Operationalizations of Non-Political Position Generator Variables

Male was a dummy variable that took a value of 1 if the participant was male and 0 otherwise. *Age* was calculated by subtracting participants' year of birth from 2018, the year in which the survey was conducted. *Han Chinese* was a dummy variable that took a value of 1 if the respondent identified him- or herself as a member of the Han ethnicity and 0 otherwise.

Education was measured on a 5-point ordinal scale indicating whether participants had completed lower than primary school education, primary school education, junior high school education, senior or secondary vocational high school education, or college education and above. It was recoded to run from 0 to 1.

Wealth was a continuous index created based on respondents' answers to two questions: 1) "Which of the following items (domestic car, plasma or LCD TV, microwave, tablet/iPad, laptop, smartphone, air conditioner) do you have in your household?"; and 2) whether the respondent owns at least two houses. MCA (multiple correspondence analysis) was used to construct the index. The index was rescaled to run from 0 to 1 with higher values indicating greater wealth.

Urban was a dummy variable measuring whether a respondent resides in an urban or rural area. It is identified by the administrative unit of the town where the respondents were sampled, with 1 indicating an urban resident and 0 a rural resident.

Migrant worker is a dummy variable that took a value of 1 if the respondent was a migrant worker and 0 otherwise. Migrant worker status was identified by two questions - status of household registration and current occupation. Respondents are considered migrant workers if they have a rural (agricultural) household registration but work in the non-agricultural sector (excluding government, police bureau and the military).

Online network size was a continuous variable reflecting the respondent's self-reported number of friends on WeChat. Respondents who were not WeChat users were coded as missing on

this variable. WeChat network size was selected as a proxy for overall online social network size because the weighted survey results indicated that 98.67% of Chinese Internet users are also Wechat users.

Tie abroad was a dummy variable that took a value of 1 if the respondent reported having a relative or friend living in Hongkong, Taiwan, Macao or a foreign country that they had contact with at least once per year.

CCP member was a dummy variable that took a value of 1 if the participant was currently a member of the Chinese Communist Party and 0 otherwise.

Official was a dummy variable that took a value of 1 if the respondent reported currently working as a manager at a party or government institution, state-owned company, or other public institution and 0 otherwise.

Total forms of participation was an additive index referring to the number of participatory activities respondents had previously engaged in or would be willing to engage in in the future in response to a local policy problem such as housing or the environment. Respondents who had previously encountered such a policy problem in their local area answered questions about their past participation, while respondents who had not previously encountered any such policy problems answered about their willingness to participate in the future. The following forms of participation were included in the index: making a donation; attending a hearing; making a complaint directly to the government; making a complaint to a People's Congress representative, media, or social or political organization; posting about the issue online; attending a protest or demonstration; boycotting products; signing a petition; and joining a group or organization. Cronbach's alpha for the nine-item measure was 0.68.

Non-contentious participation was an additive index based on the same series of questions about participatory activities in response to a local policy problem. The following forms of

participation were included in the index: making a donation; attending a hearing; making a complaint directly to the government; making a complaint to a People's Congress representative, media, or social or political organization; posting about the issue online; and joining a group or organization. Cronbach's alpha for the six-item measure was 0.62.

Contentious participation was an additive index based on the same series of questions about participatory activities in response to a local policy problem. The following forms of participation were included in the index: attending a protest or demonstration; boycotting products; and signing a petition. Cronbach's alpha for the three-item measure was 0.61.

Political interest was measured with a single item asking participants to indicate their level of interest in "current social and political topics," which were defined in the survey as including government decisions, reports and policies; events or information related to public affairs, such as the environment, real estate, and health care; corruption; international news; and government leaders' activities. Respondents were given on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 = "not at all" to 3 = "very much".

Political fear was measured with the following question: "Because of housing relocation, Xiaowang[1] organized a petition with his neighbors to the local government. Would you be concerned that the following consequences will happen to him if this happened in your district or village?" There were seven answer options corresponding to various types of government repression (e.g., "he will be criticized or warned by government cadres", "he will be beaten up"). Respondents could select as many potential consequences as they wished; "none of the above", "don't know", or "refuse to answer". The resulting dummy variable was coded as 1 if the respondent indicated concerns that any of the seven repressive consequences would happen to Xiaowang and 0 otherwise.

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[1] A common Chinese name used in Mandarin Chinese the way "John Doe" is used in English.

Internal political efficacy was measured with a single item asking respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the following statement: "Politics is too complicated for me to understand". Responses were indicated on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 = "strongly agree" to 3 = "strongly disagree". Hence, higher values on this measure indicate higher levels of internal political efficacy.

External political efficacy was measured with a single item asking respondents to indicate the extent to which they think the government responds to what people want on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 = "very low" to 10 = "very high". Hence, higher values on this measure indicate higher levels of external political efficacy.

Trust in central government was measured with a single item asking respondents to indicate the extent to which they trusted the central government on 11-point scale ranging from 0 = "very low" to 10 = "very high". Hence, higher values on this measure indicate higher levels of trust in the central government.

Table S1. Item-Level Correlations for Binary Political Position Generator Items

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(1) Party or government cadre	1.000							
(2) Public security cadre	0.4496	1.000						
(3) People's Congress member	0.3216	0.3194	1.000					
(4) CPPCC	0.2528	0.2973	0.3403	1.000				
(5) Military	0.2516	0.2638	0.1657	0.1950	1.000			
(6) Journalist	0.1180	0.1635	0.1185	0.1986	0.1658	1.000		
(7) Social organization staff	0.1002	0.1047	0.1391	0.1837	0.1823	0.3561	1.000	
(8) Lawyer	0.2471	0.2868	0.1804	0.1785	0.2123	0.3493	0.3391	1.000

Table S2. Item-Level Correlations for Rank Items

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
(1) Party or government cadre	1.000			
(2) Public security cadre	0.4496	1.000		
(3) People's Congress member	0.3216	0.3194	1.000	
(4) CPPCC	0.2528	0.2973	0.3403	1.000

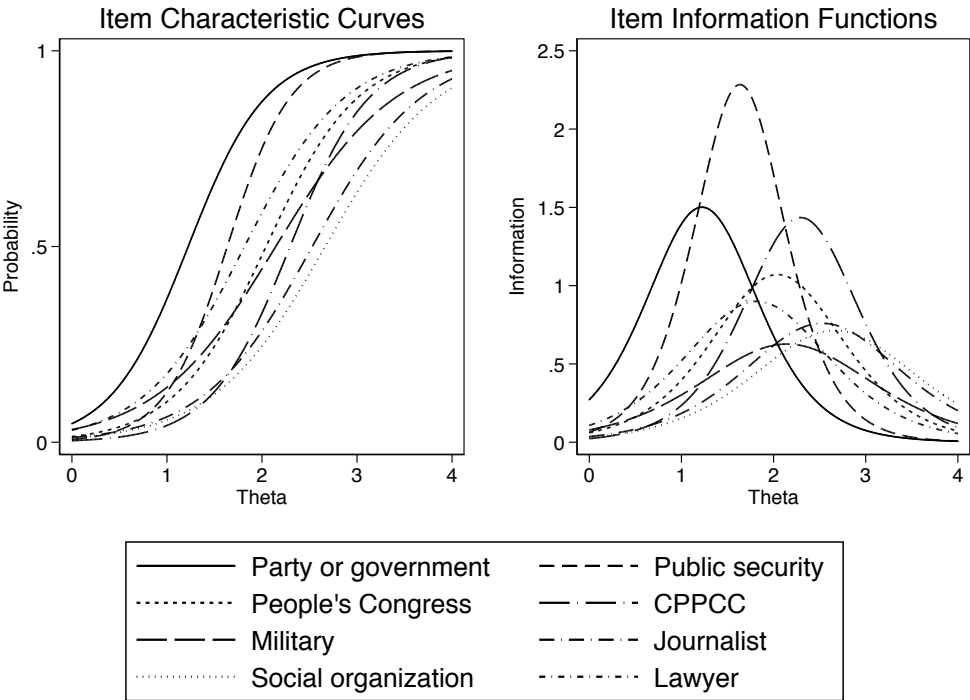*Note.* The question on rank was asked for the four positions within the party-state apparatus only.

Table S3. Item-Level Correlations for Tie Strength Items

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(5) Party or government cadre	1.000							
(6) Public security cadre	0.4496	1.000						
(7) People's Congress member	0.3216	0.3194	1.000					
(8) CPPCC	0.2528	0.2973	0.3403	1.000				
(9) Military	0.2516	0.2638	0.1657	0.1950	1.000			
(10) Journalist	0.1180	0.1635	0.1185	0.1986	0.1658	1.000		
(11) Social organization staff	0.1002	0.1047	0.1391	0.1837	0.1823	0.3561	1.000	
(12) Lawyer	0.2471	0.2868	0.1804	0.1785	0.2123	0.3493	0.3391	1.000

Table S4. Multiple Correspondence Analysis Results – Dimensional Structure

Dimension	Principal Inertia	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Dimension 1	0.0546	89.00%	89.00%
Dimension 2	0.0014	2.38%	91.28%

Figure S1. Item Characteristic Curves and Item Information Functions for Binary Political Position Generator Items

Note. All analyses conducted with survey weights.