] This variable is dichotomously coded as 1 for those who voted and 0 for those who did not.

To evaluate the performance of ancestors in *keju* exams, I utilize historical *keju* results data during the Ming-Qing period. The data, collected by Chen and colleagues (2020) from various Chinese historical archives, provide the historical density of *jinshi* and *juren* holders for today's Chinese prefectures. These density variables are constructed by dividing the total number of *jinshi* and *juren* holders of each prefecture in Ming-Qing by the prefecture's mean historical population during the same period. The dataset is adjusted accordingly to account for changes in prefectural names and boundaries over history. The

[12] Survey respondents from urban areas are asked their turnout at neighborhood committee elections. Neighborhood committees are the equivalent of village committees in urban areas. The 1982 Constitution grants the same status to neighborhood committees as their rural counterparts. However, urban neighborhood elections which produce neighborhood committees are far less advanced than village elections in terms of democratic procedures (Almen 2003). In addition, neighborhood committees themselves have little influence on the daily life of urban residents, compared to village committees' importance for rural residents (Almen 2003). I report some descriptive statistics comparing the two kinds of elections in Figure C1.1. As can be seen, voter turnout is about 25 percentage points lower in urban neighborhoods than in rural villages. Furthermore, urban residents are also considerably less likely to be informed about the candidates. Hence, I only report results with the more meaningful rural sample in the main analysis. Results with the urban sample can be found in Table C4.1 of the Appendix. The results are very similar using either sample.

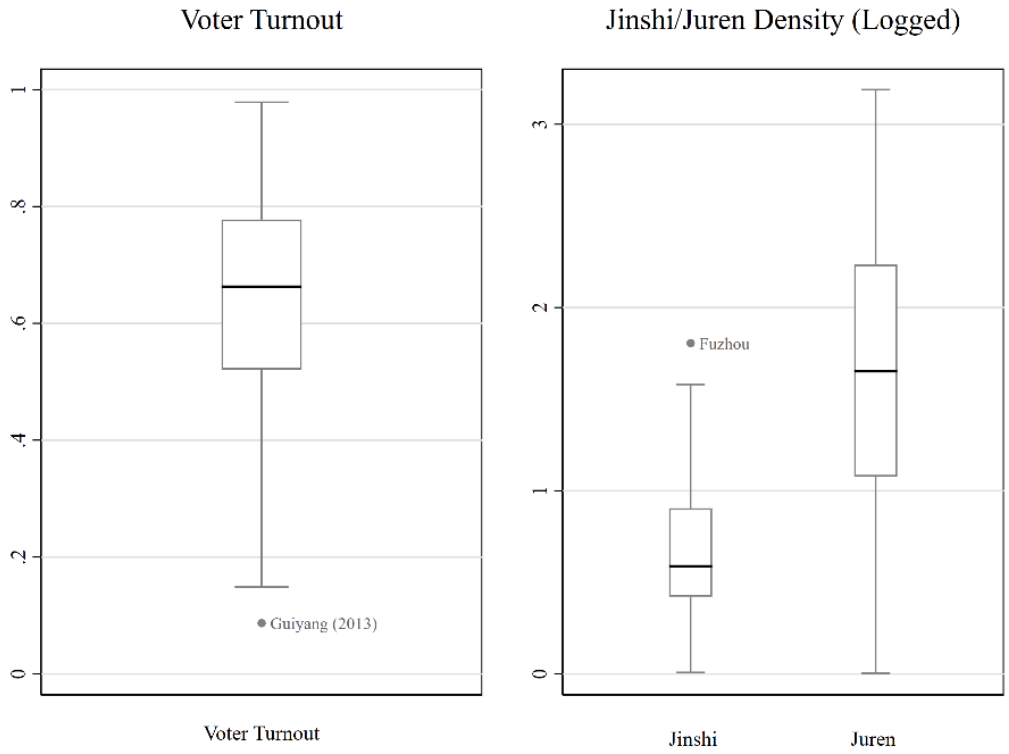
geographic distribution of Ming-Qing *jinshi* and *juren* density in contemporary Chinese administrative maps is provided in the Appendix (see Figure C2.1).

The success rates in provincial and national *keju* exams during the Ming-Qing period were extremely small. Across the 277 prefectures with available data, the mean density of *juren* holders is 5.58 per 10,000 inhabitants, and the mean density of *jinshi* holders is 1.12 per 10,000 inhabitants. There is a strong positive correlation between the per capita number of *juren* holders and *jinshi* holders ($r = 0.747$). Notably, the distribution of *jinshi* and *juren* density varies significantly among Chinese prefectures, with the prosperous Southeast coast and middle-lower reaches of the Yangtze regions having disproportionately higher *keju* successors per capita. To address the skewness of the variables and retain all observations, I follow Chen et al. (2020) by adding one to the *jinshi* (and *juren*) density and then taking the natural log, represented as ln (1 + density).

While both *jinshi* and *juren* are essential titles awarded under the *keju* system, *jinshi*, obtained at the national exam, holds the highest prestige and impact. Hence, I use historical *jinshi* density as the principal indicator, with *juren* density serving as a robustness check.

The *keju* data is merged with the CGSS rural data. The final dataset includes a total of 16,649 respondents from 64 prefectures interviewed at five cross-sectional points (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2015). Figure 4.1 describes the prefecture-level distribution of voter turnout and *jinshi*/*juren* density (logged). Summary statistics of all variables used in this study are reported in Table C3.1 of the Appendix.

Figure 4.1. Description of Village Election Turnout and *Jinshi*/*Juren* Density



Note. Box plots of the dependent variable and the moderating variables at the prefectural level.

4.6 Methods

To analyze the hierarchically nested data, multilevel linear probability models with random intercepts are used. The models consist of three levels: individual respondents (level one), prefecture-year pairs (level two), and prefectures (highest level). Model 1, the baseline, includes only gender as a covariate to examine the size of the gender gap in Chinese village elections. Model 2 adds individual-level variables that capture respondents' socioeconomic resources, which are important controls because limited access to resources is a leading explanation for gender gaps in political participation (Brady et al., 1995; Burns et al., 1997; Schlozman et al., 1994). Education, employment status, and marital status are expected to mediate part of the gender gap. Model 3 examines the moderating effect of ancestors' success in the *keju* system, captured by logged *jinshi* density in Ming-Qing. Random slopes

are specified for gender in Model 3, as the gender effect is theorized to vary between prefectures based on the strength of meritocratic culture.

To address potential confounding factors and evaluate the causal impact of meritocratic legacies on contemporary behavior, it is crucial to account for the non-random distribution of *keju* successors in history. Among other factors, historical prosperity plays a significant role. Historically prosperous prefectures were more likely to produce *keju* successors, as people in such areas had the resources and time to prepare for the competitive exams. Additionally, the historical economic conditions might have had a lasting impact on modern socioeconomic development, which, in turn, could influence contemporary gender equality dynamics (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). To control for historical economic conditions, I follow Chen et al. (2020) and use population density and urbanization rate as proxies for prefectural-level prosperity during Ming-Qing China. These indicators are considered reasonable approximations for local economic prosperity in the absence of reliable GDP data, since prior to the Industrial Revolution when productivity was low, only prosperous areas were able to support dense urban populations (Kung & Ma, 2014). Chen et al. (2020) calculated the average population density between 1393 and 1910 and the average urbanization rate between 1393 and 1920 based on Cao Shuji's work.

Geographic openness is also relevant to consider. The distribution of *jinshi* and *juren* (see Figure C2.1 in the Appendix) shows a concentration in coastal areas and major river basins, where communication with the outside world was easier than in inland regions. This becomes important when examining China's encounter with the Western world in the late 19th century. Coastal and river cities were among the first to be exposed to Western trade, technologies, and ideas. If gender equality norms were influenced by this Western contact, the impact of *keju* on the contemporary gender gap might be spurious. Therefore, I include a control for a prefecture's distance to the nearest coast and major navigable rivers to account for geographic accessibility factors.

Finally, regional heterogeneity also needs to be taken into account. Some regions were historically more likely to produce *keju* successors than others. In the Ming-Qing period, the common practice was to set regional quotas for the provincial and national exams in order to protect scholars from less developed regions (Li, 2008; Tian, 2017). For instance,

in 1427, Ming China started to recruit *jinshi* by region: North China had 35%, Central China had 10%, and South China had 55% of the total *jinshi* quota. The Qing rulers inherited the Ming's regional policy and refined the system by directly apportioning quotas to provinces. To account for regional differences in *keju* quotas and other unobserved heterogeneity related to geographic regions, I include province dummies of the Qing Dynasty as of the year 1820.

4.7 Results

Table 4.1 presents the main results of the analyses. Model 1 shows a significant gender gap in village electoral participation, with women being 7.1 percentage points less likely to have voted in the last village election compared to men. This gender gap is considerable, surpassing not only what is observed in most industrialized Western societies but also in many developing countries. For instance, the gender gap in voter turnout is estimated to be 3.4 percentage points in 20 African countries based on data from the Afrobarometer Survey (Isaksson et al., 2014).

Model 2 shows that part of the gender gap in voter turnout is a result of gender inequalities in socioeconomic resources and civic skills. Once these individual characteristics are taken into account, the gender gap is considerably reduced to 2.1 percentage points. Still, there is a portion of the gap that remains unexplained.

The results from Model 3 support the primary hypothesis, suggesting that ancestors' superior performance in *keju* exams is associated with a smaller gender gap in village election turnout. Controlling for relevant individual traits, historical, and geographic factors of prefectures, the analysis shows that logged *jinshi* density significantly conditions the effect of gender on turnout. Specifically, for every 10,000 people, a doubling (100% increase) in the number of *jinshi* holders is associated with a 5.4% increase in the marginal effect of gender.

Table 4.1. Explaining the Gender Gap in Village Election Turnout

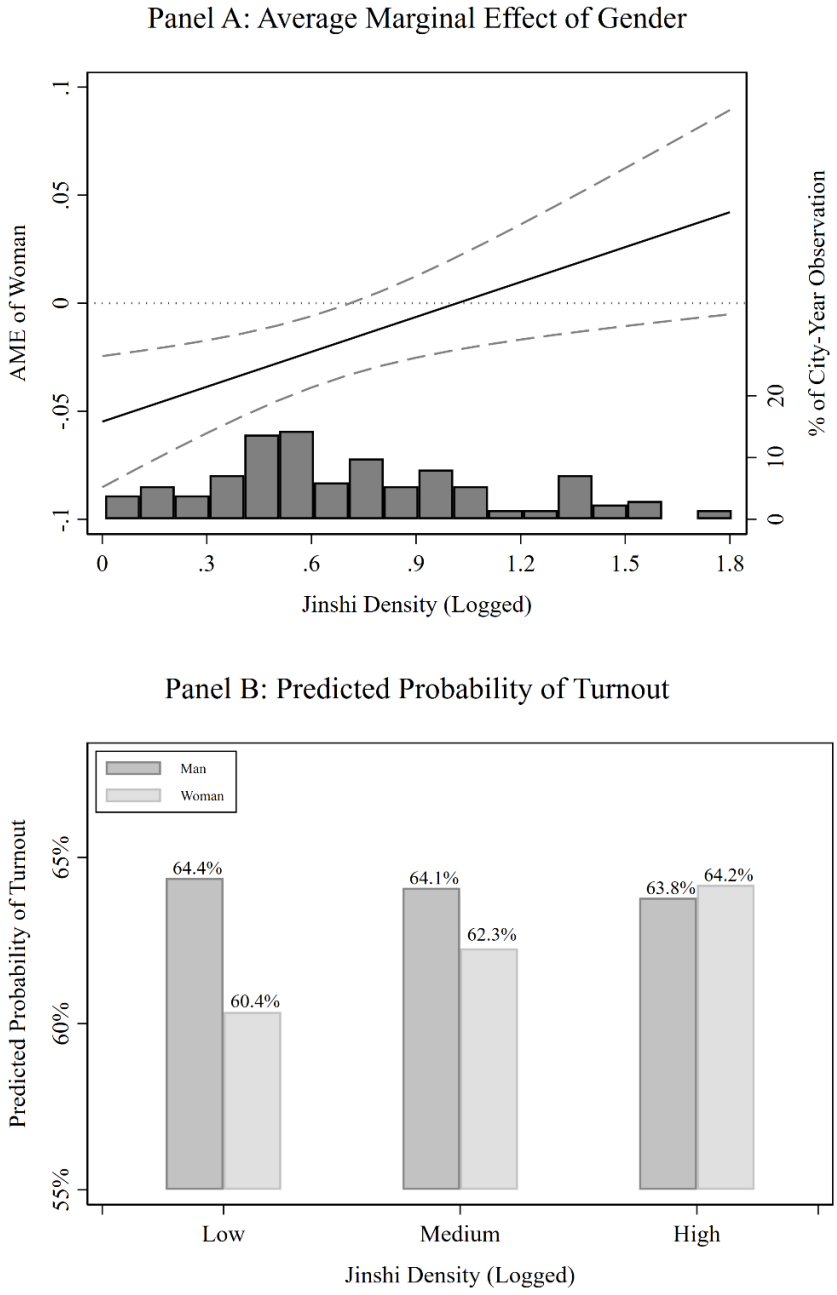
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Woman	-0.071***	-0.021**	-0.055***	-0.054**	-0.408
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.015)	(0.018)	(0.284)
Age		0.006***	0.006***	0.006***	0.006***
		(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
Education (Ref.: No Schooling)					
Primary school		0.085***	0.082***	0.082***	0.081***
		(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)	(0.010)
Middle school		0.121***	0.118***	0.119***	0.118***
		(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)	(0.011)
University		-0.012	-0.016	-0.015	-0.020
		(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)
Married		0.100***	0.100***	0.100***	0.099***
		(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.009)
Employed		0.098***	0.099***	0.098***	0.099***
		(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
Jinshi density (log)			-0.007		-0.013
			(0.049)		(0.051)
Woman × Jinshi density (log)			0.054**		0.066*
			(0.020)		(0.029)
Juren density (log)				-0.002	
				(0.026)	
Woman × Juren density (log)				0.022*	
				(0.010)	
M-Q urbanization rates			0.486	0.490	0.351
			(0.971)	(0.970)	(1.012)
Woman × M-Q urbanization rates (log)					0.285
					(0.562)
M-Q population density (log)			-0.027	-0.026	-0.034
			(0.034)	(0.033)	(0.036)
Woman × M-Q population density (log)					0.015
					(0.021)
Distance river (log)			0.011	0.011	0.011
			(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.025)
Woman × Distance river (log)					-0.001
					(0.013)
Distance coast (log)			-0.045	-0.043	-0.059
			(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.039)
Woman × Distance coast (log)					0.030
					(0.022)
1820 province dummies	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Woman × 1820 province dummies	No	No	No	No	Yes
σ^2 Prefecture	0.025	0.025	0.009	0.009	0.009
σ^2 Prefecture-year	0.006	0.006	0.005	0.005	0.006
σ^2 Female			0.003	0.004	0.002
N Prefecture	64	64	64	64	64
N Prefecture-year	284	284	284	284	284
N Individual	16649	16649	16649	16649	16649

Note. Coefficients of multilevel linear models, random slopes specified for woman in Models 3, 4, and 5. Standard errors in parentheses. Data from CGSS 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2015, rural sample.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure 4.2 provides a visualization of the interaction effect. Panel A in Figure 4.2 plots the average marginal effect of being a woman (using the observed values of the other variables) conditional on the prefecture's historical *jinshi* density in Ming-Qing. The moderation effect aligns with expectations: as the historical *jinshi* density increases, the gender gap in village election turnout gradually diminishes. There are even indications (though insignificant) of a reversed gap, with women participating more than men, in prefectures that produced the highest number of *jinshi* holders per capita. For prefectures with logged *jinshi* density one standard deviation below the mean (at 0.27), the estimated marginal effect of gender is -0.040, implying that, all else equal, a woman is 4.0 percentage points less likely to vote than her male counterpart. However, for prefectures with logged *jinshi* density one standard deviation above the mean (at 1.09), the estimated marginal effect of gender becomes 0.004, indicating a negligible (positive) gender gap in voter turnout. These results strongly support the assertion that the historical success of ancestors in *keju* exams is linked to a reduction in the gender gap in Chinese village election participation.

Furthermore, to gain deeper insights into the changing gender gap across various *jinshi* density levels, I present the predicted probabilities of turnout for men and women in Panel B of Figure 4.2. Panel B shows that the diminishing gender gap with increasing *jinshi* density is primarily driven by a more rapid increase in women's probability of participation. Using the same criterion of one standard deviation above/below the mean for high/low *jinshi* density, in prefectures with low *jinshi* density, the predicted probability of a woman's participation is 60.4%, while for a man, it is 64.4%. In high *jinshi* density prefectures, women and men participate at similar rates, with probabilities of 64.2% and 63.8%, respectively. These results suggest that meritocratic legacies contribute to closing gender gaps mainly by empowering women to participate more actively and catch up with men.

Figure 4.2. Moderating Effect of *Jinshi* Density



Note. Estimates are based on Model 3 of Table 4.1.
Panel A reports the average marginal effect of being a woman on village election turnout by logged *jinshi* density. Dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Histogram summarizes the distribution of the moderating variable at the prefectural level.
Panel B reports predicted probability of election turnout for men and women separately under low, medium and high values of *jinshi* density (logged).
Data from CGSS 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2015, rural sample.

4.8 Robustness Checks

To ensure the robustness of the findings and address potential singularities in the *jinshi* measurement, I conduct a sensitivity analysis using *juren* density as an alternative indicator in Model 4. The results show similar patterns, with *juren* density significantly moderating the effect of gender on turnout in the hypothesized direction. The effect size of *juren* density is slightly smaller than that of *jinshi* density, which could be due to the greater cultural influences associated with *jinshi* as the highest degree attainable.

To test for alternative explanations, I extended Model 3 by adding interactions between gender and contextual factors (historical prosperity, geographic openness, and province dummies). The results in Model 5 demonstrate that *jinshi* density continues to significantly moderate the gender gap in turnout, while the other contextual indicators show no significant interaction with gender. This suggests that the moderating effect of *keju* results remains robust against alternative explanations. Historical prosperity, geographic openness, and province-related unobserved characteristics do not appear to confound the main findings.

To enhance the robustness of the results, I compute the best linear unbiased predictions (BLUPs) of the random slopes in Model 3 and depict the prefecture-year specific marginal effects for gender on electoral turnout in Figure C4.1 of the Appendix. The plot exhibits a consistent pattern with no apparent aberrant points, which indicates that the persistent effect of meritocratic legacies is not driven by any prefectural level outliers.

In addition, there may be concerns that the effect of *jinshi* density on gender inequality is driven by spatial autocorrelation (Kelly, 2019). In other words, the error terms among geographically adjacent prefectures might be more correlated than geographically distant prefectures. I am less concerned about this issue in this study since province dummies have already been controlled for. Nevertheless, to further confirm, I use *jinshi* density to predict the prefecture-level gender gap (as derived from Model 3) and calculate Moran's I statistic of the residuals. The results indicate no significant spatial autocorrelation in the residuals (Moran's I = 0.015, p = 0.274).

Furthermore, additional tests using multilevel logistic models are estimated and reported in the Appendix (Table C4.2). The results are substantively the same when linear regressions are replaced with binary logistic models, which further confirms the consistency of the results regardless of the regression approach.

4.9 Alternative perspectives

Despite efforts to rule out alternative interpretations, readers may still have different perspectives on the empirical results. I conduct two additional exercises to address these concerns. First, I examine whether women's higher electoral participation is due to social pressure rather than genuine empowerment. If women had voted in the village election because of the pressure to obey norms rather than real political empowerment, then they should have had less incentive to get to know the candidates. In contrast, Figure C5.1 in the Appendix shows that women have slightly higher self-declared knowledge about the candidates compared to men, indicating that women are equally well-informed and invested in the elections. These results contradict the passive female voter interpretation.

Second, to strengthen the argument for meritocratic cultural legacies leading to women's empowerment, I use *keju* results to predict gender role attitudes.[13] The analysis, employing the same multilevel strategies as the main study, shows that higher *jinshi* density is associated with less stereotypical gender role attitudes among women compared to men. This provides additional support for the empowerment account and suggests that women exposed to greater meritocratic influence tend to hold more egalitarian gender attitudes. Details of this analysis are provided in Table C5.1 and Figure C5.2 in the Appendix.

[13] The CGSS surveys conducted in 2010, 2012, 2013, and 2015 include four shared items measuring respondents' attitudes towards traditional gender roles. They are asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements: "Men should prioritize work, and women should prioritize family", "Men are naturally more competent than women", "A woman's priority should be marrying a good person rather than pursuing a good job", and "Women should be the first to be laid off during an economic crisis". The scale shows good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.66.

4.10 Discussion

Electoral participation allows citizens to express their preferences by electing representatives for legislative and executive positions. Gender disparities in participation raise concerns about women's representation and the legitimacy of elections. This study is the first to empirically examine the impact of Confucian tradition on gender gaps in electoral participation in East Asia. Using historical *jinshi*/*juren* density data at the prefecture level and individual-level voter turnout data, I find a significant negative correlation between geographic variation in *jinshi* (or *juren*) density during the Ming-Qing period and the gender gap in village election turnout in the 21st century. Moreover, the reduction in gender inequalities is likely to be driven by women empowerment. These findings contradict the common belief that Confucianism hinders women's political status and involvement, suggesting that some aspects of the Confucian tradition may motivate contemporary women to challenge the existing *status quo*.

This research has some limitations, particularly regarding causal identification. The use of historical data helps mitigate concerns of endogeneity when studying current political phenomena. Additionally, I incorporated control variables and explored alternative explanations. Nevertheless, there remains a theoretical risk of omitted variables bias, as it is not possible to account for all relevant factors related to prefectures' historical *keju* performance that might influence contemporary gender gaps in politics.

Another important limitation concerns the generalizability of the findings. The focus on Chinese village elections makes this study typical as China is the birthplace of Confucianism and the *keju* system, which endured for over 1300 years before being abolished in 1905. The Confucian meritocratic culture likely had significant influence on the Chinese people. However, China's unique historical and political context, including the radical communist revolution, may limit the applicability of these findings to other Confucian societies in East Asia, such as Japan, South Korea, or Taiwan. These societies have different institutional backgrounds for citizen participation, and democratic elections may not share the same incentives or functions as Chinese village elections. Therefore, caution should be exercised when extrapolating the results of this research to other contexts.

The progress of women's participation in politics in East Asia has not kept pace with the region's economic and social development. This research highlights a significant gender gap (7.1 percentage points) in voter turnout during Chinese village elections. Future studies could investigate the cultural origins of this disparity in other East Asian societies or through a comparative lens. While this study shows that Confucian meritocracy narrows the gender gap in turnout, there are likely other principles and teachings that may hinder women's involvement in politics. Exploring the impact of various cultural dimensions beyond meritocracy is essential to understanding gender inequalities in East Asian politics comprehensively. Insufficient attention has been given to gender gaps in political participation in non-Western contexts. Investigating East Asia, a region that houses over one-fifth of the world's population and has distinct cultural traditions, will undoubtedly enrich our understanding of global gender gaps in political behavior.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

I started the dissertation by referencing two classic political documents from vastly different cultures: The *Declaration of Independence* and the *Book of Rites*. The first document symbolizes the quintessential American ideal, where the inalienable rights such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness reign supreme. Citizens harbor inherent skepticism toward the government, viewing it as a protector of their rights, ready to alter or abolish it should these rights be jeopardized. In stark contrast, the Confucian ideal, as elucidated in the *Book of Rites*, envisions a society of a different nature. In the utopian vision of "Grand Unity", individuals share harmonious relationships, characterized by mutual trust and care within the community. The government is not met with suspicion, but is instead entrusted with confidence. This trust stems from perceptions that the government is dedicated to the public good, and officials are seen as the most virtuous and competent selected from within the people. The contrasting conceptions of what an ideal society should be in these two texts underscore the culture-bound nature of politics. This dissertation addressed the fact that mainstream studies of public opinion and political behavior seemingly ignore the role of culture. Specifically, I have examined two crucial facets of Confucian culture – collectivism and meritocracy – and presented evidence of their significance in understanding contemporary political attitudes and behaviors. Through this work, I have shown how diverse cultural values shape individuals' thoughts and actions in the political sphere.

This concluding chapter is composed of four sections. First, it will review the major empirical findings of Chapters 2, 3, and 4, and illustrate the relationship between Confucian collectivism and negativity biases in evaluations of political authority and generalized trust, as well as the relationship between Confucian meritocracy and gender gaps in electoral participation. Second, it will discuss the contributions and implications of this dissertation on both theoretical and practical levels. Third, it will reflect on the theoretical and methodological limitations of this dissertation. Finally, the chapter will conclude by proposing several avenues for future research.

5.1 Overview of main findings

Chapter 2 investigated in a global perspective the negativity bias in government evaluations and reported on the influential role of the individualism-collectivism dimension for understanding citizens' tendencies toward negativity. Leveraging data from the World Values Survey, I observed that societies with a strong collectivist orientation exhibit a smaller negativity bias when assessing the government's performance. Subsequently, utilizing individual-level measures from the Asian Barometer Survey, I revealed a parallel cultural moderation effect on the weighting of positive and negative considerations in the evaluation of governments. Higher levels of individualism are associated with a diminished prevalence of negativity biases in shaping citizens' satisfaction with the incumbent political authority.

In Chapter 3, the focus shifted to exploring the dynamics of generalized trust through a cultural perspective. Confirming findings from previous research, this chapter used an experimental design to establish that Chinese citizens' trust is more affected by negative than by positive information. Specifically, negative news portraying malicious intent in others has a significantly stronger influence on generalized trust compared to equivalent positive news. Notably, the individualism-collectivism values emerge as a pivotal element that is linked to the negativity bias in trust. This observation suggests that individuals who embrace collectivism may respond in a more balanced way to both positive and negative information, with this inclination strengthening as their collectivist mindset deepens.

Finally, Chapter 4 tackled electoral participation, with a focus on gender disparities in voter turnout. This chapter breaks new ground by empirically investigating the influence of Confucian tradition on gender gaps in electoral engagement in East Asia. By utilizing historical *keju* examination data at the prefecture level alongside individual-level voter turnout data, this research revealed a negative correlation between the geographical variation in *keju* success during the Ming-Qing period and the gender gap in village election turnout in the 21st century. Importantly, the reduction in gender inequalities appears to be attributed to women empowerment.

5.2 Contributions and Implications

This thesis contributes broadly to our comprehension of political behavior. It underscores the important role of culture in understanding how citizens think and act politically. Chapters 2 and 3 focused on the cultural relevance for a psychological process: negativity bias. Drawing from the cultural evolution theory, which asserts culture as a pivotal factor in modeling human evolution (Boyd & Richerson, 2005; Richerson et al., 2010), I posited that culture emerges as a viable explanation for the observed variations in modern humans' negativity biases. The distinctive social environments of individualist and collectivist societies may mold discrete psychological or physiological mechanisms, contributing to the diverse manifestations of negativity bias. Informed by my findings, I strongly advocate for the inclusion of culture into future theoretical frameworks that seek to unravel negativity biases within the realm of political psychology.

The culturally nuanced expressions of the negativity bias in political attitudes prompt pondering the ramifications of cultural diversity in political development. In Chapter 2, particular attention was given to investigating negativity biases in citizen-government relationships. These biases function as a crucial mechanism through which citizens hold the incumbent authority accountable for inadequate policies, establishing a framework wherein the government faces consequences for its missteps. Politicians receive some support for their accomplishments, but they are more vulnerable to criticism and a decline in popularity for their wrongdoings (Soroka, 2014). This mechanism aids in comprehending government alternation, particularly during challenging periods. The cultural divergences in negativity biases unveiled in this chapter imply different cultural patterns of citizen-government relationships.

In Western-style individualist societies, where negativity biases are more prevalent, citizens tend to be critical of the government – a phenomenon distinct from the experiences of citizens in collectivist East Asian cultures. This distinction presents both potential advantages and challenges.

On the positive side, heightened negativity biases can act as a catalyst for enhancing democratic institutions. Increased attention to the government's negative policy outcomes may exert pressure on the incumbent for improved performance. During instances of

unsatisfactory performance, critical citizens are more likely to avoid forming emotional ties to traditional political parties. This can help foster a more dynamic and issue-based electorate (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000). Moreover, a dissatisfied public may incentivize institutional reforms and encourage citizens to engage in direct political actions (Dalton, 2004). In other words, negativity biases in individualist societies hold the potential to propel citizen politics toward its democratic ideal.

Conversely, the prevalence of strong negativity biases raises the risk of the government facing undue blame during unfavorable situations. Empirical studies in public opinion reveal instances where citizens falsely attribute responsibility to the incumbent for events unrelated to government performance, leading to incumbent vote loss (Achen & Bartels, 2016; Healy et al., 2010; but see Fowler & Hall, 2018). This unnecessary cynicism has the potential to erode social cohesion, particularly during major crises or turbulence, where a more trusting citizen-authority relationship could contribute to better solutions. For instance, research on the COVID-19 pandemic suggests that collectivism was a crucial predictor of a society's performance in combating the virus. Citizens' trust in the government and experts, coupled with their willingness to comply with precautionary measures, likely played a role in containing the deadly virus (Liu, 2021; Lu et al., 2021; Maaravi et al., 2021; Rajkumar, 2021).

Chapter 3 examined the negativity bias in trust among citizens, or generalized trust – an indispensable component of social capital (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000). Generalized trust has been considered as a foundational element for numerous positive aspects of society (Nannestad, 2008). In the political arena, evidence suggests that trust is linked to improved government performance (Knack, 2002), lower levels of corruption (Uslaner, 2002), heightened political and civic engagement (Uslaner & Brown, 2005), as well as democratic transition and the health of democracy (Paxton, 2002). However, comparative research indicates that people generally exhibit a relatively low level of trust, influenced by a tendency to allocate greater attention and significance to negative rather than positive elements of social experiences (van Lange, 2015).

This chapter used China as a case study and demonstrated that Confucian collectivism exhibits a significant correlation with the reduction of negativity bias in generalized trust.

These findings suggest that Confucianism, as a traditional cultural tradition in East Asia, might play a role in the political modernization process of the region, given that a high level of generalized trust is deemed a crucial component of democratic political culture (Almond & Verba, 1963; Putnam, 2000). Furthermore, the study sheds light on the high level of trust observed in collectivist China. While prior research indicates that collectivism might directly foster trust (Westjohn et al., 2022; Zeffane, 2017), this study introduces an additional mechanism – collectivism may diminish individuals' inclination to distrust owing to negativity biases.

Chapter 4 dealt with another crucial issue in politics, namely gender equality, from a cultural perspective. While the gender gap in voter turnout has diminished in established Western democracies (Smets & van Ham, 2013), a persistent gender gap continues to exist in emerging democracies in Africa and Latin America (Isaksson et al., 2014; Morgan, 2015). The gender disparities in participation raise concerns regarding women's representation and the overall legitimacy of elections. This chapter proposes that the Confucian tradition of meritocracy contributes to a reduction of gender gaps in electoral participation in East Asia. Furthermore, the diminishing gender inequalities are likely driven by women's empowerment. These findings suggest that the meritocratic elements inherent in East Asian Confucianism can enhance women's political status and involvement.

The results challenge the prevailing cultural approach in gender studies, which posits that gender equality is an inevitable outcome as traditionalism gives way to self-expressive and post-materialist values (Inglehart and Norris, 2003). Instead, the findings demonstrate that traditionalism is not necessarily incompatible with modern values. A more nuanced perspective becomes crucial to understanding the consequences of culture.

In summary, the findings of this research contribute to ongoing discussions about the relationship between Confucianism and democracy. Scholars typically fall into one of three camps regarding the compatibility of Confucian values and liberal democracy, as extensively reviewed by Shin (2011). First, the conflict approach perceives Confucianism as a system of social and political ethics that emphasizes strong governments, group well-being, and hierarchical relations, which is fundamentally at odds with Western liberal

democratic values such as the division of power, individual freedom, and citizen rights (Huntington, 1996; Pye & Pye, 2009; Zakaria, 1994). Second, the compatible thesis contends that elements of Confucian doctrines can help East Asian societies developing sustainable democracy and extending it beyond Western standards (de Bary, 1983; Fukuyama, 1995; Nathan, 1990). For example, notions like the Mandate of Heaven in Confucianism emphasize people's consent as the foundation of government legitimacy (*Mencius, Book VII*). This is in line with the democratic conception of the government's accountability to the people. Third, the adaptive approach suggests that features of Confucianism and democracy can be redefined and integrated to improve institutions that are more suitable for historically and culturally Confucian societies (Ackerly, 2005; Bai, 2008). Some researchers such as Bell (2006) advocate for a hybrid parliamentary system tailored for East Asian countries. This proposed system combines Confucian and liberal ideals, designing a lower chamber elected by the people and an upper chamber selected through competitive examinations.

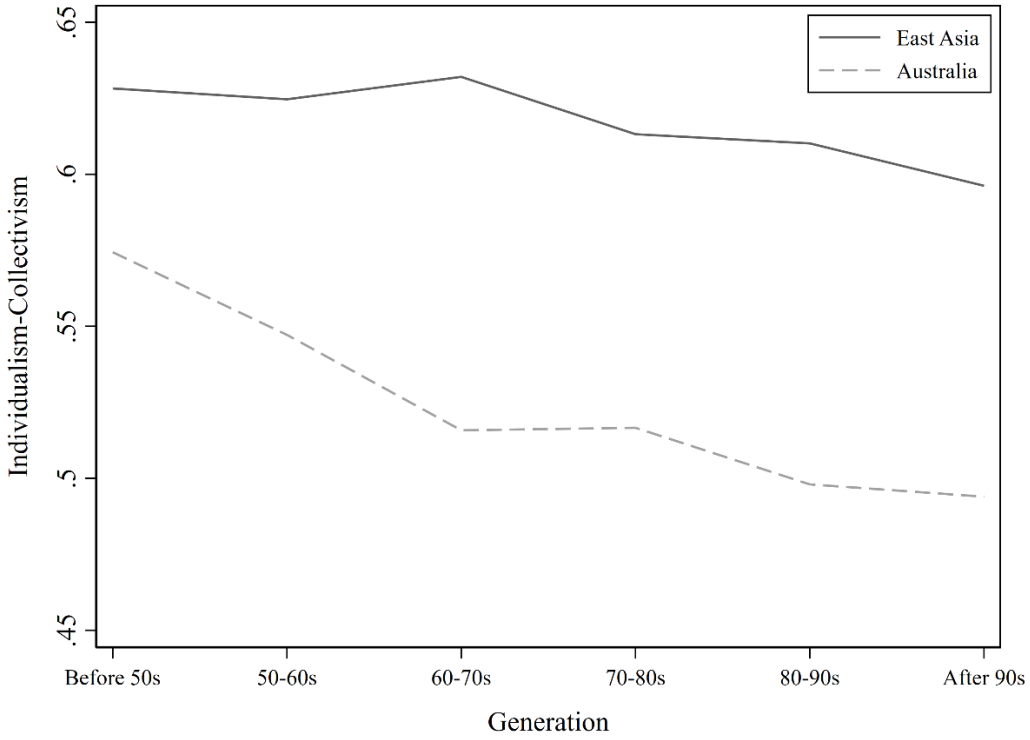
The empirical evidence presented in this dissertation unequivocally rejects the conflict approach and offers a more positive portrayal of a democratic perspective in Confucian East Asia. Notably, the findings suggest that certain Confucian values align with democratic principles. First, Confucian collectivism emerges as a mitigating factor in reducing negativity biases in citizens' assessments of the incumbent authority. This does not imply an absence of critical scrutiny among collectivist citizens; rather, they demonstrate reasonable responsiveness – compensating the government for positive policy outcomes as much as penalizing it for negative ones. Second, Confucian collectivism plays a role in diminishing negativity biases in citizens' formation of generalized trust. For collectivist citizens, negative information about other members of society does not exert a more significant impact on trust than positive information. This phenomenon suggests a more resilient generalized trust throughout the entire society, which can be advantageous for democratic development. Third, Confucian meritocracy contributes to a reduction in the gender gap in political participation. A meritocratic culture works to empower marginalized segments of society, including women, thereby contributing to gender equality in the political sphere.

5.3 Limitations

This dissertation suffers from certain limitations. First, the use of cross-sectional data restricts the ability to empirically model cultural change or stability in East Asia. This limitation is crucial for interpreting the implications of the research, particularly in the context of increasing globalization. The interconnection of cultures, heightened exposure to diverse values, and the ease with which individuals assimilate values from other cultures imply that cultural changes can occur at a more rapid pace than in previous times. Notably, evidence suggests a trend toward increasing individualism within the East Asian population, especially among younger generations (Heine, 2016). While this dissertation could not thoroughly investigate this issue, Figure 5.1 offers some evidence regarding the level of attachment to collectivist values among different generations in major Confucian societies compared to Australia, the sole Western cultural country surveyed in the Asian Barometer Survey's 4th wave. The individualism-collectivism scale spans from 0 to 1, with higher values signifying closer alignment with the collectivism pole. The graph illustrates a decline in collectivist values among younger East Asians.

However, it is important to question whether this trend signifies the demise of traditional cultural values in the region and renders them unimportant for the study of contemporary politics. The comparison between trends in East Asian societies and Australia reveals that, despite a diminishing attachment to traditional values among the younger generation in East Asia, the collective orientation in the region remains remarkably robust. Notably, the post-90s generation surpasses significantly the average level observed among Australian citizens. This difference is even larger than that between the youngest and the oldest generations in East Asian societies. Nisbett (2003) underscores that even in the most "Westernized" society in East Asia, Japan, which has had a capitalist economic system for over a century, traditional social values such as loyalty, team spirit, consultative decision-making, and cooperativeness persist in characterizing the economic system. These values are frequently credited for the "Japanese miracle" of economic development in the post-war period.

Figure 5.1. Level of Collectivism among Different Generations in EA and Australia



Note. The figure presents the evolution of individualist-collectivist values among different generations in seven Confucian societies – Hong Kong, Japan, Mainland China, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam – and a non-Confucian society which is Australia. Data come from the Asian Barometer Survey. The individualism-collectivism scale runs between 0 and 1. Higher values indicate a closer alignment with collectivism.

In a nutshell, my stance on the issue of cultural change in East Asia falls between Fukuyama's end-of-history convergence and Huntington's clash-of-civilization divergence. In contemporary Asian societies (excluding North Korea), people commonly embrace Western elements such as wearing jeans, T-shirts, Nike shoes, consuming Coca-Cola, listening to American music, and watching Hollywood movies. There is a possibility that the capitalist economic system and the liberal democratic system could become popular choices for many societies in the region in the future. However, the cultural evolution dynamic does not erase the underlying cultural differences between the East and the West, which are deeply ingrained in ecological, historical, and philosophical traditions (Nisbett, 2003; Talhelm et al., 2014). Despite the presence of global influences, thus, I

believe that it remains meaningful to investigate culturally-bound political attitudes and behaviors alongside the exploration of universal explanations.

The dissertation's second limitation pertains to its narrow focus on specific dimensions of Confucian culture. I considered only two elements of the multifaceted Confucian tradition: collectivism and meritocracy. While the empirical analyses suggest that these Confucian elements are compatible with the political modernization process in East Asia, it is crucial to acknowledge that Confucianism encompasses diverse aspects, and other dimensions of Confucianism are known to be inherently antidemocratic.

One example is the hierarchical orientation toward authority, a norm that regulates individuals' behavior based on their social status (Shi, 2014). Confucius and his followers contended that social disorder arises when individuals deviate from their assigned duties. In ancient Chinese language, the term "freedom" (*fanglang*) carries a negative connotation, meaning unconstraint or lack of discipline. Confucius, having lived during the tumultuous Spring and Autumn period (770-476 B.C.), identified individual ambition and unrestrained self-assertion as fundamental causes of the decline of dynasties (*libeng yuehuai*). Confucian scholars throughout East Asia's history have argued that hierarchy – a relationship characterized by difference and ranking – is not only natural but also desirable for a well-functioning society. In contrast to liberal norms grounded in a social contract that deems individuals free and equal, the Confucian ideal envisions a society where each actor has a defined role and is expected to adhere to specified responsibilities. For example, Confucianist norms outline five basic human relationships known as *wulun*, each governed by corresponding norms: "between father and son, there should be affection; between sovereign and minister, righteousness; between husband and wife, attention to their separate roles; between siblings, a proper order; and between friends, honor and trust" (*Mencius, Book V*).

The dissertation's empirical examination was limited to the dimensions of collectivism and meritocracy without looking into other aspects of Confucianism such as the hierarchical orientation toward authority. The absence of an empirical investigation into other dimensions raises the possibility that the complete influence of Confucian values on citizens' political attitudes and behaviors, as well as the democratic perspective at large,

may present a different and potentially contrasting picture. While the dissertation addresses certain Confucian elements supportive of democratic development, it is premature to assert the overall compatibility of traditional Confucianism with democratic principles without a comprehensive examination of the diverse aspects within the Confucian doctrines.

Third, the dissertation uncovered correlations between Confucian culture and the political attitudes and behaviors of contemporary East Asians. However, establishing causal relationships proves to be a complex endeavor. In Chapter 2, I explored the relationship between collectivism and negativity biases in government evaluations. However, the reliance on cross-sectional observational data from the World Values Survey (WVS) and Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) limits the capacity to infer causality. Chapter 3 investigated the effect of collectivism on negativity biases in generalized trust. Despite an experimental design, the anticipated impact of cultural priming does not materialize. To further probe the relationship between cultural values and negativity biases, a non-preregistered and exploratory observational analysis was conducted, which compromises the establishment of clear causal links between culture and negativity biases in generalized trust. Chapter 4 analyzed the connection between meritocracy and the gender gap in electoral participation using data from the China General Social Survey and historical archives on *keju* exams. However, unlike many legacy studies which assume that the distribution of the independent variable is (quasi-)random (see Homola et al., 2020 for example), Chapter 4 cannot argue for a random distribution of the prefecture's success in the *keju* system. Indeed, as indicated in Figure C2.1, the Southeast coast and middle-lower reaches of the Yangtze regions have produced disproportionally higher *keju* success per capita. Even though the models include controls at the aggregate level, such as historical prosperity, geographic openness, and province dummies, it cannot be guaranteed that all relevant factors influencing *keju* success and contemporary gender inequalities have been accounted for. Therefore, causality remains uncertain.

Finally, Chapters 1 and 2 of this dissertation studied the relationship between collectivism and negativity biases using survey-based self-reported items. While Likert scales are a common tool in political science for their accessibility, ease of administration, and convenience, they are susceptible to biases such as social desirability, acquiescence bias,

moderacy bias, and extreme/ambivalent response styles (Spencer-Rodgers & Peng, 2018). For instance, individuals attached to collectivist values might be more socially oriented, potentially giving socially desirable answers. The disappearance of the negativity bias among those adhering to Confucianist collectivism could be, in part, an artifact of this empirical approach. Survey conditions may strengthen the tendency to provide answers that align with social norms. In other words, we cannot know whether the reduced negativity bias among collectivist people is due to automatic instinct or conscious calculation when facing normative pressure.

5.4 Future research

The core focus of my dissertation centers on a fundamental inquiry: comprehending the pivotal role of culture in shaping political behavior. A notable deficiency in current research stems from its dependence on "WEIRD" samples (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic). This deficiency opens the door to the exception fallacy and limits our holistic understanding of human political behaviors. This dissertation is a first step to rectify this gap by integrating the cultural dimension into the examination of citizens' political behaviors. More research along these lines is necessary, however, and below I outline three avenues for future research.

First, this dissertation explored the role of collectivism, with a particular focus on understanding its relationship with negativity bias. To further probe the relevance of individualism-collectivism in political psychology, future research could extend this inquiry to other psychological biases in politics. One such bias is the native bias, characterized by negative sentiments toward immigrants within the local population (Choi et al., 2023). Scholars that seek to unravel the native bias draw on social identity theory (Bloom et al., 2015; Mangum et Block, 2018). According to this theory, individuals construct their identity based on their affiliation with a social group and may engage in symbolic conflict with other groups to preserve their privileged status in society (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). In the context of immigration, for example, citizens are prompted to think in terms of "us" versus "them" (Harell et al., 2012). However, most research in this field

has predominantly focused on developed countries, which creates a significant gap in non-Anglophone and non-Western European contexts (Dinesen & Hjorth, 2020). This gap is particularly concerning given that, since 2013, the number of international migrants choosing destinations in developing countries has surpassed those in developed countries (Ratha, 2016). The absence of studies in more diverse contexts obscures crucial perspectives for studying attitudes toward immigration, especially considering that most societies studied as migration destinations are primarily individualist from a cultural perspective.

The literature in cultural psychology suggests that collectivist values are associated with a stronger identity and loyalty to the group, as well as a clearer distinction between members of the in-group and individuals from the out-group (Triandis et al., 1988; Yamaguchi, 1994). Therefore, it is plausible that citizens who adhere to collectivist values experience more negative feelings toward immigrants compared to those who are individualist. Future research can utilize both measurement scales with observational data (Singelis, 1994) and experimental methods, as suggested by the situated cognition model (Oyserman & Lee, 2007), to investigate the effect of the individualism-collectivism construct on other psychological biases important to political science, such as the native bias.

Second, this dissertation examined two dimensions of Confucianism – collectivism and meritocracy. As discussed in the limitations section, a focus on these dimensions might result in an imbalanced understanding of the role traditional Confucian values play in East Asia's political development. Future research could empirically explore other facets, notably the hierarchical orientations within Confucianism. This aspect is believed to be related to East Asia's authoritarian political systems (Huntington, 1996).

For doing so, scholars could compare the effects of collectivism and hierarchism in Confucianism on generalized trust, a crucial component of social capital which contributes to democratic transition, consolidation, and health (Paxton, 2002). On the one hand, drawing on the social learning model (Simon, 1957), Confucian collectivist norms that boost trust practices among in-group members could have a spill-over effect when individuals deal with unknown others in the society. In this way, Confucian collectivism might increase generalized trust. On the other hand, considering research indicating that an

inegalitarian culture leads to less trust (Inglehart, 1999), the hierarchical orientation in Confucianism might reduce generalized trust.

Future research could use data from the Asian Barometer, where the traditionalism scale contains measures of both collectivist and hierarchical values, to investigate this research question. Alternatively, experimental priming using cultural cues is also feasible. Such research comparing the influence of different Confucian teachings can illuminate the multi-faceted nature of Confucianism and provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between Confucian culture and democracy.

Finally, to better understand the mechanism driving the reducing negativity bias among collectivist individuals, I invite new research employing psychophysiological measures to operationalize negativity bias.

For instance, an increasingly popular option among political psychologists is to make use of skin conductance measures (Fournier et al., 2020; Osmundsen et al., 2022; Soroka et al., 2019). Skin conductance, or electrodermal activity, captures sympathetic nervous system arousal by measuring microscopic changes in sweat production via electrodes on the fingertips (Figner & Murphy, 2011). Negativity bias, a tendency to pay more attention to negative than positive information, can be captured by higher skin conductance levels when subjects are exposed to negative stimuli compared to positive ones.

Future research can use laboratory experiments to explore the relationship between culture and negativity bias at a physiological level. If culture's influence is automatic and reaches the unconscious, we should observe that collectivist subjects have similar levels of skin conductance when exposed to positive and negative stimuli, while individualist subjects respond more intensely to negative stimuli than positive ones. However, if culture's influence is limited to the semantic level and individuals regulate their attitudes by conscious reasoning and rational calculation, it is likely that no difference will be found in the physiological arousal of subjects holding different cultural values.

* * *

In conclusion, this dissertation has made contributions to the understanding of the relationship between culture and citizen politics, particularly within the context of Confucian societies. Chapters 2 and 3 illuminate the cultural relevance of negativity bias and underscore the need to integrate culture into future theoretical frameworks in political psychology. Furthermore, Chapter 4 demonstrates that Confucian meritocracy can play a role in reducing gender gaps in electoral participation and speaks to the (post-)modernization approach which sees a potential conflict between traditionalism and postmodern values such as gender equality.

This dissertation investigated empirically the cultural influence on political attitudes and behaviors with a focus on East Asia. As we move beyond the limitations of "WEIRD" samples, this dissertation lays the groundwork for future research endeavors. The outlined future avenues invite scholars to probe deeper into diverse psychological biases, explore other dimensions of Confucianism, and employ innovative psychophysiological measures. By embracing these directions, researchers can build upon this foundation and foster a richer understanding of political behavior in global contexts, which could ultimately contribute to more inclusive and nuanced perspectives in the field.

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Appendix A for Chapter 2

Appendix A1: Question Wording of Key Variables

World Values Survey

- Dependent Variable

How satisfied are you with the way the people now in national office are handling the country's affairs? Would you say you are very satisfied, fairly satisfied, fairly dissatisfied or very dissatisfied? (1-4)

- Independent Variable

How satisfied are you with the financial situation of your household? If '1' means you are completely dissatisfied on this scale, and '10' means you are completely satisfied, where would you put your satisfaction with your household's financial situation? (1-10)

Asian Barometer Survey

- Dependent Variable

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the [name of president, etc. current ruling] government? (1-4)

- Independent Variables

How would you describe the change in the economic condition of our country over the last few years? (1-5)

How well do you think the government responds to what people want? (1-4)

How effective is the government in cracking down on corruption? (1-4)

Appendix A2: Summary Statistics of Variables

Table A2.1. Summary Statistics (WVS)

	N	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Government Satisfaction	56219	0.43	0.28	0.00	1.00
Age	56219	0.32	0.18	0.00	1.00
Female	56219	0.48	0.50	0.00	1.00
Married	56219	0.66	0.47	0.00	1.00
Employed	56219	0.56	0.50	0.00	1.00
Education	56219	2.13	0.76	1.00	3.00
Political Ideology	56219	0.53	0.26	0.00	1.00
Financial Situation (-)	56219	0.79	0.32	0.00	1.00
Financial Situation (+)	56219	0.27	0.34	0.00	1.00
GDP per Capita (Logged)	56219	2.48	0.87	0.43	3.89
Collectivism	56219	57.47	23.43	9.00	88.00
Electoral Democracy Index	56219	0.70	0.19	0.15	0.92

Source. World Values Survey, 1994-1998, 1999-2004.

Table A2.2. Summary Statistics (ABS)

	N	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Government Satisfaction	39633	0.53	0.29	0.00	1.00
Age	39633	0.30	0.17	0.00	1.00
Female	39633	0.49	0.50	0.00	1.00
Employed	39633	0.63	0.48	0.00	1.00
Education	39633	0.55	0.28	0.00	1.00
Party ID	39633	2.03	0.75	1.00	3.00
Allocentrism	39633	0.65	0.21	0.00	1.00
Economic Situation (-)	39633	0.79	0.32	0.00	1.00
Economy Situation (+)	39633	0.21	0.30	0.00	1.00
Responsiveness (-)	39633	0.76	0.29	0.00	1.00
Responsiveness (+)	39633	0.20	0.27	0.00	1.00
Anti-corruption (-)	39633	0.81	0.29	0.00	1.00
Anti-corruption (+)	39633	0.30	0.33	0.00	1.00

Source. Asian Barometer Survey, 2010-2012, 2014-2016, 2018-2021.

Appendix A3. Exploratory Factor Analysis of Allocentrism

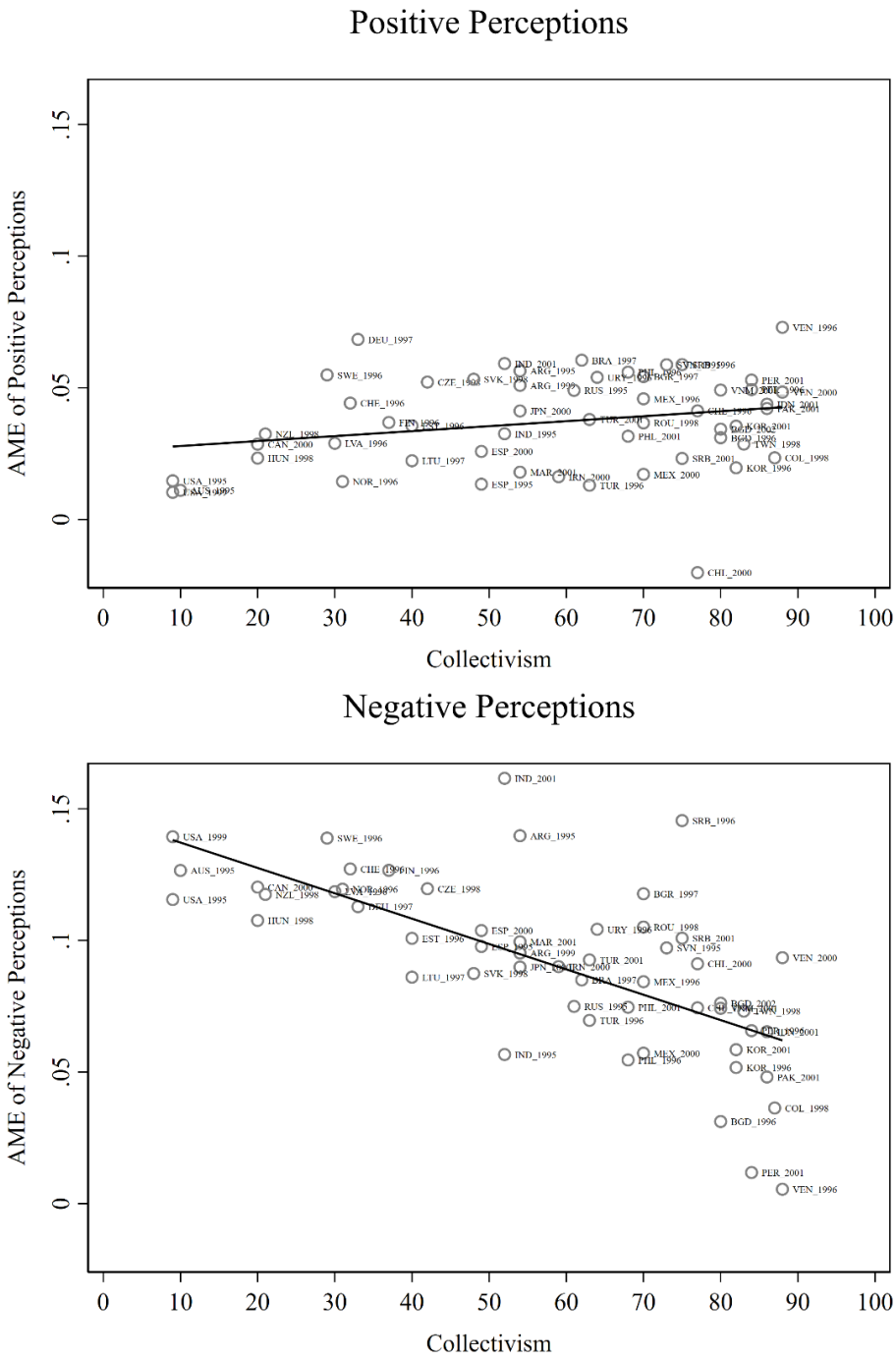
Table A3.1. Factor Loadings of Allocentrism (ABS)

	Factor loadings
1. For the sake of the family, the individual should put his personal interests second.	0.697
2. In a group, we should sacrifice our individual interest for the sake of the group's collective interest.	0.826
3. For the sake of national interest, individual interest could be sacrificed.	0.794
N = 39633, Cronbach's alpha = 0.664, % of total variance explained = 60.0%	

Note. Principal component factor analysis.
Data from Asian Barometer Survey, 2010-2012, 2014-2016, 2018-2021.

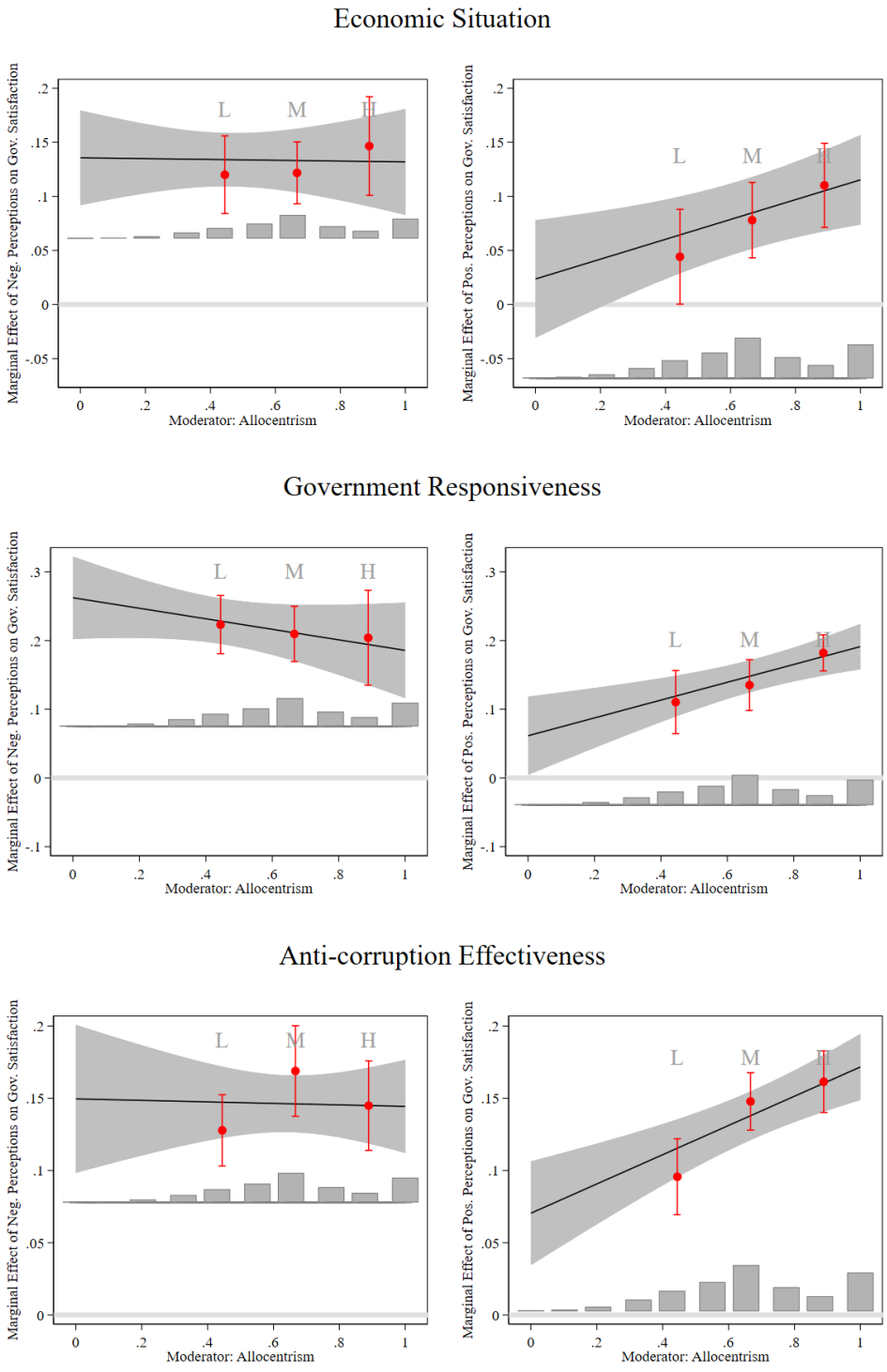
Appendix A4: Robustness Checks

Figure A4.1. Negativity Bias by Hofstede's Collectivism across 41 Countries (WVS)



Note. Point estimates on the Y axis are the predicted country-year specific slopes for positive and negative perceptions respectively. The calculation is based on Model 2 of Table 2.1.
Data from World Values Survey, 1994-1998, 1999-2004.

Figure A4.2. Interaction Effects Using the Binning Estimator (ABS)



Note. Estimates and 95 percent confidence intervals come from Models 2, 4, and 6 in Table 2.2.

Table A4.1. Jackknife Resampling Test (ABS)

	Neg. Int. (Eco)	Pos. Int. (Eco)	Neg. Int. (Resp.)	Pos. Int. (Resp.)	Neg. Int. (Corrupt)	Pos. Int. (Corrupt)
Australia	-0.002	0.094*	-0.070*	0.128**	0.001	0.110***
	(0.058)	(0.035)	(0.034)	(0.043)	(0.051)	(0.030)
Hong Kong	0.001	0.095**	-0.069	0.134**	-0.004	0.103***
	(0.054)	(0.032)	(0.042)	(0.044)	(0.055)	(0.026)
Indonesia	-0.006	0.089*	-0.077	0.133**	-0.008	0.101***
	(0.058)	(0.039)	(0.046)	(0.042)	(0.053)	(0.026)
India	-0.031	0.068*	-0.025	0.099	0.024	0.091**
	(0.039)	(0.029)	(0.018)	(0.068)	(0.036)	(0.029)
Japan	-0.008	0.107**	-0.068	0.138**	-0.006	0.102***
	(0.063)	(0.037)	(0.039)	(0.041)	(0.046)	(0.026)
Cambodia	0.004	0.084*	-0.072	0.129**	-0.016	0.104***
	(0.053)	(0.040)	(0.042)	(0.045)	(0.050)	(0.026)
South Korea	0.004	0.079**	-0.075	0.116**	-0.012	0.094**
	(0.062)	(0.028)	(0.037)	(0.035)	(0.061)	(0.027)
Myanmar	0.004	0.109*	-0.105*	0.151***	-0.014	0.101**
	(0.050)	(0.043)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.057)	(0.028)
Mongolia	0.009	0.076*	-0.081	0.138***	-0.007	0.111***
	(0.054)	(0.031)	(0.068)	(0.037)	(0.072)	(0.026)
Malaysia	-0.006	0.106***	-0.094*	0.147***	-0.008	0.119***
	(0.064)	(0.028)	(0.043)	(0.036)	(0.054)	(0.022)
Philippines	-0.002	0.096*	-0.077	0.106**	0.009	0.086***
	(0.065)	(0.036)	(0.039)	(0.033)	(0.055)	(0.022)
Singapore	-0.002	0.095**	-0.080*	0.129**	-0.000	0.103***
	(0.057)	(0.034)	(0.035)	(0.044)	(0.056)	(0.027)
Thailand	-0.019	0.103**	-0.088*	0.126*	-0.022	0.085**
	(0.048)	(0.029)	(0.037)	(0.049)	(0.053)	(0.025)
Taiwan	-0.002	0.077*	-0.078	0.134**	-0.004	0.105***
	(0.049)	(0.038)	(0.044)	(0.045)	(0.058)	(0.026)

Note. OLS coefficients. Robust standard errors clustered on country and wave in parentheses. The rows signify that the country in question has been excluded from the analysis. Models control for age, gender, level of education, employment status, and party identification. Country and wave fixed effects are added. Data from Asian Barometer Survey, 2010-2012, 2014-2016.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Appendix B for Chapter 3

Appendix B1: The IND-COL Value Scale

Table B1.1. Factor Loadings of the IND-COL Dimension

	Factor loadings
1. Individuals should sacrifice self-interest for the group.	0.777
2. Individual rewards are more important than group welfare. (Reversed)	0.694
3. Individuals should stick with the group even through difficulties.	0.728
4. Individual success is more important than group success. (Reversed)	0.702
5. Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer.	0.739
6. Individuals are free to pursue their goals without considering the welfare of the group. (Reversed)	0.659
N = 1973, Cronbach's alpha = 0.811, % of total variance explained = 51.5%	

Note. Exploratory factor analysis using the principal component method.

Appendix B2: Survey Questionnaire

Block A: Background Information

Q1. In what year were you born?

Q2. Do you identify as:

a. Male

b. Female

c. Other

Q3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

a. Primary and below

b. Junior high

c. Senior high

d. College

e. University undergraduate

f. Postgraduate

Block B: Cultural Priming

[Half of the sample is shown the following]

In the next few minutes, you should think about and answer the two following questions.

Q4a. To begin with, please think about what you have in common with your family and friends, and list three similarities you think are the most important.

Q5a. Now, think about a time when you sacrificed something for the good of benefiting your family, a group of friends, or teammates. In a few sentences, please describe briefly

the situation. For example, what did you sacrifice and how did it benefit the group?

[Half of the sample is shown the following]

In the next few minutes, you should think about and answer the two following questions.

Q4b. To begin with, please think about what makes you unique and different from your family and friends, and list three differences that you think are most important.

Q5b. Now, think about a time when you achieved a personal goal resulting from figuring something out independently on your own, or after having made a tremendous individual effort, even though your friends or family did not support you. In a few sentences, please describe briefly the situation. For example, what obstacles did you overcome and what efforts did you make to achieve the goal on your own?

Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

a. Individuals should sacrifice self-interest for the group.

b. Individual rewards are more important than group welfare.

c. Individuals should stick with the group even through difficulties.

d. Individual success is more important than group success.

e. Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer.

f. Individuals are free to pursue their goals without considering the welfare of the group.

Strongly disagree			Neutral			Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Block C: Information Stimili

[Third of the sample is shown the following]

Now you are going to read a short news story. After reading, your opinion about the story will be asked.

According to the New Beijing News, a journalist went undercover into two branches of a restaurant in Beijing, and found that there were various food safety problems in the back kitchen. Among them, the oil for frying did not get replaced for a long time.

During the repeated frying process of edible oil, hundreds or even thousands of very complex oxidizing substances can be produced, some of which are harmful to the human body. According to the "National Food Safety Standard for Vegetable Oils", if the polar component value of edible oil exceeds 27, it can no longer be used.

On June 24, the undercover journalist from the New Beijing News found that the oil used for frying had turned black, almost inky. Conducting several tests using the in-store oil measuring instrument, he noticed that the polar component values were above 30. Consequently, he asked the manager on duty to change the oil. The manager on duty tested the oil himself, but he still asked the reporter to simply filter the oil and continue to use it. It was not until June 29, after ten days of use, that the restaurant's management agreed to replace the oil.

Q8a. How do you evaluate the behavior of the restaurant manager?

Very negative			Neutral			Very positive
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q9a. What was the theme of the news report you just read?

a. Unemployment issue

b. Food safety issue

c. Environment protection issue

d. Energy security issue

[Third of the sample is shown the following]

Now you are going to read a short news story. After reading, your opinion about the story will be asked.

Recently, several media reported on Mr. Liu's sale of "honest fried dough sticks" in Baoding City. After hearing the news, many local residents and even out-of-towners on trips made a special detour to taste Mr. Liu fried dough sticks.

On the window of the shop, Mr. Liu posted a "solemn promise". He promises to new and old customers, "the oil used in our store is first-class soybean salad oil purchased in bulk from a vegetable oil company", and guarantees that "the oil for fritters is new every day, without a single drop of refrying oil".

"Today, I have to pour out 1.5 kilograms of oil, and 1.5 kilograms of oil cost 15 yuan. If it is for health, it is not expensive." Mr. Liu said that, "honest fried dough sticks" have no technical requirements, and anyone can do it, it depends on whether they want to do it.

In addition, on the blue wall of the shop, Mr. Liu also posted an illustration introducing the methods of identifying recycled oil and refrying oil with the naked eye, so that every customer could see it.

Mr. Liu said that his job is to sell fried dough sticks. For him, the 1.5 kilograms of oil dumped every day is the bottom line of keeping his conscience. The price is not high, but it is precious.

Q8b. How do you evaluate the behavior of Mr. Liu?

Very negative			Neutral			Very positive
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Q9b. What was the theme of the news report you just read?

a. Unemployement issue

b. Food safety issue

c. Environment protection issue

d. Energy security issue

[Third of the sample skips the news reading task, and is shown the following]

Q8c. You probably have a favorite color. But we are more interested in making sure you're doing the survey carefully, so please just select the color brown here.

a. Orange

b. Blue

c. Brown

d. Green

e. Red

f. Purple

Block E: Trust

Q10. Generally speaking, would you say that most people in the society can be trusted?

Most people cannot be trusted						Most people can be trusted
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Appendix B3: Balance Tests

Table B3.1. Balance Tests

A. Cultural Treatment

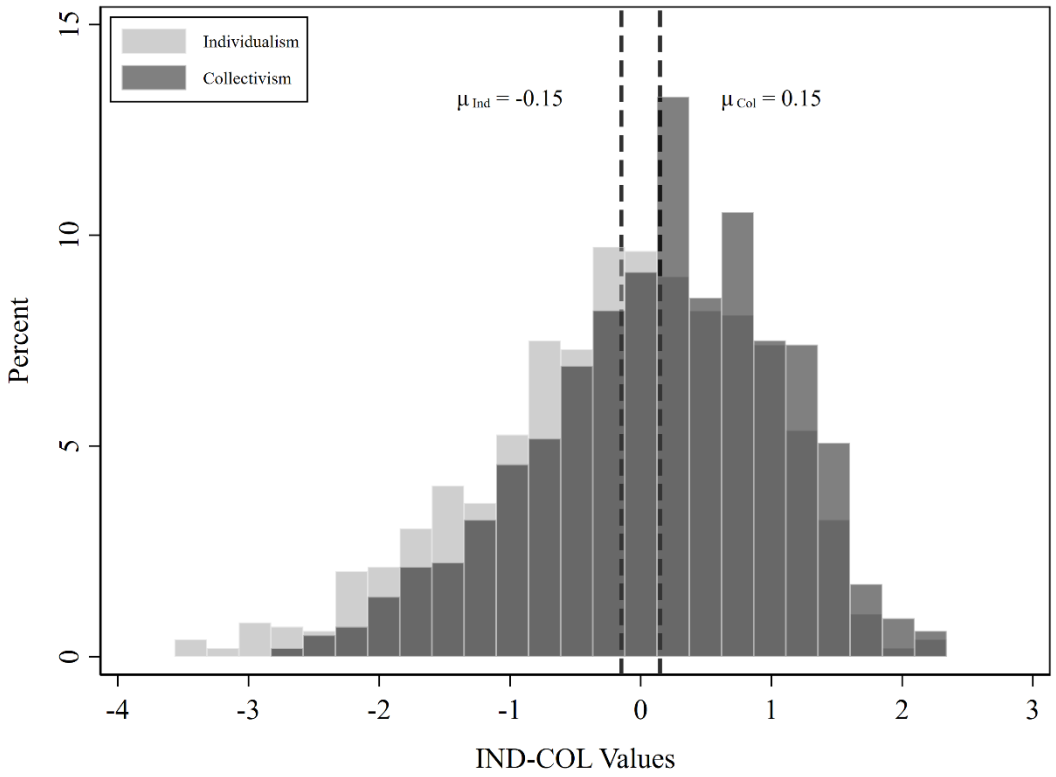
	Individualism (N = 987)	Collectivism (N = 986)	Difference	*p* value
Age	29.03	29.19	-0.16	0.67
University	0.82	0.82	0.00	0.90
Female	0.66	0.67	-0.01	0.61

B. Information Treatment

	Treatment (Positive + Negative) (N = 1317)	Control (N = 656)	Difference	*p* value
Age	29.09	29.16	-0.08	0.85
University	0.81	0.84	-0.03	0.12
Female	0.67	0.65	0.02	0.27

Appendix B4: Manipulation Checks

Figure B4.1. Manipulation Check for Cultural Priming

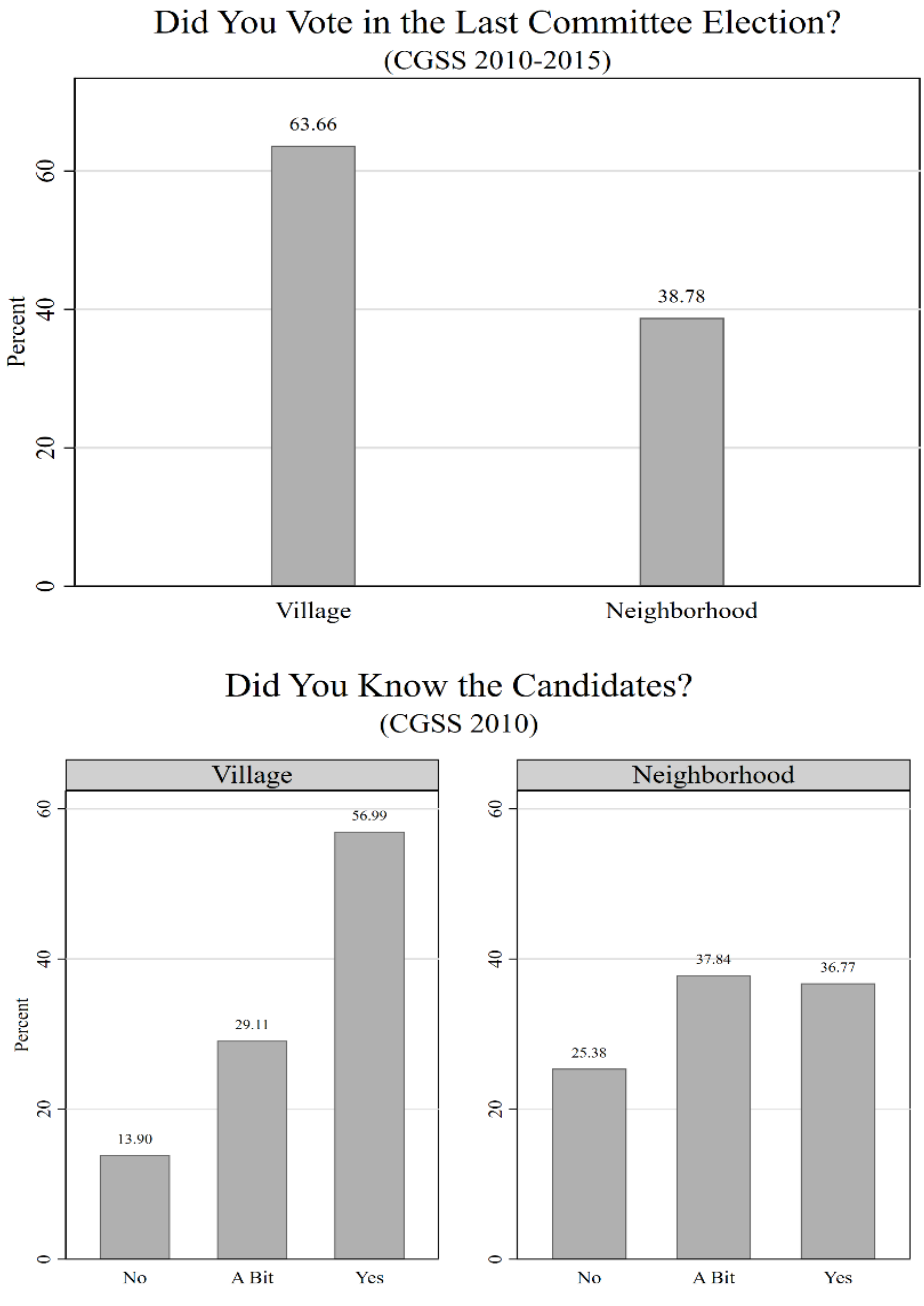


Note. Histograms summarize the distribution of respondents' IND-COL values under different cultural priming conditions (individualism vs collectivism).

Appendix C for Chapter 4

Appendix C1: Local Elections in China

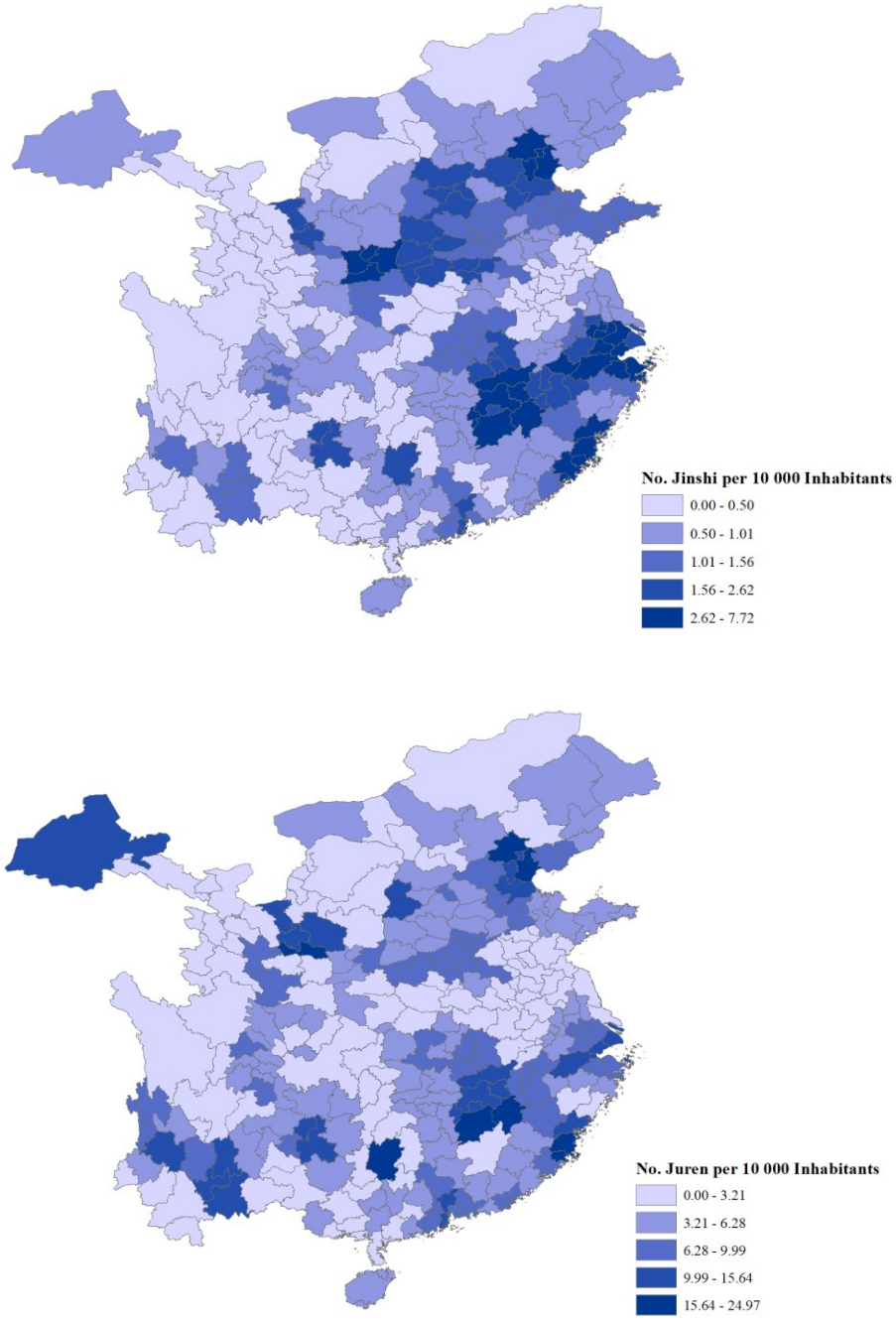
Figure C1.1. Comparison between Village and Neighborhood Elections



Note. Descriptive statistics comparing village elections and neighborhood elections.
Data from China General Social Survey 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2015, rural sample.

Appendix C2: Geographic Distribution of *Keju* Success

Figure C2.1. Geographic Distribution of *Jinshi* and *Juren* Density



Note. Graph shows regional distribution of *jinshi* and *juren* density in contemporary Chinese administrative map.
Data from Chen et al. (2020)

Appendix C3: Summary Statistics

Table C3.1. Summary Statistics

	N	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Turnout	16649	0.63	0.48	0.00	1.00
Woman	16649	0.50	0.50	0.00	1.00
Age	16649	50.96	15.59	16.00	95.00
Education	16649	2.19	0.82	1.00	4.00
Married	16649	0.82	0.38	0.00	1.00
Employed	16649	0.67	0.47	0.00	1.00
Jinshi density (logged)	16649	0.65	0.39	0.01	1.81
Juren density (logged)	16649	1.53	0.77	0.00	3.19
Distance river (logged)	16649	0.54	1.06	-3.06	2.19
Distance coast (logged)	16649	12.80	0.98	10.08	14.17
Ming-Qing urbanization rates	16649	0.05	0.03	0.00	0.12
Ming-Qing population density (logged)	16649	2.30	0.74	0.22	3.68

Data from CGSS 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2015, rural sample.

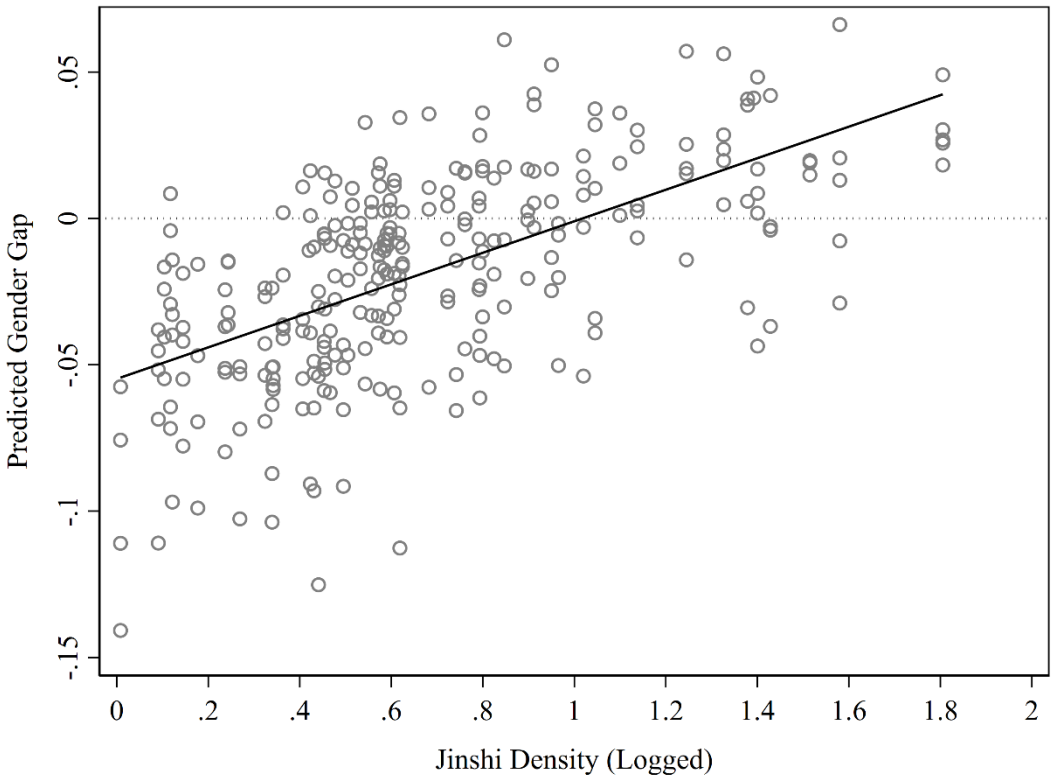
Appendix C4: Robustness Checks

Table C4.1. Main Results Using the Urban Sample

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Woman	-0.017**	0.001	-0.040**
	(0.006)	(0.006)	(0.014)
Age		0.007***	0.007***
		(0.000)	(0.000)
Education (Ref.: No Schooling)			
Primary school		0.110***	0.107***
		(0.013)	(0.013)
Middle school		0.129***	0.125***
		(0.012)	(0.012)
University		0.084***	0.080***
		(0.014)	(0.014)
Married		0.071***	0.072***
		(0.007)	(0.007)
Employed		0.031***	0.030***
		(0.007)	(0.007)
Jinshi density (logged)			-0.036
			(0.043)
Woman × Jinshi density (logged)			0.043**
			(0.016)
Ming-Qing urbanization rates			0.279
			(0.435)
Ming-Qing population density (logged)			0.102***
			(0.031)
Distance river (logged)			0.007
			(0.021)
Distance coast (logged)			-0.016
			(0.033)
1820 province dummies	No	No	Yes
σ^2 Prefecture	0.022	0.019	0.008
σ^2 Prefecture-year	0.005	0.005	0.004
σ^2 Female			0.002
N Prefecture	74	74	74
N Prefecture-year	332	332	332
N Individual	25458	25458	25458

Note. Coefficients of multilevel linear models, random slopes specified for woman in Model 3. Standard errors in parentheses.
Data from CGSS 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2015, rural sample.
* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Figure C4.1. Gender Gap by *Jinshi* Density across 64 Prefectures



Note. Point estimates on the Y axis are the predicted prefecture-year specific slopes for gender. The calculation is based on Model 3 of Table 4.1.
Data from CGSS 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2015.

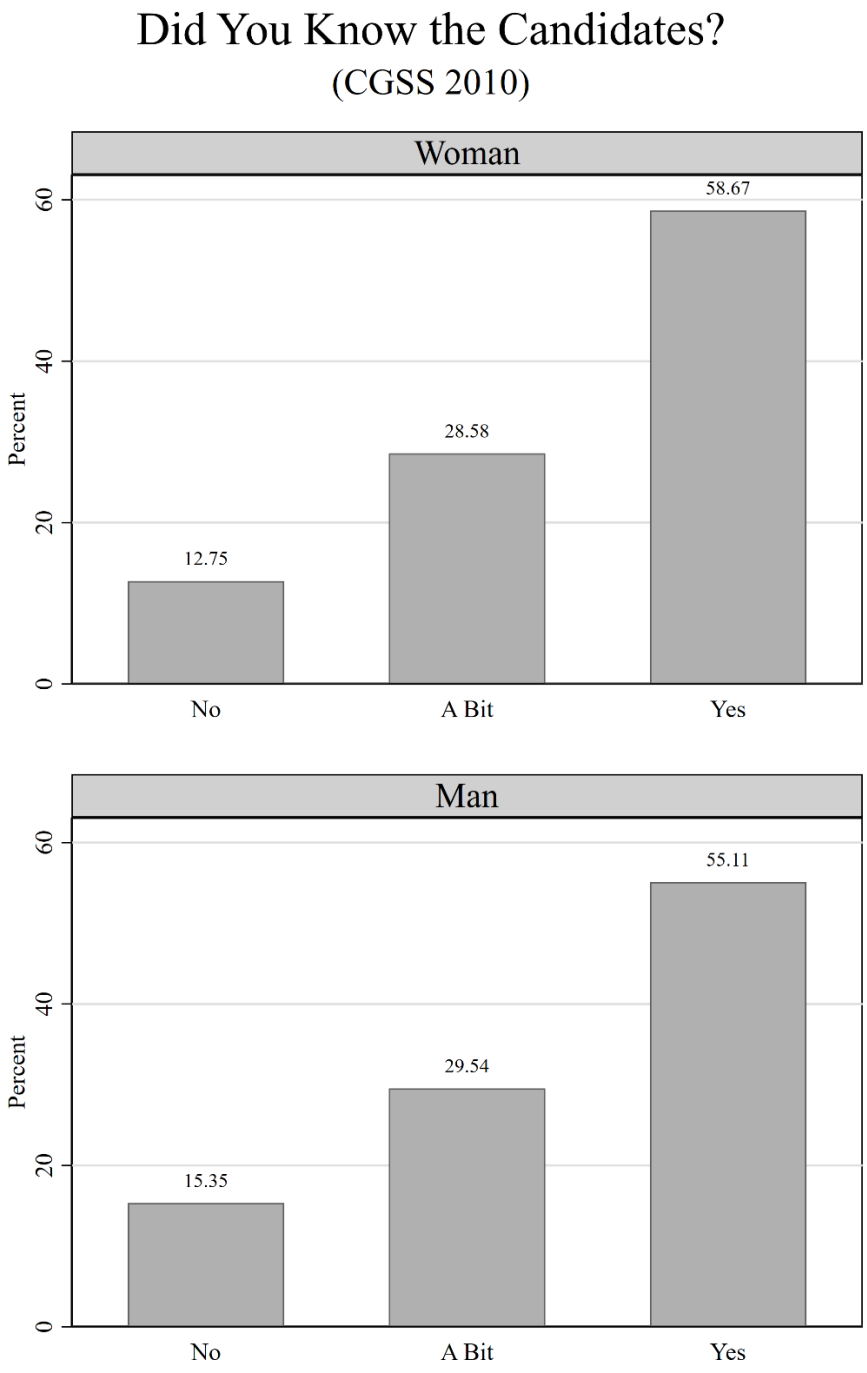
Table C4.2. Main Results with Multilevel Logistic Models

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Woman	-0.348***	-0.111**	-0.264***	-0.269**	-2.015
	(0.035)	(0.039)	(0.079)	(0.093)	(1.477)
Age		0.031***	0.031***	0.031***	0.031***
		(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Education (Ref.: No Schooling)					
Primary school		0.436***	0.425***	0.427***	0.420***
		(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.051)	(0.051)
Middle school		0.620***	0.609***	0.610***	0.605***
		(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.058)	(0.058)
University		-0.067	-0.077	-0.075	-0.093
		(0.137)	(0.138)	(0.138)	(0.138)
Married		0.505***	0.506***	0.507***	0.502***
		(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.048)
Employed		0.497***	0.502***	0.501***	0.503***
		(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.042)
Jinshi density (log)			-0.103		-0.145
			(0.251)		(0.259)
Woman × Jinshi density (log)			0.256*		0.343*
			(0.102)		(0.148)
Juren density (log)				-0.048	
				(0.130)	
Woman × Juren density (log)				0.111*	
				(0.054)	
M-Q urbanization rates			3.336	3.358	2.715
			(4.915)	(4.911)	(5.134)
Woman × M-Q urbanization rates					1.055
					(2.871)
M-Q population density (log)			-0.110	-0.107	-0.145
			(0.172)	(0.165)	(0.181)
Woman × M-Q population density (log)					0.078
					(0.108)
Distance river (log)			0.050	0.050	0.050
			(0.122)	(0.121)	(0.127)
Woman × Distance river (log)					-0.002
					(0.066)
Distance coast (log)			-0.234	-0.233	-0.300
			(0.191)	(0.190)	(0.200)
Woman × Distance coast (log)					0.147
					(0.115)
1820 province dummies	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Woman × 1820 province dummies	No	No	No	No	Yes
σ^2 Prefecture	0.558	0.624	0.221	0.220	0.224
σ^2 Prefecture-year	0.152	0.167	0.149	0.148	0.158
σ^2 Female			0.067	0.072	0.028
N Prefecture	64	64	64	64	64
N Prefecture-year	284	284	284	284	284
N Individual	16649	16649	16649	16649	16649

Note: coefficients of random intercept multilevel logistic models, random slope specified for woman in models 3, 4, and 5. Standard errors in parentheses. Data from CGSS 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2015, rural sample. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Appendix C5: Alternative Perspectives

Figure C5.1. Knowledge about the Candidates among Men and Women.



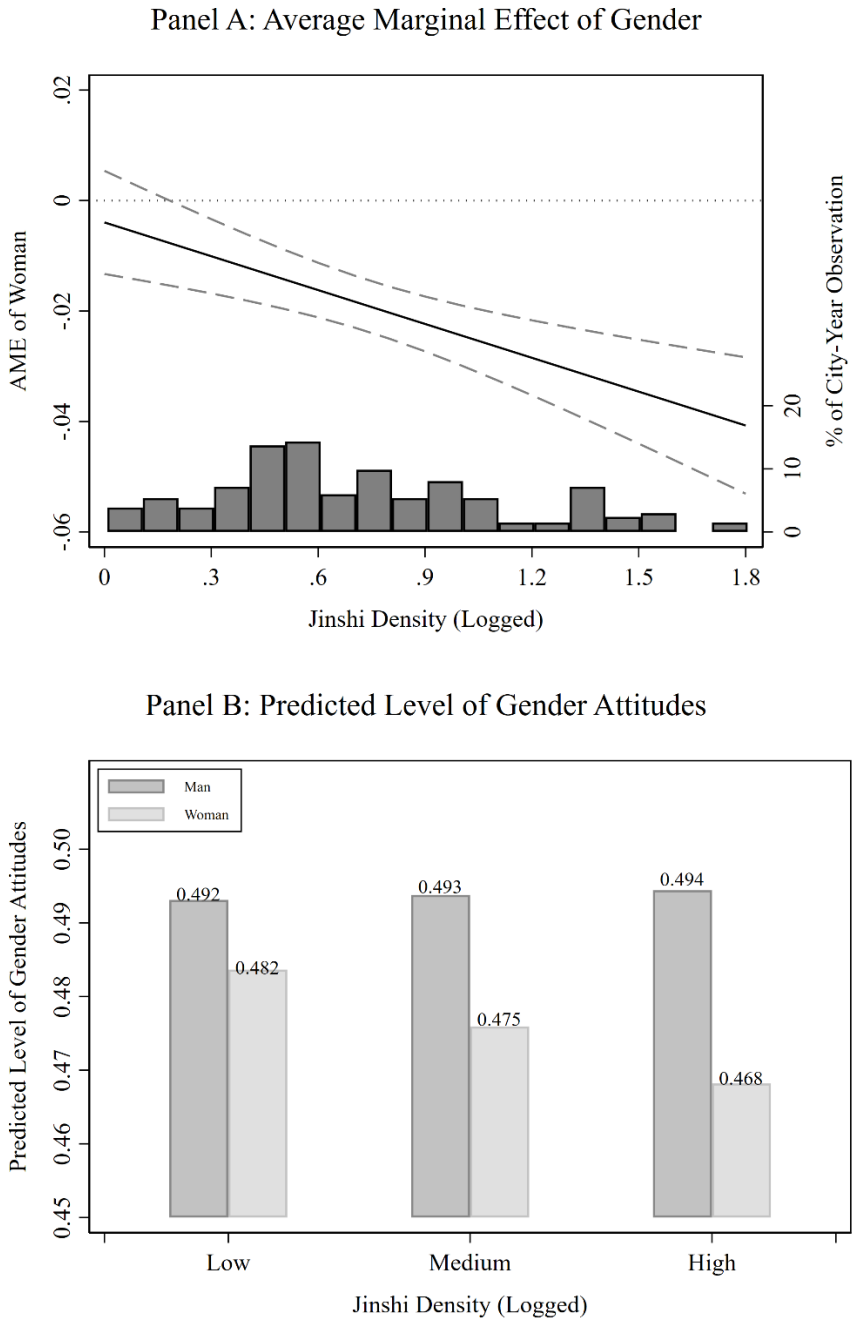
Note. Descriptive statistics comparing village elections and neighborhood elections. Data from China General Social Survey 2010, rural sample.

Table C5.1. Moderating Effect of *Jinshi* Density on Gender Role Attitudes

	Model 1
Woman	-0.004
	(0.005)
Age	0.000***
	(0.000)
Education (Ref.: No Schooling)	
Primary school	-0.034***
	(0.003)
Middle school	-0.115***
	(0.003)
University	-0.179***
	(0.004)
Married	0.018***
	(0.002)
Employed	0.009***
	(0.002)
Jinshi density (log)	0.003
	(0.009)
Woman × Jinshi density (log)	-0.020***
	(0.005)
M-Q urbanization rates	-0.115
	(0.084)
M-Q population density (log)	0.004
	(0.006)
Distance river (log)	-0.001
	(0.004)
Distance coast (log)	0.002
	(0.006)
1820 province dummies	Yes
σ^2 Prefecture	0.000
σ^2 Prefecture-year	0.001
σ^2 Female	0.000
N Prefecture	75
N Prefecture-year	293
N Individual	39568

Note. Coefficients of multilevel linear models, with random slopes specified for woman.
Standard errors in parentheses.
Data from CGSS 2010, 2012, 2013, and 2015, rural and urban samples.
* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Figure C5.2. Moderating Effect of *Jinshi* Density on Gender Role Attitudes.



Note. Estimates are based on Table C5.1
Panel A reports the average marginal effect of being a woman on village election turnout by logged *jinshi* density. Dashed lines indicate 95% confidence intervals. Histogram summarizes the distribution of the moderating variable at the prefectural level.
Panel B reports predicted level of gender attitudes for men and women separately under low, medium and high values of *jinshi* density (logged).
Data from CGSS 2010, 2012, 2013, and 2015, rural and urban samples.