

Why Was There No Fashion in Mao's China?

Effects of Politics on Culture in the Case of Chinese Naming Practices *

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Why Was There No Fashion Under Mao?

Effects of Politics on Culture in the Case of Chinese Naming Practices

Abstract

We examine the popularity distribution of given names prior, during, and after Mao Zedong's rule over the People's Republic of China to clarify how exogenous and endogenous factors act together in shaping cultural change. Whereas recent work in the sociology of culture emphasizes the importance of endogenous processes in explaining fashion (Kaufman 2004), our analysis demonstrates two ways that Mao's regime impacted cultural expression, even in a domain that was largely untouched by its radical cultural policies: (a) by promoting forms of expression reflecting legitimate political ideologies; and (b) by creating a general feeling of insecurity, whereby citizens fear that any public expression of difference could signal political disloyalty. As argued by Lieberman (2000; Lieberman and Lynn 2003) and developed further in this paper, the latter condition is important because endogenous fashion cycles require a critical mass of individuals who seek to differentiate themselves from common practice. Our analysis suggests how exogenous and endogenous mechanisms interact, with the former setting the conditions for the operation of the latter; our analysis also sheds light on the nature of conformity under authoritarian regimes as well as the social conditions supporting individual expression.

A weak person steers clear of individualization; he avoids dependence upon self with its responsibilities and the necessity of defending himself unaided. He finds protection only in the typical form of life...

-- Simmel 1957 [1904]: p.550).

Our generation used to live for others, for our parents, for our country, worst of all, for the opinions of others. We always worried about how others would respond to our words and deeds.

-- "Lingmu," a survivor of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (Wen 1995: 144)

I. INTRODUCTION

When viewing a group photograph of China from the Maoist period, one is struck by obvious similarities in individuals' appearance, many of whom are likely to be wearing nearly identical "Mao suits," or buttoned-up jackets with rounded collars and four patch pockets with flaps.² And such a photograph might look very much the same whether it was taken in 1960 or 1975. More generally, it would seem that there was very little "fashion" during Mao's rule over China (1949-1976), where the lack of fashion is indicated by a high degree of uniformity in cultural expression at a given period in time, and little change across periods in what is popular (see Lieberson 2000). This casual impression that Mao's China was marked by a lack of fashion-- and the corresponding impression that the contemporary period is marked by greater cultural variety and change-- requires more systematic validation. But assuming this impression is correct, what explains it?

² According to Garrett (2007: 218), the Mao suit (actually, a Western term, not used by the Chinese) was originally a "military garment" associated with Sun Yatsen, and was "worn by Chairman Mao Zedong and leaders of the Communist Party at the founding ceremony in Tiananmen Square on October 1, 1949," thus symbolizing the Communists' inheritance of Sun's Republican mantle (and Sun's status as the "forerunner of the revolution"). "It would eventually be worn by everyone the length and breadth of the country, regardless of sex, age, or class (ibid)."

Recent scholarship on cultural change directs us to the importance of endogenous rather than exogenous factors in explaining fashion. By "exogenous" (or "external"; see Kaufman 2004), we mean those factors that either: (a) influence the *supply* of cultural material with which individuals can express themselves, as instantiated in the production of culture perspective (see Peterson and Anand 2004 for review), or (b) influence individuals' *demand* for particular forms of cultural expression, as exemplified by various forms of "reflection theory" (see Albrecht 1954; Griswold 1981; Kaufman 2004). As against such exogenous factors, "endogenous" (or internal) processes drive cultural change in a manner that is "large(ly) ... independen(t) from historical events (Robinson 1976: 1138)" and instead reflect processes that are internal to the cultural domain in question (see Kaufman 2004; cf., Griswold 1981; Laslett 1976; Meyersohn and Katz 1957). In short, fashion is its own engine of change. For instance, while the rise of the miniskirt in the 1960s is sometimes interpreted as reflecting the influence of the women's movement, it may have been driven solely by long-term cycles in women's fashion concerning hemlines, whereby the impetus to engage in marginal differentiation cumulates in significant change (cf., Richardson and Kroeber 1940; Lieberman 2000: 93-98).

Lieberman's (2000) analysis of changes in the popularity of "first" or "given" names³ provides what is perhaps the strongest empirical support for the importance of endogenous processes in relation to exogenous factors (see also Besnard 1994; Salganik, Dodds, and Watts 2006; Salganik and Watts 2008). Parents' choice of given names is a particularly useful test case due to the irrelevance of commercial interests and, more generally, any exogenous factors associated with the supply of cultural material. At the same time, given names have important consequences for a range of social and economic outcomes (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004;

³ According to Chinese convention, given names follow surnames. So, we to avoid confusion we avoid the term "first name."

Aura and Hess 2010), so this is not decision that parents take lightly. And Lieberman (2000: Chapter 3) shows that various exogenous factors that might cause shifts in demand for names with particular cultural content are relatively unimportant as compared with endogenous mechanisms.

Yet despite the increasing evidence for the importance of endogenous processes in Western naming fashion, exogenous political factors likely played important roles in limiting fashion in Mao's China. This seems obvious when we consider the first exogenous factor-- the supply of cultural material. The Maoist regime's monopoly of the production, distribution, and importing of cultural (and many other) products meant that even Chinese who wished to deviate from common cultural practices were limited in their ability to do so. To return to the case of the Mao suit, a major factor behind its widespread adoption was that due to the rationing of thread and cloth during the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961), "there was little choice to wear clothes until they fell apart, or buy a Mao suit (Garrett 2007: 219)." Since the Maoist regime's control over cultural production represents an obvious constraint on many areas of cultural expression, we follow Lieberman and other recent researchers (see Besnard 1994; Berger and LeMens 2009; Gerhards and Hackenbroch 2000; Gerhards 2005; Gerhards and Hans 2009; Sue and Telles 2007) and focus on a cultural domain where cultural production is irrelevant: fashion in given names. And we argue that this focus provides a unique lens for seeing how two exogenous features of the political context may shape cultural expression generally, and fashion dynamics in particular (see also Besnard 1994).

The first, which we label the "politicized menu effect," is based on the second type of exogenous factor described above-- i.e., the reflection-theoretic idea that certain forms of cultural

expression will be more popular because they reflect popular ideas or a *zeitgeist* (see Meyersohn and Katz 1957: 596). While Lieberman did not find strong evidence for such an effect, there are two reasons to expect such an effect in Mao's China: (a) most Chinese names are meaningful words (whereas the meaning of Western names and especially English names is generally unknown to the users of such names), thus making naming choices more susceptible to influence by political conditions that make certain meanings legitimate and others illegitimate (cf., Weitman 1987); and (b) the Maoist regime engaged in a series of aggressive interventions in cultural expression that has no parallel in any of the countries studied by Lieberman—and perhaps has no precedent in human history. Accordingly, there is some evidence of politicized naming during the early stages of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976; see Friedman, Pickowicz, and Selden 2005: 101; Lu 1989). And yet, since there was no specific Maoist policy regarding given names (and Maoist leaders specifically renounced this focus in the early Cultural Revolution; see below), and since there are features of Chinese naming patterns that promote much greater differentiation than in Western naming (as we discuss below), there is some question of how significant was the preference for “political” names during the Maoist regime, and to what extent this might have limited the extent of fashion. Thus the first contribution of our study is to provide the most systematic analysis to date of this question.

Our second contribution involves refining and validating an additional way by which features of political context may shape cultural expression—i.e., by triggering or dampening endogenous processes. Observe that while exogenous and endogenous processes are analytically distinct, they are necessarily linked. In particular, while *a change in fashion* may be driven by endogenous processes, it seems necessary to posit some exogenous factor to explain *fashion itself*-- i.e., why some social contexts are marked by more fashion than others. Accordingly,

Lieberson (2000: 66-68) posits a range of exogenous factors-- summarized as "the rise of individualism"-- as possible explanations for why naming patterns in the West underwent a 19th century phase-shift from being governed by tradition (with very little variety and change) to being governed by fashion (greater variety and change). Underlying such a phase-shift is an underlying shift in the typical person's "taste for popularity" (TFP)—i.e., his or her desire to differentiate from, rather than conform to, common forms of cultural expression (Lieberson and Lynn 2003). But the case of the rise of individualism in the West is of limited analytic utility because of the many factors involved, and because it suggests that endogenous processes can be "turned on," but perhaps not "turned off" by exogenous factors. Our analysis of Maoist China addresses each of these issues.

We argue that the imposition and the removal of the Maoist regime triggered two shifts in the average TFP, first limiting the predilection to differentiate and then encouraging it, and thereby first increasing and then decreasing the degree of fashion in Chinese society. The key mechanism in this process is suggested by Simmel (1957), in the epigraphical quotation taken from his classic essay on fashion: the unconventionality that is the engine of fashion cycles is avoided by people who are "weak" or insecure (see Phillips and Zuckerman 2001). Based on the literature on authoritarianism generally, and that on Mao's China in particular, we argue that this condition of insecurity was pervasive because expressions of loyalty to the regime were not credible. Authoritarian regimes produce a "politics of (public) dissimulation" (see Jowitt 1974; cf., Havel 1986; Kuran 1995; Pfaff 2006; Scott 1990; Straughn 2005; Wedeen 1999), the most general form of which is to avoid appearing different from one's fellow citizens. Accordingly, we show a marked absence of fashion during the Maoist period, especially in Beijing, and even after taking into account the rise in political names as well as other policy-related changes (the

one-child policy and the changing status of women). Thus, our second contribution is to provide support for the idea that cultural variety and change are stultified by a general desire for "protection... in the typical form of life (Simmel 1957 [1904]: p.550);" and that conversely, robust fashion cycles reflect a greater sense of security that expressions of mere difference will not be interpreted as deviance.

We organize the rest of the paper as follows. In the next section, we use a computational model to help clarify the assumptions and implications of each the two mechanisms that we argue had an effect on Chinese naming fashion—the “politicized menu” effect, and the “TFP-shift” effect. In the following sections, we provide background on Chinese naming practices and then provide an historical overview that develops our hypotheses about how the Mao’s regime limited variety and change in naming practices: (a) by channeling cultural expression towards a restricted menu of politically legitimate content; and (b) by limited citizens’ willingness to act differently from their fellow Chinese. Next, we discuss the data we collected and present our results. We conclude by drawing lessons for how exogenous conditions interact with endogenous cultural change, for the nature of conformity in authoritarian regimes, and for the social foundations of individual expression.

II. MECHANISMS BY WHICH POLITICS CAN SHIFT THE EXTENT OF FASHION

The Politicized Menu Effect

Insofar as changing political conditions might affect the amount of fashion in a cultural domain (i.e., the extent to which there is variety of cultural expression at a given point in time, and change in such expression across time points; see Lieberman 2000), two mechanisms could be

responsible. The first mechanism, which we label the “politicized menu effect,” is straightforward. Let us assume that individuals are indifferent to how others choose to express themselves such that cultural practices are either chosen randomly (e.g., parents are indifferent as to what names to give their children) or selected based on personal preferences for content (e.g., some parents just like certain names and others like other names-- and they do not care if they are alone or one of many with such preferences). And let us assume that all individuals select from the same, large “menu” of practices that are regarded in the culture as appropriate for the particular form of cultural expression (e.g., English names must use some combination of letters that is pronounceable by English speakers). Under these assumptions, one way that a political regime could influence the degree of fashion would be by altering this menu. All things equal, if the regime’s ideology has the effect of delegitimizing certain options and/or privileging other options, this would reduce the number of practices chosen by citizens at any point in time. And if the regime's ideology remains stable over some period of time, this would have the effect of limiting cultural change. Conversely, if the political regime were to relax its control over the menu of political expression, or if the regime’s ideology were to change, cultural variety and change should increase.

The TFP-Shift Effect

While the “politicized menu effect” represents a highly plausible explanation for how political conditions shape the degree of fashion in a population, much prior theory and research suggests that individuals do not simply select practices randomly or based on preferences for content, but based on their relative prevalence in a population—what Lieberman and Lynn (2003) label individuals’ “taste for popularity” (see also Lieberman 2000; Varnum and Kitayama 2011; cf.,

Berger and LeMens 2009).⁴ Below we will elaborate on why people are sensitive to the popularity of cultural practices, and what social conditions affect an individual's taste for popularity (TFP). In particular, we will develop the idea (drawn from the literatures on status and conformity, and dissimulation under authoritarian rule) that TFPs are a decreasing function of security in group membership. But for now, it is sufficient to observe that in selecting a cultural practice (e.g., what clothing to wear, what music to consume), individuals typically prefer a practice that is not so common that they resemble everyone else (e.g., it is awkward when one finds that one has selected exactly the same outfit as others), and not so rare that one's cultural competence or commitment to group becomes questionable (e.g., wearing pajamas to a dinner party). That is, individuals generally pursue some balance between conformity and differentiation, so as to attain membership while also gaining distinction (Simmel 1957; cf., Brewer 1991; Deephouse 1999; Porac, Thomas, and Baden-Fuller 2011; Zuckerman 1999). And while it is difficult to observe tastes-for-popularity directly, Lieberman and Lynn (2003) use General Social Survey data to show that there is a significantly positive correlation among the popularity of the names given to children within the same family, thus suggesting that this is fairly stable trait (given social and economic conditions) that reflects the social situation of parents, and which varies in the population (see also Varnum and Kitayama 2011).

We now build on Lieberman and Lynn (2003) to clarify a second mechanism by which political conditions might shift the degree of fashion in a population, what we label the “TFP shift effect.” Consider first how variation in TFP *within* a population acts as an endogenous

⁴ Other lines of research—most notably, those on neighborhood change (see Granovetter 1978; Granovetter and Soong 1983; Schelling 1978; Orser 1994), collective action (Marwell and Oliver 1993), and innovation adoption (e.g., Bass 1969)—explain collective dynamics through reference to “threshold” distributions, whereby action is triggered once an action reaches a threshold of popularity. Following Lieberman, our approach involves two key differences that make it more appropriate for the problem at hand: (a) agents choose from a large number of possible actions; and (b) agents have an ideal point rather than a threshold, such that practices can be too popular, as well as insufficiently popular, for an agent to adopt (or retain).

engine of cultural variety and change, and then how a shift in the TFP distribution would turn off that engine. Assume that the average member of the population prefers practices of moderate popularity, and that various subgroups in the population exhibit continuous variation in their TFP, from those-- the *avant garde*-- who have a strong preference for rare practices and a corresponding aversion to common practices—to “laggards” who prefer practices of the greatest popularity, and avoid rare practices (cf., Rogers 2003). Under these conditions, once the *avant garde* make a rare practice somewhat popular, it will be adopted by subgroups with ever lower mean TFP, and the practice diffuses until it is embraced by the conformists. But as it diffuses, it becomes too popular for the *avant garde*, which then turns to new practices. It is clear that such a system will feature variation in cultural practices in any point in time. And we can see that such a TFP distribution will generate significant change over time in the cultural practices that are observed. That is, the system should exhibit fashion dynamics.

And this mechanism underlies a second way politics might lead to the decline of fashion in addition to reducing the menu of legitimate cultural material. Consider that at one extreme, if all population members have a very high TFP, there will be no longer be an *avant garde* to create cultural variety and serve as the engine of change. Thus, if exogenous (political) conditions can shift the average TFP towards this extreme (or towards the other extreme where differentiation is sought) this will dampen (or trigger) fashion. As detailed in Appendix A, we constructed a simple computation model to clarify this mechanism, to explore its scope conditions, and examine how it interacts with the politicized menu effect. In the model, individuals adopt a practice from a menu based on the prevalence of practices in the population and the actor’s own preference for popularity. Once all individuals have had an opportunity to change their choices based on an initially random distribution of practices, following Lieberman (2000; cf., Lieberman

and Lynn 2003), we examine two characteristics of the realized distribution: (a) *concentration*, measured by the proportion of population that adopts one of the top n (*top 10 or 50*) most popular practices; and (b) *turnover*, measured by the degree to which the popularity distribution changes from one period to a later period, controlling for concentration (see Lieberman and Lynn 2003).⁵

This simple model illustrates how a shift in the TFP distribution toward a preference for popular practices leads to the decline in fashion. The results for concentration (see figure 1) suggest that, especially for distributions with a high standard deviation, the higher the mean of the TFP distribution, the more concentrated is the distribution of cultural practices. This indicates that a population with a higher average TFP will have a lower diversity of cultural practices than populations with a lower average TFP. The results for turnover (see figure 2) suggest that especially for distributions with a high standard deviation, the higher the mean of the TFP distribution, the lower is the turnover of cultural practices. This indicates that a population with a higher average TFP over time will have less change in most popular practices than populations with populations with a lower average TFP. In sum, our simulation results suggest that a shift in TFP toward preferences for conformity is likely to increase concentration and reduce turnover, and thus can lead to a decline of fashion in a cultural domain.

FIGURES 1 AND 2 ABOUT HERE

III. CHINESE GIVEN NAMES

⁵ Our measure of turnover adjusts for the potential effects of changes in concentration on turnover. Consider that if the rank of the names remained stable, but overall the concentration declines, Lieberman's (2000) measure that uses actual frequencies with which names appear in the population to calculate turnover, would find an increase in turnover. In contrast, instead of actual frequency of usage, we calculated "adjusted turnover" under the assumption that the distribution of names follows a power law. Based on the name's rank, we assign each name an expected frequency of usage based on all historical periods for which we have data. This ensures that across time periods in which concentration changes, names of similar rank contribute comparable amount to changes in adjusted turnover. For a more complete discussion of these issues, see Zhang, Obukhova and Zuckerman (2011).

Having clarified two possible mechanisms by which political conditions could cause a decline in fashion, we next provide historical and theoretical support for our argument that each of these mechanisms played a role in the decline of fashion under Mao, and specifically in the case of given names. Before doing so, it is worth emphasizing certain distinctive aspects of Chinese naming practices, in addition to the critical one mentioned above—i.e., that Chinese names are largely based on words whose meaning is salient to users (see also Weitman 1987). It is also important to note that traditionally Chinese names have three parts, each represented by a single character: a surname, a generational name (given to all members of a family born in a given generation), and a given name. In recent years, generational names have fallen into disuse, and two-character given names have become common. Note as well that while historically, many girls did not receive given names, giving girls given names became universal practice during the early years of the People's Republic of China. We discuss the implications of this change below.

Two additional aspects of Chinese given naming practices imply that Chinese naming fashion differ in characteristic ways from those typical in the West. First, a distinctive aspect of traditional Chinese naming practices is the general custom of “family avoidance,” or a taboo against using the names of an ancestor (Sung 1981: 87-88). This means that Chinese avoid naming individuals after living or dead relatives, thus decreasing concentration and increasing the degree of turnover (cf., Rossi 1965). Second, little constrains the supply of cultural material, both because any character can be a name and because there is a much stronger tendency to choose uncommon names (Sung 1981:88; Watson 1986: 622). The key reason for this is the latter is that the Chinese language has a very limited number of surnames: only 5,652 Chinese surnames have ever been recorded (Hang 1981, cited in Zhu and Millward 1987:9). As a result, concentration in given names can lead to confusion. Thus Watson (*ibid.*) reports that “the

Chinese find the idea of sharing one's given name with millions of other people extraordinary" and Sung (ibid) describes official policies on name-changing by the Taiwanese government, which are designed to avoid confusion among people with the same name.⁶ This has a critical implication for our analysis. We will see much lower rates of concentration in our data than Lieberman reports in the West, even in the most recent periods when Western naming is driven by fashion dynamics. At the same time, we expect to see significant shifts towards *greater* concentration (and lower turnover) under Mao.

IV. THE TWO MECHANISMS IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In this section, we provide an historical overview that develops two interlocking but distinct themes that are the basis for our hypotheses, which apply the politicized menu effect and the TFP-shift effect to the case of fashion in Chinese given names. For each theme, we first discuss the effects in general and then in the context of given names.

Relevance of the Politicized Menu Effect

General Restrictions on the Menu of Cultural Expression

There may be no historical example that approximates the extreme measures adopted by the Maoist to promote certain forms of cultural expression and to mark others as illegitimate. In form, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) followed the Soviet model (see Crozier 2008) of placing all production, distribution and importing of cultural artifacts in the People's Republic of

⁶ Similar restrictions are known in certain labor markets. For example, the Screen Actors Guild does not allow two members to have the same name (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stage_name). This represents an important impetus for the generation of unusual names in Hollywood.

China (PRC) under the Department of Culture, which in turn reported to the Department of Propaganda. But Maoist attempts to control and shape Chinese culture were more far-reaching, with intellectuals and the arts positioned in a leading role for reshaping Chinese society, following the credo that “politics was in command” (ibid). Accordingly, Mao and Premier Zhou Enlai both spoke at the First National Congress of Literary and Art Workers held in August 1949 (three months prior to the official declaration of the PRC), as Mao told the thousands of participants: “You are useful to the revolution and to the people (Galikowski 1998, p.12).” Also at this congress, in a foreshadowing of Chinese intellectuals’ public submission to the role assigned to them by Mao, the prominent painter Ye Qianyu admitted many shortcomings in his work and that of the artists who had not been under Communist control (“individualism,” “remoteness from the masses,” excessive reliance on “western bourgeois artistic methods and aesthetic values”), and called for artists to study Mao Zedong Thought, and “unite with the workers, peasants and soldiers to struggle for a new China (Galikowski 1998, p.13).”

In addition to being unique in the extent of its intervention in Chinese culture, the Maoist system featured two distinctive features that carried out such intervention: the political campaign and public criticism. The most notorious of these political campaigns was the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), but it was preceded by (and included within it) a series of other campaigns: the “Thought Reform” movement of 1950-1951, the 1954 campaign against the literary critic Yu Pingpo, the 1955 movement against writer Hu Feng, the anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957-1958, the anti-Rightist Deviation Movement that accompanied the Great Leap Forward (1958-1961), the Socialist Education Movement (1963-1964), and the Anti-Confucian campaign

(1973-1974).⁷ Each of these campaigns featured brutal repression of intellectuals (exile to labor camps and collective farms, imprisonment, and execution⁸) who dared to express ideas that were viewed as illegitimate by the Maoist regime (or to advocate for tolerance of those who expressed such views). In addition, a distinct element of these campaigns was that those even peripherally involved with a delegitimized practice were implicated (Zhou 1993) and many had to deliver public criticism and self-criticism that reinforced the boundaries for appropriate behavior.

Such practices permeated life in Maoist China, as Maoist policies were promulgated and enforced via a system of control at all levels of society that had no parallel in the rest of the Communist world.⁹ The most widespread feature of this system was the *public criticisms* that regularly occurred at meetings organized by the Party throughout every workplace and neighborhood (Whyte 1974; Whyte, Vogel, and Parish 1977). At such meetings, whose methods represented a sharp break from traditional Confucian culture, with its “emphasis on maintaining harmony and avoiding conflict in interpersonal relationships” (Whyte 1974: 22; Yuan, Kuiper, and Shu 1990: 62-63), Marxist-Leninist ideas (in highly simplified versions to support Party policies) were “studied,” new Party policies were publicized and promoted, and participants were criticized and induced into making self-criticisms (Whyte 1974). These discussions and attacks were highly ritualized (see Yuan, Kuiper, and Shu 1990) and they escalated (especially during the Cultural Revolution) into hundred-person “struggle meetings” and mass (tens of thousands of participants) rallies of “public criticism” in large stadiums, during which time a victim (often

⁷ For the campaigns of the 1950s, see (Chen 1959, Galikowski 1998). For later campaigns, see especially Goldman (1982), and see below for references to the Cultural Revolution.

⁸ In 1958, Mao bragged to Party cadres that while Emperor Qin Shi Huang (259 BCE – 210 BCE) was reviled for having buried 460 scholars alive, “We have buried forty-six thousand scholars alive.... We have surpassed Qin Shi Huang a hundredfold...” (see Lieberthal 2003: 71).

⁹ Chang and Halliday (2006: 635) note how distinctive this approach was: “Stalin had carried out his purges using ... the KGB, who swiftly hustled their victims out of sign to prison, the gulag or death. Mao made sure that much violence and humiliation was carried out in public, and he vastly increased the number of persecutors by getting his victims tormented and tortured by their direct subordinates.”

wearing a dunce cap and a placard that proclaimed his crime, and echoed by similar messages on the many “Big Character Posters” throughout the space) would have to adopt a painful, submissive posture and endure denunciations of his failings and his character for many hours, with such condemnation often issued by family members and coworkers.

We conclude our review of the ways the Maoist regime politicized the menu of Chinese cultural expression by noting two ways that such intervention shifted during the Cultural Revolution, which began in the spring of 1966 and ended with Mao’s death, in 1976. First, the instrument of ideological control shifted from the ministries of the state (which were purged by Mao) to a small group of Mao loyalists (first, the Central Cultural Revolution Small Group and Defense Minister Lin Biao, and then the Gang of Four), with various elements in society (student Red Guards, then worker groups of Revolutionary Rebels, and then the People’s Liberation Army) being used to enforce such control. Second, repression of culture broadened and deepened to virtually any conceivable form of cultural expression. Specifically, during the summer and fall of 1966, student Red Guards went on violent rampages attacking any manifestation of the “Four Olds” decried by Mao: old habits, old routines, old thoughts, old culture (see e.g., MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006: 102-54; Yan and Gao 1996: 56-92; Walder 2009: 123-54; Wen 1995). The methods of delegitimizing cultural practices were public and violent and included mass rallies in large stadiums, where thousands of books and articles clothing or books that were deemed “bourgeois” or “feudal” were burned in large bonfires; the closing of schools, the elimination of textbooks and humiliating attacks on teachers; forced haircuts administered to women with hairstyle that were deemed “decadent” or “bourgeois”, the elimination of horticulture as a feudal practice; and the banning of virtually all music except for that associated with Mao’s cult of personality (most famously, “the East is Red”). These

strictures remained effectively in place for the next ten years even as the Red Guards themselves were soon replaced (and then purged) as Mao's instruments of control (see e.g., MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006; Yan and Gao 1996; but see also Clark 2008). However, much of the fervor had subsided by 1968.

The Politicized Menu Effect on Naming Practices

Thus through direct control over arts and culture, political campaigns, and public criticism that permeated all levels of society, the Maoist regime reduced the menu of cultural practices that individuals could choose from, thus potentially leading to a decline of fashion. And there is also good reason to believe that the Maoist politicization of the cultural menu extended to the content of names. In particular, existing research suggests that name-changing was a prominent feature of the early stages of the Cultural Revolution. As summarized by MacFarquhar and Schoenhals (2006: 114-115):

Perhaps the most harmless part of the movement was the changing of names—streets, shops, schools, theaters, restaurants, hospitals, newspapers, journals, even the Red Guards' own given name, indeed anything that had a name in the given place. Personal names were changed from ones with 'feudal' overtones to ones more fitting for a self-designated "revolutionary successor," names like "Protect Biao" [i.e. Lin Biao, Mao's designated successor] or "Defend Qing" [i.e. Jiang Qing, Mao's wife]. ... In Beijing, Zhou Enlai allowed the name of the road on which the Soviet embassy to be located to be officially changed from Yangwei Street to Anti-Revisionism street, as requested by the Red Guards. Foreign journalists who had been specifically invited estimated that the ceremony was attended by close to 100,000 Red Guards. ...

The most famous incident involving changing a given name occurred during the mass rally in August 1966, at which Mao symbolically endorsed the Red Guard movement, by accepting an armband from a middle-school student (who had been involved in the violent

actions that led to the death of a teacher) named Song Binbin. Accounts of this encounter vary, but the report that was publicized in the press described the Red Guard as changing her given name to “Yaowu,” meaning “Be Martial,” rather than “Binbin,” meaning “Refined and courteous.”¹⁰ Lu (1989) also reports students voluntarily changing names from Xue Ru, meaning “to learn from Confucius” to “Xue Biao,” meaning “to learn from Lin Biao,” who at the time was regarded as Mao’s potential successor. Another student was forced to change the name from “Zhongli,” meaning “remain neutral” to Zuo meaning “left”.

Such incidents provide a basis for expecting a general politicization of given names, especially during the Cultural Revolution. Accordingly, Lu’s (1989) study of students in Nianjing shows a high incidence of “political” names among children born during the Cultural Revolution, and Friedman et al. (2005: 101) report that about half of the children who were born during the “high tide of the” Cultural Revolution in the model village of Wugong in Hebei province were given “revolutionary” names.¹¹

In sum, because in Mao’s China because some practices were legitimized, while others publicly delegitimized, individuals likely adopted given names with political content expressing loyalty to the regime, leading us to expect that cultural diversity should decline. This yields a straightforward two-part hypothesis about why we would expect to see an absence of fashion in

¹⁰ Slight variations on this story appear in various accounts (see Honig 2002: 259; Lu 1989: 268; MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006: 108; Hinton 2003).

¹¹ Note that while the dramatic stories from the outset of the Cultural Revolution suggest that the regime was focused on naming, this focus was short-lived. There are no historical reports indicating that there was attention to the legitimacy of names after August 1966 and by December 1966, Premier Zhou repudiated the extent of the name-changing. Citing Mao’s authority, he told a group of Red Guards that “As for names, as long as they’re not too feudal or too backward, then they’re all right” (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006: 116). We are aware of no historical research that documents attempts by the regime to legitimize or privilege certain names, either before or after the early Cultural Revolution. In this respect, the Maoist intervention into naming was far less extensive than that implemented by other regimes in various historical periods and settings (e.g., French legal code long had guidelines for legitimate names, the German “Namensänderungsverordnung” policy of 1938, or Turkish restrictions on Kurdish names [Aslan 2009]). That said, Maoist cultural policies can be expected to create an atmosphere that indirectly politicized the menu of given names.

Maoist China, even for a practice that was not subject to the regime's control over cultural production:

Politicized Menu Hypotheses:

(A) The Maoist period was associated with higher popularity of "political" names.

And insofar as: (i) the focus on political names implies a sharp reduction in the overall menu of possible names; and (ii) the politicized menu exhibited relatively little change during the Maoist period, this implies that:

(B) The Maoist period was associated with lower diversity in popular names at a given point in time, and less change over time.

The TFP-Shift Effect

In addition to restricting the menu of legitimate names, we contend that the conditions set by the Maoist regime were such that they induced a shift in the taste-for-popularity (TFP) distribution, dampening the endogenous processes that drive fashion. This argument derives from complementary lessons provided by the literature on status and conformity and the literature on "dissimulation" under authoritarianism, as well as specific aspects of Mao's regime. The relevant lesson from the former literature (see Phillips and Zuckerman 2001 for review) is that individuals who wish to be regarded as a member of a social category by the audience that controls access to that category must feel a sense of security or "unquestioned (category) membership" (Hughes 1946), in order publicly to engage in practices that are unusual among

category members. In many contexts, high-status individuals are more likely to feel such security because the high public evaluation implied by the attribution of status means that the audience takes their competence and commitment for granted, thus allowing them to express difference with the confidence that such difference will not raise questions about their competence or commitment (see Phillips, Turco, and Zuckerman 2011).¹² Accordingly, Simmel (1957) argues that the tendency to conform rather than differentiate reflects the “weakness” of an actor’s social position.

Moreover, while this line of reasoning has generally been used to explain differential tendencies towards conformity and differentiation *within* a group or society, the literature on conformity under authoritarianism (see Jowitt 1974; cf., Havel 1986; Kuran 1995; Pfaff 2006; Scott 1990; Straughn 2005; Wedeen 1999)¹³ suggests that the authoritarian state creates conditions (relative to more liberal, democratic regimes) where *virtually everyone* (including Party officials; see Walder 2010) is in a state of significant insecurity, and thus feels pressure publicly to conform to official norms. As suggested by Pfaff (2006: 24; cf., Hirschman 1970: 96), the reason authoritarian regimes in general, and Leninist regimes in particular, produce a general condition of insecurity is because they eliminate citizens’ options for either “exit” or “voice,” and this thereby renders citizens’ expressions of “loyalty” suspect. The elimination of exit via rules against emigration (and regional migration), coupled with the monopolization of all life-giving and life-enhancing resources by the state (thereby eliminating “exit” via acquisition of

¹² Note, however, that very low status actors can also be expected to violate membership norms insofar as they are outsiders effectively be barred from recognition as category members. And note that high-status actors may often need to issue a disclaimer that explains why their differentiation is consistent with category membership (while those disclaimers are less effective for lower-status actors; see Hahl and Gosline 2011).

¹³ Defining what is an authoritarian (vs. totalitarian vs. communist) regime is notoriously difficult. Wedeen’s (1999: 26) definition is useful and certainly covers Maoist China, and to a great degree, contemporary China as well: a regime in which “leaders are intolerant of people or groups perceived as threatening to the regime’s monopoly over the institutions of the state, including those state-controlled institutions (the press, radio, television, schools) charged with symbolic production.”

needed resources from non-state entities), means that citizens live in an extreme state of dependence on the state and its representatives (Shirk 1983; Walder 1986). And as is well known, citizens in authoritarian regimes face sharp restrictions on free speech and assembly, especially that which contains criticism of the regime.

Indeed, while citizens in authoritarian regimes are not allowed to express criticism of the regime, they are often encouraged and even *required* to express loyalty to it (Weeden 1999), as exemplified by Maoist methods of public criticism and self-criticism. Since such expressions of loyalty are (known by everyone to be) effectively coerced, and they are made in a context where citizens have no alternative to dependence on the state and cannot voice their true opinions, they are regarded as acts of “dissimulation” (Jowitt 1974), a politics of “as if” in which most citizens conform with legitimized forms of political expression because it is required of them (Weeden 1999). Consider, for example the following dialogue that was recounted in a memoir of the Cultural Revolution:

‘Doesn’t your position as a delegate to the Political Consultative Conference give you some protection?’ I asked my friend (Li Chen).¹⁴

‘I hear the Maoists want to abolish that organization. *They call it a collection of radishes, red on the outside but white inside.* They claim that while all the delegates talked as [p.73] if they supported the Communist Party, in actual fact they oppose the party,’ she said.

‘Is that true?’

‘Who knows? *When the penalty of speaking one’s mind is so great, nobody knows what anybody else thinks,*’ Li Chen said. I had to agree with her. In fact, after living in Communist China for so many years, I realized that one of the advantages enjoyed by a democratic government which allows freedom of speech is that the government knows exactly who supports it and who is against it, while

¹⁴ Li Chen was the head of the piano department at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. According to the memoir’s author, Li committed suicide (one of thousands during this period) at her piano, unable to resist the pressure from the Red Guards.

the totalitarian government knows nothing of what the people really think.’
(Cheng 1986: 74, emphasis added)

The logic of the foregoing discussion has been thus far employed by scholars to explain the public expressions of loyalty witnessed in authoritarian regimes. Such expressions of political loyalty have rightfully commanded scholars’ attention because they seem the most politically consequential and because they are hard to understand given the repression that such citizens seem to experience as well as the rapidity with which such citizens seem to change their views once the regime falls (Kuran 1995). But this line of reasoning can be taken a step further to reflect a more subtle symptom of authoritarian rule—i.e., *a general tendency to avoid rare cultural practices and embrace common practices, even when these practices have no ostensible political content*. Insofar as everyone (except the authoritarian leader) is suspect of disloyalty in such a regime, and insofar as there are grave consequences when one is marked as disloyal, it is foolish to take actions that deliberately involve separating oneself from one’s fellow citizens because it could raise suspicion about one’s commitment to the regime. When anyone can be accused of harboring a desire to undermine the regime, why would a citizen do anything to stand out? When everyone’s membership is in question (cf., Hughes 1948) because their commitment to the regime is suspect, no one experiences the security necessary to express difference from others.

The TFP-Shift Effect on Naming Practices

The prior discussion provides historical and theoretical support for the argument that cultural expression under Mao should be subject to the TFP-shift effect, whereby the high level of insecurity produced a pronounced distaste for unpopular cultural practices. And our

computational model illustrates how such a shift should dampen endogenous fashion processes, thus increasing uniformity of cultural expression at a particular point in time (see figure 1) and decreasing the rate of change in the popularity distribution of such expression (see figure 2).

We believe that Chinese given names are particularly likely to be subject to this effect. Since they are all-purpose markers of identity that individuals use across social situations, and particularly in interactions with the state, parents should be especially conservative in choosing given names for their children. It is important to note in this regard that it is very common in China, as in other cultures, to use pet names or nicknames within one's family or local community (on "milk" names, see Sung 1981: 69-70 and on nicknames, see Zhu and Millward 1987: 18-20). Moreover, the Chinese often avoid using official given names in interaction among friends or even acquaintances, and instead use fictive kinship terms such as "older sister" etc. As such, official names are expressly designed for interactions with the state and in public situations (Scott, Tehranian, and Mathias 2002) that in Maoist China, were all dominated by representatives of the state.

In sum, since the Maoist Period induced a general state of insecurity, it induced a shift in the TFP distribution towards a higher mean TFP. And. This implies that relative to later and earlier periods, the Maoist period should be associated with less fashion:

TFP-Shift Hypothesis:

Insofar as Chinese parents experienced heightened insecurity in expressing difference from others during the Maoist regime, it induced a shift in the TFP distribution towards a higher mean TFP, this implies that that:

The Maoist period was associated with lower diversity in popular names at a given point in time (as shown in figure 1) and less change over time, even for non-political names (as shown in figure 2).

V. CLARIFYING THE EMPIRICAL IMPLICATIONS

Before proceeding to the empirical tests of our hypotheses, it is important to discuss four points of clarification, regarding: (a) the relationship between the two hypotheses; (b) periodization, and in particular the implications of the one-child policy and the gradual nature of the Reform period for the timing of the changes in fashion; (c) the geographic boundaries of the populations to which our hypotheses apply; and (d) gender differences.

Relationship between the two hypotheses

First, a clarification of the relationship between the two hypotheses is necessary and helps to suggest the appropriate empirical strategy. In particular, while we expect to see evidence of an increase in political names during the Maoist period (part A of the politicized menu hypothesis) and this could explain a reduction in fashion (part B), two considerations suggest that that this factor cannot fully account for the reduction in fashion we show below. Thus, we expect that *even when we remove the effect of heightened use of political names on concentration and turnover, we will see evidence of the TFP-shift effect in heightened concentration and lower turnover among non-political names.*

The first of the considerations supporting this expectation is that some Chinese parents may have been wary of using a political name to signal their commitment to the regime because

the dramatic, and often rapid, changes in the Party line meant that citizens who publicly expressed commitment to a particular line risked being caught when that line was changed. Perhaps the most famous example of this prior to the Cultural Revolution was the about-face of the Hundred Flowers episode, when those who spoke against the regime when Mao encouraged free expression of criticisms were then purged during the Anti-Rightist Campaign (see Chen 1959; Galikowski 1998). This was repeated in the case of the Cultural Revolution, as it effectively represented a wholesale purge of the CCP organization (extending to Premier Liu Shaoqi and eventually to Army chief Lin Biao) and which therefore required public repudiation of much of what had been accomplished by the PRC prior to the Cultural Revolution, and those who (other than Mao and to some extent Zhou) who had led it. A vivid example of such a reversal is provided by Friedman et al. (2005: 101): a boy who was named Xusu or “emulate the Soviet Union” in the early 1950s; but he then was renamed Pixiu or “criticize revisionism” in a futile attempt to stave off bullying and beating during the Cultural Revolution when the post-Stalin USSR was vilified as having betrayed socialism.

This story also helps illustrate the second, and somewhat paradoxical, reason why politically-legitimate forms of expression may be avoided (and other methods of conformity preferred): since expressions of ideological loyalty are not credible in an environment where loyalty is required, they can raise suspicion when they are overzealous. Li Chen’s account of how members of a Political Consultative Conference were labeled “radishes” is typical of the kinds of accusations that were fundamental to the Cultural Revolution, and which are foreshadowed in earlier campaigns. The Cultural Revolution began with the purge of Party leaders for secretly being an “anti-Party” clique who, according to Zhou Enlai, “raise the red banner to oppose the red banner (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006: 38).” Walder’s (2009;

Dong and Walder 2011) account of the Red Guards in the opening years of the Cultural Revolution provides many examples of how actions taken to demonstrate loyalty to the revolution were attacked by opponents as indicating efforts to hide disloyalty.¹⁵ The implication is that going out of one's way to express loyalty, as reflected in the choice of a political name for one's child, could potentially backfire by raising the question of why the parents were "protesting so much" (cf., Hahl and Gosline 2011; Willer, Kuwabara, and Macy 2009). For many parents, the safer strategy may have been to choose a *common*, politically-neutral name rather than a *political* name.

We do not believe that the foregoing considerations are sufficient to doubt part (A) of the politicized names hypothesis. That is, it seems likely (and consistent with existing evidence) that political names were more common during the Mao era than in periods preceding or following it. And all things equal, this politicized menu effect should then entail the implications in the second part of the hypothesis. However, the foregoing considerations suggest that insofar as there was a significant lack of fashion during the Mao period, it cannot be *fully explained* by this factor. Accordingly, our analytic strategy will be to: (a) demonstrate the lack of fashion in the Maoist period; (b) test for the politicization of names; and (c) test for whether the lack of fashion can be explained by such politicization. Insofar as we find a lack of fashion under Mao even in with respect to non-political names, this will provide indirect support for the TFP-shift hypothesis.

¹⁵ For instance, while those who committed violence were accused of hooliganism and creating chaos in a way to undermine the revolution, those who tried to limit violence were accused of opposing the revolutionary consciousness of the masses. And while those who tried to create organizational structures to manage the revolution were accused of "bureaucraticism" and "arrogantly" suppressing the masses, those who called for more democratic processes were accused of opposing the "proletarian dictatorship" of the Central Cultural Revolution Group (see Walder 2009: 155-202; cf., Dong and Walder 2011).

Periodization: Implications of the One-Child Policy and the Gradual Nature of the Reforms

In order to test our hypotheses, we must clarify the periodization we employ. The inception of Maoist China can be dated fairly precisely to 1949. And one does not need to be a student of China to know that it has experienced a massive transformation since Mao's death in 1976, and that the Reform Period has led to a substantial decrease in each of the effects that are the focus of our analysis—the extent of the state's intervention in Chinese culture and the degree of insecurity in expressing difference. And yet, there are two factors that make it challenging to date the beginning of the period at which we expect fashion in naming to be triggered: (a) the One-Child Policy introduced in 1979; and (b) the gradual (and uncertain) nature of the reform process prior to 1992.

A consideration of the One-Child Policy suggests that we may in fact not see evidence of an increase in fashion in the immediate aftermath of Mao's death because the One-Child Policy likely had an effect on naming fashion that is in exactly the opposite direction of our hypotheses; that is, it implies an *increase* in concentration and a *decline* in turnover. In the early 1970s, with Mao's blessing, Zhou Enlai initiated a campaign aiming to limit families to two-children (Fong 2002). In 1979, China introduced the official One-Child Policy that restricted Han-majority to one child and non-Han minorities to two children (Banister 1987; Greenhalgh 1990). As result of these policies, fertility rates dropped from more than 5 children per woman in 1971 to a little over 2 by 1980 (Banister 1987). By mid-1990, fertility rate dropped to two or fewer children per woman (Hershatter 2004). As discussed in Appendix A, an untended consequence of the One-Child Policy might have been to increase concentration and lower turnover in precisely the same

period where we expect (due to the reduced politicization of the cultural menu and the shift towards lower TFP) a decrease in concentration and higher turnover. The reason for this effect is that families who have multiple children are constrained from giving those children the same given name over time, thus increasing the variety of names in the population and providing a spur for greater turnover. Conversely, a restriction on family size should increase concentration and lower turnover. As a result, the One-Child Policy makes it less likely that patterns in naming fashion will support our hypotheses. And insofar as we do find supporting evidence, this will give our hypotheses even greater credence.¹⁶

A consideration of the second factor—the gradual and uncertain nature of the Reform Period throughout the 1980s—implies that it is not obvious how precisely to date this transition for the purposes of our analysis. While the post-Mao era could potentially be dated from Mao’s death in 1976 or perhaps the show trial of the Gang of Four in 1981, the reform process in fact proceeded in fits and starts through the 1980s (see Davis and Vogel 1990), with the most notorious setback occurring with the regime’s crackdown on demonstrators in Tiananmen Square on June 4th 1989. We expect that despite the profound changes taking place through the 1980s, they did not necessarily result in greater feelings of security in membership and a rise of TFP. In fact, among a population that lived through numerous policy reversals of the Maoist period, the uncertain nature of the reform process may even have *heightened* the sense of insecurity in expressing difference. Deng Xiaoping’s 1992 “Southern Tour” marked an important turning point - by demonstrating CCPs commitment to the reform process, the tour likely resulted in a gradual lowering of the sense of insecurity and a corresponding willingness publicly to express difference (i.e., a higher TFP). During the tour Deng visited four coastal Southern cities:

¹⁶ Note that because the implementation of the One-Child-Policy is much more consistent in urban areas, with significant variation in the effectiveness of implementation in the rural areas, the effect of the One-Child-Policy is most clear-cut in the cities.

Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Shanghai and gave a number of speeches to promote his economic reform agenda. In particular, the proclamation attributed to Deng that "to get rich is glorious," suggested the primacy of the economic development over dictates of Communist ideology. A key implication was the reform removed the need to dissimulate loyalty, not only because regime no longer required it, but also because in all likelihood by giving individuals a significant amount of economic freedom it encouraged a degree of genuine loyalty. Thus, *we expect the years after 1992 to represent the sharpest contrast with the Maoist period, such that evidence of an increase in fashion (lower concentration and higher turnover) should be clearest afterwards.*

Geographic Scope Conditions

In addition to raising questions about the timing at which our hypotheses should best be tested, three issues must be considered in specifying the geographic boundaries for testing our hypotheses: (a) how patterns of national assimilation might affect concentration quite apart from the two mechanisms that are the focus of our analysis; (b) the extent to which the TFP-shift hypothesis is sensitive to knowledge about the relative prevalence of various cultural forms in local regions versus a very large country; and (c) variation across Chinese localities in the political conditions that drive the two mechanisms. Together, these considerations suggest the importance of focusing analysis on specific localities as well national trends. We now elaborate on these points and their implications.

The first issue is important because in addition to the effects of Maoist policy considered above, Mao's regime promoted national assimilation, and as shown in Appendix A this likely raised *national* concentration and *lowered turnover* compared to the periods before and after

Mao. Mao's policies aimed to transform a country with a weak central state and a variety of regional fiefdoms to one with a very strong central state, which promoted a single national culture at the expense of regional (as well as ethnic and religious) differences. One key element of the nation-building program was the language reform promulgated in the 1950s and early 1960s. Specifically, language reform aimed to promote the use of the Beijing dialect called *putong hua* as a national lingua franca.¹⁷ Another key element of China's nation-building efforts was the promotion of cultural assimilation not only for officially recognized minorities, but also among unrecognized ethnic, religious and linguistic groups within Han-majority, who comprise over 90% of China's population (Dreyer 1977; Gladney 1996). The strictest of these policies were abandoned in the post-Mao period (Gladney 1996; 2004; cf., Thireau 1988: 305-10), though it is likely that greater interregional mobility and communication partially counterbalanced these trends. *This implies that national concentration should increase and turnover decrease during the Maoist period and its immediate aftermath compared to periods before and after it, independently of trends in politicization of the menu or shifts in TFP.* This complicates our ability to test our hypotheses with national data. However, we can eliminate national assimilation as a factor by testing our hypotheses within specific regions in addition to China as a whole.

The second and third considerations reinforce the implication that we should focus on local fashion trends. In particular, while the PRC developed a broad array of mechanisms for transmitting common knowledge across the whole of China including expanding the educational

¹⁷ In addition to promotion of *putong hua*, the reforms had two other components that also likely limited diversity in writing and pronunciation. First, the writing system was simplified by reducing a number of strokes necessary to create a character and reducing the total number of characters by selecting one standardized variant. Second, a standardized pronunciation (*pinyin*) system based on *putong hua* was developed that allows speakers of Chinese to write the pronunciation of a character with Latin letters and tone marks (see Mills [1956] for more details).

system and installing national broadcast system into the smallest villages, it is still questionable whether Chinese citizens would be as aware of national trends in the popularity of given names as they were aware of local trends. As discussed in Appendix A, results are quite sensitive to the assumption of global versus local knowledge. This analysis suggests that the best way to test our hypotheses is by analyzing data on local regions, within which it can be assumed that parents have some awareness of trends in popularity. Moreover, insofar as the politicized menu and TFP-shift effects should be most pronounced where the Maoist regime was strongest and most focused on enforcing its writ, this suggests that our hypotheses should be most likely to hold in some localities than in others. As discussed below, this led to our choice of focusing on two cities—Beijing and Guangzhou—with an expectation that our results should be stronger in the former city.

Naming and gender

A final issue that potentially complicates the testing of our hypotheses is that the onset of the Maoist regime led to substantial changes in the status of women generally, and it had specific implications for women's names. In Pre-Revolutionary China, women could not inherit land or property, and after marriage women became a property of their husband's extended family, generally severing links to their birth families. After the Communist revolution, the official status of women in Chinese society improved, and a women's status became more closely connected with her family's status (for a review, see Hershatter 2004). The most pronounced changes in rural areas occurred during the 1950s when China passed a series of laws, including a 1950's Marriage Law, which granted women freedom to marry and divorce, as well as the right

to inherit land and property. As a result of these laws, women, particularly in rural China, experienced a gain in status. Together with these changes, women acquired given names.

Prior to the PRC, Chinese women often did not have given names, or they were ascribed little importance. An ethnographer of rural Hong Kong in the 1960s describes women as “nameless”: at marriage women lost their baby names and became known and referred to by their relationships (such as wife or mother of X), and at old age, simply as “an old woman.” (Watson 1986, cf. Sung 1981: 89). The net result of these trends is that it is unclear how our hypotheses apply to women in the early years of Maoist rule. Insofar as women were not always named or such names were unimportant, this implies that there would have been little established fashion for names and little attention paid to their relative prevalence. Without established traditions, parents would be forced to innovate. Thus this may ironically have been a period of cultural innovation at the same time that other exogenous conditions suggest (as discussed above) that fashion should be limited. *Thus we believe that our hypotheses apply to the naming of men throughout the periods in question, and they should increasingly apply to women after the first decade or so of Maoist rule.*

VI. DATA, METHOD, AND MEASUREMENT

Dataset. The data for this study come from National Citizen Identity Information Center (NCIIC) which is managed by China’s Ministry of Public Security (MPS). The MPS obtained these data as part of its program of issuing smart identity cards in early 2000s, which replaced the old paper version. In the process, the MPS compiled a digital record of all individuals with ID cards.

Under the household registration system (*hukou zhidu*) that was introduced at the inception of the PRC in 1949, the MPS records and manages the information (including name, birth date, gender,

address, etc.) of all citizens (see Whyte and Parish 1984: 16-22). Because registering a name-change with the MPS is a cumbersome process, we expect that these data are a fairly accurate reflection of names given at birth. Despite its advantages, one limitation of these data is that differential mortality might affect our results for older cohorts—i.e., if those with unusual names were more likely to be persecuted by the Maoist regime (we have found no historical evidence for such persecution). To mitigate the effects of mortality, we limit our study to persons younger than 60 years old—i.e., those who were born in 1945 or later.

For every fifth year starting in 1945 and ending in 2005, we obtained a list of the fifty most popular names for both men and women for all of China, as well as for two cities, Beijing and Guangzhou. For each of these locations and for each gender, we also obtained the total number of babies born in that year, the total number of names given, and the number of babies who were given a unique name. Ideally, we would have preferred to obtain a list of all names used in the population, but NCIIC's pricing policies made this impossible. As a result, in each period, some names present on our list in the previous period drop out and some new names are added, and this censoring makes the use of standard event history models impractical. Despite its limitations, the data used in our study compared favorably with data used in study of Western names, which typically uses fewer than 50 names (e.g. Lieberman 2000: Chapter 2, Lieberman and Lynn 2003), and makes no use of information on the total number of names or unique names. We expanded our analysis to the top fifty names because the reasons discussed above suggested that we would find a lower level of concentration in Chinese names. And use of the total number of names and unique names helps us form estimates of concentration in a given year, and the statistical significance of differences in concentration (see Appendix B).

In addition to obtaining national data, the considerations discussed in the prior discussion motivated our decision to augment the national data with data on two cities—Beijing and Guangzhou. The PRC selected Beijing as the national capital,¹⁸ and its dialect was recognized as a national lingua franca and its culture as “representative” of Han culture. In addition, virtually all acts of the Maoist regime began in Beijing, and were experienced most fully there.¹⁹ This contrasts with Guangzhou that is located in Southern China near Hong Kong and was only partially and unevenly brought into the national culture. Not only have its residents evaded and resisted actions to promote the use of *putong hua*, it also has three groups (Cantonese, Hakka and the Boat people) that while officially considered as Han, are socially distinct (Ikels 1996: 21-23).

For each city, we only restricted city data to the oldest areas in each city. This helps to mitigate the possibility that changes in naming patterns reflect significant in-migration into these cities that occurred in the 1950s. Since these districts are most densely populated, we expect that they received the least amount of in-migrants. For Beijing, we focused on Dongcheng, Xicheng, Chongwen, and Xuanwu districts that are located inside the 2nd ring road and in Guangzhou on Liwan, Yuexiu, and Haizhu districts that are recognized as Old City. While we cannot completely eliminate concerns with in-migration, following the logic on the relationship between national homogenization and concentration, we expect that as in Beijing in-migrants were more nationally representative than in Guangzhou, significant in-migration should make it *harder* for us to find evidence of increased concentration in the capital.

¹⁸ While Beijing was the traditional imperial capital and was the de jure capital under the Kuomintang, they in fact had ruled from Nanjing and Beijing was controlled by regional warlords.

¹⁹ This point can be taken too far. For instance, while it was once widely believed that the Cultural Revolution was largely a Beijing (and Shanghai) event, recent scholarship shows that its effects were wide and deep (see Friedman et al. 2005; Walder and Su 2003). Still, every change in the conditions of the Maoist regime were felt first and most forcefully in Beijing. Thus the Beijing data represent the clearest basis for evaluating our hypotheses.

Measuring Politicized Names. In order to test the politicized names hypothesis, we need to classify names based on their political content. To do this, we generated a list of the names that in any year were among 50 most popular names in the nation and in each one of our cities. Then, we asked 5 native Chinese speakers with ages ranging from 30-70 to pick out names that had “a content reflecting that era’s political atmosphere.” We used an inclusive definition in order to leave open the possibility that raters might find political names in any period of Chinese history. Thus, while it is widely assumed in China that political names were popular during the Cultural Revolution, we did not want to prime the raters to only mark what they consider “Cultural Revolution” names. Then, we coded as “political names” those names that at least two raters agreed had political content.²⁰

VII. RESULTS

We organize our analysis in three sections, and we present results for males and then for females. In the first section, we examine the extent to which in the Maoist period was indeed marked by relatively little fashion, as indicated by relatively high concentration in the most popular names, and low turnover in these names from period to period. Next, we test for part A of the Politicized Names hypothesis—i.e., whether there were more politicized names in the Maoist period. And then we examine whether the reduction in fashion can be fully attributed to the politicized menu effect, or whether the more subtle TFP-shift effect may have been at work. Insofar as the lack of fashion under Mao cannot be explained by the politicized menu effect, we will have evidence consistent with the hypothesis that a key exogenous effect on the fashion

²⁰ We also performed all basic analyses using names that were coded by all five raters as political names. The results were substantively similar.

system involved a shift in the TFP distribution towards a high average predilection for conventional behavior.

Men

Was there a decline in fashion?

To recall, we expected fashion to decline during the Maoist period compared to periods before and after it even for cultural practices were not subject to direct political control. Consistent with this expectation, we find higher concentration and lower turnover in popular names during Maoist period and its immediate aftermath than in periods before and after it. We now discuss these results in more detail.

As shown in table 1a, we find that the peaks of concentration occurred predominantly during the late Maoist period and Early Reform period, and the lowest levels of concentration are either in the earliest years or in the contemporary period. The timing of the peaks varies somewhat. In the national data, the three highest levels of concentration are reached during the Early Reform period (1985, 1990) and during the first year of Early Reform period (1995). In Beijing, the peak occurs about a decade earlier – in the end of the Maoist period (1975) and Early Reform periods (1980 and 1985). And in Guangzhou, the peak occurs during the Maoist period (1960, 1970 and 1975). The relatively high level of concentration in the Early Reform period might seem surprising. But as discussed above, this pattern is in fact consistent with the implications of the One-Child Policy, which can be expected to increase concentration (and lower turnover). Moreover, as we discussed above, the regime's commitment to reform was unclear until Deng's Southern Tour, of 1992. Accordingly, the key break appears after 1990.

As discussed in Appendix B, we tested the significance of these differences in concentration using a Wilcoxon sign-rank tests on samples of equal population size. These tests indicate that for the nation as a whole, as well as for Beijing and Guangzhou, both the increase in concentration between 1945 and 1980 and the decrease in concentration between 1990 and 2005 is statistically reliable. Consistent with our expectations, the strongest results are observed for Beijing. Here we find here that while in 1945 less than one in a sixteen (6.5%) men had one of the 50 most popular man's names, at the height of concentration in 1980, one out of *three* did (33.4%)!

<INSERT TABLE 1 HERE>

We also find evidence for a lower level of turnover during Maoist period and its immediate aftermath (table 2a). Nationwide, the three lowest levels of turnover are reached early in the Maoist period (1960-1965), Early Reform (1985-1990) and Early Reform period (1990-1995). In Beijing, the three lowest levels of turnover occur early in the Maoist period (1955-1960) and in the late in the Early Reform period (1980-1985 and 1985-1990), and in Guangzhou - during the early Maoist period (1955-1960, 1960-1965 and 1965-1970). The spikes of turnover between 1945-1960 (1950-1955 and 1955-1960 in the nation, 1945-1950 in Beijing and Guangzhou) likely reflect a wholesale replacement of names associated with an ousted KMT regime with names association with a new Maoist one. Lastly, note that by 2000-2005, turnover had surpassed levels observed through the entire Maoist period.

As discussed in Appendix B, we tested the significance of these differences using a regression model in which the change over time was indicated by a significant interaction effect of historical time, in moderating the effect of the lagged share of a name on its current share. These analyses indicate that for all locations, there is a significant negative interaction effect

between historical time and lagged share, indicating a general increase in turnover over the observed period. These analyses do not show a significant decrease in turnover during the Maoist period, perhaps because too few pre-Mao periods are observed.

<INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE>

Overall, our results confirm our initial impression that fashion in given names was limited during the Maoist regime. We showed a high level of concentration and low levels of turnover during the Maoist regime and its immediate aftermath, compared to periods before and after. While the patterns of high concentration and low turnover during the Maoist regime in national data might reflect increasing homogenization, the results for Beijing, and to the lesser extent for Guangzhou, suggest a remarkable increase in concentration and decline in turnover during the Maoist period and its immediate aftermath that is particularly striking considering the tendency of Chinese that we discussed above, to use differentiating names and to avoid name-sharing with living or dead individuals.

Politicized Menu Effect

We hypothesized that the increase in popularity of “political” names is one factor that could explain decline of fashion in names during the Maoist period. As we discussed above, the Maoist regime promoted certain forms of cultural expression and marked others as illegitimate. By legitimating some forms of cultural expression and delegitimizing others, the Maoist regime reduced the menu of cultural practices that individuals could choose from, thus potentially leading to a decline of fashion. In this section, we test part A of the Politicized Menu hypothesis—i.e., whether there were more politicized names in the Maoist period. First, we

discuss some examples of political names. Then, we turn to our analyses of the number of political names among the fifty most common names.

To illustrate the nature of political names in table 3a, we translate the 10 most popular men's names in the nation for each decade in our sample, putting in bold those names considered by at least two raters to have political content. It is noteworthy that there seems to be considerable change in the political names that were popular in each period. During the pre-PRC period, as China was recovering from humiliating defeats in the hands of Western powers and the loss of territories to Japan, the names focused on building and protecting the nation (e.g. **Build Nation**, **Nation Magnificent**, **Build China**, **Victory and Nation Well**). During the Maoist period, themes of nationalism (e.g. **Build Nation**, **Build China**, **Nation Magnificent**, **Nation Strong**, **Build People**) continue to be prominent, but there was new emphasis on the army (e.g. **Army and Build Army**) and a positive personal attributes extolled in Maoist propaganda (e.g. **Hardness**). In later periods, the use of political names declined. In the Early Reform period, ten most popular names contain only two political names (e.g. **Hardness** and **Army**) and in the Late Reform period only one name (e.g. **Hardness**).

<INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE>

The impression of a general decline in political naming indicated in the top 10 names is reinforced when we examine trends in the top 50 names, as portrayed in figure 3. The proportion of political names in 50 most popular names reached its highest levels during Maoist regime, and dropped markedly after 1985, when less than one in ten most popular 50 names had a political content. We consider these results to provide strong evidence in favor of the Part A of the “Politicized Names” hypothesis. Particularly noteworthy is the high level of political naming prior to the Cultural Revolution. In fact, we find that political names were prevalent before the

PRC regime: in 1945 roughly one third of top 50 names across the nation as well as in the two cities had political content. Also, somewhat surprisingly given historical accounts of name changes in Beijing discussed above, we show a decline in political naming in Beijing during the Cultural Revolution,²¹ which lends credence to our suggestions that the prevalence of political naming is limited by the policy reversals that make the use of “political” names a potential liability, and also because excessive displays of political loyalty could themselves raise suspicion. In sum, contrary to Lieberman’s (2000) analysis of Western naming and the general emphasis on endogenous mechanisms in recent cultural sociology (see Kaufman 2004 for review), the Maoist regime had a strong direct and exogenous effect on fashion in men’s names, as evidenced by a relatively high popularity of popular names during the Maoist period and the de-politicization of the cultural menu in more recent years.

<INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE>

Extent of Fashion, with and without politicized menu

While we showed a strong tendency to use political names during the Maoist period, we also suggested that we have at least two reasons to expect that the popularity of “political” names does not entirely account for the decline in fashion. Specifically, because policy reversals made the use of “political” names a potential liability and also because excessive displays of political loyalty could themselves raise suspicion, it is plausible that at the height of Cultural Revolution in a politically charged atmosphere of Beijing parents avoided political names. We argued that if the increase in the proportion of population who has a political name is the only factor that

²¹ This may reflect the fact that we do not have data on 1966 or 1967, the two years that historical accounts (e.g. MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2006: 114-115; Friedman et. al. 2005: 101; Lu 1989) suggests should have the highest rate of “political” naming, and when the intensity of the Cultural Revolution was at its highest pitch.

explains the decrease in cultural diversity and change, there is no reason to expect that fashion declined among non-political names. But there is in fact strong theoretical and historical reasons to think that the Maoist regime caused a shift towards a higher taste for popularity regardless of political content, thus increasing concentration and lowering turnover. We test for this by re-calculating concentration and turnover excluding political names.

Despite the high proportion of names with political content that we documented above, we find that even when we exclude men who were given political names, concentration was higher during the Maoist period and its immediate aftermath than in periods before and after it. As shown in table 4a and figure 4a, the peaks in concentration occurring during the Early Reform period (1985, 1990) and during the first year of Early Reform period (1995) in the nation, and in the end of the Maoist period (1975) and Early Reform periods (1980 and 1985) in Beijing. As shown in figure 4a, the rise and fall of concentration in Beijing is particularly dramatic and occurs relatively early, and such differences are highly significant in Wilcoxon rank-sum tests on samples of equal population size. Unlike the nation and Beijing, in Guangzhou the removal of political names shifts the peaks in concentration to later years – Early Reform period (1980 and 1990) and Late Reform period (1995). However, there is a sharp decline thereafter. And Wilcoxon sign-rank tests performed on samples of equal population size in the national as well as in both cities confirm a significant decline in concentration between 1990 and 2005, as well as significant increases in concentration between 1945-1960 and 1980.

<INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE>

With respect to turnover, excluding political names from the analysis makes our finding of low turnover during the Maoist period even stronger (table 2a and figure 5a)—a result that is not surprising given the noticeable *turnover in political names* discussed above. In analyses that

exclude political names, we find that the dips in turnover predominantly occurred during the Maoist period. Specifically, across the nation, as well as in both cities, two out of three lowest levels of turnover were reached during 1960-1965, a period immediately following the Great Leap Forward campaign, and 1970-1975, a period immediately following name changing campaigns during Cultural Revolution. Aside from these two dips in turnover, in the nation the third dip occurred in the immediate aftermath of Maoist period (1980-1985), and in Beijing and Guangzhou -- early in the Maoist period (1955-1960). Note finally that results of regression analyses testing for the significance of differences in turnover across time periods are substantively the same as those that include political names.

<INSERT FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE>

In sum, despite the high proportion of political names among men's names during the Maoist period, our analysis of concentration and turnover with and without political names suggests that political naming cannot account for the lack of fashion under Mao. Specifically, we find little change in the results for concentration and turnover after we removed political names from our analysis. This means that we find a considerable decline of fashion in Maoist China that cannot be attributed solely to the Chinese parents' tendency to give their children political names. While the major limitation of our analysis is that we have not measured Chinese parents' TFP, and how it changed over time, we can say only that the empirical data for men are consistent with our argument that the TFP distribution shifted to the right during the Maoist period, thus limiting cultural variety and change.

Women

Was there a decline in fashion?

To recall, we argued that changes in the status of women during the period under study can have an important effect on women's naming practices. Particularly in rural China, because prior to the Communist Revolution, women had a low status, we have reasons to expect that insofar as women were not always named or such names were unimportant, this implies that there would have been little established fashion for women's names and little attention paid to their relative prevalence. After the first decade or so of Maoist rule when new laws giving women rights equal to men were introduced, we would expect that our hypotheses should increasingly apply to women's names.

As shown in table 1b, our data indicate higher concentration in popular names among women than men during earliest periods in our data. These high levels of concentration are even more remarkable considering that in the earliest periods, women's names appear to show very little variety in content, being predominantly formed from a small set of characters with strong associations with qualities attributed to women (table 3b). For example, in 1945 among 10 most popular names 5 names contained a character for "flower," 4 for "orchid," 3 for "elegant," 2 for "laurel" and 2 for "treasure." Over time, the difference between the concentration in men's and women's names declines, so that by 1970 women's names are only slightly more concentrated than men's.

Consistent with our expectations, in later periods (roughly after 1965) our hypotheses increasingly apply to women's names. Women's names display the highest levels of concentration in the immediate aftermath of the Maoist period. Specifically, nationwide the three highest levels of concentration were reached during Early Reform period (1980, 1985, and 1990). In Beijing, the three highest levels of concentration occurred during Cultural Revolution (1975) and Early Reform period (1980 and 1985) and in Guangzhou – in Early Reform (1980

and 1990) and Late Reform (1995) periods. Similarly to men's names, the increase in concentration in Beijing is the most dramatic so that while in 1965 almost one in five (18.4%) women had a name among 50 most popular names, at the height of concentration more than one out of *three* (35.6%) did. And we see that for the nation and for both cities, concentration in women's names was at its lowest point in 2005. Similarly to men, the Wilcoxon rank-signed tests indicate that the decline in concentration from 1990 to 2005 was significant, and it was significant from 1980 to 2005 in Beijing.

Turning to the results for turnover, our data suggest a gradual increase in turnover in women's names during the entire period (table 2b). The turnover is higher among women than among men. Both national and city data show notable spikes in turnover during the Maoist period, which likely reflect wholesale replacement of women's traditional names with names associated with the new regime. As would be expected given the historical evidence, the spikes occur around Cultural Revolution period (1965-1970 in national data, 1960-1965 in Beijing data, and 1965-1970 and 1975-1980 in Guangzhou data).

Politicized Menu Effect

Turning to our results for political names, we see that political names were never as common among women as they were among men (figure 3b). Among the top 10 most popular names in the nation, at least two rates considered only one name in 1975 (e.g. Red) to have political content reflecting that period's political atmosphere (table 3b). Overall, the results suggest that even at the heights of political naming less than 15% of the 50 most popular women's names were political names. The spike in political naming in 1970 in Beijing and Guangzhou and 1975 in the nation likely reflects the effect of the Cultural Revolution, perhaps influenced by such

episodes as that discussed above in which Mao renamed a female Red Guard Song Binbin with a more martial name.

Extent of Fashion, with and without politicized menu

Since political naming was relatively rare for women, it cannot account for the lack of fashion observed during the Maoist period. Thus as with men, we find that after we exclude political names from the analysis, we find that the Maoist period and its immediate aftermath are associated with high concentration and low turnover (tables 2b and 4b), thus providing indirect support for our TFP hypothesis. Specifically, nationwide the three highest levels of concentration are reached during Early Reform (1985, and 1990) and Late Reform (1995) periods; in Beijing - during late Maoist (1975) and Early Reform period (1980 and 1985) and in Guangzhou – in Maoist (1960) and Early Reform (1990), Late Reform (1995) periods.

Turning to the results of turnover, similarly to men, excluding political names from the analysis makes our findings of lower turnover during Maoist period slightly stronger. Specifically, we find one of the three dips in turnover across the nation as well as in both cities occur in 1950-1955, a period immediately following the establishment of the Maoist regime. In the national data the other two dips occur during the transition to Maoist (1945-1950) and Early Reform (1975-1980); in Beijing – transition to Maoist (1945-1950) and late Maoist (1970-1975) periods; and in Guangzhou – in Maoist (1955-1960 and 1960-1965) period.

In sum, the results of our analyses for women suggest that the decline in fashion we documented during Maoist period cannot be completely accounted for by the tendency of Chinese parents to give their children political names. However the results for women are less clear than the results for men, which we suggest is partially a result of the rapid changes in the

status of women in China over the period we examine. These changes in status also likely help to account for the differences between our results for China and those reported for the West (see Gerhards 2005; Gerhards and Hans 2009; Lieberman 2000; Lieberman and Lynn 2003).

Specifically, while similarly to the West, we find that turnover in women's names is higher than in men's names, unlike in the West, in China the concentration in women's names is higher than in men's names.

VII. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Conclusion

As against the recent trend in sociology of culture and Lieberman's analysis of fashion in Western names (but see Weitman 1987), we have seen clear evidence of a political, exogenous effect on fashion. Our most straightforward result is that there was a much more pronounced usage of politically legitimate names during the Maoist period and its immediate aftermath than in periods before and after it. We chose Maoist China as our research site precisely because it is a very different case than those that the Western, liberal cases that Lieberman (2000; Lieberman and Lynn 2003) and other recent researchers (e.g., Gerhards and Hackenbroch 2000; Gerhards 2005) had analyzed. The greater salience of the meaning of names in Chinese culture (cf., Weitman 1987), and the breadth and depth of the Maoist interventions in China, made it more likely that there was a direct exogenous effect on Chinese fashion in given names. While these factors make this case unique, it cannot be ignored if we are to have a general theory of how exogenous and endogenous processes affect cultural expression. Thus the first lesson from our analysis is a better understanding of the conditions under which the menu of legitimate cultural expression

can be altered by exogenous political conditions: (a) when the regime's ideology potentially considers a practice to be a form of political expression, (b) when the regime intervenes in a manner that approaches the extent of Maoist interventions.

However, we have also shown that there is more to the exogenous effect of politics on culture than the reshaping of the available menu of cultural expression. *The key empirical result of our paper was that there is a significant reduction in fashion under Mao even when we restrict our attention to non-political names.* We have argued that this is consistent with a more subtle effect of politics on culture than that of the politicized menu effect-- i.e., that by lowering the degree of security (with respect to expressions of difference), the regime increased the aggregate taste-for-popularity; and this in turn turned off the endogenous mechanisms that drive fashion (see figures 1 and 2; cf., Lieberman 2000, Lieberman and Lynn 2003). The major limitation of our analysis is that we have not measured Chinese parents' TFP, and how it changed over time. As such, we can say only that the empirical data are consistent with this hypothesis, that there is strong evidentiary support for the idea that the level of security that expressions of difference will not be regarded as signs of disloyalty underwent a sharp increase between the 1970s and the 1990s, and that the data cannot be fully explained by the politicized menu hypothesis.

In addition, three considerations suggest that the TFP-shift hypothesis deserves to be taken seriously: (a) when integrated with the "politicized menu" mechanism, mechanisms based on "taste-for-popularity" help to resolve a key conundrum that faces the former; (b) such an integration suggests a subtle but powerful modification in how we understand conformity under authoritarianism; and (c) the TFP-shift hypothesis, as applied to China, provides new insights into a central question for students of modernity-- i.e., the rise (and fall) of individualist expression. We conclude by discussing each of these issues in turn.

Discussion

The Strength in Weak Politicization

In the foregoing, we assumed that an increase in popularity of “political” names provides support for the politicized menu hypothesis. Yet *the TFP-shift effect may in fact be partly responsible for the politicization of the cultural menu*. To see why this is the case, it is useful to contemplate the following dilemma that any citizen in an authoritarian regime faces when she seeks to abide by a politicized menu: which cultural practice will be regarded as politically legitimate? This dilemma is not difficult insofar as the regime publicizes the cultural menu and makes it very clear which expressions are privileged and which are not tolerated. But in at least some cultural domains (e.g., parental choice of given names), authoritarian states often refrain from publicizing a menu of legitimate practices.²² And insofar as: (a) the regime’s ideology is unclear; and/or (b) it is unclear how that ideology relates to the domain in question, the citizen faces the dilemma of anticipating which cultural practice is most likely to be deemed acceptable. Regarded in this manner, a straightforward solution seems available: the citizen should select a practice that appears politically legitimate and has already been adopted by many of his fellow citizens. That is, such a context produces a high taste for *popularity as a basis for selection among politically legitimate forms of expression*.

Observe in this regard that there were many names that could ostensibly have signaled loyalty to the Maoist regime, but which were not among the most popular names during the Maoist periods (see tables 3a and 3b). For instance, one wonders why “Build China,” “Army,”

²² This will be true if the regime: (a) is truly indifferent to expression in this domain; (b) finds it too costly to devise (and revise) such a menu; and/or (c) wishes to give the appearance that citizens are free to choose without repercussions.

and “Hardness” became popular names, but “Great Red,” “Toward East,” and “Study Mao” never reached the same level of popularity. Our approach suggests one possible answer to this question—i.e., that there was in fact nothing about the content of the former set of names that makes them more politically legitimate than the latter set of names. Rather, insofar as Chinese citizens were more likely to select among those acceptable names on the basis of their popularity, this entailed that those politically legitimate names that happened to gain an early lead would then win out in the eventual popularity contest.

To illustrate this point, we extended (in analysis that is not shown) the simulations presented in Appendix A by analyzing the implications of a very high TFP —i.e., the results at the extreme right of the range in figures 1 and 2—under the condition where only political names are available to be chosen. Under these conditions, since a high TFP leads to a heavy concentration in just a few of these practices, it follows that *most politically legitimate practices will never be popular*. Put differently, this model implies that, were it possible to “re-run” the history of the Maoist regime multiple times without any change in its policies, a different set of politically legitimate practices would predominate each time (see Salganik, Watts, and Dodds 2006; Salganik and Watts 2008; cf., DiPrete and Eirich 2006). Thus even when we see a full transformation of the cultural practices in a population such that they all seem to cohere with a new regime’s ideology, the *specific practices* that become adopted may be driven by the endogenous mechanisms reflected in the TFP-shift effect.

Note finally how this combination of exogenous- political and endogenous-social processes suggests a generalization of the “strength of a weak state” model of U.S. Federal regulation (see Dobbin and Sutton 1998; Dobbin, Edelman, Meyer, Scott, and Swidler 1988; Edelman 1992). According to this model, conformity with Federal regulations comes about less

through directing organizations to adopt specific practices, then via general and vague regulations, the ambiguity of which then induces organizations to monitor (and interact with) one another to discern (and influence) which practices will become common and thereby become the de facto standard. The implication of this analogy is that U.S. organizations are insecure (thereby having a high TFP) in the same way that individual citizens are insecure in an authoritarian state. Of course, insecurity in the latter case runs far deeper as it pertains even to naming practices that are not even subject to regulation, whereas organizations (and citizens) in Western countries need only be insecure about running afoul of the law.

What is Dissimulated under Authoritarianism?

An appreciation for the TFP-shift effect, and how it might interact with the politicized menu effect, also promises to shed light on public conformity under authoritarian regimes. It is by now a consensus among scholars that even when their public actions suggest endorsement of the regime, few citizens of authoritarian regimes (especially after the initial revolution) privately endorse its official ideology and policies. Where exit is not possible and sincere voice is not tolerated (cf., Hirschman 1970), one gets a public culture based on “dissimulation” (see Jowitt 1974; cf., Havel 1986; Kuran 1995; Pfaff 2006; Scott 1990; Straughn 2005; Wedeen 1999). Our analysis contributes to this line of research by suggesting that the same logic of dissimulation may apply to a broad range of (public) action that seems to have no political content whatsoever. Insofar as citizens of such regimes have reason to believe that any expression of difference could be construed as deviance (and specifically, disloyalty to the regime), they can be expected to avoid such expressions.

Moreover, an extension of our simulation model (analysis not shown) suggests why researchers (and citizens of authoritarian regimes) have focused on the regime's effect on political expression but not on its effect on more mundane cultural expression, such as the selection of given names. In particular, let us assume that the introduction of an authoritarian regime has two effects: (a) partial 50% replacement of the pre-existing cultural menu with political-correct options; and (b) a shift in the mean TFP to a point where the typical citizen has a very high TFP. If we compare the pattern of cultural expression prior to, and after, such a change in regime, the most noticeable change is likely to be the radical transformation in the cultural menu: for example, five of the top ten names are now names that express loyalty to the regime, and because the TFP is so high, these five names have a very large share of the total. It is understandable why researchers would focus on trying to understand why citizens choose to express such a high degree of loyalty to a repressive regime. However, such an interpretation would miss the fact that: (a) as discussed above, citizens do not randomly select from politically-approved expressions but endogenously converge on a small subset; and (b) we also see convergence on a small subset of *non-political names*. Note further that this pattern most closely resembles what we find in the empirical data we have presented. Of course, we cannot know if this set of conditions exactly maps into the situation in Maoist China. Our point is only that insofar as a key mechanism producing conformity in authoritarian regimes is the lack of security in membership, it is very likely that the stultifying effect on cultural expression extends beyond the most noticeable, politicized forms of expression to mundane expressions that seem to have nothing to do with politics.

On the Rise and Fall of Individual Expression

We conclude by noting potential implications of our analysis for how social conditions promote or dampen expressions of individuality. While the dividing line between pre-modern and modern society are notoriously difficult to identify, Lieberman's (2000: xx-xx) research provides clear and compelling evidence that at least in one respect-- parental choice of given names for their children-- something fundamental changed in many Western societies during the 18th and 19th centuries. In every country for which data have been collected, a phase-shift is in evidence. After hundreds of years in which the set of names chosen by parents was very limited and changed little, it became considerably less concentrated and unstable. In short, such systems shifted from being governed by tradition to being governed by fashion, and this was apparently driven by a move from high to low average TFP.

This naturally raises the question of why this shift might have occurred. Lieberman's attributes the shift in the taste-for-popularity distribution to a cluster of changes associated with the emergence of "individualism" that was concomitant with the modernization of Western societies. But what aspect of modernization was responsible for this shift? This question seems quite challenging given the complexity of the processes associated with modernization-- including secularization, urbanization, changes in family structure, and the increasing complexity of the economic structure. Our analysis can hardly answer this question in a definitive manner. However, it provides two potential lessons for future research.

First, modernization by itself may be insufficient to induce expressions of individuality. A long tradition in sociology beginning with Durkheim (1984 [1893]) describes individualism as stemming from the more elaborated division of labor in modern economies that produces more complex role-sets, thereby heightening consciousness of social difference and the creating a need

for “mental adjustments” that facilitate participation in a variety of segmented roles and establish consistency (Coser 1991: 18-19). If modernization is a sufficient cause for the rise of individual expression, we would not expect the fashion mechanism to operate any differently in authoritarian and non-authoritarian regimes. Many authoritarian regimes, in particular Communist regimes, are indisputably modern. During their periods of authoritarianism, these countries experienced the transformations that we identify with emergence of modernity in the West, including a highly elaborated division of labor, secularization, urbanization, and education reforms, and decreasing family size. This suggests that something more than modernization is required to move the average TFP.

In particular, our analysis is consistent with those scholars who link the rise of “individualism”—and especially the inclination to *express* individual difference-- to the extension of citizenship rights; and more broadly, to the rise of institutions that privilege the individual and the nation-state as the key actors of modern society, with each constituting the other and negating the importance of more primordial affiliations and estates (see Frank and Meyer 2002; Scott et al. 2002). As Leca (1990: 166) writes:

The individual citizen constitutes the state but is also constituted by it, because only equality before a common law allows the individual to be freed from 'particular' networks of solidarity and domination. There is no individual identity without the sovereignty of the state.

According to this view, the individual becomes primary because he is granted certain basic rights by the liberal nation-state which ensures his membership in the polity as long as he obeys the law and regardless of any other identity or affiliation he may have. And insofar as such citizenship rights truly secure an individual’s membership in the polity, she is authorize(d) to have and exercise individual tastes (Frank and Meyer 2002). Our analysis is consistent with this

perspective. Individuals who live under authoritarian regimes may participate in a complex division of labor and are torn from many of their traditional roles and relational patterns. Moreover, they are typically given formal citizenship rights. But such rights are tenuous to say the least. And this *insecurity in their membership in the polity* conveys a sense that they are not authorized to exercise individual taste. And such conservatism at the micro level has potentially significant macro implications, inducing a general situation of cultural uniformity and stasis.

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Table 1a. Concentration of top 10, 25 and 50 names, with political names, men.

	Region	Pre-PRC (%)	Maoist (%)						Early Reform (%)			Late Reform (%)		
		1945	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Top 10	Nation	<u>0.7</u>	<u>0.8</u>	<u>1.4</u>	2.1	2.2	3.4	4.4	5.2	6.3	6.2	5.9	4.6	3.5
	Beijing	<u>2.0</u>	<u>2.8</u>	4.3	5.5	6.2	11.7	10.8	13.5	13.8	8.0	5.8	3.9	<u>3.6</u>
	Guangzhou	<u>2.0</u>	<u>2.4</u>	4.4	6.7	5.5	4.7	3.7	4.5	3.7	5.5	5.3	3.6	<u>3.2</u>
Top 25	Nation	<u>1.5</u>	<u>1.7</u>	<u>2.6</u>	3.9	4.0	5.9	7.3	9.2	11.0	11.2	10.2	8.2	6.9
	Beijing	<u>4.0</u>	<u>5.5</u>	8.2	9.8	11.0	18.8	19.8	23.7	23.3	14.4	10.0	7.6	<u>6.5</u>
	Guangzhou	<u>3.9</u>	<u>4.4</u>	7.7	11.1	9.1	9.2	7.3	8.1	7.0	9.8	9.3	6.4	<u>5.8</u>
Top 50	Nation	<u>2.5</u>	<u>2.8</u>	<u>4.1</u>	5.7	5.8	8.4	10.3	12.8	15.2	15.7	14.4	12.0	10.4
	Beijing	<u>6.5</u>	<u>8.5</u>	11.6	13.7	15.4	25.7	27.6	33.4	31.2	21.2	14.7	11.6	<u>9.8</u>
	Guangzhou	<u>6.3</u>	<u>6.7</u>	11.4	15.1	13.1	14.0	11.5	12.3	10.9	13.9	13.1	9.5	<u>9.1</u>

Notes: Three highest values in the row are in **bold**. Three lowest values are underlined.

Table 1b. Concentration of top 10, 25 and 50 names, with political names, women.

	Region	Pre-PRC (%)	Maoist (%)						Early Reform (%)			Late Reform (%)		
		1945	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Top 10	Nation	6.4	5.2	4.1	3.4	<u>2.8</u>	<u>3.4</u>	4.7	6.1	7.2	7.0	5.8	4.2	<u>3.2</u>
	Beijing	9.8	7.1	5.3	5.7	7.1	9.9	12.9	14.6	11.7	7.4	<u>5.5</u>	<u>3.5</u>	<u>3.7</u>
	Guangzhou	4.0	3.8	4.3	5.1	<u>3.6</u>	<u>3.3</u>	4.1	5.6	4.7	6.4	6.1	4.0	<u>3.6</u>
Top 25	Nation	10.7	9.1	7.6	<u>6.9</u>	<u>5.7</u>	6.8	9.0	10.9	12.4	12.4	10.5	8.0	<u>6.6</u>
	Beijing	16.4	13.5	11.1	11.2	12.7	17.9	21.2	25.6	22.4	15.5	<u>10.4</u>	<u>7.3</u>	<u>6.7</u>
	Guangzhou	7.6	7.7	8.7	9.7	7.0	<u>6.8</u>	7.9	10.0	8.9	11.4	10.8	<u>7.7</u>	<u>6.9</u>
Top 50	Nation	15.2	13.4	11.6	10.9	<u>9.3</u>	<u>10.6</u>	13.1	15.6	17.8	17.5	15.4	12.1	<u>10.8</u>
	Beijing	22.1	19.6	18.1	18.2	18.4	25.9	28.9	35.6	33.6	23.8	<u>16.5</u>	<u>12.0</u>	<u>10.2</u>
	Guangzhou	11.8	12.7	13.7	15.2	<u>11.3</u>	<u>10.9</u>	11.7	14.6	13.7	16.7	16.1	11.5	<u>10.6</u>

Notes: Three highest values in the row are in **bold**. Three lowest values are underlined.

Table 2a. Adjusted turnover, with and without political names, men.

Region		Transition	Maoist					Early Reform			Late Reform		
		1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
With political names	Nation	0.0069	0.0101	0.0082	<u>0.0047</u>	0.0076	0.0061	0.0060	0.0062	<u>0.0045</u>	<u>0.0049</u>	0.0079	0.0107
	Beijing	0.0126	0.0102	<u>0.0066</u>	0.0092	0.0102	0.0087	0.0091	<u>0.0065</u>	<u>0.0078</u>	0.0096	0.0169	0.0160
	Guangzhou	0.0140	0.0101	<u>0.0067</u>	<u>0.0061</u>	<u>0.0093</u>	0.0090	0.0104	0.0106	0.0158	0.0094	0.0124	0.0134
Without political names	Nation	0.0051	0.0074	0.0055	<u>0.0035</u>	0.0037	<u>0.0014</u>	0.0039	<u>0.0030</u>	0.0043	0.0047	0.0069	0.0100
	Beijing	0.0097	0.0077	<u>0.0046</u>	<u>0.0056</u>	0.0071	<u>0.0055</u>	0.0071	0.0064	0.0073	0.0096	0.0162	0.0159
	Guangzhou	0.0110	0.0066	<u>0.0057</u>	<u>0.0051</u>	0.0071	<u>0.0057</u>	0.0068	0.0086	0.0139	0.0094	0.0123	0.0134

Notes: Three highest values in the row are in **bold**. Three lowest values are underlined.

Table 2b. Adjusted turnover, with and without political names, women.

Region		Transition	Maoist					Early Reform			Late Reform		
		1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
With political names	Nation	<u>0.0149</u>	<u>0.0248</u>	0.0412	0.0482	0.0955	0.0529	<u>0.0397</u>	0.0482	0.0503	0.0435	0.0542	0.0791
	Beijing	<u>0.0426</u>	<u>0.0596</u>	0.0747	0.0861	0.0804	0.0801	0.0812	0.0755	<u>0.0675</u>	0.0725	0.1237	0.1133
	Guangzhou	0.0779	0.0853	<u>0.0510</u>	<u>0.0567</u>	0.1136	0.0911	0.0896	0.0860	0.0978	0.0750	<u>0.0745</u>	0.0794
Without political names	Nation	<u>0.0149</u>	<u>0.0248</u>	0.0412	0.0474	0.0894	0.0453	<u>0.0345</u>	0.0388	0.0466	0.0411	0.0525	0.0791
	Beijing	<u>0.0372</u>	<u>0.0512</u>	0.0671	0.0846	0.0720	<u>0.0625</u>	0.0756	0.0755	0.0675	0.0725	0.1237	0.1133
	Guangzhou	0.0754	<u>0.0670</u>	<u>0.0498</u>	<u>0.0559</u>	0.1040	0.0778	0.0800	0.0837	0.0978	0.0750	0.0745	0.0794

Notes: Three highest values in the row are in **bold**. Three lowest values are underlined.

Table 3a. Ten most popular names nation-wide by period, men.

Top 10	Pre-PRC	Maoist			Early Reform	Late Reform	
	1945	1955	1965	1975	1985	1995	2005
1	Build Nation	Build Nation	Army	Brave	Great	Hardness	Greatness
2	Moral Brightness	Build China	Brave	Army	Hardness	Outstanding	Handsome and Outstanding
3	Nation Magnificent	Peaceful	Build China	Great	Surpass	Billows	Billows
4	Brightness	Build Peace	Build Nation	Strong	Brave	Roc	Prosper
5	Will Bright	Nation Magnificent	Great	Firmness	Billows	Great	Outstanding
6	Treasures Forrest	Army	Build Army	Billows	Strong	Surpass	Great Righteousness
7	Build China	Peace	Peace	Build Army	Shine	Prosper	Hardness
8	Golden Born	Build Bright	Build Peace	Literary and Brave	Roc	Grand	Aerospace
9	Victory	Nation Strong	Strong	Waves	Waves	Strong	Pretty
10	Nation Well	Build People	Bright	Splendor	Army	Handsome	Knowledgeable

Note: Political names are in **bold**.

Table 3b. Ten most popular names nation-wide by period, women.

Top 10	Pre-PRC	Maoist			Early Reform	Late Reform	
	1945	1955	1965	1975	1985	1995	2005
1	Elegant Flower	Elegant Flower	Elegant Flower	Colorful	Quiet	Quiet	Delighted
2	Elegant Orchid	Elegant Orchid	Laurel Flower	Beautiful	Beautiful	Good looking	Good Looking
3	Laurel Flower	Laurel Flower	Jade Orchid	Fragrant	Graceful	Agile	Fine Joyful
4	Laurel Orchid	Jade Orchid	Flower	Swallow	Colorful	Graceful Demeanor	Quiet
5	Jade Orchid	Laurel Orchid	Elegant Orchid	Quiet	Swallow	Handsome	Intelligent
6	Elegant Treasure	Elegant Treasure	Jade Wintersweet	Agile	Agile	Snow	Quiet Joyful
7	Jade Flower	Phoenix Flower	Duckweed	Red Wintersweet	Slender	Beautiful	Glad Joyful
8	Jade Treasure	Jade Treasure	Beautiful	Glow	Fragrant	Cinnabar	Rain Glad
9	Phoenix Flower	Jade Flower	Phoenix Flower	Red	Cinnabar	Colorful	Snow
10	Orchid Flower	Laurel Treasure	Agile	Flower	Exquisite	Slender	Graceful Demeanor

Note: Political names are in **bold**.

Table 4a. Concentration of top 10, 25 and 50 names, without political names, men.

	Region	Pre-PRC (%)	Maoist (%)						Early Reform (%)			Late Reform (%)		
		1945	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Top 10	Nation	<u>0.3</u>	<u>0.4</u>	<u>0.3</u>	1.1	1.2	1.9	3.1	3.8	5.0	5.6	5.2	4.2	2.9
	Beijing	<u>1.1</u>	<u>1.5</u>	<u>1.7</u>	2.4	4.2	8.4	9.0	11.5	11.8	7.3	5.2	3.9	3.1
	Guangzhou	<u>1.4</u>	<u>1.5</u>	<u>2.4</u>	3.9	3.5	3.3	3.4	4.5	3.7	5.5	5.3	3.2	2.9
Top 25	Nation	<u>0.8</u>	<u>1.1</u>	<u>1.1</u>	2.1	2.3	3.8	5.3	7.6	9.4	9.9	9.3	7.8	6.3
	Beijing	<u>2.6</u>	<u>3.4</u>	<u>4.0</u>	5.2	7.6	12.9	17.3	21.0	21.3	13.7	9.4	7.3	6.1
	Guangzhou	<u>2.7</u>	<u>2.7</u>	<u>4.6</u>	6.5	5.6	5.7	5.7	7.1	6.5	9.8	9.0	6.0	5.5
Top 50	Nation	<u>1.7</u>	<u>1.8</u>	<u>2.1</u>	3.1	3.3	4.9	7.5	10.2	13.4	14.3	13.1	11.3	9.8
	Beijing	<u>4.5</u>	<u>5.4</u>	<u>6.7</u>	8.1	10.8	18.5	24.2	30.7	28.9	20.5	13.9	11.3	9.3
	Guangzhou	<u>4.6</u>	<u>4.2</u>	<u>7.7</u>	9.8	8.6	9.0	8.7	10.8	10.1	13.9	12.8	9.1	8.7

Notes: Three highest values in the row are in **bold**. Three lowest values are underlined.

Table 4b. Concentration of top 10, 25 and 50 names, without political names, women.

	Region	Pre-PRC (%)	Maoist (%)						Early Reform (%)			Late Reform (%)		
		1945	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
Top 10	Nation	6.4	5.2	4.1	3.4	<u>2.8</u>	<u>3.0</u>	4.3	6.1	7.2	7.0	5.8	4.2	<u>3.2</u>
	Beijing	9.8	7.1	4.8	<u>4.7</u>	6.1	7.5	12.9	14.6	11.7	7.4	5.5	<u>3.5</u>	<u>3.7</u>
	Guangzhou	4.0	<u>3.2</u>	4.3	5.1	<u>3.6</u>	<u>2.2</u>	3.7	5.6	4.7	6.4	6.1	4.0	<u>3.6</u>
Top 25	Nation	10.7	9.1	7.6	<u>6.9</u>	<u>5.7</u>	<u>6.2</u>	7.7	9.5	11.8	12.4	10.5	8.0	6.6
	Beijing	16.4	12.5	10.3	9.9	11.2	14.9	20.6	25.6	22.4	15.5	<u>10.4</u>	<u>7.3</u>	<u>6.7</u>
	Guangzhou	7.3	<u>6.8</u>	8.7	9.7	<u>6.8</u>	<u>5.5</u>	7.2	9.8	8.9	11.4	10.8	7.7	6.9
Top 50	Nation	15.2	13.4	11.6	<u>10.7</u>	<u>9.2</u>	<u>9.4</u>	11.2	13.8	16.8	17.0	15.1	12.1	10.8
	Beijing	21.7	18.5	17.0	16.8	<u>16.5</u>	21.8	27.9	35.6	33.6	23.8	<u>16.5</u>	<u>12.0</u>	<u>10.0</u>
	Guangzhou	11.4	11.1	13.5	15.0	10.9	<u>9.4</u>	<u>10.8</u>	14.4	13.7	16.7	16.1	11.5	<u>10.6</u>

Notes: Three highest values in the row are in **bold**. Three lowest values are underlined.

Figure 1. Relationship between TFP mean and concentration in most popular practices TPF for two values of standard deviation

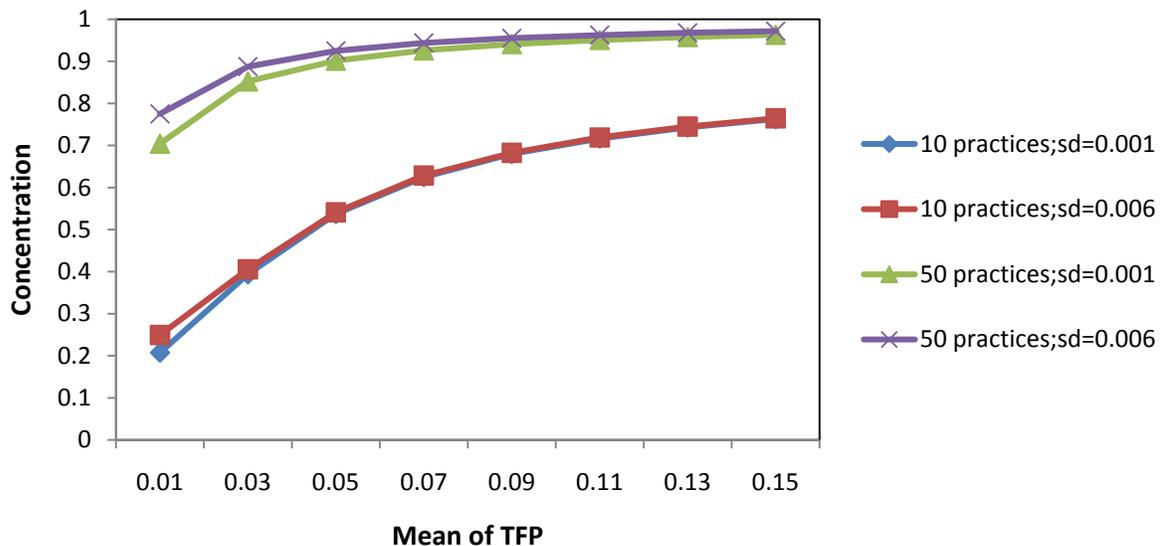


Figure 2. Relationship between TFP mean and turnover in most popular practices TPF for two values of standard deviation

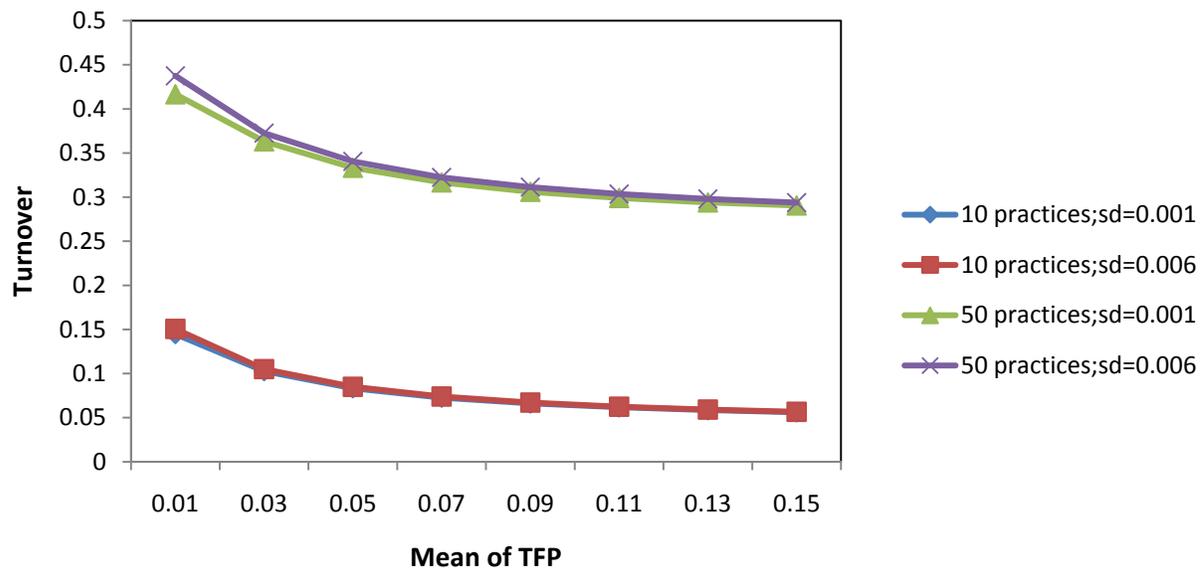


Figure 3a. Percentage of political names in top 50, men.

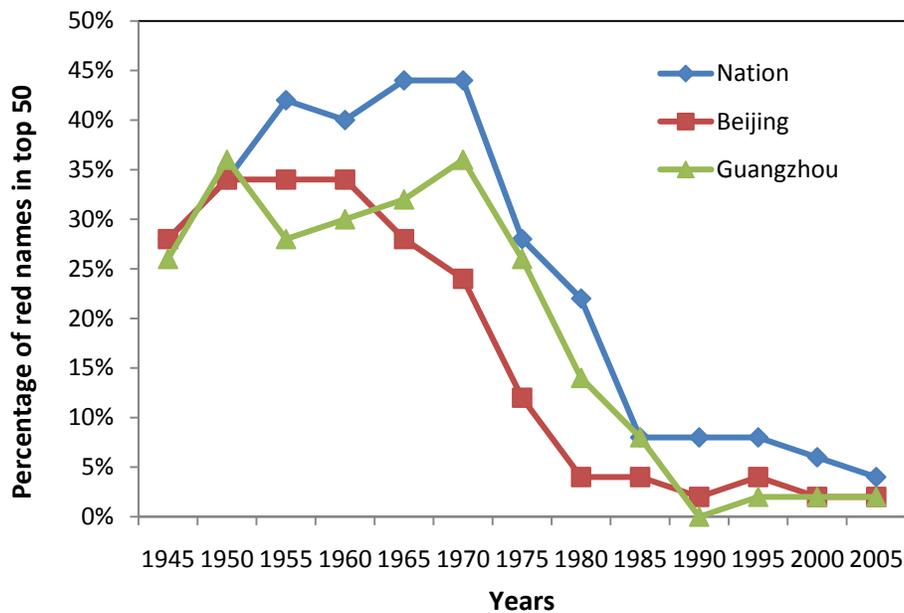


Figure 3b. Percentage of political names in top 50, women.

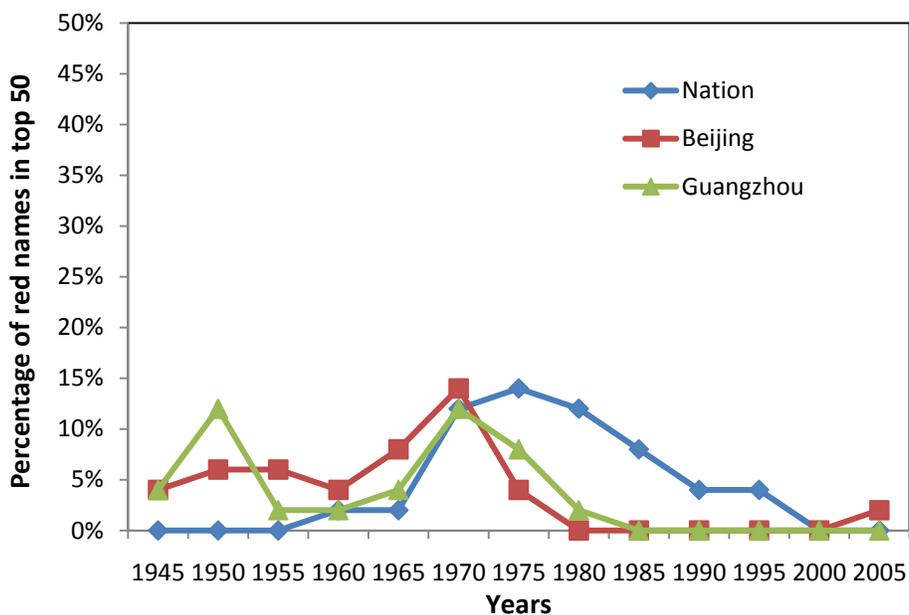


Figure 4a. Concentration without political names, men.

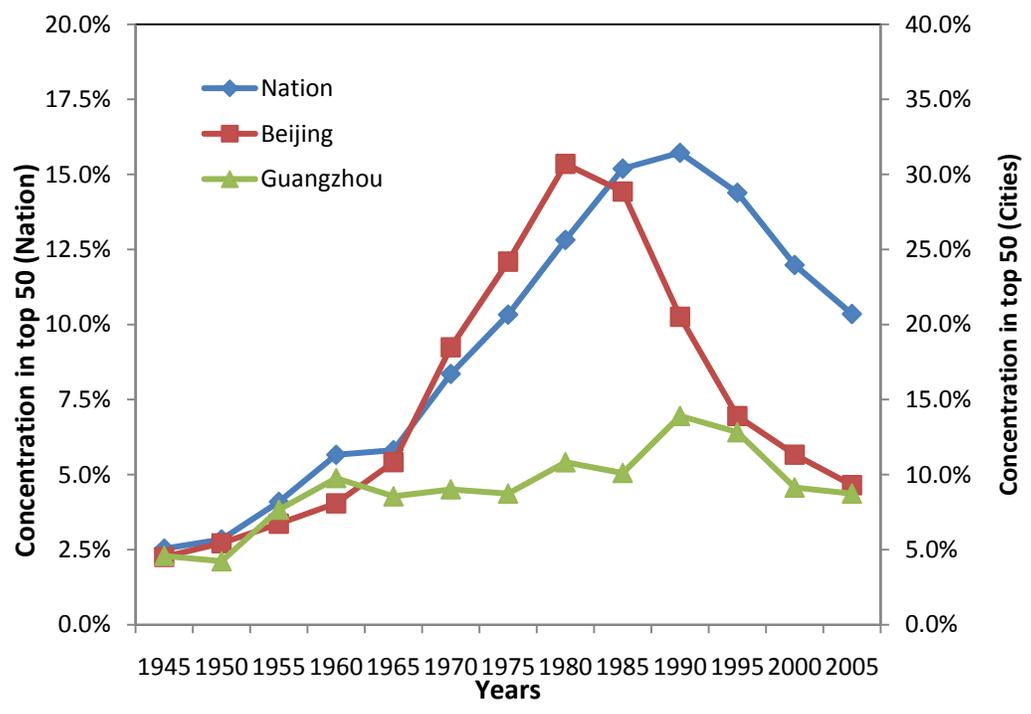


Figure 4b. Concentration without political names, women.

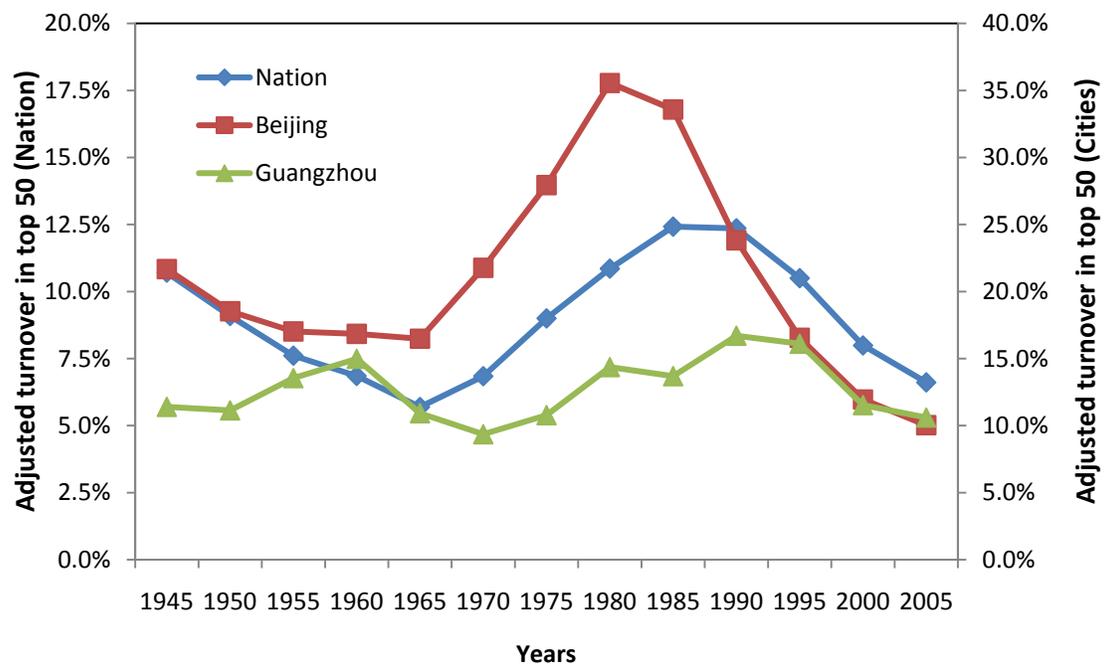
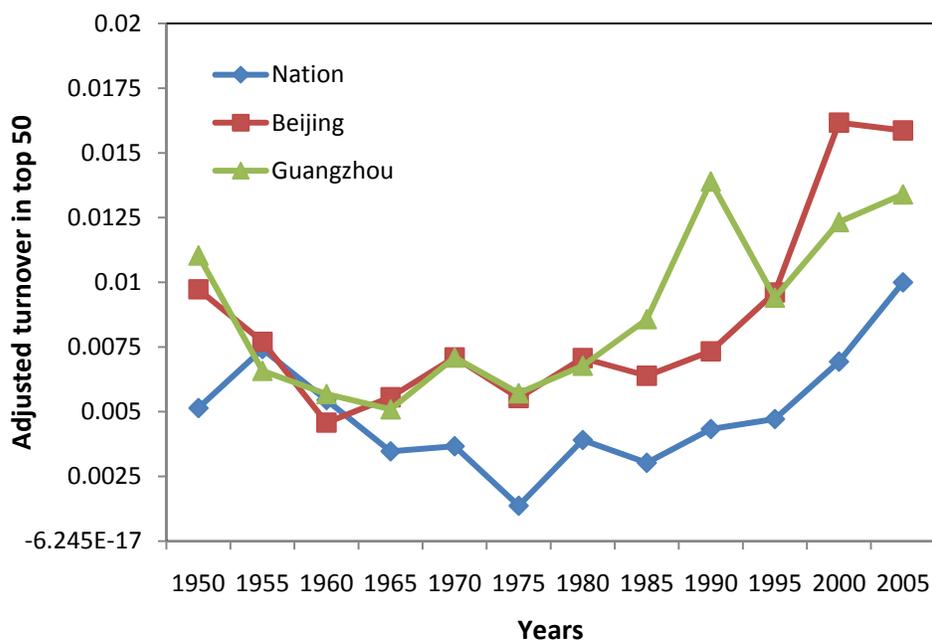
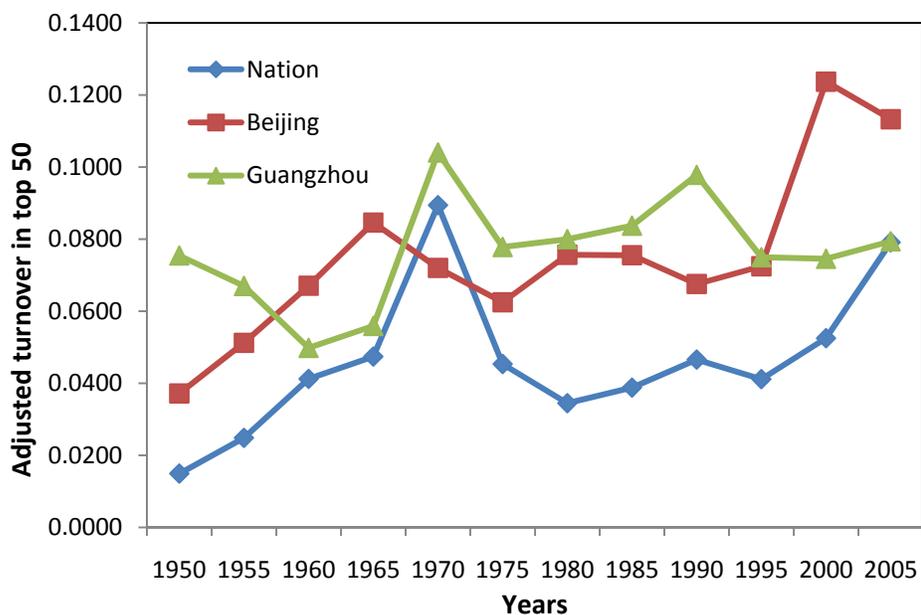


Figure 5a. Adjusted turnover without political names, men.



Note: The value reported for each year represents the value for the immediately preceding 5-year period.

Figure 5b. Adjusted turnover without political names, women.



Note: The value reported for each year represents the value for the immediately preceding 5-year period.

Appendix : A Computational Model of Naming Fashion

In this appendix, we present a simple computation model that clarifies how the TFP-shift mechanism influences the degree of fashion (i.e., the diversity of cultural practices at a point in time and their change over time). We begin by discussing our base model, and then two key scope conditions we have explored.

Base Model.

Consider a population of N actors who, from a menu of M ($M \geq N$) possible practices at any point in time, adopt P ($P \leq M$) practices. We randomly assign each actor a TFP. We assume that the TFP is normally distributed with a mean between 1% (that is, on average actors prefer practices that 1% of other actors adopt) and 20% (that is, on average actors prefer a practice that 20% of other actors adopt). We examined two levels of variance for the TFP distribution ($SD=0.001$ and $SD=0.006$).¹

In the initial state of the system ($t=0$), we randomly assign the P practices to the N actors and calculate the P practices' initial popularities—the popularity of a practice is the percentage of actors who adopt this practice. For instance, if we have 100 actors and 10 practices, the popularities of the ten practices will be between 1% and 91%. The rest ($M-P$) practices' popularities are all zero. In the models we present, we assume $P=N=100$.²

At $t=1$, actors examine the actor calculates the differences between its taste for popularity and the popularities of all practices, including the one it currently adopts. If there is a practice

¹ Because of low mean, to avoid negative values, 0.006 is the biggest SD we can use for a mean of 1%.

² Our models using 100 actors and 20 or 50 practices produced substantively similar results.

whose popularity is closer to the actor's taste than the actor's current practice, the actor will change its practice to the new one.³

We assumed that actors make decision in a partially sequentially fashion. Specifically, we divided the N actors into K groups each of which has L actors ($K*L=N$), and update the popularities of practices after every L actors update their practices. In the base case, we set $L=10$ that means that 10 actors search for a new practice simultaneously. We also explored cases where L was set as high as $L=100$ (i.e., simultaneous choice) and as low as $L=0$ (i.e., sequential choice). Turnover is limited at $L=0$, and becomes unrealistically high at $L=100$.

Lastly, we calculate concentration and (adjusted) turnover of the realized distribution. The results from our base-case simulations are presented in figures 1 and 2 of the paper. Note that we have presented these results with two different levels of variance

Scope conditions

Local knowledge only. We examined how our results are influenced by the assumption that actors have knowledge about the distribution of practices in the entire population of actors. This is relevant, because as discussed in the main body of the paper, there are two reasons to focus on local rather than national fashion: (a) parents may be unaware of the distribution of practices outside of their local area; and (b) over time national assimilation policies might shift the balance between local and global knowledge. To examine the effect of local knowledge on our base model, we assumed that agents are located on a $10*10$ lattice and make decisions based on the

³ If multiple practices meet this criterion, the actor will randomly pick one from them.

distribution of practices among their 8 neighbors. We find that concentration will be lower but turnover will be higher than when actors have local knowledge than in our base model that assumes global knowledge. For instance, when the mean of TFP equals 0.01, SD equals 0.003 and the update is partially simultaneous, the concentration of top 10 is 17.4% lower and the turnover is 9.7% higher when knowledge is global than when it is local. In sum, assumption of local vs. global knowledge has important consequences for our results, implying that it is important to focus on regional data where the assumption of global knowledge is more plausible.

Avoiding past choices. We also examined how our results are influenced by agents' tendency to avoid practices that they have previously chosen. This is relevant because a likely effect of the One-Child Policy was to eliminate this constraint. Consider that, if in their lifetime parents have multiple children, they need to choose a different name for each child. By contrast, if parents only have one child, they will not avoid the names they have previously chosen (or more accurately, this model would simulate the passage of several generations, in which each generation does not have to avoid the name a previous generation has used). Our analysis shows that when actors avoid repeating practices, both concentration is lower and turnover is higher than when actors can adopt repeating practices. For example, when the mean of TFP equals 0.02, SD equals 0.006 and the update is partially simultaneous, the average concentration over five times is 1.3% higher and the average turnover is 7.3% lower when actors avoid repeating practices than when they don't. In sum, the overall result of the One-Child Policy might have been to delay the onset of decline in concentration in precisely the same period where we expect (due to the reduced politicization of the cultural menu and the shift towards lower TFP) a decrease in concentration. Furthermore, insofar as the policy was implemented in fits and starts and unevenly across China, this might introduce a source of noise factor in our data. Note that

because the implementation of the One-Child-Policy is much more consistent in urban areas, the effect of the One-Child-Policy is most clear-cut in the cities, implying that it is important to focus on regional data.

Appendix B: Testing Significance of Change in Fashion

Concentration. Our hypotheses concern changes over time in the degree of concentration and turnover. This raises the question of what constitutes a significant change in these measures, and this challenge is complicated by our lack of complete data on all names that were used and changes in population size that change the meaning and comparability of the distributions over time. For instance, the fifty most popular names will obviously have a lower combined “share” in one year than another if the population size goes from one million to fifty (where the share of the top-fifty names necessarily is 100%). To address this challenge in testing for the significance of differences in concentration, we devised a procedure that eliminates the confound of population-size. The main step of this procedure is to take a sample of 5,000 babies from each population under consideration (year, location, and gender) and give these babies names based on the observed distribution of shares for these names. Since we know the population size, the total number of names given, the total number of unique names, and the share for the fiftieth ranking name, we can estimate the distribution of shares for names ranked 51 until the unique names with considerable precision (and no greater bias with respect to one year versus another year). And this allows us to form samples that produce reliable estimates of the share-distribution for each population and year that are comparable due to the elimination of differences in population size. And we test for the differences in concentration in such samples using the Wilcoxon rank-sum test. Insofar as the parents in one year tend to favor more popular names than in another year, names in the former year will be ranked higher than names in the latter year, and the difference in these ranks follows a normal distribution, creating a Z-score that establishes the significance of the difference.

Turnover. Testing the significance of changes in turnover is also challenging because it involves an aggregation of over-time changes in shares for the same names, and we do not know how the shares of names below rank 50. Fortunately, changes in share at lower shares will have less effect on estimates of turnover. Still, it is possible that estimates based on the fifty top-ranking names could be biased by lack of information on lower-ranking names. This caveat must be borne in mind in interpreting our analysis.

Our approach to testing the significance of changes in turnover is based on regression analyses, where a name's share (in a given location and gender) of the following form:

$$Share_t = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Share_{t-1} + \beta_2 Time + \beta_3 Time * Share_{t-1} + \beta_4 Top50share_t + \beta_5 Priorchange_t + \epsilon_t$$

The unit of analysis in these models is the name, and $Share_t$ is its share in a given year. The degree of turnover is measured as a function of the extent to which the lagged share ($Share_{t-1}$) is a strong predictor, and the model controls for the degree of concentration of the top fifty names in a given year ($Top50share_t$), and the prior difference between the name's share from the year prior to the last year ($Priorchange_t$). We test for the significance of change in turnover by interacting lagged share with (various functions of) historical time. Insofar as turnover is higher in one period than another, this should be reflected in a significant coefficient for β_3 .