Online Appendix

Information Control and Public Support for Social Credit Systems in China

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Contents

A   Survey and Experimental Design

A.1   Ethical Considerations

We take extra caution to minimize potential risks to respondents, field staff, and the researchers. Both online and field surveys are anonymous. In the nationwide online survey, we avoid asking any sensitive questions to protect respondents and reduce self-censorship. The field survey is a five-minute opinion survey with minimal risk, which was granted an IRB exemption.[1] In particular, we take the following efforts to protect the rights and wellbeing of research participants and field staff during the college field survey.

First, we design our repression information treatment based on an article publicized by a progressive state media outlet, the Beijing News (Xinjingbao).[2] The Beijing News is co-founded by Guangming Daily and Nanfang Daily Group and is known for its willingness to test Chinese censors. The information from this progressive outlet was considered radical but tolerated by Chinese censors and thus should not involve political risks. Second, we state earlier in the questionnaire that our scenarios are hypothetical, which mitigates the potential risk of information revelation even if the information might change some students' beliefs. Third, we interviewed some of the respondents (for evaluating the questionnaire design), and they did not think the survey was sensitive. Fourth, we use an online criticism of the government instead of radical political actions because online criticism is less sensitive, which is safer for respondents, field staff, and researchers. Fifth, in each university, we asked faculty members and students to proofread the questionnaire to make sure it did not incur any risk to respondents. Finally, the survey is anonymous and the enumerators were requested to stay away from respondents when respondents filled in the questionnaire. A questionnaire that does *not* collect personal information reduces the risk of a loss of confidentiality and any other risks related to individual identity. These strategies not only reduce potential risks to

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[1]The exemption was granted by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Penn State University.

[2]See, "Credit Rating Should not Harm Citizens' Basic Rights" (in Chinese): http://www.bjnews.com.cn/opinion/2014/06/20/321658.html, last accessed March 17, 2021. This article mentions that the SCS punishes "petitioning and public tip-offs on the Internet (上访和网络举报)". The article has not been taken down from the Beijing News website.

respondents but also minimize respondents' social desirability bias and self-censorship during the survey.

A.2   In-the-field Survey Experiment

A.2.1   Randomization and Treatments

Respondents were randomly assigned to one control group and three treatment groups. Due to the relatively small sample size, we use block random assignment to reduce potential imbalance among groups. The easily identifiable variables that could predict public support of government coercion are gender and region (Conrad et al. 2018). Thus, we partition the subjects into six blocks (two gender groups by three regions/universities) and randomize within each block.

Note that if the severity of violations and the associated punishments are different between the social order treatment and the political repression treatment, the treatment effects may not capture differences in information revelation but reflect the differences in the severity of violations and punishments. To address this concern, we fix the level of punishment for both treatment conditions and make the severity of violations as similar as possible between treatments. Table A.1 shows the vignettes of the control and treatment scenarios.

A.2.2   Main Measures

To measure respondents' opinion toward the SCS, we ask them to what extent they support the SCS on a 0-10 scale, and whether the SCS should be managed by the government or third-party organizations. We also ask where respondents obtained information about the SCSs, such as state media, non-state media, commercials, self-experience, and/or friends. This question allows us to examine the relationship between government information control and support of the SCS. In addition, scholars argue that the public may support a coercive tool if they are not victims but beneficiaries of state coercion. We ask respondents to guess their future social credit levels if a nationwide SCS were about to take place. This measure captures to what extent they believe they will be victims of the SCS. It also captures individuals' social-desirability bias because a higher

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Table A.1: Control and Treatment Scenarios

Control Scenario: No Information

Many public spaces install facial recolonization and ID scanning devices; there are also surveillance cameras everywhere. It is very easy to record citizens' good or bad behaviors. In addition, a number of city governments are piloting Social Credit Systems that assess citizens' behavior. SCS scores can influence citizens' transportation options, school entrance, employment, social security policies, and bank mortgage application, etc. Do you disapprove or approve of this trend of management?

现在很多地方都需要刷脸认证，比如火车站，飞机场，汽车站等；街道上也随处可见监控摄像头。居民的良好和不良行为很容易记录。而且目前我国不少城市的政府都正在创建社会信用体系试点，给居民的行为打分，分数会影响到居民的交通出行，入学、就业、社保、银行贷款等诸多方面。你是反对还是支持这样一种管理发展趋势？（请选择反对或支持程度）

Treatment 1: Social Order Maintenance Information

... application, etc. *Recently, one citizen in an eastern city drove drunk and caused chain-reaction accidents (though no one was hurt).[a] Being downgraded in social credits, this person is banned from buying air tickets or hopping on high-speed trains. Now this person can only travel by bus or slow train.* Do you disapprove...

......等诸多方面。比如不久前东部某试点市一位居民醉酒驾车、超速并导致连环车祸（虽无人受伤）。该居民社会信用等级被降低，以至于被禁止购买飞机票和高铁票，只能乘坐大巴和普通列车出行。你是反对......

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[a]We use "an eastern city" because East China is known for its advancement in developing social credit systems.

Treatment 2: Political Repression Information

... application, etc. *Recently, one citizen in an eastern city often posted criticisms online to blemish the government's image. Being downgraded in social credits, this person is banned from buying air tickets or hopping on high-speed trains. Now this person can only travel by bus or slow train.* Do you disapprove...

......等诸多方面。比如不久前东部某试点市一位居民由于经常在网上发帖损害政府形象。该居民社会信用等级被降低，以至于被禁止购买飞机票和高铁票，只能乘坐大巴和普通列车出行。你是反对......

Treatment 3: Order and Repression Information

... application, etc. *Recently, one citizen in an eastern city drove drunk and caused chain-reaction accidents (though no one was hurt). Another citizen in an eastern city often posted criticisms online to blemish the government's image. Being downgraded in social credits, these two citizens are banned from buying air tickets or hopping on high-speed trains. Now they can only travel by bus or slow train.* Do you disapprove...

......等诸多方面。比如不久前东部某试点市一位居民醉酒驾车、超速并导致连环车祸（虽无人受伤），而另一位居民经常在网上发帖损害政府形象。这两位居民的社会信用等级都被降低，以至于被禁止购买飞机票和高铁票，只能乘坐大巴和普通列车出行。你是反对......

score is socially desirable.

A.2.3 Nonresponse Rate

Nonresponse after randomization may induce biases to estimation. Information about sensitive topics like the SCS's repressive function often leads to nonresponse. But this is not a serious concern in our college field survey because only 10 out of 747 respondents did not complete the questionnaire (participants were notified that they are free to drop out from the survey at any time, and the nonresponse rate is only 0.013). Table A.2 further shows nonresponse rates by control and treatment groups. Among the four groups, the two treatment groups that reveal repression information have a larger number of non-responses (n = 5 and 3 respectively) than that of the control group (n = 1) and the social-order information treatment group (n = 1). But the high response rates in these groups indicate that potential biases are negligible. Besides, respondents who saw the SCS's repressive potential but refused to talk about it due to sensitivity concerns would have exhibited lower support had they answered the question. In other words, the biases caused by nonresponse, if any, will lead to an underestimation of the repression treatment effect. Thus, nonresponse is not very likely to be a concern here.

Table A.2: Nonresponse Rate by Group

	Control	Social	Political	Social & Political
N of Obs.	204	164	198	181
N of Nonresponses	1	1	5	3
Nonresponse Rate	0.005	0.006	0.025	0.017

A.3 Nationwide Online Survey

We use a nationwide online survey with broader demographic representativeness to complement our college field survey. The online survey was conducted between February and April 2018 through a foreign-based survey company. The survey company collaborates with Chinese companies that operate websites and apps to conduct the survey online through desktops and mobile applications. The participants were randomly selected from a user base of more than 350,000 Chinese netizens who use over 40,000 different apps and mobile websites, such as Line (a messaging app with 220 million active users worldwide), Design Home (an app to simulate home decoration),

Coin Dozer (a gaming app), and TVSmiles (an app for quizzes and prizes to win). The survey was displayed on app offer walls or website pages that provide users a list of actions or opportunities to complete to get rewards. Depending on the apps and websites, users were offered different, small monetary or nonmonetary rewards, including access to premium content (e.g., news articles), virtual rewards (e.g., extra time in games), gift cards, vouchers, charitable donations, and PayPal cash. Using a variety of rewards allows the survey company to reach a broad population with different preferences and demographic features.

The survey uses a blind opt-in recruitment strategy to enlarge the representativeness of the sample: users were offered to take part in a survey, but they did not know the topic of the survey before opting in. The questions are not sensitive at all in this survey because we want to reach a population as representative as possible. When the survey content is displayed, participants are notified that they can choose to drop from the survey at any time and completion of the survey constitutes consent. In total, 64% of opt-in respondents completed the survey. Survey responses were considered invalid if respondents completed them in a very short period of time with several consecutive identical answers or inconsistent responses. After excluding invalid responses, we have a total sample of 2,027 Chinese netizens.

The sampling process accounted for the distributions of age, gender, and region of China's Internet-based population based on recent statistics from the International Data Base of the U.S. Census Bureau (2016), Pew Global Attitudes Survey (2015), and Statista (2016). Further, to represent the demographic characteristics of the census, a weight is created using age, gender, region, and demographic groups' Internet penetration based on the aforementioned surveys and censuses. Taking into account an estimate of the design effect based on the distribution of the weights, the overall margin of error for estimates is 2.22%.

A.4   Summary Statistics

Table A.3 reports the summary statistics of the nationwide online survey.

With respect to the experiment in the college field survey, Table A.4 reports the covariate

Table A.3: Summary Statistics (Nationwide Online Survey)

Statistic	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	25%	75%	Max
Credit Systems Approval	2,027	4.29	0.81	1	4	5	5
Perceived Distrust	2,027	4.16	0.92	1	4	5	5
Avoid Friends with Bad Social Credits	2,027	0.38	0.49	0	0	1	1
SCS Info: TV/Newspaper	2,027	0.17	0.37	0	0	0	1
SCS Info: TV/Newspaper (Commercial SCS User)	1,469	0.23	0.42	0	0	0	1
Female	2,027	0.42	0.49	0	0	1	1
Age	2,027	30.62	8.91	18	24	36	64
Income	1,994	3.34	1.10	1	3	4	5
Education	1,977	3.64	0.69	1	4	4	4
Urban/Rural Residence	2,027	0.84	0.37	0	1	1	1
CCP Member	2,027	0.22	0.42	0	0	0	1
Public Employment	1,990	0.34	0.47	0	0	1	1
Living in Pilot City	2,002	0.47	0.50	0	0	1	1
Credit Decision Influence	2,027	0.74	0.44	0	0	1	1
Confidence in the Government	2,027	3.30	0.74	1	3	4	4
Credit Score Fairness	1,224	3.33	0.60	1	3	4	4
Privacy	2,027	1.71	0.64	1	1	2	3

balance among control and treatment groups based on a number of individual characteristics and attitudes, including age, gender, family income, income satisfaction, party affiliation, membership in official university organizations, membership in student societies, community service, interest in discussing politics, media consumption, social distrust, online expression. As shown in Table A.4, randomization is successful, and the covariates are balanced among all groups.

Table A.4: Balance Check (College Field Survey)

	obs.	Control	Social	Political	Social&Political	p-value
Age	704	21.42	21.43	21.03	21.16	0.314
Female (F=1)	741	0.50	0.48	0.54	0.48	0.632
Income (1-9)	737	6.85	6.59	6.83	6.79	0.469
Income Sat. (0-10)	746	6.73	6.73	6.72	7.04	0.491
Party (Yes=1)	746	0.16	0.17	0.17	0.12	0.540
Official Organization (Yes=1)	747	0.48	0.45	0.51	0.47	0.721
Student Organization (Yes=1)	746	0.61	0.62	0.63	0.62	0.961
Community Service (1-5)	739	2.51	2.48	2.49	2.53	0.967
Speech (1-5)	737	3.13	3.12	3.18	3.14	0.923
Media: News (1-5)	725	2.04	2.09	2.15	2.10	0.624
Media: TV (1-5)	729	2.97	3.10	2.90	3.00	0.340
Media: Phone (1-5)	738	4.75	4.74	4.66	4.72	0.393
Distrust (0-10)	737	4.35	4.03	3.94	4.29	0.434
Discuss Politics (1-5)	737	2.28	2.18	2.25	2.16	0.564

B Empirical Results

B.1 Field Survey Experiment

B.1.1 Support for the SCS: Additional Controls

Table B.1 shows the results of the experiments with additional controls. Because the treatments are randomized at the individual level, we use robust standard errors for all model specifications. The results show that the effect of repression information on respondents' support for the SCS is strong and statistically significant even if we control for a variety of variables (Column 4). Note that the *SCS Info: State Media* variable is generated from a question asking respondents' sources of information. This variable is also used to identify the State Information sample (Columns 2 and 5) and Non-state Information sample (Columns 3 and 6). Thus, this *SCS Info: State Media* variable is excluded from the models in Column (5) and Column (6).

B.1.2 Support for Government Management of the SCS

We further explore the effects of the information treatments on individuals' support for the government to manage the SCS. Table B.2 shows that the results are largely similar to those using support for the SCS as the outcome variable. In general, revealing the SCS's repressive potential decreases individuals' support for the government to manage the system, and the negative effect is stronger on less informed individuals. Interestingly, revealing information about the SCS's social order maintenance function slightly decreases individuals' support for government management, although the effect is not statistically significant. This may imply that citizens have concerns over government power abuse, even though the intention of the punishment is good.

Table B.1: Information Revelation and Support for the SCS: Experimental Evidence

VARIABLES	(1) Full Sample Support	(2) State Info Support	(3) NonSt Info Support	(4) Full Sample Support	(5) State Info Support	(6) NonSt Info Support
Social Order	0.400*	0.462	0.364	0.354	0.213	0.379
	(0.239)	(0.409)	(0.288)	(0.238)	(0.391)	(0.294)
Political Repression	-0.848***	-1.267**	-0.736**	-0.809***	-1.329***	-0.742**
	(0.258)	(0.501)	(0.297)	(0.267)	(0.497)	(0.316)
Social & Political	0.005	-0.403	0.122	-0.015	-0.354	0.077
	(0.247)	(0.453)	(0.285)	(0.256)	(0.452)	(0.307)
SCS Info: State Media				0.522***		
				(0.101)		
Distrust in Society				0.218*	0.235	0.217
				(0.118)	(0.214)	(0.138)
Personal Distrust				-0.147	-0.088	-0.162
				(0.122)	(0.219)	(0.143)
Age				0.087	0.029	0.117*
				(0.054)	(0.078)	(0.067)
Female				-0.498***	-0.897**	-0.295
				(0.182)	(0.353)	(0.219)
Income				0.062	-0.081	0.137**
				(0.053)	(0.091)	(0.063)
CCP Member				-0.182	-0.067	-0.395
				(0.312)	(0.509)	(0.366)
Social Conformity				0.100	-0.047	0.168
				(0.088)	(0.146)	(0.103)
Social Service				0.209	-0.490	0.577**
				(0.201)	(0.341)	(0.246)
University FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	7.768***	7.922***	7.696***	5.053***	8.886***	3.169*
	(0.213)	(0.436)	(0.243)	(1.371)	(2.138)	(1.676)
Observations	737	180	557	670	159	511
R-squared	0.038	0.082	0.036	0.102	0.171	0.066
Total Effects (Linear Combinations):						
Social + Interaction	0.405	0.058	0.487	0.340	-0.141	0.456
	(0.419)	(0 .763)	(0 .489)	(0.425)	(0.735)	(0.516)
Political + Interaction	-0.843**	-1.670**	-0.614	-0.824**	-1.683**	-0.665
	(0.429)	(0.806)	(0.493)	(0.440)	(0.789)	(0.525)

Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Variable values are in their original scale. Columns (1) and (4) report the results from the full sample. Columns (2) and (5) report the results from a subsample of respondents who obtained information about the SCS from state media only (less informed group). Columns (3) and (6) report the results from a subsample of respondents who obtained information about the SCS from non-state sources (more informed group).
*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

Table B.2: Information Revelation and Support for Government Managing the SCS

VARIABLES	(1) Full Sample Gov Mgmt	(2) State Info Gov Mgmt	(3) NonSt Info Gov Mgmt	(4) Full Sample Gov Mgmt	(5) State Info Gov Mgmt	(6) NonSt Info Gov Mgmt
Social Order	-0.083	-0.088	-0.112	-0.070	-0.047	-0.120
	(0.138)	(0.278)	(0.160)	(0.146)	(0.320)	(0.167)
Political Repression	-0.351***	-0.606**	-0.287*	-0.285**	-0.544*	-0.249
	(0.131)	(0.291)	(0.148)	(0.140)	(0.318)	(0.158)
Social & Political	-0.002	-0.249	0.061	0.038	-0.359	0.101
	(0.136)	(0.287)	(0.155)	(0.145)	(0.319)	(0.164)
SCS Info: State Media				0.258**		
				(0.111)		
Distrust in Society				-0.024	-0.054	-0.013
				(0.022)	(0.050)	(0.025)
Personal Distrust				-0.000	0.057	-0.016
				(0.029)	(0.060)	(0.033)
Age				-0.060**	-0.030	-0.067**
				(0.028)	(0.059)	(0.032)
Female				-0.237**	-0.193	-0.196*
				(0.104)	(0.227)	(0.119)
Income				-0.039	0.059	-0.057
				(0.031)	(0.070)	(0.036)
CCP Member				0.144	0.407	0.051
				(0.156)	(0.335)	(0.176)
Social Conformity				0.024	0.081	0.014
				(0.050)	(0.100)	(0.059)
Social Service				0.087	0.054	0.129
				(0.107)	(0.228)	(0.122)
University FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.242**	0.371*	0.195	1.764**	0.271	2.214**
	(0.113)	(0.220)	(0.133)	(0.762)	(1.591)	(0.877)
Observations	735	180	555	669	159	510

Robust standard errors are in parentheses. Variable values are in their original scale. Columns (1) and (4) report the results from the full sample. Columns (2) and (5) report the results from a subsample of respondents who obtained information about the SCS from state media only (less informed group). Columns (3) and (6) report the results from a subsample of respondents who obtained information about the SCS from non-state sources (more informed group).
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

B.1.3 Information vs. Framing Effects

One concern with any survey experiments is that the treatment effects could be some short-run framing/priming effects: the treatment scenarios suddenly increase the accessibility of some matters in memory while making respondents ignore other matters (Chong and Druckman 2007).

To be more specific, framing effects on an individual's opinion are best understood with a conventional expectancy-value model (Azjen 1980; Chong and Druckman 2007; Nelson and Oxley 1999). In this model, every object, such as an issue, event, or policy, has i attributes. An individual's attitude consists of the sum of the product of his/her evaluation of each attribute i and the salience weight of each attribute i. In the case of attitude toward the SCS, $Attitude_{SCS} = w_s v_s - w_p v_p$, where v_s is the evaluation of the SCS's social benefits, v_p is the evaluation of the political risk associated with the SCS, and w_s and w_p ($w_s + w_p = 1$) are the salience weights associated with social benefits and political risk respectively. In this model, framing works by changing the salience weights of attributes (Chong and Druckman 2007), which means citizens know the political costs of the SCS but put less weight on this attribute and more weight on social benefits because of government propaganda. In contrast, information works by changing the evaluation of attributes—if a citizen knows little that the SCS can be used for political repression, she will attribute a small or zero v_p.

We don't have a direct measure to gauge citizens' knowledge about the SCS's political costs. However, in the online survey, we asked Tencent and Sesame users if they know how their social credit score is calculated. Among 1,469 respondents, only 197 (13%) of them answered "Yes, I know a lot about it". A large majority of respondents (1272) either "know a little about it" (50%) or "don't know how it is calculated" (37%). Although this measure is far from ideal, we can see that most citizens do not know much about how SCSs works. Evidence from our 16 interviews conducted in 2018 also confirms this lack of information among Chinese citizens. In addition, we asked respondents in the online survey if they think their credit score is calculated fairly. Only 80 out of 1,469 respondents think the credit score is unfair. If they knew SCS's repressive nature, this number would be much larger because few citizens would consider a repressive tool fair. Thus,

if most citizens don't know much about SCSs' political costs, the treatment effect we observed is more likely a result of lack of information than a result of framing in our treatment snippet.

To sum up, we believe information plays an important role in citizens' support for the SCS. But we acknowledge that we cannot fully distinguish between framing effects and information effects through our repression information treatment (especially for people who know a lot about the SCS).

B.1.4 Prevalence of Repression via the SCS

Another concern is that our "online criticism" treatment may imply the prevalence of political repression via the SCS. The logic is that, if a minor transgression like online criticism can be punished, the SCS is very likely to cover more radical political actions as well.

However, to infer this logic, the subjects in the experiment need to be quite sophisticated: ones who are able to realize that if online criticism can be published, so must be other equally or more radical political actions, therefore SCS's repression might be more prevalent that one thought before. In other words, they need to be able to realize and to some extent believe in the fact that online criticism is the tip of the iceberg for things that can trigger government repression. Since most of our respondents completed the survey on roads or in dining halls and usually spent about 5 minutes on it, they likely answered the questions more by instinct than by the aforementioned sophisticated thinking process.

In addition, it should be noted that we use "*often* (经常) posting criticisms online to blemish the government's image" in the treatment condition (Online Appendix A2). Unlike occasional criticism that many people might have done, frequent criticism is more like a radical action than a minor transgression.

Moreover, if this "online criticism" treatment reminds respondents of the prevalence of repression via the SCS, it will especially influence citizens who might be engaging or associated with more radical political actions because they are the potential targets of such repression via the SCS: therefore, all else equal, such more politically at=risk citizens should be more affected by the infor-

mation treatment than other citizens if issue salience is a major mechanism. Based on our survey questions, we use the group of respondents who talk more about politics online (compared to those who do not frequently comment on politics) as a proxy group for more politically at-risk citizens. Again, if issue salience is an important mechanism driving our information treatment, a citizen who is more likely to be associated with more radical political actions will reduce his/her support for SCSs more than someone who is unlikely associated with radical political actions, even though both have been reminded of SCS's repression on more radical political actions.

One complication here is that our more politically at-risk citizens—measured as people who talk more politics online—might respond more to our treatment simply because our treatment is phrased around online criticism of the government which can remind them of the danger of their online comments. Therefore, if we empirically find that more politically at-risk citizens, operationalized as people who make more online comments about politics, are associated with a stronger treatment effect, it could be a function of the issue salience mechanism suggested by the reviewer and/or a simple reminder of the danger of their online political comments: we cannot empirical separate these two mechanisms in this situation. However, if we find that more politically at-risk citizens are NOT associated with a stronger treatment effect, then neither mechanism is likely to explain our treatment effect.

In the survey, we asked the question "Do you often publicly comment on or repost political events or trending news online?" The answers order from "1. Never", "2. Seldom", "3. Sometimes", and "4. often" to "5. very frequently". We code respondents who answered "Sometimes", "Often", and "Very Frequently" as active online commentators (a proxy for more politically at-risk citizens) and then examine the heterogeneous effect of the "online criticism" treatment on active vs. non-active commentators. As Figure B.1 shows, there is not much difference between these two groups. If any, the treatment has a slightly smaller effect on respondents who actively comment on politics on the Internet. The evidence from this additional analysis, therefore, suggests that issue salience (as well as the reminder effect discussed in the last paragraph) is unlikely to be what drives our treatment effect.
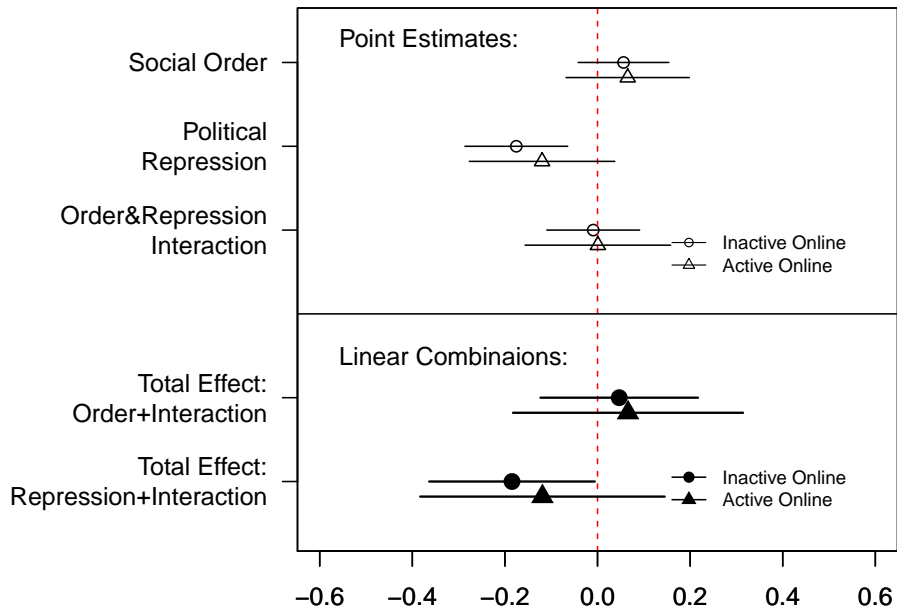
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Figure B.1: Information Treatment Effects, By Online Activism

Note: The upper panel reports the main effects of two treatments and the marginal effect between them. The lower panel reports the total effects: main effects plus the marginal effect.

Nevertheless, we cannot fully rule out this issue salience explanation. Ideally, the solution would be to use "more radical political actions" instead of "online criticism" as the treatment, but this is not feasible because (1) we need to protect subjects as we said in Appendix Page 1, and (2) implementing such an experiment is difficult if not possible in China.

B.1.5 Mean Comparisons with T-Tests

Table B.3 reports the unconditional mean comparisons for the two-by-two factorial experimental design. The results are similar to the regression results in Table B.1. Revealing the SCS's social-order-maintenance function alone does not increase individuals' support but showing its repressive potential significantly reduces people's support. Note that the overall effect of social order information is positive and statistically significant. This is probably because showing repression information alone has a stronger effect than showing information about both social-order-

maintenance and repression. Nevertheless, the conditional mean comparisons in Table B.1 control for university fixed effects and other variables, which are more reliable than the unconditional mean comparisons in Table B.3.

Table B.3: Group Mean Comparisons with Two-Sample T-Tests

	No Info.	Repression	Overall	Repression vs. No Info (P-Value)
No Info.	7.60 [203]	6.77 [193]	7.19 [396]	-0.83 (0.001***)
Order	7.98 [163]	7.6 [178]	7.79 [341]	
Overall	7.77 [366]	7.16 [370]		-0.61 (0.001***)
Order vs. No Info (P-Value)	0.38 (0.117)		0.59 (0.001***)	

B.1.6 Excluding International Students and Insincere Survey Takers

In the main analysis of the experimental data, we keep all respondents because randomization occurred before respondents completed the survey. However, we have three respondents from abroad (Russia, Cambodia, and Taiwan) who did not tell us they are international students before the survey. Four respondents did not pass our attention check question. One respondent specifically wrote on the questionnaire that he is "against the machine (反机器)" so that he gave very negative answers to SCS-related questions. Thus, we exclude these eight respondents from the sample and rerun the analysis for a robustness check. Figure B.2 shows that the results remain the same as those from the full sample.
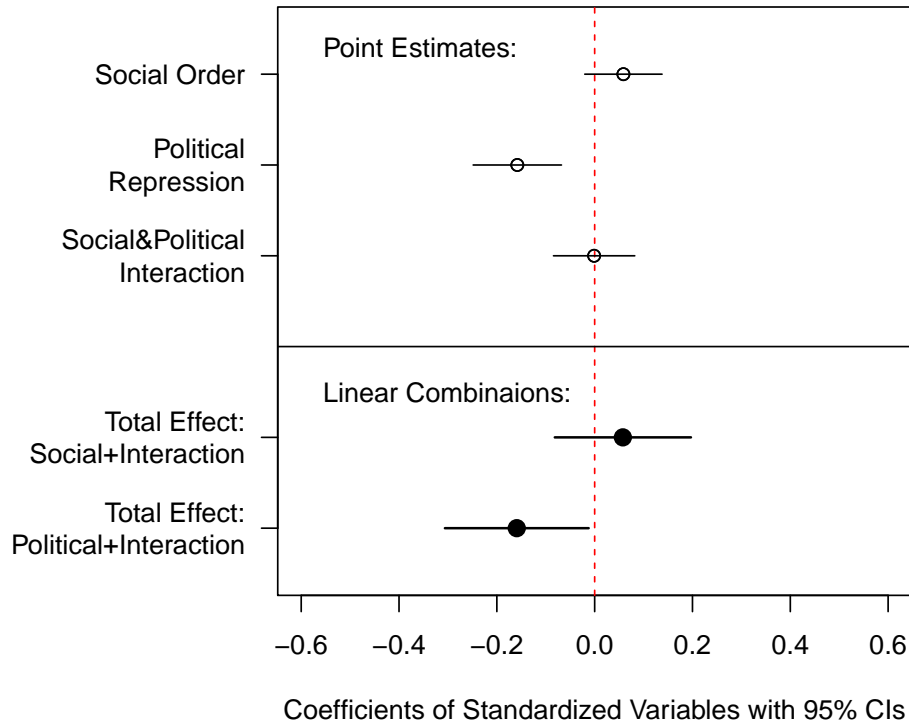
Figure B.2: Information Treatment Effects, No Foreigners and Insincere Survey Takers

Note: The upper panel reports the main effects of the two treatments and the marginal effect between them. The lower panel reports the total effects: main effects plus the marginal effect. The effective number of observations is 729.

B.2   Observational Evidence from College Field Survey: Robustness Tests

Table B.4 reports the results of the university field survey with additional controls. Column (1) shows the OLS results plotted in Figure 5 in the main paper. In Column (2), we control for respondents' self-evaluation of their SCS scores to address social desirability bias. In particular, the question asks: "If the SCS will be implemented nationwide to rate every citizen, how do you estimate your own social credit score? A. Far above average ... E. Far below average." In Column (3), we use individuals' willingness to discuss politics online as a proxy to control for their risk preference. The question is "Do you usually discuss political affairs and trending news on the Internet (Weibo, WeChat, Blogs, etc.)? 1.Never ... 5.Very Frequently." In Column (4), we use individuals' willingness to petition an unfair university policy to control for their tendency to obey

the authority. The results show that the positive relationship between exposure to state media (Info. Control) and support for the SCS remains robust after controlling for these personal traits.

Table B.4: Information Control and Support for the SCS: College Field Survey

VARIABLES	(1) Support	(2) Support	(3) Support	(4) Support
SCS Info: State Media	0.215**	0.210**	0.216**	0.215**
	(0.038)	(0.027)	(0.030)	(0.027)
Distrust in Society	0.084***	0.062**	0.063**	0.064**
	(0.004)	(0.010)	(0.009)	(0.010)
Personal Distrust (Insecurity)	-0.049	-0.038	-0.038	-0.038
	(0.048)	(0.049)	(0.050)	(0.050)
Selfscore (Social Desirability)		0.182*	0.181*	0.181*
		(0.050)	(0.051)	(0.049)
Discuss Politics (Risk Preference)			-0.044	-0.044
			(0.035)	(0.036)
Petition (Non-Obedience)				-0.013
				(0.041)
Other Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
University FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	-0.011	-0.021	-0.027	-0.026
	(0.042)	(0.035)	(0.031)	(0.032)
Observations	670	670	668	665
R-squared	0.073	0.102	0.105	0.105

Robust standard errors are clustered on provinces. Other controls include age, gender, income, CCP membership, Social Conformity, Social Service, etc.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

B.3 Observational Evidence from Nationwide Online Survey: Robustness Tests

Table B.5 reports the results of the Nationwide Online Survey with additional controls. Column (1) shows the main regression results as plotted in Figure 6 in the main paper. In Column (2), we include the variable SCS Fairness to control for individuals' credulity. This question asks the users of Tencent or sesame SCSs: "Do you think your credit score is fairly calculated?". In Column (3), we use a question regarding privacy protection to capture individuals' risk preferences, "Have you ever decided to not use a website or app because you didn't want to share personal information?". The results show that the effect of social isolation is large and statistically significant after con-

trolling for these two variables. In Column (4), we control for individuals' social desirability by including a question that asks respondents to compare their scores with others: "Is your Sesame or Tencent score higher or lower than most of your family's and friends' scores?" The effect of citizens' tendency to avoid discredited friends remains large and statistically significant.

Note that the effect of information control is not very robust to the credulity control. As we discussed in the main paper, in the online survey, we only asked individuals their information sources for commercial SCSs such as Tencent and Sesame SCSs. We also used TV and newspaper as a proxy for state media. This imperfect measure likely correlates with individuals' evaluation of the SCS's fairness. In the Field Survey, we used a more accurate measure of exposure to state media and the result is very robust (Table B.4).

Table B.5: Information Control and Support for the SCS: Nationwide Online Survey

VARIABLES	(1) Support	(2) Support	(3) Support	(4) Support	(5) Support
SCS Info: TV/Newspaper	0.072***	0.007	0.073***	0.029*	0.011
	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.017)	(0.016)	(0.016)
Avoid Friends with Bad Social Credits	0.176***	0.113***	0.175***	0.157***	0.109***
	(0.019)	(0.015)	(0.020)	(0.021)	(0.014)
Perceived Distrust	0.292***	0.175***	0.290***	0.206***	0.177***
	(0.020)	(0.032)	(0.021)	(0.027)	(0.029)
SCS Fairness (Credulity)		0.220***			0.203***
		(0.017)			(0.020)
Privacy (Risk Preference)			-0.017		0.029
			(0.021)		(0.027)
SCS Self-evaluation (Social Desirability)				0.106***	0.061***
				(0.022)	(0.021)
Other Controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region FEs	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	0.029	0.188***	0.029	0.167***	0.197***
	(0.022)	(0.035)	(0.021)	(0.022)	(0.032)
Observations	1,895	1,186	1,895	1,278	1,121
R-squared	0.219	0.214	0.219	0.175	0.218

Robust standard errors are clustered on provinces. Other controls include age, education, gender, income, public employment, SCS pilot city, urban/rural residence, CCP membership, etc.
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

B.3.1 What Predict Citizens' Reliance on State Media for Information about the SCS?

Citizens who support the SCS may self-select into consuming state media. Figure B.3 shows that citizens with higher education, communist party membership, or living in SCS pilot cities are more likely to rely on state media for information about the SCS. We thus control for these variables in the models that examine the relationship between information control and support for the SCS (Table B.5).
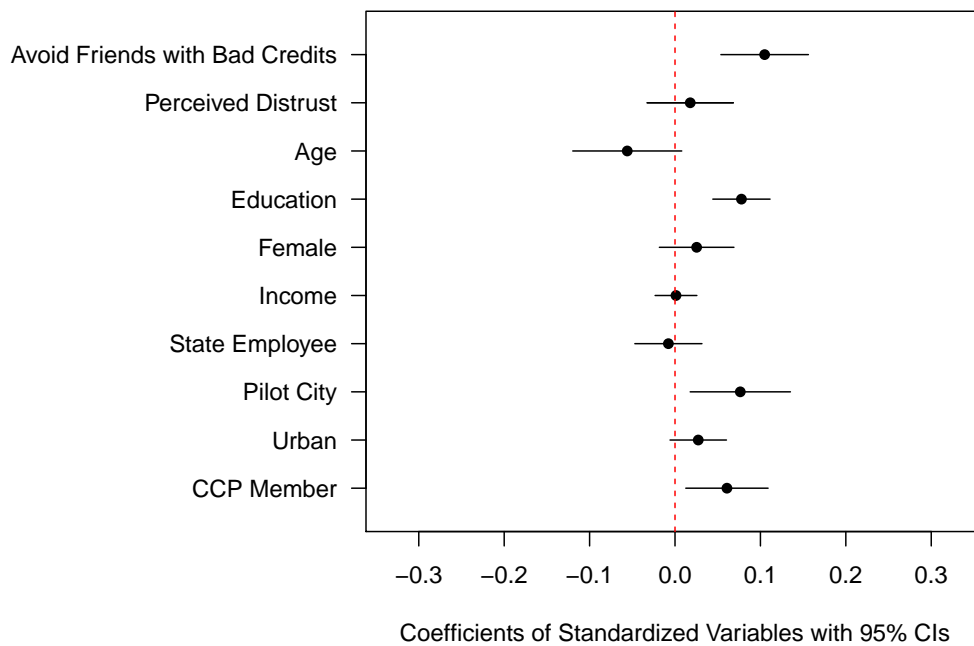

Figure B.3: Using State Media for Information about the SCS

Note: Region fixed effects are included. Robust standard errors are clustered on provinces.

B.3.2 Support for the SCS: Commercial-SCS Users Only

We code TVs and newspapers as a proxy for state media. But this question is conditional on respondents reporting the use of *commercial* SCSs (e.g., Tencent or Sesame SCSs). There are 1,469 commercial-SCS users out of 2,027 respondents. For the main analysis, we code non-users into the non-state-media group. Here we focus on a sample of 1,469 commercial-SCS users only. Figure B.4 shows that the results are robust in this smaller sample.
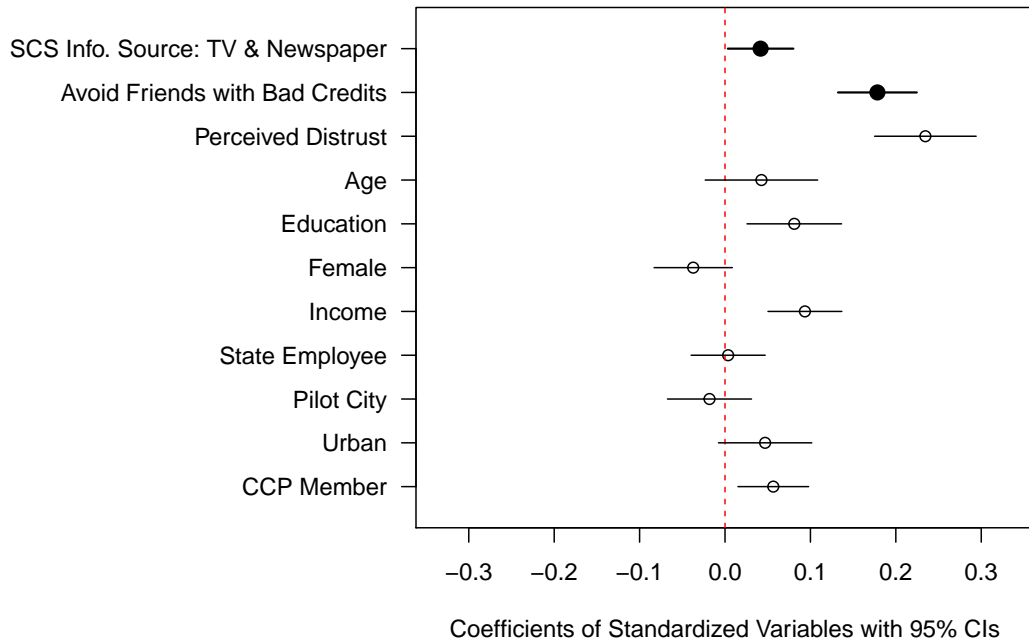
Figure B.4: Support for SCSs: Nationwide Online Survey, Commercial Users Only

Note: Region fixed effects are included. Robust standard errors are clustered on provinces. The effective number of observations is 1,410.

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