

## A Survey of Survey Research on Chinese Politics

### *What Have We Learned?*

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In a political environment that remains (at best) officially skeptical about the enterprise, representative sample surveys on Chinese politics have nonetheless grown substantially in number in the past two decades: political scientists trained and based outside mainland China conducted a mere two such surveys in the 1980s, but the number increased more than tenfold in the 1990s and continues to rise steadily. By mid-2008, some sixty articles, books, and book chapters drawing from original representative sample surveys on Chinese politics had appeared – including many articles in top-tier journals of political science and area studies alike. This chapter surveys the surveys and their products. It briefly explains the focus here on probability sample surveys and describes the changing regulatory context within which researchers conduct their surveys. Most of all, it evaluates their achievements, with attention to their cumulativeness, contributions to knowledge, and fit in Chinese area studies. The chapter is not a primer on the conduct of survey research on Chinese politics in mainland China.<sup>1</sup> It is instead a status report and reflection on this research, aimed as much (or more) at its consumers (and nonconsumers) as at survey researchers themselves.

From the corpus of English-language monographs and peer-reviewed journal articles authored by political scientists and published in nonmainland sources through mid-2008, I identify studies that exploit original probability sample survey data.<sup>2</sup> In coauthored works, I include studies that meet these criteria so long as at least one of the authors is a political scientist. I have surely missed some relevant surveys in my search – but not, I think, any represented in studies published in major journals of political science or Chinese

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<sup>1</sup> For good overviews, see Shi (1996) and Wenfang Tang (2003, 2005). On survey cooperation by ethnic minorities, see Hoddie (2008). On nonresponse, see Zhu (1996). On political sensitivity, see Tsai, Chapter 14 of this volume. Among new monographs drawing from survey data, a good discussion of methods can be found in Dickson (2008).

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix 10.1 for a precise description of what is (and is not) reviewed for this chapter.

area studies or organized by any of the roughly half-dozen major players in the enterprise of survey research on Chinese politics. I focus in this chapter on original surveys, not the small literature by political scientists who analyze datasets produced wholly or mainly by others. At the same time, the paucity of studies analyzing existing datasets is a sign of the relative immaturity of survey research on Chinese politics, a topic that merits discussion and is taken up below.

#### PROBABILITY SAMPLE SURVEYS

As mainland China is large and diverse, what we observe in our fieldwork is necessarily a small subset of a range of players, beliefs, and actions. Further, as China is changing rapidly, what we observe is a snapshot that may or may not be relevant beyond a single point in time. More observations, across more space and at more points in time, can improve confidence that our fieldwork observations are not highly unusual, but the problem is inherent and remains fundamentally unresolved. If the goal is to generalize from what we observe, then the argument for probability sample survey research as a method is quite strong: without a probability sample of a sufficiently large number of observations, analyzed with inferential statistics, we can say nothing about the generalizability of our fieldwork observations.

The notion of a probability sample survey implies that survey researchers select localities and individual respondents into their samples probabilistically. This permits researchers to answer basic questions about the population sampled. More to the point, although particular estimates about the population will differ from statistics provided by a complete and perfectly accurate census of the population (which is unattainable), probability sampling allows researchers to associate the estimate with a specific degree of certainty (conventionally, 95 percent or 99 percent) that the true population value lies within a specific range of values. By contrast, estimates of population values based on samples drawn in ways that violate probability sampling differ in unknown ways from the population sampled.

It is not very difficult to select a probability sample of localities in mainland China (although it is more difficult actually to conduct survey research in the selected localities, as this requires the cooperation of the political authorities). By contrast, increased mobility and outdated residence lists have made it more difficult to select a representative probability sample of individual respondents in any selected locality in mainland China.<sup>3</sup> The survey of surveys below reveals that relatively few surveys on Chinese politics select samples that are nationally representative. Most of the surveys are local probability surveys: a probability sample of individual respondents is selected within a locality or localities selected for convenience. Descriptive statistics along any single dimension from a local probability sample are generalizable to the local

<sup>3</sup> See the discussions in Chapters 12 and 13 of this volume.

population sampled, of course. These descriptive statistics (unlike those based on a nonprobability sample of local respondents) are unbiased estimates about the local population – but not beyond it. Yet, even local probability samples can permit survey researchers to generalize beyond the locality on the sorts of questions that interest social scientists most: questions about the relationship between variables.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, considering mainland China's diversity and rapid pace of change, these are exactly the sorts of questions that can potentially contribute most to our knowledge. For good reason, then, this chapter focuses exclusively on probability sample surveys.

#### REGULATORY REGIME FOR SURVEY RESEARCH

One of the earliest high-level official responses to collaborative survey research on Chinese politics ominously signaled its vulnerability: in 1990 the Central Committee instructed political scientists at Peking University to cease work on a collaborative survey project with the University of Michigan; the State Education Commission (SEC) confiscated the already collected data, officially declared as “state secrets.”<sup>5</sup> Not long after this incident, the SEC and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) were asked to work out appropriate procedures to guide surveys conducted in collaboration with nonmainland researchers, but little was done. A 1996 Central Committee document apparently indicates that proper approval is required for surveys by CASS and universities if the projects involve nonmainland scholars, but the document does not set out procedures for obtaining approvals.<sup>6</sup>

Since 1999, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) has been charged with the creation, refinement, and interpretation of a regulatory regime governing all survey research in mainland China conducted with researchers based outside the mainland – in Chinese 涉外调查, translated here as foreign-affiliated surveys. The term refers to research conducted by Chinese agencies jointly with (委托) or funded by (资助) organizations or individuals based outside the mainland. NBS regulations distinguish between business surveys (市场调查) and social surveys (社会调查). Survey research on Chinese politics falls under the latter category, which is more strictly regulated. It is governed by the Measures for the Administration of Foreign-Affiliated Surveys (NBS, 2004a),

<sup>4</sup> This depends on the analysis not being contaminated by local peculiarities in the theorized relationships. See Manion (1994).

<sup>5</sup> The survey drew official attention with a request to transport completed questionnaires to the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan for coding and data input. The National Science Foundation (NSF), a sponsor of the project, responded to confiscation of the data with a ban on NSF funding for any collaborative research with mainland China. The ban was lifted in mid-1993, when the data were returned to Peking University for coding and input there. An exportable electronic dataset was apparently viewed quite differently from “documents” such as completed questionnaires. See Marshall (1993).

<sup>6</sup> I have not seen this document. My account is based on discussions with mainland Chinese survey researchers.

which replace significantly more restrictive interim measures issued in 1999. The key principles of the regime governing social survey research are the survey permit and project approval systems.

Survey research involving foreign affiliates may be conducted only by the several hundred mainland agencies that have obtained a permit (涉外调查许可证) for such research.<sup>7</sup> Only the NBS and the statistical bureaus of provincial-level governments have the authority to issue such permits.<sup>8</sup> No organization or individual based outside the mainland is authorized to conduct survey research on the mainland without the participation of an authorized mainland agency.

Approval for foreign-affiliated social survey projects must be obtained prior to implementation of the survey. In addition to a copy of the contractual agreement between the Chinese agency and the foreign affiliate, the application for project approval must include a description of the purpose, content, scope, sample, methods, and time frame of the survey as well as a copy of the questionnaire. If changes are made to the survey plan, including the questionnaire, prior to the survey, further approval must be obtained. The NBS and provincial statistical bureaus are obliged to approve (or not approve) the project within fourteen days of receipt of the application. In particular circumstances, the time for approval may be extended another ten days. A written explanation must be provided if projects are not approved.

The existing project approval system is very significantly relaxed, compared to that reflected in the earlier interim measures.<sup>9</sup> Before 2004, Chinese political scientists could not reliably assure their nonmainland colleagues that they would be able to share survey data with them. The earlier measures required not only prior approval of projects, but also a postsurvey second approval to share data with nonmainland affiliates. Chinese authorities could reconsider the confidentiality of the survey data in what might be a new political context. The earlier measures effectively ruled out an early commitment (in grant applications, for example) to public accessibility of survey data.

Foreign institutional review boards may appreciate that the new regulatory regime requires informed consent. Questionnaire cover sheets must conspicuously note: "The respondent has voluntarily agreed to participate in this survey." NSB measures also prohibit use of foreign-affiliated surveys to harm

<sup>7</sup> The *China Daily* noted in 2000 that 29 agencies had received permits to engage in foreign-affiliated survey research. The NBS Web site documents the particular agencies to which it has issued permits over the years. I counted 204 in 2004, 83 in 2005, 58 in 2006, and 186 in 2007. Permits are valid for a period of three years. <http://www.STATS.gov.cn/>

<sup>8</sup> Survey research that spans provincial boundaries requires NBS authorization.

<sup>9</sup> Business surveys enjoy an even more relaxed regulatory environment: they no longer require survey project approval as long as the survey is conducted by an authorized Chinese agency. The relaxation for both business and social surveys reflected in the new measures is the result of a State Council decision some six months earlier. That decision was prompted by passage of the Law on Administrative Permits in 2003. See NBS (2004b).

the interests of any individual and require that surveys be designed so as to maintain the confidentiality of responses.

The regulatory regime presents some new difficulties for foreign-affiliated survey research, however. An NBS clarification (2004c) specifies exactly what information must be indicated conspicuously on the questionnaire cover sheet: the term 涉外 (foreign-affiliated) appears five times in a mere four lines. That is, the measures make all but certain that survey respondents and local authorities facilitating the project know that the activity has some sort of non-mainland connection. Such a disclosure may jeopardize official cooperation, affect interview response (rate and quality), or both. This is particularly likely if respondents are elites.

In sum, survey research by political scientists based outside mainland China is less vulnerable today than in previous years. Progress on a regulatory regime has been made since the early 1990s and significant progress has been made in the past few years. At the same time, survey research on Chinese politics remains subject to the vagaries of Chinese politics – in particular, to official sensibilities about what constitutes politically sensitive questions.<sup>10</sup> Survey researchers who operate within (and outside) the regulatory regime governing their research presumably take the political context into account. Undoubtedly, what results is something of a compromise, usually reflected in the questionnaire design. So far as I can tell, however, what has not been compromised in the surveys reviewed below is the integrity of the survey enterprise as social science.

#### A SURVEY OF SURVEYS

Table 10.1 presents the original probability sample surveys on Chinese politics identified from English-language monographs and peer-reviewed journal articles authored by political scientists and published in nonmainland sources by July 2008.<sup>11</sup> The growth of survey research is evident: the pace in the 1990s is being matched in the first decade of this century and also reflects work by a somewhat broader representation of scholars.

Only three of the surveys are nationally representative – although, as discussed below, two recent additions to nationally representative surveys are not reflected in the table. A large number of the surveys focus exclusively on Beijing, a convenient but highly atypical sample of the urban Chinese population. At the same time, there is fairly good representation of a regionally diverse rural China, which mainly reflects scholarly interest in village elections. Most of the surveys were conducted with face-to-face interviews, but

<sup>10</sup> Wenfang Tang (2003) argues that economic interests also partly explain NSB reluctance to relax standards further. If all survey organizations could conduct foreign-affiliated surveys, then the market for high-priced NSB survey data would shrink.

<sup>11</sup> The numbering suggests thirty-two surveys, but survey 15 combines six annual surveys, discussed at greater length below and in Chapter 13 of this volume.

TABLE 10.1. *Probability sample surveys on Chinese politics resulting in publications analyzing original datasets. Based on a review of English-language monographs and peer-reviewed journal articles by political scientists published in nonmainland sources by mid-2008*

	Year	Localities Surveyed	Size	Publications Associated With Survey
1	1986–87	1 city: in Jilin	250	Manion (1991, 1993)
2	1988–89	Beijing	757	Shi (1997, 1999b)
3	1990	4 counties: in Anhui, Hebei, Hunan, Tianjin	1,270	Manion (1996, 2006); Jennings (1997, 1998, 2003); Eldersveld and Shen (2001)
4	1990–91	National probability sample	2,896	Nathan and Shi (1993, 1996); Shi (1999c)
5	1992	44 cities	2,370	Tang and Parish (2000); Tang (2001a, 2001b, 2005)
6	1993–94	National probability sample; also Taiwan and Hong Kong	3,287	Shi (1999a, 2000, 2001); Chen and Shi (2001); Chu and Chang (2001); Kuan and Lau (2002)
7	1995	Beijing	916	Dowd, Carlson, and Shen (1999)
8	1995	Beijing	658	Chen, Zhong, and Hillard (1997); Chen et al. (1997); Zhong, Chen, and Scheb (1998); Chen and Zhong (1999, 2000, 2002); Chen (2004)
9	1996	Hubei, Shaanxi, Shandong, Sichuan, Zhejiang	160 <sup>†</sup>	Oi and Rozelle (2000)
10	1996	4 counties: in Anhui, Hebei, Hunan, Tianjin	1,414	Eldersveld and Shen (2001); Jennings and Zhang (2005); Manion (2006); Jennings and Chen (2008)
11	1996	Beijing	895	Shi (1999b)
12	1997	Beijing	694	Zhong, Chen, and Scheb (1998); Chen (1999, 2000, 2004); Chen and Zhong (2000)
13	1997, 1999	8 counties: in Hebei, Hunan, Shandong, Zhejiang	754	Dickson (2002, 2003)
14	1998–99	Beijing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Lanzhou, Shanghai, Shenyang	1,543	Tong (2007)

(continued)

TABLE 10.1. (continued)

	Year	Localities Surveyed	Size	Publications Associated With Survey
15	1998–2004	Beijing	551–757	Johnston (2004, 2006); Johnston and Stockmann (2007)
16	1999	87 village small groups: in 25 provinces	1,356	Li (2002)
17	1999	1 county: in Jiangxi	400	Li (2003)
18	1999	Beijing	670	Chen (2001, 2004)
19	1999	Chongqing, Guangzhou, Shanghai, Shenyang, Wuhan, Xi'an	1,820	Tang (2001a, 2005)
20	1999	4 counties: in Anhui, Heilongjiang	2,400	Zweig and Chung (2007)
21	1999–2001	4 counties: in Fujian, Jiangsu, Jiangxi	1,600	Li (2004)
22	2000–2001	Rural Shaanxi	306	Kennedy (2002); Kennedy, Rozelle, and Shi (2004)
23	2000	Rural Jiangsu	1,162	Zhong and Chen (2002); Chen (2005a, 2005b)
24	2000	Jiangsu, Shanghai, Zhejiang	1,625	Wang, Rees, and Andreosso-O'Callaghan (2004)
25	2001	8 counties: in Fujian, Hebei, Jiangxi, Shanxi	316 <sup>†</sup>	Lily Tsai (2007a, 2007b)
26	2001	2 counties: in Fujian	913	Rong (2005)
27	2002–2003	National probability sample	1,525	Kellee Tsai (2007)
28	2002–2003	12 villages: in Anhui	1,503	Tan and Xin (2007)
29	2003–2005	2 counties: in Fujian, Zhejiang	800	Li (2008)
30	2004	1 county: in Yunnan	700	Davis et al. (2007)
31	2004	Beijing	592	Chen, Lu, and Yang (2007)
32	2005	8 counties: in Hebei, Hunan, Shandong, Zhejiang	1,337	Dickson (2007)

<sup>†</sup> Number of probabilistically selected villages in each of which surveyors interviewed a few purposively selected informants.

*Notes:* National probability sample surveys exclude Tibet. Except for national probability samples, “localities surveyed” refers to nonprobabilistically selected localities within which surveyors used probability sampling selection methods. Except for informant surveys, “size” refers to number of completed questionnaires.

ten were conducted with self-administered questionnaires, typically with a survey team member present to answer queries.<sup>12</sup>

Six of the surveys have a longitudinal component, of considerable value to our understanding of Chinese politics. One is a quasi-experimental design: survey 17 is actually a preelection and postelection survey of the same villagers. For the most part, however, the longitudinal design reflects an effort to gauge the impact of a rapidly changing social, political, and economic environment. Surveys 3 and 10, discussed later in the chapter, are pairs in a panel study, an effort to reinterview respondents in order to track change over time at the individual level of analysis. The remaining four are longitudinal cross-sections: they return to the same localities, with essentially the same questionnaire, but survey a new representative sample of the population. The Beijing Area Study (BAS), which is discussed below and in Chapter 13, is the most important of these if only because it tracks change annually. Survey 11 returns to the Beijing mass public in 1996 to ask roughly the same questions about political participation as asked in survey 2. Survey 32 returns to the same eight counties six years later to survey local officials and private entrepreneurs on the same issues. Surveys 8, 12, and 18 of the Beijing mass public contain a common core of questions on popular political support for the regime, incumbents, and policies.

Also, several studies systematically survey and compare two different populations: local government administrators and the mass public in Beijing (Chen, 1999), villagers and local officials at various levels in the countryside (Eldersveld and Shen, 2001; Jennings, 2003; Manion, 1996), private entrepreneurs and local officials (Dickson, 2003, 2007, 2008), villagers and village committee members (Chen, 2005b), villagers and village leaders (Tan and Xin, 2007; Zweig and Chung, 2007), and urban industrial enterprise managers and local environmental sector bureaucrats (Tong, 2007).

Of the surveys presented in Table 10.1, five stand out as achievements of particular note, milestones in survey research on Chinese politics. They include surveys 2, 4, and 6, supervised by Tianjian Shi, each pathbreaking in its own way.

Survey 2, conducted in Beijing and initially conceived as the pretest for a nationally representative survey, is the first large-scale probability sample survey of the Chinese mass public.<sup>13</sup> The vision underpinning its design is

<sup>12</sup> Self-administered surveys were used in three samples of elites: retired officials in survey 1, local officials and private entrepreneurs in surveys 13 and 32, and local bureaucrats and enterprise managers in survey 14. Self-administered questionnaires were also used to survey the mass public in Beijing in surveys 8, 12, 18, and 31; in rural Jiangsu in survey 23; and in rural Anhui in survey 28. Considering the relatively low effective literacy and general unfamiliarity with survey instruments in mainland China, self-administered questionnaires are probably better suited to more literate samples.

<sup>13</sup> The national survey was precluded by the events of June 1989. The mainland partner was an independent survey research center, newly established under the Beijing Social Economic Research Institute headed by Chen Ziming and Wang Juntao, both later charged and imprisoned as the "black hands" behind the 1989 protests. Shi flew out of Beijing on June 10, 1989, with the pilot study questionnaires.



also distinctive and controversial for its time. It is a bold vision of “normal science” that poses as an empirical and testable question the view of the passive citizen in authoritarian China. Its questionnaire borrows heavily from a classic study of political participation in comparative politics (Verba, Nie, and Kim, 1971) and investigates activities easily dismissed at the time as irrelevant (voting), apolitical (workplace cronyism), or too sensitive to discuss with strangers (strikes, demonstrations, boycotts).

Survey 4, supported by the National Science Foundation, is the first nationally representative survey on Chinese politics. Indeed, as Nathan and Shi (1993) point out, it is not only “the first scientifically valid national sample survey” explicitly focusing on political behavior and attitudes conducted on the mainland but the first such survey ever conducted in a Communist country. Again, the design is prompted by a classic survey study in comparative politics (Almond and Verba, 1963), this time with a focus on political culture. An underlying question is the relationship between Chinese culture and democracy. In what sense does Chinese culture pose an obstacle to democratization? In the event of multi-partism, what does the distribution of values across Chinese society suggest about how preference aggregation might create opportunities for political parties?

Survey 6 borrows the vision of cross-national comparative survey work and adapts it to study political culture in three Chinese polities, asking essentially the same questions of Chinese on the mainland, in Taiwan, and in Hong Kong. This is a complex collaborative project, involving nine principal investigators based in the United States, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. It also distinguishes itself from surveys 2 and 4 by the greater attention, in the questionnaire itself, to the possibility of Chinese exceptionalism. The concept of political culture investigated in the survey prominently includes features of Confucianism, in particular a hierarchical orientation to the moral state. The mainland survey includes a large enough urban subsample to permit statistically valid comparisons with the Taiwan and Hong Kong samples.

A fourth pioneering effort is survey 3, the first probability sample survey on politics in the Chinese countryside.<sup>14</sup> Other new features of this study are its survey of both local elites and the mass public, using some of the same survey items to permit comparisons; a panel component that returned to the same localities to reinterview the same respondents in 1996; and a survey team that included several American political scientists for whom the study was their first foray into the study of Chinese politics.<sup>15</sup> This is very much an omnibus survey, the product of negotiation among ten Chinese and American scholars with a variety of research agendas.

<sup>14</sup> Full disclosure: I participated in this survey project. Politics in the post-1989 conservative interregnum intruded to create unusual setbacks for it. See note 5 above.

<sup>15</sup> For example, Jennings authored (1997, 1998a, 2003) and coauthored with his graduate students (Jennings and Zhang, 2005; Jennings and Chen, 2008) several articles drawing on the survey data and published in top-tier journals in both political science and Chinese area studies. Eldersveld coauthored a study with Mingming Shen (Eldersveld and Shen, 2001), the key force in the survey among mainland participants.

Finally, surveys 7 and 15 represent the BAS surveys, described in Chapter 13 of this volume. Begun in 1995, the BAS is an annual survey of the Beijing mass public. It is modeled on the Detroit Area Study and the Chicago General Social Survey and has similar aims: to gauge change and stability over time across a broad range of social, economic, and political dimensions and to understand their correlates. In addition to the basic questionnaire, a novel feature of the BAS is the inclusion of modules of question batteries provided by nonmainland scholars. The foreign policy questions explored by Johnston (2004, 2006) and Johnston and Stockmann (2007) draw from such a module, for example.

In addition to these five milestones, two recent surveys not listed in Table 10.1 are pathbreaking for their nationwide sampling of geographic space using Global Positioning System (GPS) technology. The spatial sampling used in these surveys produces representative samples, including representative samples of the more than 100 million migrants living in Chinese cities, who are typically missed with conventional methods based on household registration lists.<sup>16</sup> First to use this spatial sampling technique for all China (including Tibet) is a 2004 survey on the institutionalization of legal reforms, described at greater length in Chapter 12 of this volume. Second is a 2008 omnibus multidisciplinary survey organized by Texas A&M University and designed to be a regular multiyear effort. In addition to its use of spatial sampling, this survey is noteworthy because preparation included a broad invitation to the scholarly community to contribute questions to the core questionnaire. This feature is modeled on the American National Election Study and may be an important step in building a larger survey research community.<sup>17</sup> As neither of the two surveys had yielded publications by mid-2008, I do not include them in Table 10.1. Clearly, however, spatial sampling inaugurates a new generation of survey research in mainland China, well adapted to ongoing demographic changes.<sup>18</sup>

All of the surveys listed in Table 10.1 are the product of collaboration with mainland partners, a relationship that ranges widely from full partnership to subcontracting. As shown in Table 10.2, a few institutions dominate among mainland partners. First is Peking University, especially its Research Center on Contemporary China (RCCC), which has partnered with nonmainland political scientists for the greatest number of surveys.<sup>19</sup> This reflects (and builds) its reputation as probably the most competent academic survey research agency

<sup>16</sup> For a description of spatial sampling using GPS technology and its advantages over conventional sampling in mainland China, see Chapter 12 in this volume and Landry and Shen (2005).

<sup>17</sup> Questions from eleven scholars outside the core team of survey researchers were added to the survey instrument. Full disclosure: I am a member of the board for the Texas A&M China Survey.

<sup>18</sup> Articles analyzing data from the legal reform survey can be found in a special issue of *China Review*, vol. 9, no. 1 (Spring 2009).

<sup>19</sup> The RCCC also conducted the mainland component of the World Values Survey in 2000.

TABLE 10.2. *Mainland partner institutions for probability sample surveys on Chinese politics*

Mainland Partner	Survey
Peking University, Department of Political Science	1, 11
Peking University, Research Center on Contemporary China	3, 7, 10, 13, 14, 15, 19, 32
People's University, Social Survey Research Center, Beijing	4, 6
People's University, Public Opinion Research Institute, Beijing	8, 12, 18
Beijing Social Economic Research Institute, Opinion Research Center of China	2
Economic System Reform Institute of China	5
Northwest University, Xi'an	22
East China University of Politics and Law, Shanghai	24
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Private Economy Research Center	27
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Research Group, Mass Participation in Community Residents Committees	31
Unspecified	9, 16, 17, 20, 21, 23, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30

*Note:* Survey numbers refer to surveys listed in Table 10.1. "Unspecified" means either no mainland partner institution is specified in publications associated with the survey or reference to the mainland partner institution is nonspecific.

on the mainland. It also reflects substantial ties between former classmates at Peking University and the University of Michigan that link survey researchers based on the mainland and in the United States.<sup>20</sup> People's University also stands out as a frequent mainland partner.

For the most part, survey researchers have not worked with nonacademic marketing firms, although such firms are plentiful and some have worked on prestigious American surveys (e.g., Pew surveys by Horizon). Although commercial firms may be subject to fewer regulatory requirements,<sup>21</sup> they may be wary of risking their livelihood with surveys on explicitly political topics. The reliance on academic partners probably also reflects existing substantial ties and common scholarly interests. Further, commercial firms can be less collegial (i.e., transparent) about sharing with clients details of sampling design and survey implementation; this makes it difficult for survey researchers to evaluate the quality of the data provided.

<sup>20</sup> Mingming Shen, RCCC founder and director and Peking University graduate, earned his doctorate in political science at the University of Michigan. Classmates at Peking University include Tianjian Shi, Wenfang Tang, and Yanqi Tong. Classmates at the University of Michigan include Dickson, Johnston, and Manion.

<sup>21</sup> See note 9 above.

It is also worth noting that the mainland partners remain unspecified for more than a third of the surveys listed in Table 10.1. This may reflect a partnership that does not meet all of the official standards of the Chinese regulatory regime for survey research. Where mainland partners remain unspecified, notes in methodological appendices sometimes refer vaguely to a “mutual agreement” or “political sensitivities.” Whatever the cause, the lack of transparency is unfortunate. It can be difficult to gauge the quality of survey research based on the scant information provided in many of the journal articles listed in Table 10.1.<sup>22</sup> As anonymity provides protection, identification provides accountability. Accountability for the quality of the work is particularly important to the maturation of the relatively new field of survey research on Chinese politics. Further, mainland partners protected from the vagaries of politics are at the same time deprived of the opportunity to build their reputations.

Arrangements with mainland partners may also partly account for the dearth of publicly available datasets from the surveys listed in Table 10.1. Only three have been publicly archived – from surveys 2, 3, and 6.<sup>23</sup> The dataset from survey 25 is available on the author’s Web site. Datasets from surveys 16, 17, and 21 are available from the author upon request.<sup>24</sup> Not surprisingly in this context, analysis of existing datasets remains rare. In my survey of the literature, I discovered only a few studies analyzing data from either these datasets or the mainland data from the publicly archived World Values Surveys and Asia Barometer.<sup>25</sup> In short, the norm for survey research on Chinese politics is for researchers to be involved in every part of the project, from survey design to analysis and write-up. To the extent that there is a division of labor, it is reflected in actual survey implementation by mainland partners. As political scientists increasingly receive their survey research funding from agencies that expect a commitment to public availability of data after a specified time, this state of affairs may change. The routine public archiving

<sup>22</sup> Descriptions of methods in monographs are generally much better. Normal length guidelines for journal articles undoubtedly encourage sacrificing methodological for substantive elaboration.

<sup>23</sup> Data from survey 3 are archived at the Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan. Data from surveys 2 and 6 are archived at the China Archive at Texas A&M University. Data from the Taiwan and Hong Kong surveys that complement mainland survey 6 are archived at National Taiwan University.

<sup>24</sup> Of course, even where researchers do not publicize the availability of their data, they may make it available upon request. For example, Kent Jennings and I have made available data from the 1990 survey of local officials that complement the rural mass public survey in survey 3. Wenfang Tang has made available data from surveys 5 and 19, as well as data from surveys conducted by the Economic System Reform Institute of China in 33–44 cities in 1987–89 and 1991, analyzed in Tang and Parish (1996, 2000) and Tang (2001a, 2005), and from a survey conducted by the All-China Federation of Trade Unions in 1997, analyzed in Tang (2005) (personal communication, June 12, 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Guo (2007) and Hoddie (2008) analyze data from survey 6. Tang (2005) and Wang (2007) analyze data from the World Values Surveys. Chang, Chu, and Tsai (2005) and Zhengxu Wang (2006, 2007) analyze data from Asia Barometer.

of survey data will be one marker of the maturation of survey research on Chinese politics.

#### CONTENT AND CUMULATIVENESS

What are the main topics that consume the various products of survey research on Chinese politics? What valuable knowledge about Chinese politics has survey research contributed? When survey researchers examine the same or similar topics, do they explicitly engage one another? To what extent are they building a cumulative knowledge?

Of all the studies identified in Table 10.1, a conservative estimate would place more than half in the category of democratization. The single most popular topic in survey research on Chinese politics is village elections, also popular in qualitative research. It figures in some of the earliest survey studies and continues to thrive. It has garnered the attention of the widest range of survey researchers. For these reasons, a brief review of survey research questions and findings on village elections is a good point of departure.

A few studies (Oi and Rozelle, 2000; Shi, 1999a) seek to explain the substantial variation throughout the country in implementation of the 1987 Organic Law on Village Committees. With grassroots democratization as the dependent variable, these studies measure village electoral democracy as electoral contestation. A greater number of studies inquire into the impact of village electoral democratization. These studies also develop more nuanced measures of electoral quality, conceived as a bundle of variables, including but not restricted to contestation. Although they focus attention on different components of the relationship, their findings are all broadly consistent with the proposition that electoral mechanisms strengthen elite-mass connections. Specifically, village elections of higher democratic quality are associated with greater congruence of views between villagers and village leaders (Jennings, 2003; Manion, 1996); a stronger likelihood of villager appeals through village leaders (Li, 2002); villager satisfaction with the electoral process (Kennedy, 2002); higher levels of external efficacy (Li, 2003); perceptions that village leaders are fair (Kennedy, Rozelle, and Shi, 2004) and trustworthy (Manion, 2006); and greater villager political interest, awareness, and optimism (Tan and Xin, 2007). This is a fairly robust accumulation of evidence across surveys conducted at different times in a variety of localities by a range of scholars employing different measures. The overall conclusion is not particularly surprising, however.

Other studies illustrate not only that survey researchers actively engage one another in building a cumulative knowledge of Chinese politics but also that not all survey research on Chinese politics is simply confirmatory. It can yield surprises that contribute importantly to our basic repository of knowledge. Three examples illustrate this fairly well.

Robust evidence attesting to regime support provides a first example. Findings based on surveys of the Beijing mass public at three points in the

1990s produce the same surprising conclusion: despite only moderate support for government policy performance, the regime enjoys broad and strong legitimacy, based on the elitism and authority orientation of ordinary Chinese (J. Chen, 2004; Chen, Zhong, and Hillard, 1997; Zhong, Chen, and Scheb, 1998). Similarly, examining data from the first nationally representative survey on Chinese politics, Nathan and Shi (1996) find that only a small number support an end to party leadership, even among Chinese who support democracy – a concept that resonates more with traditional notions of leadership than with pluralism. Shi (2001) finds a similar result in his comparative study of political trust, analyzing data from somewhat later representative surveys of Chinese on the mainland and Taiwan: political trust on the authoritarian mainland is strong and based on traditional values, compared to trust in democratizing Taiwan, where it is more contingent on government performance.<sup>26</sup>

A second example draws from survey research on the Chinese business-state relationship. Dickson (2002, 2003) reveals that Chinese capitalists neither possess beliefs nor engage in activities that constitute a challenge to the regime. Theories that identify them as likely activists confronting the ruling Communist Party are not well founded. Moreover, “red capitalists” have not become less embedded in the current political system over time (Dickson, 2007, 2008). Drawing from nationally representative survey data, Kellee Tsai (2007) reaches the same conclusion: Chinese private entrepreneurs do not constitute a politically assertive class (or share a common class identity at all) that poses a challenge to the state – nor are they a likely source of contestation in the near future.

A final example originates in the survey research on political participation. As Shi (1997) demonstrates in his early study, political involvement by ordinary Chinese is wide ranging and intensive, not simply formalistic. Further, its intensity and range are increasing (Shi, 1999b). Jennings (1997) confirms that this picture of frequent, varied, and autonomous acts of political participation also extends to the Chinese countryside.

#### AN EXAMPLE OF COMPETING PERSPECTIVES

The examples above show that survey researchers engage one another in building a cumulative knowledge. One of the more lively examples of survey researcher engagement unfolded in two *Journal of Politics* articles presenting competing theoretical frameworks, hypotheses, empirical tests, and findings on the same question: why do Chinese vote in local congress elections? The presentations by Chen and Zhong (2002) and Shi (1999c) are particularly interesting because the debate is fundamental, clear, and explicit. As such, the engagement merits particular discussion here.

<sup>26</sup> Related but not exactly similar is the finding of Lianjiang Li (2004) in a comparison of political trust in different levels of state power: there is substantially and significantly higher trust in the center than in lower levels.

The articles roughly agree in their observations and characterization of *partial* electoral reform: local congress elections are semicompetitive, but in an authoritarian political context. In both articles, Chinese voters are rational, pursuing their interests as best they can under the circumstances. Both articles present multivariate analyses of voter turnout in local congress elections and include most of the same socioeconomic variables. Shi tests his hypotheses with data from a 1990–91 nationally representative sample survey, Chen and Zhong with data from a December 1995 survey of Beijing residents.

Most interestingly, the articles begin with fundamentally different perspectives on contemporary Chinese politics, reflected in completely different hypotheses on voting behavior, given partial reform. The crux of the different perspectives has to do with how much institutional change is required to produce behavioral change. For Shi, a little institutional change is expected to go a long way: the relevant contrast for Chinese voters is with the noncompetitive elections of the past. Electoral *choice among candidates*, although limited, is the relevant institutional change. For Chen and Zhong, the key contrast is with a nonexistent liberal democracy. Despite electoral choice among candidates, current authoritarian institutions have not dislodged Communist Party electoral management and ideological dominance; in this context, the only important new choice for Chinese voters is the choice to *abstain* from voting. In sum, Shi hypothesizes that the choice to vote will reflect the vote's new relevance in elections with choice, despite the authoritarian context; by contrast, Chen and Zhong hypothesize that the choice to vote will reflect the vote's continued irrelevance in the authoritarian context.

Probably the hypotheses and findings of greatest interest have to do with the impact on voting of democratic orientation and political efficacy – which point in different directions in the two articles. Chen and Zhong hypothesize and find that Chinese with stronger democratic values and sense of internal political efficacy are less likely to vote in the (still authoritarian) local congress elections, compared to those with weak democratic values and weak internal efficacy. Shi hypothesizes and finds the opposite. The analyses also yield different findings (each consistent with the different hypotheses) about the impact on voting of anticorruption sentiment and socioeconomic variables such as age and education.

These differences point to three issues for survey research on Chinese politics. First and most obviously, different scholars can begin at the same point but formulate radically different hypotheses about the implications of what they observe; these different hypotheses may both be plausible, even equally plausible. Indeed, what is most interesting about the Chen and Zhong article is their reframing of partial political reform: they present a different way of seeing semicompetitive congress elections, which is completely at odds with Shi's framework, hypotheses, and findings. The second issue is less obvious without a careful reading of the two articles: different frameworks are interesting in the context of survey research because the rival hypotheses they yield can be tested – but not unless they are set up in a true competition. In their

socioeconomic measures, the models are nearly the same (although Chen and Zhong fail to include party membership), but the other variables are completely different in measurement and even conceptualization.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, Shi does not include a measure of democratic orientation (or regime support) in his multivariate model: he includes it only in a bivariate analysis; as such, it is not a strong enough empirical finding for a contrast. Of course, Chen and Zhong do not pretend to replicate Shi's model. At the same time, they miss an opportunity for a persuasive contrast and greater cumulativeness by, for example, presenting one model that mirrors Shi's as closely as possible, given the difference in measures.<sup>28</sup>

The third issue may be the most important. A true replication of Shi's model with the 1995 Beijing survey data might well produce very different results from those presented in Shi's article. These are very different populations: Shi's nationwide sample is 70 percent rural, a far different population from the more highly educated and politically savvy Beijing residents. Timing is also important: for Shi's respondents, the most recent congress elections (in 1986–87 or 1988–89) occurred in a more liberal environment than those recalled by Beijing residents in 1995. The more general point is the relevance of context in thinking about relationships between variables and in interpreting statistical results. The pace and unevenness of change in China requires us to pay attention to geographic and temporal diversity. Some of the implications of this have already been emphasized earlier: the value of longitudinal studies, for example. For large-scale surveys that span localities of different types, it implies taking geographic diversity into account in our statistical models. Finally, it serves as a caution against accepting findings as established facts that require no further examination, even in different circumstances.

#### SURVEY RESEARCH AND AREA STUDIES

If the small community of survey researchers is indeed engaged in building a valuable cumulative knowledge of Chinese politics, how broad is the community of consumers? Certainly, survey-based studies appear to have made serious inroads in the discipline: roughly a dozen of the articles listed in Table 10.1 appear in top-tier journals of political science. Yet, how big is the divide between survey-based studies and studies based on archival and qualitative research methods, both with a longer tradition in Chinese area studies? Twenty-six of the forty-six journal articles listed in Table 10.1 are published in

<sup>27</sup> This is certainly true of internal efficacy and anticorruption support. For example, Chen and Zhong use one question to measure internal efficacy: it focuses on workplace (not national) politics; Shi uses both measures in an index of internal efficacy. Chen and Zhong ask for an evaluation of anticorruption measures; Shi measures abuse of power by local leaders.

<sup>28</sup> This would be simple: it would involve including party membership and leaving democratic orientation and regime support out of the model; internal efficacy and anticorruption support would still be slightly different measures, of course.



journals that focus exclusively on China, East Asia, or Asia.<sup>29</sup> This is hardly a definitive answer to the questions posed above, but it does not suggest a chasmic divide. Nor does a close reading of the research products listed in Table 10.1 suggest a divide.

The overwhelming preponderance of survey-based studies explicitly situate their research questions (and findings) within both the discipline of political science and the field of Chinese area studies, regardless of publication outlet. A few refer only to work in the qualitative tradition in Chinese studies, ignoring other survey-based research on Chinese politics and also eschewing a broader empirical and theoretical context. None ignore qualitative studies in contextualizing their research, however. To the contrary, they typically draw at some length from qualitative studies in setting out the research question, justifying its importance, and interpreting statistical findings.

Engaging the qualitative research does not guarantee a readership among qualitative researchers in Chinese politics. Ideally, in an area studies journal, the account of the research and findings should be accessible beyond the community of scholars with sufficient training to assess the quality of the methods. Most articles do not go the extraordinary lengths of Nathan and Shi (1993) in attempting to educate readers about the relative merits of survey research, but most do make an effort (perhaps with editorial prodding) to explain their substantive findings clearly enough.

A more serious problem, to my view, is an overuse of descriptive statistics, which have an inordinate impact because of their relative digestibility. Nearly one-fourth of the research products listed in Table 10.1 are exclusively, essentially, or mainly descriptive – without any multivariate model estimation or inferential statistical analysis.<sup>30</sup> Summary descriptive statistics are a useful preliminary to analysis and also have inherent value when the survey data are nationally representative or permit a valid comparison across time or populations. Many of the descriptive statistical presentations lack these features, however. Even so, this does not reflect a restraint imposed (or self-imposed) with an area studies readership in mind. Although a high proportion of these presentations can be found in journals with an area studies focus, it is not the case that these outlets shun more sophisticated work. Nineteen of the twenty-six survey-based articles on Chinese politics appearing in area studies journals present multivariate models and employ inferential statistics.

Finally, although survey-based studies engage the qualitative research, relatively few integrate qualitative and survey research in a single project. That is,

<sup>29</sup> *Journal of Contemporary China* dominates, with ten articles; *China Quarterly* is next, with six articles.

<sup>30</sup> Some of these present bivariate relationships, but most present only descriptive statistics along a single dimension. More than half of these are fairly recent publications (i.e., 2005–2007), so it is not that scholarship has simply been catching up in methodological sophistication. It is worth noting that the standard (multivariate models or inferential statistics) I use here is by no means a very high one.

if there is not a divide, there does seem to be a division of labor. Two welcome recent exceptions are studies by Kellee Tsai (2007) and Lily Tsai (2007a, 2007b). Kellee Tsai integrates an original large-scale nationally representative survey with some 300 in-depth qualitative interviews with local officials, private entrepreneurs, and mainland researchers to describe and explain “informal adaptive institutions” in the relationship between Chinese capitalists and the state. Lily Tsai works on a smaller scale in the Chinese countryside: from a case study of a few villages in a single province, she develops a thesis on the role of “solidary groups” in public goods provision, then collects administrative data through an informant survey of some 300 villages across four provinces and subjects her proposition to statistical testing. Both works are impressive examples of richly contextual research that successfully employs multiple methods. Combining qualitative and quantitative research findings is more difficult to realize in a journal article, given length restrictions, but examples include studies by Manion (1991), Kennedy (2002), and especially Lianjiang Li (2002, 2004).

## CONCLUSION

What is the status of survey research on Chinese politics? This chapter points to many reasons for optimism about the enterprise. Most important of all, the products of survey research reflect a community that is actively engaged in building a valuable cumulative knowledge of Chinese politics. Nor does this community ignore the progress in our knowledge of Chinese politics gained from qualitative fieldwork or nonsurvey quantitative work.

Survey research on Chinese politics is still a fairly young enterprise, however. Some important areas for improvement remain outside the range of influence of American researchers. So long as the enterprise is subject to the intrusiveness of a regulatory regime that reflects a wary authoritarian politics, it will be difficult to develop strong open working relationships in survey research with Chinese colleagues at more institutions. This has several implications, none favorable. It obstructs the growth of accountability in survey research and the emergence of reputations for excellence among more Chinese institutions. Concerns to protect mainland partners are also a disincentive (if not always an absolute barrier) to widespread and systematic sharing of data. In turn, the dearth of publicly accessible datasets constrains the integration of survey data more broadly into research on Chinese politics, limiting it to a fairly small community of survey researchers.

## APPENDIX 10.1: WHAT IS REVIEWED HERE

For this chapter, I reviewed English-language monographs and peer-reviewed journal articles authored by political scientists and published in nonmainland sources through mid-2008 to identify studies that exploit original probability sample survey data. This focus eliminates from consideration a substantial

literature by sociologists and economists drawing from probability sample survey data, including work that to varying degrees bears on Chinese politics broadly defined. Nor do I review survey-based studies produced and published on the mainland. Mainland Chinese political scientists have conducted a large number of surveys, beginning in the 1980s. Nathan and Shi (1993) observe that most such surveys on which they have information are methodologically flawed. Surveys published in mainland sources appear to have improved in quality, but descriptions of their methods are often too sparse to permit evaluation. This is, of course, true of several survey-based studies published outside the mainland too.

I focus in the chapter on original surveys. Researchers based outside mainland China always work with mainland colleagues, but by “original survey” I imply their participation in the decision-making process that shapes the product in crucial ways. This includes choices about pretests, interviewers, training, sampling, and data input. This decision rule was not always straightforward to implement. In particular, Wenfang Tang typically compares evidence from original surveys and existing datasets in his work. For example, Table 10.1 includes a 1992 forty-four-city survey and a 1999 six-city survey, both of which he designed or played the main role in designing. The table does not include three other surveys in which he did not participate in the decision-making process as described earlier. At the same time, his access to these datasets is a noteworthy event in the history of survey research on Chinese politics. This is especially the case for the surveys conducted by the Economic System Reform Institute of China, disbanded after 1989. A National Science Foundation grant allowed Tang and Parish to recover the data and check them against the original questionnaires. For work based on existing datasets acquired by Tang, see Tang (1993, 2001a, 2005) and Tang and Parish (1996, 2000).

I invite readers to alert me to studies that do not appear in Table 10.1 but do meet the criteria for inclusion noted above. Table 10.1 and its associated references are updated regularly on my personal Web site at <http://www.lafollette.wisc.edu/facultystaff/manion/>.

As discussed in footnote 24, few of the datasets are publicly archived, but in my experience it is worthwhile to make a direct individual request to survey researchers for access to their data. This can be an especially useful strategy for graduate students to supplement qualitative fieldwork and archival sources, for example.