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Modernization, Culture, and the Class Ceiling: Women's Political Participation in China

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Abstract

This research seeks to explain female political participation in China. First, is female political

participation in China high or low compared with other countries of similar scales, political

institutions, and cultural contexts? Second, what are the conditions under which women participate

in politics in China? To answer these questions, I examine the levels of women's political

participation at both cross-national level and sub-national levels (across space and over time).

Specifically, I examine the effects of culture, modernization, and political institutions on female

political participation. I find a lack of support for cultural explanations, and evidence for the

positive effects of modernization and political institutions.

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1. Introduction

Women have played an important role in the development of modern China. Ever since the late Qing, Chinese revolutionaries have called for female empowerment. Women participated in the revolution that brought down the last dynasty in 1911; they participated in the communist revolution that gave rise to the People's Republic of China in 1949. In the Maoist period (1949-1976), women participated in production of the socialist economy as well as Mao Zedong's mass political campaigns—after all, it was Mao who claimed that "women hold up half of the sky." Women continued to play an important role during Reform and Opening (1978-), although they now face many of the challenges women face in advanced industrial societies: gender discrimination, employment discrimination, balancing family and career duties, to name a few. Given China's unique historical background and recent socio-economic development, how should we understand female political participation in China?

This research paper seeks to answer two questions regarding female political participation in contemporary China. First, is female political participation in China high or low compared with other countries of similar scales, political institutions, and cultural contexts? Second, what are the conditions under which women participate in politics in China? Specifically, what explains the variation in the levels of female participation across regions and over time in contemporary China? The rest of the paper proceeds as follows. Section Two surveys the existing literature on female political participation. The three main explanations of female political participation are: culture, modernization theory (e.g. income, education) and political institutions. I also presented my

hypotheses in the second section. Section Three explains the data and methods I used in this paper. First, I compare China against other Confucian societies to examine whether culture (Confucianism, in particular) affects female political participation in China. I also describe the data I use to examine whether education and income affect female political participation at both cross-national and sub-national levels. Finally, I present the data I use to investigate political institutions' effects on female political participation in China. Section Four presents my findings from both cross-national and sub-national analyses. At the cross-national level, I found that culture (Confucianism) is not a good indicator of female political participation; I also found support for modernization theory. At the sub-national level, I found that education and income are positively correlated with female political participation. I also found evidence indicating the impact of political institutions on female participation. The concluding section (Section Five) summarizes my findings.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Define Political Participation*

First, what is political participation? Zheng and Qian (2017) defined political participation as: "Political participation in general encompasses the various activities citizens undertake to influence government behaviors."[1] Deth (2016) claims that political participation "can be loosely defined as citizens' activities affecting politics. By now, the list of participatory activities has become virtually infinite and includes actions such as voting, demonstrating, contacting public

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[1] Jianming Zheng and Wenrong Qian, "Women Entrepreneurs' Political Praticipation in China", *Asian Women* 33(2), 2017. 6, Research Institute of Asian Women Sookmyung Women's University, pp. 23-42, 27.

officials, boycotting, attending party rallies, guerrilla gardening, posting blogs, volunteering, joining flash mobs, signing petitions, buying fair-trade products, and even suicide protests."[2] Shi (1997) defines political participation as "activities by private citizens aimed at influencing the actual results of governmental policy."[3] The United Nation also outlined types of political participation: "Participation in electoral Participation in electoral processes involves much more than just voting. Political participation derives from the freedom to speak out, assemble and associate; the ability to take part in the conduct of public affairs; and the opportunity to register as a candidate, to campaign, to be elected and to hold office at all levels of government."[4]

Rosen listed that political participation in China can take the following forms: first, women's holding of full-time leadership positions in government offices at different levels; Second, women's engagement in non-governmental positions. According to Shi, much participation in China occurs through the workplace.[5] The work unit (danwei) was put at the center of political competition by the unique institutional arrangement of Chinese society. "The repertoire of participatory activities within the work unit include such actions as contacting the leader of the work unit, voting for leaders of the danwei, slowing down on the job, persuading others to vote for certain leaders in work-unit elections, and whipping up public opinion in the work unit against certain leaders. Slightly more than 70% of the survey respondents reported having engaged in such work unit political activities even after excluding voting in work-unit elections. Apparently the

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[2] Jan W. van. Deth. "What is Political Participation?", Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics. 2016. Retrieved 17th, April, 2018.
[3] Tianjian, Shi. *Political Participation in Beijing*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997.
[4] United Nation. Chapter 3.   http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/Chapter3.htm
[5] Shi.

danwei is a hotbed of political activity in China."[6]

Women's political participation in China can be divided into three strata: Leadership positions in the Party and States, Participation in Legislature and Consultation, Grassroots governance. The most powerful leadership positions in the party and state is the standing committee of the Politburo, the innermost circle of power.[7] Since the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921, no women has ever made it to this circle. Historically, only three women have been full members of the party's Politburo: Jiang Qing, Ye Qun, and Deng Ying Chao. Notably, each the three members were wife of important male political figures: Mao Zedong, Lin Biao, and Zhou Enlai, respectively. The second tier of party-state governance are The Party Central Committee and the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress.[8] Moving from the center to the provinces, another aspect of female political participation is holding positions as ministers (vice ministers), mayors (deputy mayors), and other political figures. "One low, three small" [yi di san shao] summed up the situation of women in serving as provincial governors or deputy governors: "overall proportion of women engaged in politics is low, while the number of women at higher levels, in top positions, and in key sectors is small." [9]

At grassroots level, Jennings (1997) claims that five kinds of participation acts exist in local Chinese counties or communities: local party meeting, offer suggestion to local cadres, contact

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[6] Arthur H.Miller. "Book Review of Political Participation in Beijing by Tianjian Shi", *The Journal of Politics*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Feb., 1999), The University of Chicago Press on behalf of the Southern Political Science Association pp. 271-273, 272.
[7] Stanley Rosen, "Women and Political Participation in China", Pacific Affairs. Vol 68, No. 3 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 315-341. University of British Columbia. 317.
[8] Rosen, 319.
[9] Rosen, 325.

delegate to the county people's congress or township people's congress or member of the village

council, attend all-village meeting.[10]Another important form of grassroots political participation

is engagement in grassroots branches of the Party and the Youth league. The Party and the Youth

league strive to recruit active members at grass-root level, as they serve could as the vital

connection between grass-root mass and central party's power. Furthermore, in China countryside,

peasants were endowed with the right to elect village cadres, which makes them more willing to

support the officials in the implementation of top-down state tasks. "According to Art 111 of the

1982 Constitution, the new village committee were "mass organizations of self-management at the

grassroots level", whose representatives were to be elected directly by the residents."[11]   Women

cadres at county or township levels are normally engaged in the work of mass organizations.

Women cadres in departments of government tends to be allocated to areas such as "education,

culture, public health and family planning", which are "soft" jobs can be hardly quantified.[12] In

addition, women cadres can also be assigned to carry out unpopular party policies such as the

"One-Child Policy": "In the age-old spirit of blaming the messenger, it is relatively easy to

mobilize opposition against women candidates who have been effective in carrying out unpopular

party policies." [13]

   Rosen argues that though China's Communism has not collapsed, "issues that have been raised

[10] Kent Jennings, "Political Participation in the Chinese Countryside", The American Political Science Review. Vol 91, No. 2 (Jun 1997), 361-372.
[11] Gunter Schubert, Anna L. Ahlers. Chapter 2: "Direct Village Elections as a New Element of Administrative Control and Legitimation", *Participation and Empowerment at the Grassroots: Chinese Village Elections in Perspective.*) Lexington Books, 2010). 21-29.
[12] Rosen, 327.
[13] Rosen, 328.

in European post-socialist states would be familiar to a Chinese audience."[14] To be specific, as China gradually moving toward market-oriented economy after its reform and opening up, "obligatory quotas which had guaranteed women a given percentage of the seats in legislative bodies were removed, leading to a rapid decline in the number of women holding political office."[15] However, at the same time, new opportunities emerge for women to break the glass ceiling of merely filling a quota in Communist party positions. The reform and opening up policy "has created a situation in which the state's control over society has been greatly diminished, but its sensitivity toward political heterodoxy has been heightened."[16] In China's exclusive social context that involves so many intriguing variations, women's political participation is facing both new opportunities and frustrating constraints.

2.2 *What Explains Women's Political Participation?*

Existing research on female political participation clusters around three main explanations: culture, modernization, and political institutions. Among cultural explanations, two explanations are normally provided. First, the "socialization theory" explains gender gap as a consequence of difference in early learning experiences, in which women are indoctrinated with more passive political roles. Second, the "situation theory" explains gender gap in terms of women's role as primary caretakers whose primary responsibilities should be in family, therefore prevents women from political participation. Among the explanations that fall under the modernization theory,

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[14] Rosen.
[15] Rosen, 315.
[16] Rosen, 316.

income and education are significant factors leading to the gender gap in political participation. First, women on average enjoy less income and education, therefore participate less in politics. Second, women who are poorer and less educated than other women participate less in politics.[17] Finally, political institutions also affect female political participation. In the absence of political institutions that encourage female participation (such as gender quotas in legislatures), women are not placed in important positions in politics, and can feel powerless as a result.

2.2.1   *Cultural Explanations*

It is not novel to find that there exists an aggregate difference in political participation – politics is generally perceived as a man's game. Women's political participation historically significantly lags behind that of men because they were admitted to full citizenship and suffrage long after men were endowed with these rights. Extensive studies on women's hurdles to enter the political arena have been done in political science field. For example, major issues include the external obstacles in women-unfriendly system and internal obstacles of women's unwillingness to run for elective office. Scholars have suggested that attitudes toward women's political leadership are affected by cultural environment. Nordic countries have a gender-egalitarian political culture which is particularly conducive to women's participation in politics.[18] Inglehart and Norris (2003) find that high proportion of women's presence in parliament is more likely to happen in societies with egalitarian political cultures. They also found that traditional attitudes

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[17] J. Tong, "The Gender Gap in Political Culture and Participation in China," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies.* 36, (2003) 131-150.
[18] Kazuki Iwanaga. "Women and Politics in Asia: A comparative Perspective," *Women's Political Participation and Representation in Asia*. NIAS- (Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2008), 1-22.

toward women continue to serve as a major obstacle to female's parliament elections.[19]

The situational explanation that accounts for political activity among women looks to contemporary characteristics of women's social roles. Roles such as wife, mother, widow, housewife, can inhibit or foster political participation in various ways. Hill (1981) finds that sex roles substantially affect women's political participation opportunities. Gender roles in culture might dictate that many women who are homemakers or mothers of young children, usually have less time or opportunities for legislative services.[20] Two indicators are utilized to quantify women's social roles in countries: female employment score and an indicator that is expressed as the ratio of female to male median incomes for persons with undergraduate degrees, which is meant to show the extent of wage discrimination against women.[21] In addition, political culture is defined as "the historical source such as differences in habits, concerns, and attitudes that exist to influence political life in the various states."[22] Bias embedded in countries' political cultures can potentially limit women's personal development in political participation. He concluded that some elements of culture (such as tradition of female representation, traditionalistic culture scale scores), are good predictors of female political participation. However, some others (such as female employment in legal profession, innovation in women's jury service) are not accurate predictors because of the complexity and diversity of cultural elements in social science research.

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[19] Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris. "Chapter 6: Women as Political Leaders," *Rising Tide: Gender Equality and Cultural Change Around the World. (New York:* Cambridge University Press, 2003). 127-146.
[20] David B. Hill. "Political Culture and Female Political Representation," The Journal of Politics, Vol.43, No.1. (The University of Chicago Press, 1981). 150-168).
[21] Hill, 164.
[22] Hill, 160.

Furthermore, Jennings (1983) in his paper argues that roots and variations of the gender disparities in political participation can be traced back to the family practices which reflect societal norms about gender-appropriate behavior.[23] High rates of political action are always accompanied by easy access to political resources, time, money, and channels of communication. The isolating and confining roles of women such as homemakers and single mothers tend to lack easy access to the aforementioned resources. He also notes that even women struggle to break out of traditional gender roles, they still have to carry the gendered obligation in their new niches. In addition, Chen et al. (2005) affirmed that women, who are employed at home and take the role of mothering, reinforce the male-dominant political institutions. Informally employed women generally lack the resources to participate in either economic affairs or political decision-making processes.[24]

On the other hand, the gradual process of women entering the full-employed job market stressed the fundamental equality of men and women. Anderson (1975) affirmed that one explanation for lower rates of female political participation is that it has been largely maintained by the predominance of the role of housewife and mother and the lack of concern with politics which this role has been thought to imply. However, the gender differences in political participation narrowed in 1952-1972. Anderson argues that the change is due to the fact that women who are employed outside of the home participated at an equal rate to that of men.[25]

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[23] M.Kent, Jennings, "Gender Roles and Inequalities in Political Participation: Results from an Eight-nation Study," The Western Political Quarterly, Vol. 36, No 3. (University of Utah on behalf of the Western Political Science Association, Sep., 1983), 364-385.
[24] Martha Chen, Joann Vanek, Fracie Lund, James Heintz with Renana Jhabvala, and Christine Bonner. *United Nations Development for Women. (UNIFEM)*. 2005.
[25] Anderson, 1972. Working Women and Political Participation, 1952-1972.

However, the number of children a woman has does not have a direct proportional relationship with a woman's political participation. If the burden of bearing children has an impact on women's political participation, it should be expected that the political participation level is lower when women have more children. Contrary to this belief, J. Tong (2003) finds that women without children are normally less interested and participate less in political affairs. But on the other hand, women with three or more children also reported lower levels of political participation measures than that of women with only one child.[26] This finding clarifies that the number of children a woman has does influence their political participation but not in a direct proportional way. Compare to the burden of children, socio-economic factors have a more substantial effect on women's political participation.

In addition, certain cultures are believed to have a more favorable effect on female political participation than others. For example, Confucianism tradition is always considered as an important reason for female's subjugation in society, as it works as an intricate web that restricting women to the domestic sphere, identifying women in terms of their relationships to men, and depriving their educational and working opportunities even in contemporary societies. Confucianism's emphasis on the importance of hierarchy and role-playing and endorsement of the existent labor division between women and men in a patriarchy society helped to defend and justify sexual inequality.[27] Jiang (2009) pointed out that "Confucianism's restricting effect on female political participation in China is on obstructing their opportunities to participate or to represent:

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[26] J. Tong. 144.
[27] Xinyan Jiang, "Confucianism, Women, and Social Contexts,", *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, Vol 36 (2), (2009), 229.

in professional areas, women generally neither have opportunities to compete over their male counterparts, nor they received equal recognition when they attain equal achievement as their male counterparts."[28] However, there is a dearth of literature that examines Confucianism culture's effect on female political participation in China compares to other non-Confucianism dominant countries. Therefore, I identify this question as a part of my research direction.

2.2.2 *Modernization Theories*

There is a general consensus which indicates that education level does affect women's political participation rate and their participation manner. An intuitive reaction in regards to the relationship between education level and the political participation rate is that the higher the educational status, the more women participate in politics.

Bishaw (2004) conducted a study in Ethiopia to investigate the impact of education on rural women's political participation by using a questionnaire and interviews as instruments of data collection. Based on the response of six hundred rural women and twelve gender activists, his findings indicated that as rural women's level of education increases, their involvement in political and economic activities and the possible advantages secured from their participation increase.[29] To be specific, rural women with primary and secondary school educational experience have claimed significantly higher participation in political affairs compared to illiterate rural women.[30] However, no data is available for women who have a college education certificate or higher.

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[28] Jiang, 229.
[29] Alemayehu Bishaw, "The Impact of Education on Rural Women's Participation in Political and Economic Activities," *International Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies*. Vol. 6(2),(Academic Journals, 2014). 23-31.
[30] Bishaw.

Bhalotra et al. (2014) found that narrowing of the gender gap in literacy has substantial impacts on women's political participation.[31] Bhalotra et al. presents estimates of the relationship between women's political participation and women's literacy conditional relative to that of men in India. In their research commissioned by UNESCO, they find significant impacts of the literacy of women relative to men on women's candidacy, competitiveness, and turnout. By using electoral outcome data and matching this to literacy rates census data from 1980-2008, A 10 percentage point increase in women's literacy which, at the mean levels of women's and men's literacy in India over the sample period results in a contraction of the male-female literacy ratio by 40 percentage points, is associated with increases in female candidacy of 20%, of the chances that a woman is in the top two vote winners of 13% and in female turnout of close to 6%, in every case, relative to the sample mean.[32]

For a structural explanation, J. Tong (2003) provides empirical research that illustrated that besides the widely acknowledged fact that higher socio-economic groups are more politically engaged than those in the lower strata, surprisingly, women with a higher socio-economic status are more politically engaged than those men and women who occupies a lower socio-economic status.[33] High occupational groups, regardless of gender, are significantly more attentive to political affairs in both electoral and non-electoral activities than lower occupational groups.[34] What worth noting is, women in higher socio-economic groups also score higher in political

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[31] Sonia Bhalotra, Irma Clots, and Lakshmi Iyer, "Women's Education and Women's Political Participation,"Education for All Global Monitoring Report. (UNESCO, 2014).
[32] Bhalotra, Clots, and Lyer, 2.
[33] J. Tong, 1.
[34] J. Tong, 11.

participation than men or women in lower-socio-economic stratas. However, women still scored lower than men in the same occupational group in almost all the eight political cultures and participation variables (daily media attention, political knowledge, political interest, internal political efficacy, regime efficacy, electoral political participation, non-electoral participation), except for external political efficacy.[35]

However, in some cases, women with a high education level (universities or above) show a lack of interest in political participation. Oyesomi, Salawu, and Olorunyomi (2017) take into account the exceptionality of socio-economic characteristics of female participation in politics through the use of indigenous communication. In their research, educational qualification was one of the socio-economic characteristics considered. Four communities in Lagos and Ogun are purposefully selected and 775 copies of respondent copies were used for analysis. The educational status is divided into five categories: no formal education, primary school, J.S.S. (middle School), S.S.S. (high school), and Tertiary (universities, trade schools, colleges). The result shows that the highest group with political membership of Action Congress of Nigeria party are respondents with a senior secondary school certificate. Surprisingly, out of the 11 respondents with tertiary institution certificates, only 8 of them belong to a political party (ACN and PDP). This sample implies that women with a high education usually have less interest or no time for political participation.[36]

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[35] J. Tong, 12.
[36] Kehinde Oyesomi, Abiodun Salawu, and Bankole Olorunyomi, "Indigenous Communication: Socio-Economic Characteristics Influencing Contemporary Female Political Participation," *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 18(4), (2017).164-181.

2.2.3 *Political Contexts*

Political contexts are essentially different from political culture. Political culture has been described as the embodiment of a society's values and attitudes. The underlying principles that exist in political culture can tacitly influence women's political participation or limit their personal development and opportunities in political activities. On the other hand, political institutions are clearly defined rules in the political system. Political context also plays an important role in affecting women's participation in political activities. Frequently, historical patterns and traditions that exist in political organizations significantly affect female candidacies' popularity and overall women's political participation. Some recent research about women's representation in legislature has emphasized that political structure significantly influences the likelihood that women will be elected to the legislative body. Women tend to hold more legislative seats in states and communities where legislatures are the least professional and legislative service is the least desirable.[37] Hill's (1981) findings show that states which established early patterns of women dominated legislature bodies generally have continued to support women's participation in public affairs.[38] In addition, female office seekers may encounter stiffer male opposition in states and communities where legislative compensation is greater, tenure longer and the prestige of office-holding higher.[39]

Furthermore, Marshall (2002) in his study of a local chapter of the National Women's Political

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[37] Hill, 150-168.
[38] Hill, 164.
[39] Hill, 164.

Caucus argues that in political activities, the sense of shared purpose and common identity that develop within political institutions can increase female political candidates' persuasive power.[40] His findings indicate that women's area of political participation are generally determined by their stereotypical roles. Normally, women are assigned to spheres such as women's right advocacy, children's work, or education work, which are generally perceived as consistent with their gender's roles and are normally seen as directly affecting their well-being. However, women are normally placed in lower-ranked positions of the political system where their impact on affecting their well-being is not substantial. Howell (2008) also notes that women at all levels of government and within village committees tend to be assigned portfolios that are considered 'soft' such as education and health, or that are perceived as directly relevant to their gender, such as women's work and family planning.[41] Notably, such phenomena is not occurring because of women's choice to take such portfolios but because of top-down allocation.[42] When it comes to broader portfolios such as economic development that affect both gender's interest, women are normally not allocated. Similarly, MacManus and Bullock (1995) find that female local political leaders are more likely to serve as mayors (council selected) when the positions have comparatively more limited legal authority. Again, because these positions generally face less competitiveness from male candidates.[43]

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[40] Ann Marshall, "Organizing Across the Divide: Local Feminist Activism, Everyday Life, and the Election of Women to Public Office," *Social Science Quarterly*. Vol 83 (3). (Wiley, 2002). 707-725.
[41] Jude Howell, "Chapter 3: Gender and Rural Governance in China", in *Women's Political Participation and Representation in Asia: Obstacles and Challenges*. edited by Kazuki Iwanaga. (Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2008). 55-80.
[42] Howell.
[43] Bullock, Charles S, and Susan A. MacManus, "Municipal Electoral Structure and the Election of Councilwomen." *The Journal of Politics* 53, no. 1 (1991): 75-89.

In addition, Smith et. al (2012) explain the phenomenon that the descriptive representation of women in policy-making positions is higher in some regions rather than in others. Their results indicate that it is important to consider contextual factors in political institutions. They find that urban specific political contexts characteristics can significantly affect women's descriptive representation in different communities. Smith et. al find that local communities' political characteristics are consequential for predicting women's presence in the positions of political decision makers.[44] First, women's representation as mayors and council members is more likely in cities that have more liberal electorates. Second, women's descriptive representation as mayors and council members is more likely in cities that have more women's political advocacy organizations. Third, cities are more likely to elect a woman as mayor when they have had, in recent years, larger proportion of women on the city council. In sum, the political culture of a society and the historical patterns of female's political participation are key factors that affect the city's election of women.

On local levels, another two important determinants of the women's local representation within and across the countries are society's degree of urbanization and political partisanship. Regional factors such as population density, years of female suffrage, female labor force participation, and partisanship support partially account for sub-national variation of women's political representation. Sundström and Stockemer (2015) find that regions with high female labor force support for leftist rather than radical right parties and high degrees of urbanization tend to

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[44] Adrienne R. Smith, Beth Reingold and Michael Leo Owens, "The Political Determinants of Women's Descriptive Representation in Cities." *Political Research Quarterly* 65, no. 2 (2012): 315-329.

elect more women.[45] In addition, vast differences in women's representation exist in several states within countries. For some independent variables such as population density, left or radical wing support, regional differences are even more pronounced.

Women's descriptive representation in political institutions can have specific effect on women's political participation by altering political context for women's participation. Increases in women's descriptive representation can alter women's perceptions of the political system by indicating that political context is becoming more female friendly. Verba, Burns and Scholzman's (1997) research shows that for women, living in a state with a statewide female politician has a significant impact on political information, on knowledge of public officials' names, and on political efficacy. While for men, the results are significantly different: living in a state with a statewide female politician enhances only knowledge of names, but to a lesser degree than for women.[46] The inclusion of women in elected office signals to the society that women are capable of participating in the political decision-making process, especially to women who are in the political socialization stage.[47]

Besides traditional culture, dominated political culture can also implicitly shape the form and quantity of political participation. Tang argues that "China's political culture, primarily shaped by the CCP's mass-line-inspired political mobilization, collectivization and provision of social

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[45] Aksel Sundstrom, Daniel Stockemer, "What Determines Women's Political Representation at The Local Level? A Fine-Grained Analysis of The European Regions,"*International Journal of Comparative Sociology.* Vol 56, Issue 3-4. (2015), 254-274.
[46] Sidney Verba, Nancy Burns and Kay Lehman Schlozman, "Knowing and Caring about Politics: Gender and Political Engagement," *The Journal of Politics.* Vol 59, No. 4. (1997). 1051-1072.
[47] Shan-Jan Sarah Liu, Lee Ann Banaszak, "Do Government Positions Held by Women Matter? A Cross-National Examination of Female Ministers' Impacts on Women's Political Participation," Politics and Gender, Vol 13. (2017). 132-162.

services, exerts great influence on the Chinese people's political attitudes and behavior."[48] Tang described the Chinese communist political culture as "populist authoritarianism", that consists of six components: mass line ideology, accumulation of social capital, public political activism and contentious politics, a hyper-responsive government, weak political and civil institutions, and a high level of regime trust.[49] In this research paper, the exclusive political culture in China reflects on grassroots governance—that it made grassroots governance to focus on top-down state policy enforcement and bottom-up NPC voting, and excluded participation forms such as petition, and demonstration.

2.3 Hypotheses

Based on the existing literature, I formed the following hypotheses. Hypotheses of what factors explain female political participation are split into two parts: *Cross-National* part and *Sub-National* part.

Cross-nationally, I hypothesize that 1) Income and education level both have a positive effect on female political participation rate. 2) Different cultural contexts in countries can affect women's willingness in political participation, how female leaders are evaluated by the public, and their actual participation in political parties.

Sub-nationally, first, socio-economic factors should explain female political participation rate.

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[48] Wenfang Tang, "Populist Authoritarinism: Chinese Political Culture and Regime Sustainability", The China Quarterly, 227, September 2016, 812-853.
[49] Ibid. 812.

I hypothesize that 1) incomes have a positive effect on women's political participation rate. 2) education level and available education sources should have a positive effect on women's political participation rate. 3) Finally, specific contexts in political institutions, such as whether the government have influence on gender make-up in the institution, should be able to affect women's engagement in the institution.

3.   Data and Methods

3.1 Cross-National Data on Culture and Female Political Participation:

To investigate whether culture has an effect on women's political participation, I collected data from the World Value Survey database on Mainland China, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, United States, Russia, Brazil.[50]   Three of them are believed to have been influenced by Confucian culture: Mainland China, Taiwan, and South Korea; Four of them belong to non-Confucian culture category: Japan, United States, Russia and Brazil, but they share similar characteristics as China in terms of economy or scale. To measure female political participation both on objective behavior and subjective willingness, I chose five WVS survey questions: 1) How important politics is in your life? 2) How interested would you say you are in politics? 3) For each of the following statements I read out, can you tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with each. Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree? "On the whole, man make better political leaders than women do". 4) Whether you are an active member, an inactive member or not a member of political party? 5) Use the scale 1-10 to describe how essential you think "women have

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[50] World Value Survey. Online Data Analysis. 2010-2014.

the same rights as men" is as a characteristic of democracy?

I transformed the data in the following ways. For question 1) and question 2), first, the data were crossed by "gender". Second, to statistically quantify the descriptive opinion content, I allocated a mathematical scale to each opinion extent respectively: very important = 4, rather important = 3, not very important =2, not at all important = 1, no answer = 0. Each of the expressive number is then multiplied by percentage of people who made the choice to get an indicator which shows the group's overall opinion on the specific question. For question 3), the question is formatted as "On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do", so in order to show women leader's evaluation by public, I reversely allocated mathematical scale to each opinion extent. No answer = 0, Agree Strongly = 1, Agree = 2, Disagree = 3, Strongly Disagree = 4. For question 4), again, mathematical scales are applied: Not a member =1, Inactive member = 2, Active member =3. However, in order to show women's participation extent compares to the society's participation extent as a whole, the data are crossed by "Gender= Female" again and the indicator is a result of female membership activeness in party/ overall membership activeness in party. For question 5), numerical scale 1 - 10 are already applied in original WVS survey data, but in order to more easily and visually compare this question with the other four questions, each indicator is divided by 4.

3.2 Cross-National Data on Income and Education:

In order to examine whether economic development extent (income) affect female's political participation rate, I collected female's political participation data of all 52 countries by analyzing

question number four in above-mentioned method to show women's participation extent in each country respectively. I then collected each country's GDP per capita from the World Bank's report and drew a scatter-plot to show their correlation.

Similarly, in order to examine whether education level affect female's political participation, I collected literacy rate of each country and drew a scatter-plot to show their correlation relationship. The list of countries by literacy rate in 2015 was collected by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics.[51] The data was crossed by population of 15 and plus years old and both sexes are included.

3.3 Sub-National Data on Female Political Participation in China:

I found the provincial level's female political participation data in year 2005 and 2010 from *Green Book of Women: The Annual Report on Gender Equality and Women Development in China (2008-2012)*.[52] The report shows 31 Chinese provinces' statistical indicators of four aspects: Participation in Party-state Management, Participation in the Legislature, Participation in Political Consultation, and Participation in Grassroots Governance. Each of the aspect were assigned with a weight coefficient to calculate the overall female political participation indicator: Participation in Party-state Management = 30%, Participation in the Legislature = 25%, Participation in Political Consultation = 20%, and Participation in Grassroots Governance = 25%.

I collected two sets of data to explain factors that affect female's political participation on a

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[51] UIS Data Centre, UNESCO. Education.
[52] Hui Yang, 2005-2010 Provincial Politics and Decision-Making Field Gender Equality and Women's Development Evaluation Report". *Green Book of Women: The Annual Report on Gender Equality and Women Development in China (2008-2012)*, 471-472.

sub-national level. The first set focuses on socio-economic factors including education level, education resources available and income's effect on female's political participation. The second investigates whether and how do political contexts in different level of political institutions affect women's political participation.

3.3.1 Socio-Economic Indicators:

First, to evaluate income's effect on female political participation, I collected the 31 provinces' GDP per capita data in 2004 and 2009 and analyzed the bi-variable relationship of GDP per capita 2004 v. Female Political Participation Index 2005, and GDP per capita 2009 v. Female Political Participation index 2010 respectively.[53] I constructed a scatter plot to show the linear dependence between Income and female political participation index.

Second, to evaluate education's effect on female political participation in China, I collected two sets of variables and investigate their relationships with female political participation rate respectively. 1) List of Chinese administrative division by illiteracy rate (Sixth Population Census in 2010); [54] 2) Overall index of Chinese administrative division by education resources available in 2010.[55] The overall index was calculated by summing up indicators that shows numbers of school availability and number of full-time teachers in each province. Each of the two variables are investigated to see if there exists any correlational relationship between education level and

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[53] Provincial GDP per capita, sorted by year. 2004 and 2009. National Bureau of Statistics of China, NBS. http://data.stats.gov.cn/english/easyquery.htm?cn=E0103.
[54] Illiteracy Rate in China in 2016, by region. *Statista*. The Statistics Portal. https://www.statista.com/statistics/278568/illiteracy-rate-in-china-by-region/
[55] 2010 Basic Statistics for Education. China Yearly Provincial Macro-Economy Statistics. All China Data Online. http://chinadataonline.org.pitt.idm.oclc.org/member/macroyr/macroyrtshow.asp

female's political participation rate.

3.3.2   Political Institutions:

In order to investigate whether variance in political institutions context affect female political participation, I compared the index of four aspects of female political participation index in 2005 and 2010: 1) Participation in Party-state Management, 2) Participation in the Legislature, 3) Participation in Political Consultation, and 4) Participation in Grassroots Governance. Each type of political participation represents specific institutional contexts. I compared these index in both lateral and longitudinal way. Longitudinally, I compared the data on four aspects of female political participation to see if there exist a trend of increase in participation. Laterally, I compared the four levels of participation to see there exists major difference in participation rate among them.

In addition, I collected the data of female members' proportion in each session of Central Committee of Chinese Communist Party (CCCP), from the fifth generation to the nineteenth generation (1978 – 2017) to see whether there exists a general trend of increase of female members' proportion in state-party management. I also collected the female members' proportion in National People's Congress in each session (1st- 13th) from 1954 to 2018 to see whether there exists a trend of increase in participation in legislature and political consultation. Finally, I collected the number of female member's proportion in ten top level political dignitary positions in China, including: The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, China National People Congress Board, State President, The State Council, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Central Military Commission, The Supreme Court of China, The Supreme People's Procuratorate of China,

Democratic Parties' leaders, and Social Organization leaders, to see whether female's proportion in top level dignitaries is less than that in grass root or legislature and political consultation institutions. [56]

4. Analyses and Findings

4.1. *Culture and Participation: Findings from the World Value Survey.*

Figure 1 shows my findings from the World Value Survey data on female political participation at the country-level in Mainland China, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, U.S., Russia and Brazil. The data shows that overall, female political participation in Mainland China is comparable to other countries. Across all countries, female membership in political parties is low. The largest variation exists in the question about whether women make better political leaders (Min1.689-Max 2.991); the U.S. has more people believe that women make better political leaders in the rest of the countries. It should also be noted that Taiwan has significantly more people believing that women make better political leaders in Taiwan than in Mainland China—this demonstrates that culture is not the perfect indicator of female political participation, given both Taiwan and Mainland China share similar Confucian cultures. However, China is not the country with the least amount of belief in female political leaders, as Japan has significantly less people in support of female political leaders than other countries.

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[56] Data resources from Communist Party of China News, People.com.cn.

The second and third largest variation exists in the question about how important politics is in women's life (Min 1.919- Max 2.673) and the question about female's interest in politics (Min1.915-Max 2.547). Japanese women have a stronger belief that politics is important in their life and are more interest in political participation than women in the rest of the countries. It should also be noted that South Korea has substantially more people believing that politics plays an important role in their life than that of Mainland China, but their interest in political participation is lower than that of Mainland China—this again demonstrates that culture does not absolutely serve as an indicator of female political participation.

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[57] The vertical axis variable of Figure 1 was calculated by using mathematical scale allocation. See 3.1: Cross-National Data on Culture and Female Political Participation for details.
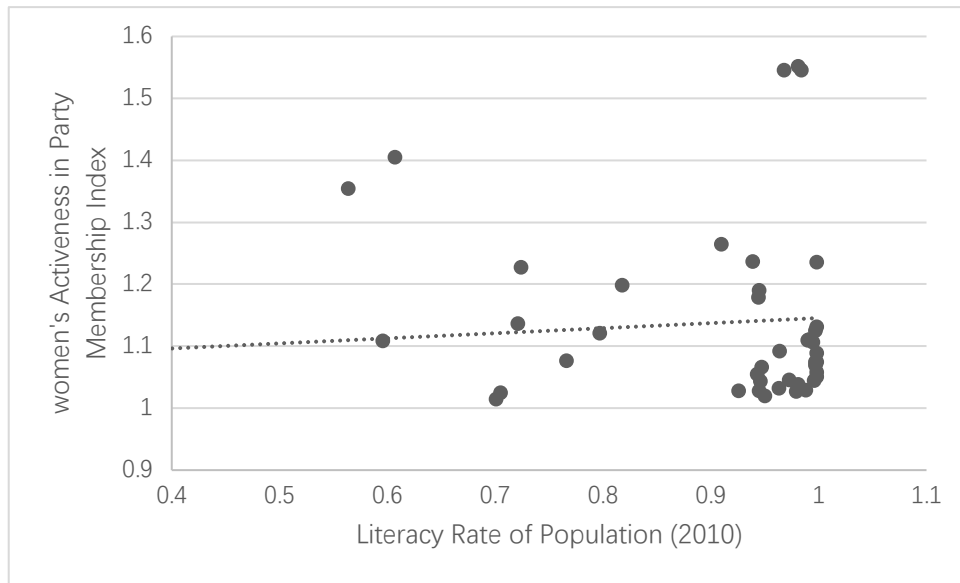
Furthermore, in the question of whether women should have the same rights as men (Min 1.910-Max 2.178), Mainland China and Taiwan that are Confucianism-influenced societies have higher levels of consent extent than that in Japan or U.S, which are non-Confucian societies. The question that shows the smallest variation (Min 0.973- Max 0.998) is female membership in political party (calculated by female's membership in party divided by overall membership). In this question, Mainland China shows a higher ratio than Japan and Brazil, while Taiwan (also a Confucianism-influenced society) shows a lower ratio than Brazil. These findings all illustrate that culture should not be an accurate indicator of female political participation rate and has no absolute influential ability on people's value about female political participation issues. However, people in different countries or might have different definition of participation because each society have its own political system. Therefore, their reactions on the questions might not serve as an absolutely accurate indicator in comparing people's values toward women's political participation across countries.
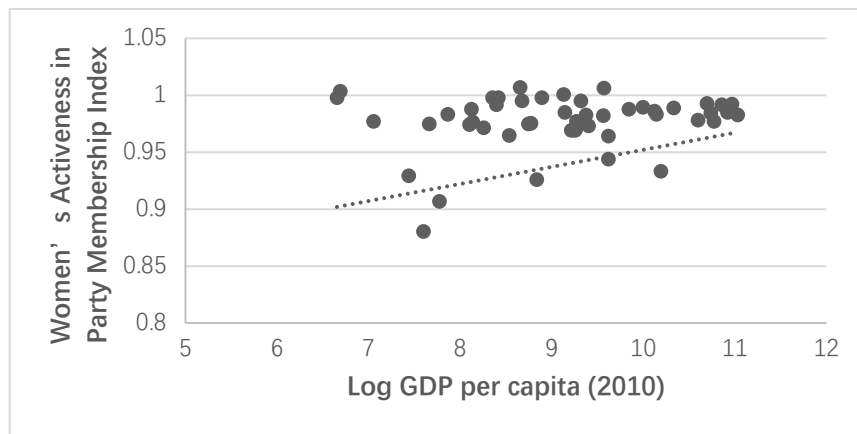
4.2 Education, Income and Participation: A Cross-national Analysis

The data outcome in Figure 2 and Figure 3 confirmed my hypotheses that there should exist a positive correlation relationship between education level and female political participation extent, income level and female political participation level respectively. This cross-national finding is also consistent with the sub-national finding about education/ income's effect on female political participation.

Figure 2: Cross-National: Women's Activeness in Party Membership Index v. Education Level (2010) [58]

Figure 3: Cross-National: Women's Activeness in Party Membership Index v. Log GDP per capita (2010)[59]
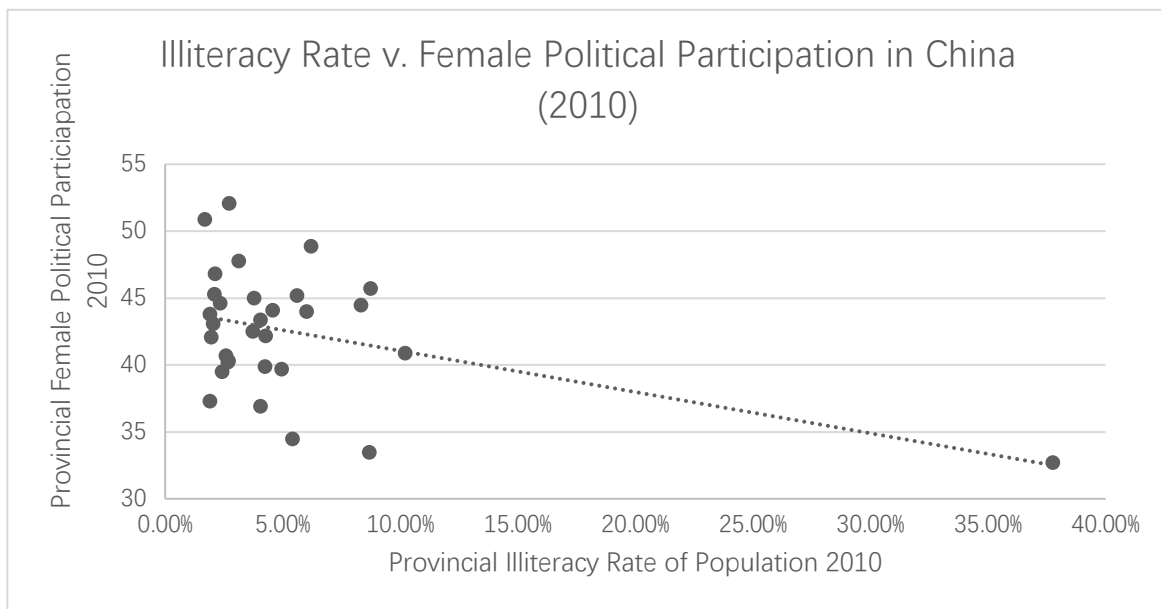

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[58] For figure 2, the vertical axis variable: Women's Activeness in Party Membership was calculated by using World Value Survey Dataset question "Whether you are an active member, an inactive member or not a member of political party?". Wave 2010-2014. Mathematical scales are applied: Not a member =1, Inactive member = 2, Active member =3, each of the expressive number is then multiplied by percentage of people who made the choice to get an indicator.

[59] Similarly, for Figure 3, the vertical axis variable: Women's Activeness in Party Membership was calculated by using World Value Survey Dataset question "Whether you are an active member, an inactive member or not a member of political party?". Wave 2010-2014. Mathematical scales are applied: Not a member =1, Inactive member = 2, Active member =3, each of the expressive number is then multiplied by percentage of people who made the choice to get an indicator. The data was crossed by gender = female, and the indicator = female index / overall index.

4.3 Education and Participation: A Subnational Analysis

   At the sub-national level, the data outcome basically confirms my hypotheses that education

level should have a positive effect on female's political participation. However, in Figure 4,

education level shows a strong positive correlation with female political participation rate (note:

in graph, the variable is illiteracy rate). Note that an obvious outlier exists in the graph: Tibet has

an illiteracy rate of 37.77%, which is quite rampant. The only language that the census included

as a standard of "literacy" was Mandarin. Tibet's educational situation falls short of the demands,

most Tibetan children would not start their mandarin education until primary school or even high

school.[60]

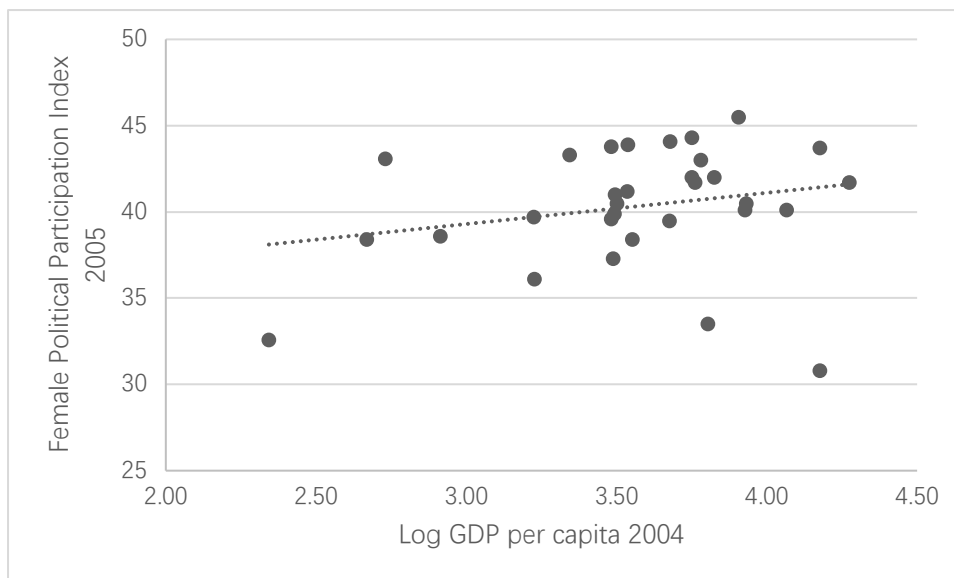*Figure 4: Illiteracy Rate and Female Political Participation in China (2010)*

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[60] "Tibet Through Chinese Eyes". *The Atlantic*. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1999/02/tibet-through-chinese-eyes/306395/
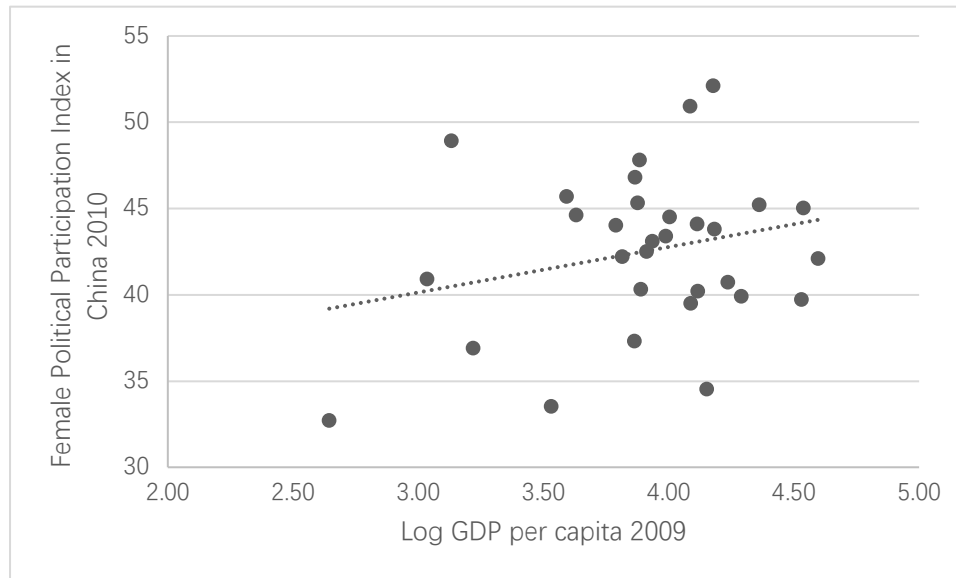
4.4 Income and Participation: A Subnational Analysis

For income, in Figure 5 and Figure 6, the data outcome shows a positive correlation between GDP per capita versus female political participation index. This sub-national finding is consistent with cross-national finding that income level is a significant indicator than income level. Note that the inclusion of one-year lag in measure (i.e. 2004 GDP and 2005 participation; 2009 GDP and 2010 participation) is to take into factor that economic development may has a lag on its influence on political participation. Under such circumstances, the disparities in participation among groups that belongs to different socio-economic strata indicates that the absence of activity from resource-deprived group members is more likely a result of their inability to participate, rather than their unwillingness to participate.

Figure 5: Income and Female Political Participation in China 2005

Figure 6: Income and Female Political Participation in China 2010

4.5 Political Institutions and Participation: A Subnational Analysis

Zheng and Qian listed that Chinese women's engagement in non-governmental positions can be in the following five forms: "as representatives of the People's Congress, as members of the CPPCC(Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference), as representatives of a women's congress, as representatives of the CPC(Chinese People's Congress), or as directors or committee members of unions."[61] To compare whether variance of context in political institutions have an effect on female political participation, I compared the national average of two years (2005, 2010)'s female political participation rate in the four aspects: 1) Participation in Party-state Management, 2) Participation in the Legislature, 3) Participation in Political Consultation, and 4) Participation in Grassroots Governance respectively, as shown in Figure 7. Note that in the graph,
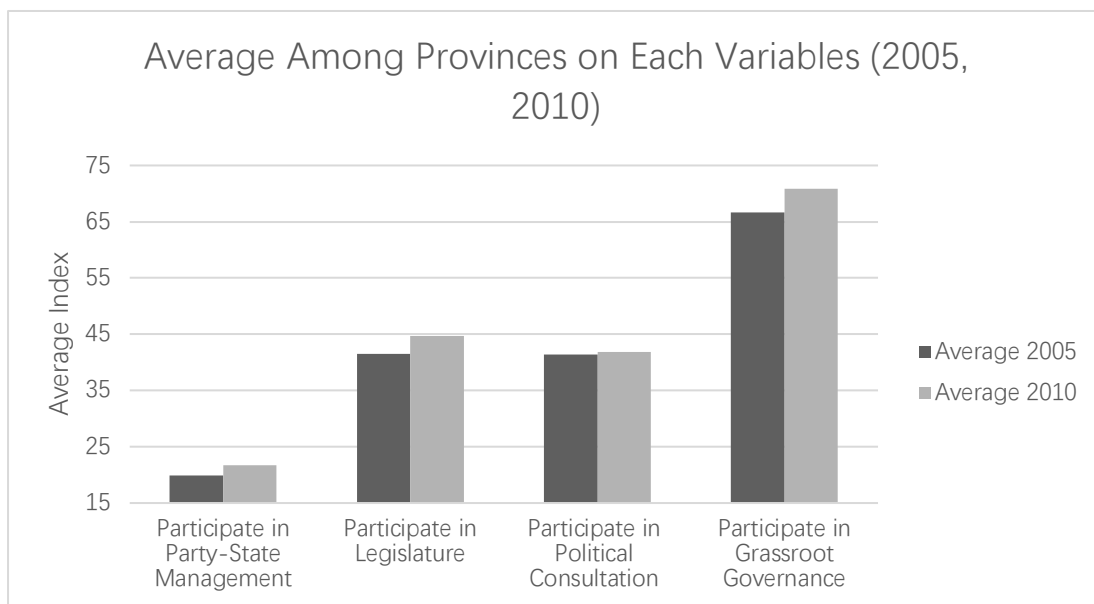
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[61] Zheng and Qian, 27.

numbers on y axis are not percentage but only index. The index only shows a comparative relationship among the four kinds of participation, rather than the actual percentage.

The four above-mentioned political participation indexes were generated in this way: 1) Participation in Party-state Management = 0.5* female proportion in member of Provincial Standing Committee of Communist Party of China + 0.5* female proportion in provincial government cadres. 2) Participation in Legislature = 0.6* female proportion in provincial People Congress + 0.4* female proportion in the Standing Committee of Provincial People's Congress. 3)Participation in Political Consultation = 0.6* Female proportion in provincial level member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference + 0.4* Female Proportion in Provincial CPPCC Standing Committee. 4) Participation in Grassroots Governance = 0.5* female proportion in Ministry of Community Residents' Committee Members + 0.5 members in Province Village Committee. [62]

[62] Hui Yang.2005-2010 Provincial Politics and Decision-Making Field Gender Equality and Women's Development Evaluation Report". *Green Book of Women: The Annual Report on Gender Equality and Women Development in China (2008-2012)*, 471-472.

Figure 7: Female Participation in Legislature, Political Consultation, and Grassroots
Governance

The data outcome shows obvious differences among the four levels of participation, and this

can be explained by different institutional configurations in the four levels of institutions. First,

among the four participation rates, Participation in Party-State Management is the lowest one. Here,

participation in party-state management refers to position-holding in top level government

organizations such as the CCCP. This can be explained by the fact that most gender selections exist

in this level of institution, as the government has all the power over the gender makeup, which

means that females do not have much right to choose to participate even if they would like to do

so. Second, Participation in the Legislature and Political Consultation are moderate among the four

participations. This can be explained by the fact that there is moderate level of gender selection in

legislature institutions. The government does have a significant amount of power over the gender makeup in legislature, but the power is not as much as that in party-state management. In the other word, females may have a chance to participate if they wanted to participate.

Third, Participation in Grass-root Governance shows substantial higher participation than the other three types of participation. This can be explained by the fact that there is least amount of gender selection exist in grassroots level institutions. The government has the least amount of power over the gender makeup of grassroots management, which indicates that females can participate freely. In addition, participation in grassroots governance were designed in direct ways that are exercisable by the majority of residents, therefore decrease the difficulty of women to participate. What is worth noting is, the grass-root participation in PRC is substantially different from that found in other societies. Tremendous penetration of powerful governmental and party organs through the society, shackled mass media, absence of independent advocacy group, all made grass-root participation in China to emphasize on policy enforcement rather policymaking stage. [63]
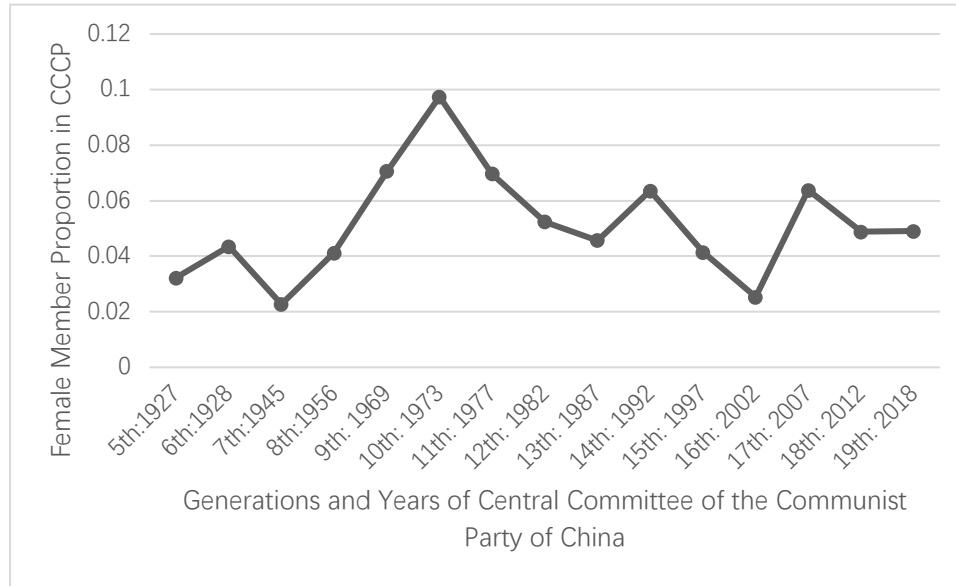
For the top level political participation, first, for Central Committee of Chinse Communist Party (1927-2018), there exist a very small increase (0.032-0.049) that can largely be ignored because of the small total number, and female member occupy very low proportion of the membership positions (Average Proportion 0.05), as shown in Figure 8.

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[63] Kent Jennings, "Political Participation in the Chinese Countryside", *The American Political Science Review*. Vol 91, No. 2 (Jun 1997), 361-372.

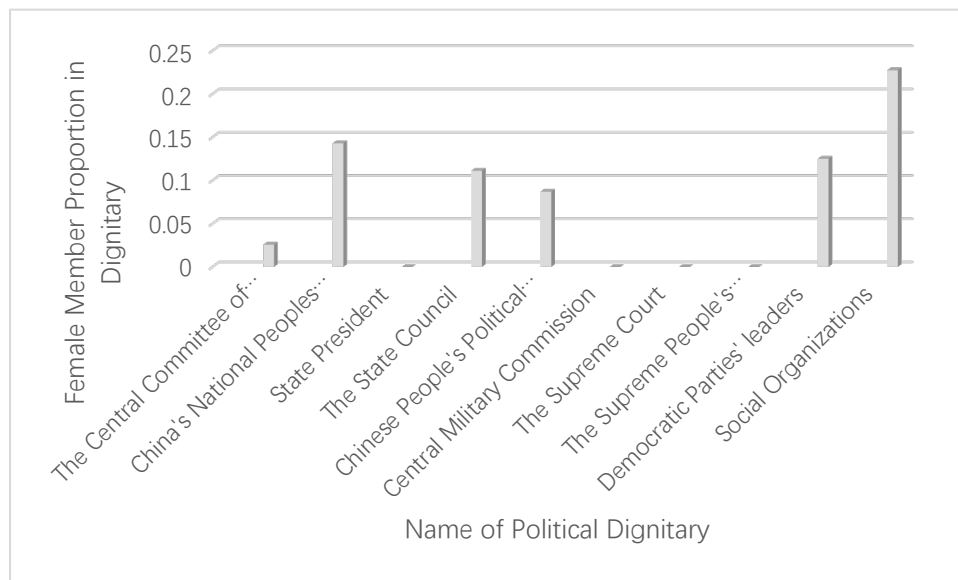*Figure 8: CCCP Female Member Proportion (1927-2018)*

Note that there was an abrupt increase in female member number from 1945 to 1973, which can be explained by the fact that during 1945-1973 two important social changes happened. First, the Chinese Communist Party experienced the establishment of the PRC, during which the CCP abolished all legal systems of the Republic of China and established its own civil law systems.[64] Second, during 1966-1976, cultural revolution which advocated gender equality happened, and this widespread ideological change should also have an effect on the increase of female member proportion in CCCP. In addition, another notable increase was during 2002-2007, and this can be explained by the fact that in 2005, the Standing Committee of the 10th National People's Congress amended the Law on Protection of Women's Rights and Interests, in which they specifically regulated that "State organs, public organizations, enterprises and institutions must, in appointing

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[64] Rosen.

cadres, adhere to the principle of equality between men and women. An appropriate number of

female cadres should be appointed. [65] Second, female member proportion in top level political

dignitaries is alarmingly low, as shown in Figure 9. However, for National People's Congress

(1954-2018), there is a significant increase in female's proportion of members (0.12-0.25), and the
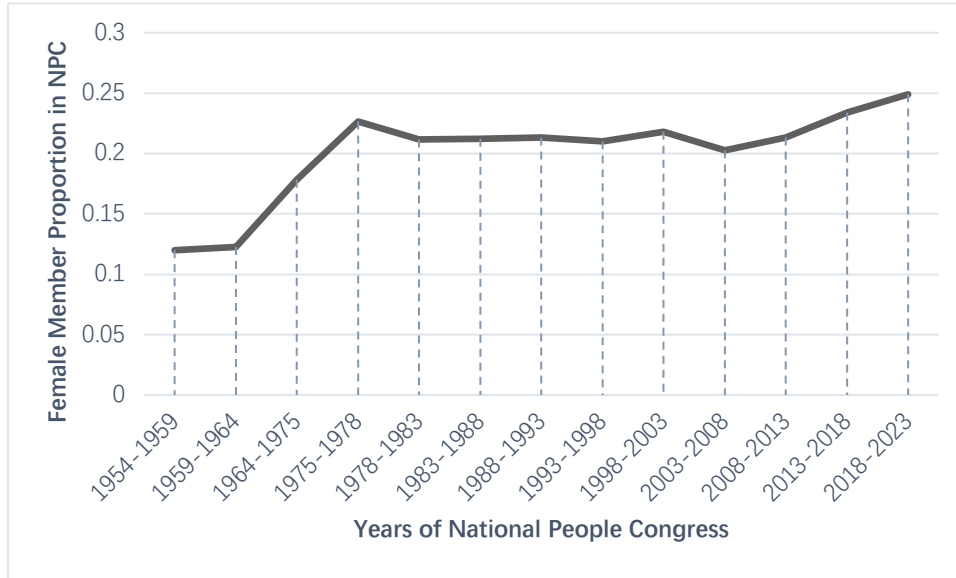
proportion increased steadily, as shown in Figure 10.

Figure 9:: Female Member Proportion in Top Level Political Dignitary in China (Current) [66]

[65] China's Revised law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests. Adopted at 5th session of the seventh National People's Congress of the PRC on April 3, 1992, amended at the 17th Session of the Standing Committee of the 10th National People's Congress on August 28, 2005.

[66] The ten Top Political Dignitary in Figure 10 are: The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, China National People Congress Board, State President, The State Council, Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Central Military Commission, The Supreme Court of China, The Supreme People's Procuratorate of China, Democratic Parties' leaders, and Social Organization leaders, to see whether female's proportion in top level dignitaries is less than that in grass root or legislature and political consultation institutions

Figure 10: National People Congress Female Member Proportion (1954-2018)

Why is that the case? Political contexts in different levels of institutions can explain this phenomenon. Chinese electoral law dictates that the National People's Congress and local people's congress should include female deputies by setting quotas, and female numbers in NPC and local People Congress should increase gradually.[67] However, as a one-party Communist state, China holds a more restrictive attitude in female political participation in party-state level, as there is no quota required for female participation in top level dignitaries. These institutional differences basically explained why female participation decrease progressively as it proceeds to higher-level of political institutions. These findings confirmed my hypothesis that factors in political context can affect female political participation. In this case specifically, it is the allocation quotas that substantially influenced female political participation.

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[67] Jacqui True, Nicole George, Sara Niner, Swati Parashar. "Women's Political Participation in Asia and the Pacific," *Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum. CPPF Working Papers on Women in Politics*. No.3. Social Science Research Council. (2014).

5. Conclusion

At the cross-national level, I find lack of evidence for cultural explanations and strong support for modernization theories. This finding indicates two important implications: first, cultural influence in countries does not serve as a perfect role in indicating female political participation. Second, education is a more accurate indicator than income is in influencing female political participation.

At the subnational level within China, I find strong support for income and education being correlated with female political participation. At subnational level, again, education is a more accurate indicator than income is in influencing female political participation. This subnational finding is consistent with that at cross-national level. In addition, I also find that political institutions matter significantly for creating the opportunities for women to break the glass ceiling. Different political contexts, such as the existence of top-down allocation and gender quota, in each level of institutions Participation in Party-state Management, Participation in the Legislature, Participation in Political Consultation, and Participation in Grassroots Governance can explain the various female participation extents.

In sum, based on current findings on female political participation, I argue that the key to facilitate future female political participation in China underlies in increasing education level and income level in population, and putting more effort in allocating gender quotas in each levels of political institutions. Increasing population's education level and income level are definitely a long-term work which requires tremendous amount of resources. If the improvement in women's

economic status may not be achieved immediately, more preconditions offered for women such as bring resources, educational accesses, and public networks should be promoted at the first place. A more direct way to help women break the glass ceiling and to actively engage in political participation in to apply gender quota to established political systems across jurisdictions at regional, local, and national levels, and to provide Constitutional support if possible.

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