



# Homophily in the career mobility of China's political elite



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## ABSTRACT

We argue that leadership promotion in China's political elite relies on homophily for signals of trustworthiness and future cooperative behavior more than on economic performance. We first point to the limitation of the economic performance argument from within the framework of China's specific M-form state structure, and then we proffer a sociological explanation for why higher-level elites in China rely on homophilous associations in recruiting middle-level elites to the top positions of state. Using a unique dataset covering China's provincial leaders from 1979 to 2011, we develop a homophily index focusing on joint origin, joint education and joint work experience. We trace personal similarities in these respects between provincial leaders and members of China's supreme decision-making body, the Politbureau's Standing Committee. We then provide robust evidence confirming the persisting impact of homophilous associations on promotion patterns in post-reform China.

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## 1. Introduction

China's economic success over the last three decades is to a large extent ascribed to good political leadership. Whether in terms of a helping-hand-state (Frye and Shleifer, 1997) or corporatist state (Walder, 1995; Oi, 1992; Peng, 2001), general assessments converge on the view that China's political leadership and governance have been key to economic performance. Thus, interest in explaining China's remarkable four decades of sustained economic growth has put elite politics and patterns of political leadership recruitment at the center of scholarly interest in the political economy literature.

In addressing the puzzle of Chinese economic growth, economists have mainly applied an organizational perspective focusing analysis on China's federalist, multidivisional state structure (hereafter, M-form state) (Qian and Xu, 1993; Qian et al., 1999). The argument is that M-form state structures allow central governments to treat local jurisdictions as independent profit-centers comparable to divisional units within a multidivisional corporation (Chandler, 1962; Williamson, 1975). This invites local yardstick competition not dissimilar from managerial profit incentives in private enterprise (Maskin et al., 2000), which in turn enables performance-based evaluation of provincial political elites for promotion to national leadership in Beijing.

Empirical evidence for the "performance hypothesis" of leadership turnover remains inconclusive, however. Looking at a sample of provincial governors and party secretaries, Li and Zhou (2005) found a positive correlation between local economic growth and promotion probabilities for provincial leaders in the period between 1979 and 1995. Chen et al. (2005) confirmed higher promotion probabilities for those provincial leaders who outperformed their predecessors between 1979 and 2002. In contrast, Bo (1996) found no evidence of performance-related promotion patterns for a broader sample including vice governors and deputy party secretaries covering the period from 1949 to 1994. Similarly, Landry (2003) rejected the "performance

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hypothesis” based on an extensive study including sub-provincial level jurisdictions covering the period between 1990 and 2000.

An alternative perspective suggests that leadership turnover remains essentially political (Guo, 2009; Gilley, 2003). The argument is that political leaders continue to staff key political positions with loyal supporters to form strategic alliances at all levels of the political hierarchy to avert destabilizing power struggles at the center, and to ensure cooperation between different administrative layers (Li and Bachman, 1989; Dittmer and Wu, 1995). This historical and political perspective reflects the continuing importance of informal politics as a crucial element of institutionalized power relations (Tsou, 1995). According to this perspective, the structure of post-reform patron–client relations may not differ much from the Maoist era, when career advancement and security depended on factional associations (Nathan, 1973; Pye, 1981; Huang, 2000). This perspective in the political economy literature has more recently inspired empirical studies examining how political factions shape promotion patterns of the party elite (Choi, 2012; Shih et al., 2012).

We focus on exploring homophily as the mechanism that provides the social glue in the development of trust and loyalty in political relationships. In this article, our aim is to identify the micro-level mechanisms that explain the basis for identity and group solidarity in political factions. An advantage of our approach is that homophily offers an ‘ex ante’ predictive means to identify political actors who are likely candidates for promotion into the inner circle of the political elite, whereas specifications of membership in elite factions are only amenable to empirical analysis once factional ties are openly displayed and once individuals are identified as members of clearly defined factional groups.<sup>1</sup> The goal of this paper is twofold: First, we offer a sociological perspective and methodology to examine the recruitment of China’s political elite, which undermines the feasibility of performance-driven leadership promotion. We show that the need for vertical coordination between subdivisions and center generates a demand for interpersonal trust and cooperative behavior to secure internal organizational coherence, commitment and efficacy, which in turn makes reliance on achievement in economic performance as a basis for promotion untenable. Second, consistent with the historical and political literature, we argue that leadership promotion in China’s state structure depends on signals of trustworthiness and cooperative behavior. In sum, we proffer a sociological explanation for why higher-level elites in China rely on homophily in recruiting middle-level elites to the inner circles of the political elite. Homophily provides the social mechanism that facilitates trust, commitment and organizational efficacy in the political elite. We then present the empirical data and model, summarize the results, and provide robustness tests. The final sections offer a discussion of our findings and conclude.

## 2. China’s multidivisional state reconsidered

### 2.1. The performance perspective

In the economic literature, China’s M-form state structure is regarded as one of the key organizational explanations for China’s outstanding economic performance over the last few decades (Qian et al., 1999). The idea builds on organizational economics, which points to informational advantages and transaction cost economizing of multidivisional corporations. Self-contained sub-divisions allow strategic and tactical planning to be separated (Chandler, 1962; Williamson, 1975). Executives at the central level focus on strategic long-term planning, while self-contained sub-divisions are in charge of local operational tasks. The M-form organization enables the central government to focus on national strategy planning and overall economic reform development (Perkins, 1988), while lower-level jurisdictions engage in coordination of local economic development and experiments involving local policy initiatives. Extending the argument, economists have linked the organizational features of federalist systems with performance-based leadership promotion into the political elite. China’s shift to a quasi-federalist state structure provides organizational conditions that allow the central government to treat local jurisdictions as independent profit centers comparable to divisional units within a multidivisional firm (Maskin et al., 2000), which in turn facilitates performance-based leadership selection based on local yardstick competition. Rational-legal promotion rules are assumed to increase individual commitment, as political agents face transparent prospects of career advancement (Hough, 1969). Thus, the *performance hypothesis* (H1) specifies:

*Promotion chances of political agents depend on their economic performance under the current office period.*

The assumption of performance-based leadership monitoring and promotional schemes rest on the prerequisites of organizational autonomy and full accountability for divisional performance as observed in corporate M-form structures (Williamson, 1975; Jones and Hill, 1988; Hill, 1985). However, even from within the framework of economic theorizing, the organizational conditions for performance-based promotion are not in place in China’s quasi-federalist state structure.

Most importantly, provinces do not enjoy full strategic and operational autonomy shielded from central government intervention (Montinola et al., 1995). While fiscal decentralization in the 1980s induced inter-provincial competition and improved interest alignment of provincial leaders with the national reforms, the central government maintains effective administrative control needed to secure its capacity to build consensus and support for national policies (Shirk, 1993). Provincial leaders are subjected to routine monitoring and central supervision in order to detect potential political divergence and conflicts of interest between the state and the provinces at an early stage. Central authorities for this reason

<sup>1</sup> A complication is that “China does not officially acknowledge the existence of factions” (Choi, 2012: 970). Identification of factional ties does therefore necessarily invite a high degree of uncertainty.

monitor and sanction – by means of consultative interventions and even demotion and removal of responsible provincial leaders – what they view to be excessive displays of local autonomy (Chen, 1995).<sup>2</sup>

Further, China's national economic policies oftentimes grant only conditional and limited decision-making rights to subordinate government levels. Key economic projects as well as foreign direct investments exceeding certain investment benchmarks, for instance, remain under the authority and approval rights of central government bureaus.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the central government routinely intervenes in investment decisions by lower administrative levels to regulate China's growth performance (World Bank, 2006). Clearly, the central government both promotes, and limits regional policy initiatives depending on the national development goals favored by the political elite and thereby actively influences interprovincial growth differences. China's policies on special economic zones illustrate this point. Though provincial governments were entrusted with the implementation and operational tasks of the special economic zones, central authorities remained in charge of regulation, extension policies and monitoring (Cai and Treisman, 2006). In 2000, the central government launched its "Western Region Development Strategy," which promoted urbanization, infrastructure and resource development with a total of more than \$325 billion (Grewal and Ahmed, 2011), with notable effects on interprovincial growth performance (Andersson et al., 2013). Similarly, the central government actively intervenes in the development of industrial parks designated for municipal-level development.<sup>4</sup>

Although the ruling elite may underscore the importance of economic development as the basis of political legitimacy and state power (and even introduce economic performance measures as formal determinants for promotion), the central government also aims to balance and regulate inter-provincial and regional growth strategies. Growing regional inequalities fueling social and political discontent reinforce the need for central coordination and work to undermine the effectiveness of performance-driven recruitment strategies into higher-level positions of the political hierarchy.

Finally, proponents of the performance hypothesis have not specified just how reliance on performance-driven promotion schemes enable national leaders consolidate power and prevent power struggles. The problem is commitment to economic performance as a key determinant of political careers can pose an intrinsic threat to the established national leaders if recruitment of a new member into the ruling elite results in intensification of political competition over control of state power. In extreme cases, high performers can challenge national leaders with the claim to superior performance in generating economic growth.

## 2.2. The homophily principle in elite mobility

The premium placed on trust, loyalty and commitment by higher-level elites in a far-flung party-led state underscores motivation for personalized recruitment mechanisms embedded in multiplex networks for elite career mobility. In contrast to the economic explanation, we argue that higher-level elites rely on homophily in their search for signals about the character and quality of prospective candidates for promotion into the highest circles of the political elite.

We define homophily—"birds of a feather flock together"—as the tendency for people to prefer to associate with others who are similar in status or beliefs, values, and attitudes (Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1954; McPherson et al., 2001). Homophily has been confirmed as one of the most robust mechanisms shaping the composition of social groups and networks. As a law-like social mechanism, it has been observed in many domains of social action, from small localized networks (Whyte, 1943; Homans, 1950) to institutional and organizational contexts of professions, communities, voluntary associations, corporations, universities, politics, social media and online dating (Feld, 1982; Galaskiewicz, 1985; McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 1987; Marsden, 1988; Yamaguchi, 1990; Kossinets and Watts, 2009; Lazer et al., 2010; Anderson et al., 2014). It also holds true for demographic statuses such as education, occupation, race and ethnicity, religion, marital status, and age (Fischer, 1982; Laumann, 1973, 1976; Verbrugge, 1977; Tuma and Hallinan, 1979; Burt, 1991; Mouw, 2006; Ingram and Morris, 2007; Wimmer and Lewis, 2010; Ruef et al., 2011). In American society, shared ethnicity, race and religion are common bases of homophilous association, though choice homophily has been shown to select on cultural similarity in recruitment of professionals of diverse racial and ethnic identity (Rivera, 2012).

In political settings homophily can increase coordination and cooperation between government agencies (Gerber et al., 2013). Like political higher-ups in democratic states, China's Politbureau, reliant on vertical command structures and communication channels to govern a far-flung decentralized state structure, oftentimes aims to position homophilous others in key positions to facilitate coordination and cooperation. Bureaucratic controls typically provide *ex post* sanctioning devices applicable in cases of corruption, abuse of office, and other forms of illegal behavior (Huang, 2002),<sup>5</sup> but are not designed to

<sup>2</sup> Guangdong's governor Ye Xuanping, for example, was removed in 1991, following repeated conflicts with the central government, including his open opposition to the state's plan to recentralize financial authority (Vogel, 1989; Shirk, 1993). Other examples include the removal of Chen Xitong, former party secretary of Beijing and main rival of Jiang Zemin in the mid-1990s, on charges of embezzlement. More recently, Chen Liangyu, CCP Secretary of Shanghai, was dismissed in September 2006 as part of an effort to rein in provincial governments that fail to implement national policy.

<sup>3</sup> Although municipal governments at the county level are allowed to approve new projects up to USD 5 million, prefecture-level cities up to USD 10 million and sub-provincial-level cities as well as centrally administered cities up to USD 30 million, the central government maintains approval rights for major projects involving larger amounts of foreign direct investment (He, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> In 2004, the Ministry of Land and Resources suspended the approval of new industrial parks and closed down more than 2500 local economic development zones (China Daily, 2004). The State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA) maintains regulatory oversight as regards local and regional governments' implementation of environmental policy, monitoring compliance with national standards. In 2006, a SEPA-initiated environmental impact survey of municipal industrial parks led to the closure of 3100 firms that were not compliant with national environmental standards (People's Daily, 2007).

<sup>5</sup> Central authorities exercising formal leadership monitoring are for instance China's nomenklatura system and the party's *Central Discipline Inspection Commission*, the *Ministry of Supervision* as well as the *General Auditing Administration*.

insure trust, loyalty, cooperative behavior and commitment in a political order vulnerable to episodes of winner-take-all political competition. *Ex ante* screening for such “soft” qualities is therefore crucial. Information asymmetries in standard recruitment and promotion procedures, however, oftentimes complicate identification of the right skill-set and loyalty. Reliance on *homophilous affinity* as a signal of individual commitment, personal closeness, and loyalty is therefore a common strategy, particularly in the case of crucial provincial and central leadership positions.

Within China’s five-level administrative hierarchy, it is the provincial leadership which serves as the central administrative unit transmitting central orders down to local government at the grassroots level. cursory evidence supports the view that central leaders use homophily as an *ex ante* screening mechanism to place like-minded actors in key positions. Jiang Zemin, for instance, bluntly pointed out that he promoted his close protégée Zhang Dejiang to the position of Guangdong’s provincial party secretary as a measure to prevent runaway localism in Guangdong (Li, 2006). Similarly, the replacement of Chen Liangyu as party secretary of Shanghai by Yu Zhengsheng, a close follower of Hu Jintao’s policy line, was a clear attempt to tighten the government’s grip on the city’s spending policies after years of blocking national attempts to cool down overproduction and overinvestment. Fast-track elite career mobility is often associated with homophilous ties. The current president Li Keqiang, for instance, managed to rise from provincial governor in Henan to the PSC in less than 10 years.

These examples illustrate a general behavioral pattern that has been well documented as a power-preserving and enhancing strategy underlying and supporting formal, institutional power arrangements at the Center. Social attributes, such as kinship, parochial village, school ties, and relationships established in basic work units provide the foundation of homophilous associations generating trust and loyalty between politicians at the Center and lower administrative levels (Dittmer, 1995). These attributes offer the possibility to construct a whole continuum of informal relations of varying closeness, intimacy and spatial propinquity (Tsou, 1995: 101). Specifically concern over power stability and future competitors at the national level matters in the formation of these homophily-based relations, because informal ties can – at times – assume “a dominant, co-equal, or complementary role to formal politics based on formal relationships” (Tsou, 1995: 102). In an effort to consolidate the individual power base, therefore “a cadre assigned to a new task or post will immediately canvass the area for such objective affinities as a priority *sine qua non* objective, not just wait for them to emerge haphazardly” (Dittmer, 1995: 12).

Given the ruling elite’s tendency to select the country’s future national leaders from the small circle of PSC members, which in turn have typically been recruited from the group of provincial leaders, it is a natural strategy to promote on the basis of homophily into promising provincial posts. Promotions of homophilous protégées into national leadership positions will then strengthen the patron’s expected influence on national policy initiatives, and in parallel lessen the probability of a power struggle. The typical reshuffling of provincial leadership positions immediately after the nomination of a new central leadership reflects these internal power dynamics and confirms that “political interactions among persons with different types of informal relationships and networks” continue to serve as critical political action groups in the struggle over significant policy and personnel issues (Tsou, 1995:102). The power of these ties lies in the fact, that they can be activated for multiple and diverse purposes and are not limited by formal tasks or particularistic interests, which explains their fundamental and continuing role in Chinese politics in spite of its increasing institutionalization in the post-reform era.

Therefore, the *homophily hypothesis* (H2) claims:

*Promotional chances of provincial leaders in China’s M-form state structure depend on homophily-based screening.*

### 3. Data and model

We constructed a political leadership dataset to estimate the effect of homophily on leadership mobility. Covering information on all provincial governors and party secretaries during the reform period (1979–2011), our data stretches from the initial economic reforms under general secretary Hua Guofeng and Hu Yaobang to the regime of Jiang Zemin and up to the end of Hu Jintao’s leadership. Biographical information on China’s political leadership is not readily available for the entire period. In a first step we used the monthly publication *China aktuell* to identify holders of provincial leadership positions and terms of office. We then employed the web-based Chinese language service *Political Elites Database* as well as the 2nd edition of *Who’s Who in the People’s Republic of China* (Bartke, 1987) to compile biographical data on individual leaders. To validate the collected information, we cross-checked biographical data with a broad set of biographies available either in print or in web-based resources such as the *China Leader Database* and the English language service *China Vitae*. Finally, we identified the patterns of career mobility (annual binary data indicating promotion) and searched for overlapping features with PSC-members.

Excluding leaders who left their position due to health reasons or death, the dataset includes 1996 valid leader-year observations and 353 provincial leaders. Leaders who held multiple positions during the observation period (i.e. lateral moves from one province to another; promotion from governor to party secretary) are treated as new observations since the most recent change already reflected past performance and future promotion chances. Complementary data on provincial economic performance is from *China Data Online*.

#### 3.1. Model specification

Our model tests for the effects of homophily and economic performance on leadership promotion applying a binary choice model accounting for promotion versus no-promotion. Assume the members of the PSC choose between support

(labeled 1) or no-support (labeled 0) regarding the promotion of a provincial leader. The utilities the Politburo members can derive from these two alternatives are given by

$$U_1 = X_{ij}\beta_1 + \varepsilon_1 \text{ and } U_0 = X_{ij}\beta_0 + \varepsilon_0,$$

where  $i$  denotes each provincial leader and  $j$  indicates individual provinces;  $X_{ij}$  is a set of variables covering dimensions of homophilous association, measures of provincial economic performance, and a set of personal credentials;  $\beta$  is a vector of coefficients; and  $\varepsilon$  constitutes the standard normal distributed residuals. The net utility from choosing promotion rather than no-promotion is given by  $U_1 - U_0 = X(\beta_1 - \beta_0) + (\varepsilon_1 - \varepsilon_0)$ . The politburo members are likely to support a promotion if the quantity of alternative “1” is positive and option “0” otherwise; that is  $\Pr(U_1 - U_0) = \Pr(X(\beta_1 - \beta_0) < (\varepsilon_1 - \varepsilon_0))$ . Dividing by the standard deviation of the difference in unobservables and assuming a standard normal distribution of the difference in unobservable components divided by its standard deviation yields our probit model:

$$\Pr(U_1 > U_0) = \Phi((X(\beta_1 - \beta_0)/\sigma_{\varepsilon_1 - \varepsilon_0})).$$

The stratified nature of the sample calls for caution in not overlooking confounding regional effects. In general, it is not unlikely that leadership types and promotion chances are locally more similar than across China. Coastal regions, for instance, seem eager to support pro-economic-growth reformers, while poorer hinterland regions allied with conservatives (Breslin, 1996: 91). Moreover, efforts to realize a balanced representation of all regions would necessarily lead to intraregional correlations, as promotion of one provincial leader may dampen promotion chances of leaders in neighboring provinces. To capture such intraregional correlations, we estimate robust standard errors clustered on regions. For this purpose, we divided all provinces into eight regions.<sup>6</sup> We use the robust estimator of variance (Huber, 1967; White, 1980) to relax the assumption of independence for the observations, implying, in other words, that observations are assumed to be independent across regions, but not necessarily within regions. Formally, our robust estimator of variance is  $\hat{V} = \hat{V} \left( \sum_{k=1}^M u_k^{(R)} u_k^{(R)} \right) \hat{V}$  where  $\hat{V} = (-\partial \ln L / \partial \beta^2)^{-1}$  constitutes the conventional estimator of variance and  $u_k^{(R)}$  is the contribution of the  $k$ th region to the partial effect  $\partial \ln L / \partial \beta$ .

### 3.2. Dependent variable

The dependent variable indicates whether a provincial leader—either a provincial governor or party secretary—is promoted in a given year. Due to the high administrative rank of provincial governors and party secretaries in the Chinese government and party hierarchy, promotional chances are rather limited. Our coding builds on work by Lieberthal and Oksenberg (1988) and reflects the exact month of position change in order to construct matching information on relational ties with the central leadership.

*Promotion of party secretaries:* Changes are coded as promotions if party secretaries are recruited to one of the following positions in a given year: Member of the Politburo, Member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo, and Vice President of the PRC.

*Promotion of provincial governors:* As provincial governors rank one level lower in the administrative hierarchy, their promotion chances are broader. Promotions include shifts to the position of the provincial party secretary, central government minister, and chairman of institutions, commissions or bureaus directly operating under and reporting to the State Council. Naturally, shifts to the positions of Member of the Politburo, Member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo, and Vice President of the PRC also constitute promotion cases.

With a total of 31 provincial units (excluding Hong Kong and Macao), there is a core group of 62 provincial leaders (in the positions of party secretaries and provincial governors). Between 1979 and 2011, there are 475 shifts in office. All provincial leaders have experienced a change of position at least once. In total, there were 128 cases of promotion, involving 16 leaders being promoted more than once.

### 3.3. Independent variables

Our measure of homophily aims to capture similarities between provincial leaders and members of the Politbureau's Standing Committee (PSC) that form sources of shared identity. The focus on the PSC is justified as it serves as the inner circle of China's supreme decision-making body in charge of all major strategic decisions and equipped with personnel authority over provincial-level leadership positions.

In China, race homophily of the political elite reflects the predominance of Han ethnicity in the core regional bases of communist party power. Given the ethnic homogeneity of the political elite, we focus on commonplace sources of induced homophily arising from social interaction within geographical location, place of work, and institution of higher education

<sup>6</sup> We define North Coast (Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei and Shandong), North Central (Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, Henan, and Shaanxi), Northeast (Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang), East Coast (Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang), Central (Anhui, Jiangxi, Hubei, and Hunan), South Coast (Fujian, Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hainan), Southwest (Chongqing, Sichuan, Guizhou, Yunnan and Tibet), and Northwest (Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia, and Xinjiang).

(McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 1987; Kossinets and Watts, 2009). Our measure builds on three sources of homophily that are commonly regarded as crucial to establish personal closeness and trust in China: joint provincial origin, joint school experience, and joint place of work experience (Wank, 1999). First, it is customary for Chinese to ask, after an introduction, “where are you from?” A common place of origin (*lao jia*) forms an immediate basis for shared identity important in forming ongoing interpersonal relationships. The rise to power of China’s current general secretary Xi Jinping, for instance, is associated with strong support of his Shaanxi province native place association, which boasts three current members of the PSC (“the iron triangle”). Throughout history, such native place associations have always played a decisive role in shoring up top leader support. During the Nationalist era, Guangdong province played a key role in bringing up a significant number of political and military leaders; in the Mao era Hunan and Hubei provinces were sources of elite recruitment; Deng Xiaoping favored fellow natives from his home province Sichuan; and Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao preferred to recruit leaders from the east coast provinces Jiangsu and Shandong (Li, 2014). To account for homophilous preference based on common native place, we recorded whether provincial leaders have the same home province as members of the PSC.

Second, as widely documented for alumni of top-ranked Tsinghua University, joint school experience and alumni networks can provide a strong basis of shared identity and alumni loyalty (Bo, 2004). In this case, it is not required that two individuals be part of the same age cohort in school; it is instead the importance of the alumni network and shared identity in having been trained by the same alma mater that provides the foundation for homophilous affinity. For a political elite that increasingly requires university education as a basis of recruitment into the elite, we focus on university degrees, and record whether provincial leaders and members of the PSC graduated from the same university.

Finally, shared work experience in the same provincial administration often provides a basis for homophilous affinity. The provincial-level elite’s place of work is often viewed as decisive in forming a politician’s ideological outlook, political leanings and attitudes. China’s economy is characterized by unequal regional economic growth and development, and pronounced structural inequalities reflecting variation in regional concentration of state and collective production and private and foreign investments (Nee and Oppen, 2012). Given the enormous variability of conditions based on geographical location, the provincial place of work constitutes an important basis of induced homophily, signaling not only human capital but ideological and political leanings. The place of work experience is also important as a period when durable and trusting relationships are established. Network ties linking members of the PSC to their former provincial workplace provide a source of information flow on promising candidates for promotion to national leadership roles. As with graduation from the same university, homophily arising from common place of work leads to *triadic closure* or “inbreeding” effects in promotion of leaders to the ruling elite. As with alumni networks, cross-cutting networks linking the provincial work place to the PSC are conduits of information and sources for referrals. During the reform period, for example, the most prominent political group thus associated was Jiang Zemin’s “Shanghai gang,” a network of politicians that he cultivated during his term as city mayor and party secretary in the mid-1980s. After Jiang’s rise to national power, he immediately promoted his followers and built a strong vertical support base by placing loyal protégées in key positions. To systematically capture this type of joint-place-of-work effect, we record whether provincial leaders have served at a given time in the same provincial administration as any of the PSC-members. We should note that such overlap in administrative location typically did not occur while current PSC-members held their last position before moving to their Politbureau post. If this were the case, our index would face the risk that overlapping work experience simply reflects the role of certain provinces as famous career springboards. Joint workplace experience, however, is often accumulated on prior positions, often not directly followed by promotions of either party.

To make this kind of information accessible for quantitative analysis, we have constructed a *homophily index*, which reflects the sum of homophilous association based on joint origin, joint school, and joint place of work experience, for the *i*th provincial leader in year *t*. It is widely accepted in the homophily literature that multiple bases of similarity correspond with stronger homophily (McPherson, 2004; Kossinets and Watts, 2009). To construct our index, we have compared all individual 353 provincial leader curricula vitae with the vitae of the individual members of the PSC (the number ranged from five to nine members in each year of our observation period) to identify the number of matches an individual leader has with PSC-members in terms of joint provincial origin ( $m_{oit}$ ), attendance of the same university ( $m_{sit}$ ) and joint provincial place of work experience ( $m_{wit}$ ). To measure homophilous association, we have weighed the total number of matches of each individual leader ( $m_{it}$ ) with the number of PSC-members,  $p_t$ . Hence, homophily is calculated thus:

$$\text{homophily}_{it} = m_{oit}/p_t + m_{sit}/p_t + m_{wit}/p_t \text{ with } 0 \leq \text{homophily}_{it} \leq 3.$$

Our approach has some resemblance with Shih’s (2008) use of dichotomous measures indicating whether a provincial leadership team *i* shares any of five distinct attributes (i.e. birthplace, home province, education, work experience, participation in the “Long March”) with one of the Standing Committee members. However, our measure differs along two important dimensions. First, we provide separate measures for governor and party secretary instead of treating both individuals as a leadership team. More importantly, Shih’s index is calculated as the sum of these five dummy variables. To illustrate, a provincial leadership team sharing all five attributes with the same Standing Committee member would score five times higher than a leadership team sharing only one of the five attributes (e.g. work experience) with several or even all Standing Committee members of China’s Politbureau. Briefly, our measure is the first to operationalize homophily as a continuous variable constructed over time (1979–2011). This allows us to tackle the more general question of the persistence of homophily as an institutional recruitment mechanism, instead of the more practical question of when distinct factions gained the upper hand over contending factions, a question that Shih et al. (2012) have convincingly answered.

Overall, 55% of the leader-year observations have a homophilous affinity larger than zero, with a mean value of 0.142 and a maximum value of 1. Statistical mean comparison tests confirm that promoted leaders have a significantly higher homophilous affinity than non-promoted leaders (0.20 versus 0.14). Over time, homophily has become a more widespread feature connecting the PSC-membership with their provincial leaders. While in 1982, in the first office year of the 12th PSC, 55% of the provincial leaders had a homophilous affinity larger than zero, the corresponding share increased to 69% in the year 2011, one year before the end of the 17th PSC under general secretary Hu Jintao.

Appendix A provides a summary view of the provincial homophily index over time for both leadership positions available in each province. Two observations stand out: First, homophily has characterized leadership positioning over the complete observation period, yet with an all-time low preceding China's deepest political crisis, the Tiananmen massacre. While we are making no causal claims between homophily-based staffing of leadership positions and political instability, it is apparent that the immediate consequence after the crisis was to rely increasingly on homophily in leadership selection. Fig. 1 uses a series of cobweb diagrams to highlight this process in more detail. Points further away from the center signal higher homophily; the absence of any marker indicates that a province is not governed by a leader associated with any of the PSC members.

Second, it is obvious that staffing of provincial positions with homophilous leaders has received particular attention in politically and economically crucial places such as Shanghai. The city shows homophily effects over the entire observation period; since 1985 both positions are characterized by some homophilous association with PSC members. Leadership recruitment in Beijing and Guangdong also shows strong reliance on homophilous affinity. Evidently, the PSC aims to strengthen vertical administrative control over critical and powerful regions through reliance on homophily in promotion of provincial leaders into the ruling elite.

To capture provincial economic performance we include two different measures. First we include *Annual GDP growth*, and second we explore the effect of *Average per capita GDP growth* (a moving average constructed over the respective office period of each leader) as an alternative measure of economic performance. Initial evidence from statistical mean comparison tests, however, does not suggest a significant positive association between provincial economic performance and promotion chances. Promoted leaders achieve on average only marginally larger growth rates during their office term than non-promoted leaders.

Notwithstanding, identification of performance-based promotion patterns at the provincial level is a challenging task. We therefore complement the above standard measures by a third measurement helping to differentiate between a common growth component, which applies to China in general, and the provincial idiosyncratic component that can be attributed to a distinct provincial leadership regime. The underlying reasoning is that we wish to identify true performance-contributions rather than being recruited to certain positions during an overall positive business climate. This way, we attempt to control for what we call the "luck of the draw."

We apply a simple and straightforward exercise to isolate the idiosyncratic provincial growth performance. Let  $g_{it}$  be the provincial growth measure. Estimating a two-way fixed effects model gives the following residuals,

$$\hat{e}_{it} = g_{it} - \hat{\alpha}_i - \hat{f}_t,$$

where  $\hat{\alpha}_i$  is the provincial specific effect and  $\hat{f}_t$  is the common national growth component (time). The residuals  $\hat{e}_{it}$  thus capture the idiosyncratic province specific part of the growth rate.

### 3.4. Control variables

To isolate potential effects stemming from homophily and economic performance from other potentially confounding effects, we introduce a vector of control variables capturing personal features and regional economic conditions.

*Personal credentials:* Personal characteristics and achievements are part of the formal evaluation process of political leaders. We control for three dimensions:

*Age:* Two variables capture the potential impact of seniority on promotion chances (Bo, 2002). First, a continuous variable (*Age*) indicates the current age. In our sample the average age is 58.9 years. Further, we note a narrowing of the age-band of leadership promotion, indicating a preference for certain age groups. Over the reform period, the average age declined from 63.7 years in 1979 to 58.8 years in 2011. In parallel, the representation of younger leaders is declining. Whereas 6.7% of the governors and party secretaries were under the age of 50 in the period between 1979 and 1993, the corresponding ratio declined to 3.7% thereafter. Second, a dichotomous variable (*Age 65*) indicates whether the individual politician has reached the retirement age. This is to reflect national policies which formally rule out reappointment of civil servants after the age of 65.<sup>7</sup>

*Education.* Meritocratic recruitment of officials and bureaucrats to staff the state apparatus was revitalized as a source of elite legitimacy during the reform period. Since 1995, cadre selection procedures explicitly require higher education. Subsequently, the proportion of provincial leaders holding a university degree rose substantively from 36% before 1995 to 52% thereafter. To measure higher education effects, we include a dummy variable (*University*).

<sup>7</sup> See Zhongyang dang zhengji guan ganbu jiaoyu gongzuo de jue ding (*Decision to Build a Retiring Scheme for Senior Cadres*). Zhongfa No. 41. October 3, 1982, in [Chinese Legal Sources Online Database](#). The alternative use of age squared does not affect our substantive findings.

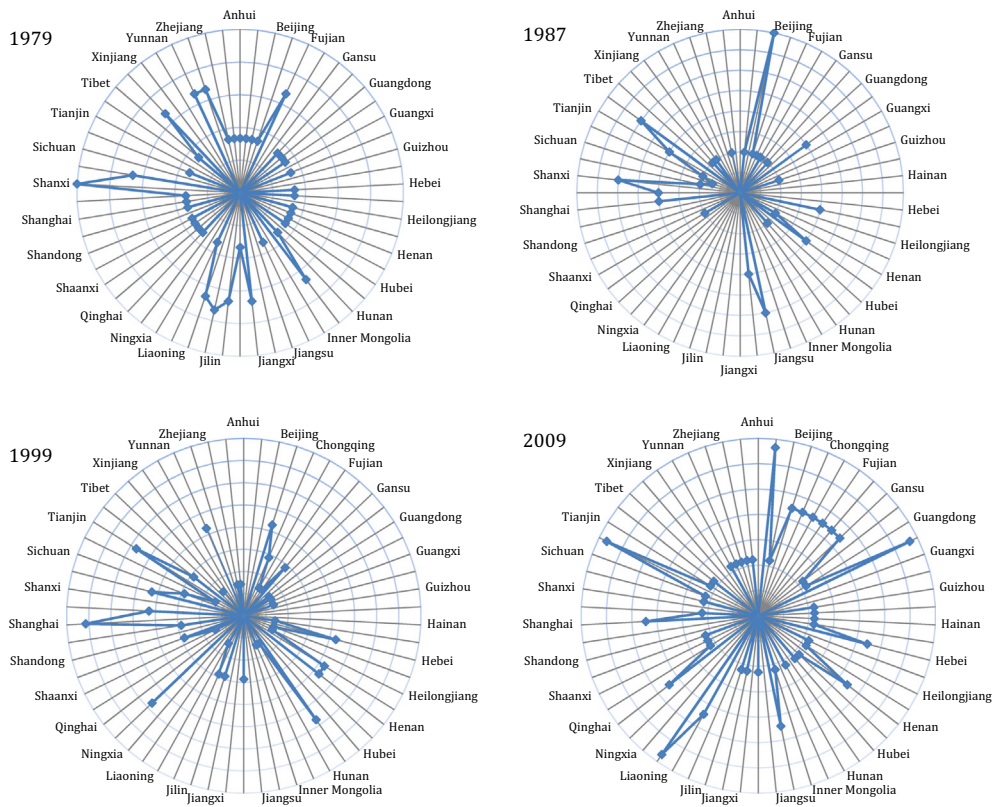


Fig. 1. Homophily index in select years, 1979–2009.

*Work experience:* Three variables capture distinct features of individual professional careers. We include a dichotomous variable (*Second term*) to signal that provincial leaders serve for a second term in their current position. This is to take into account the reportedly negative reputation effects and reduced promotion chances provincial leaders suffer when not promoted during or upon completion of their first office term. Long office terms are associated with a certain sense of local favoritism and lack of general, country-wide professional experience. Generally, the central leadership is eager to initiate a relatively fast turnover of leadership positions. The average tenure in the sample period is 3.2 years, indicating that a majority of leaders has already relocated to a new position before completing the official office term of five years. Further, we include the dichotomous variable (*Center*) to capture whether a provincial leader has acquired professional experience in the central government administration. Such experience is often seen as crucial work experience when it comes to promotions into top leadership positions like membership in the Politbureau. Finally, we include a dummy variable (*Party secretary*) to control for the current rank of a provincial leader. This is important because party secretaries – due to their higher administrative rank – enjoy smaller promotion chances than provincial governors.

*Regional control variables:* Since provincial growth chances are not independent of the level of development already achieved, we include provincial *lagged per capita GDP* to control for provincial welfare effects.<sup>8</sup> Also, it is not unlikely that local economic development affects promotion chances. At times, leaders of small and economically less developed provinces seem less successful in securing leadership positions in the central government, since less developed places did not seem to provide the sort of professional experience crucial for national leadership positions (see [Appendix B](#) for summary statistics).

#### 4. Results

In [Table 1](#) we report results from our probit analysis using stepwise regressions, first presenting the effect of homophily and various economic performance measures separately, then testing for both effects simultaneously under inclusion of the complete set of personal and regional variables.

Clearly, our hypothesis stating a positive association between homophily and promotion chances is strongly confirmed. The association between homophily and promotion chances is significant at the 0.1% level in an isolated testing strategy only including the standard annual (Model 1) and average growth measures (Model 6), as well as under inclusion of idiosyncratic performance measures (Models 3, 4 and 8) and the complete set of control variables (Models 5 and 9). Among the control

<sup>8</sup> Using the log value of per capita GDP generates similar results.



variables assessing the role of personal credentials, only prior central government experience has a significantly positive effect on promotion chances. It is worthwhile noting that with a growing proportion of university-educated provincial leaders, higher education does not provide a significant advantage. As expected, a negative association between office rank and further promotion chances is confirmed for party secretaries, who face fewer chances to further advance their career.

In contrast, the performance-based leadership promotion argument is consistently rejected. Both in isolated testing strategies as well as under inclusion of control variables, there is no indication that provincial leaders in charge of fast-growing provinces enjoy better promotion chances than their competitors. Also, the level of provincial development already achieved (as measured by lagged pc GDP) does not affect promotion chances (see Models 5 and 9).

Given the lack of clear official statements on how leadership performance is assessed, it is obviously a challenge to identify the exact measurement concept of performance that central leaders might apply when assessing provincial leaders. Consequently, there is a risk that our measures of economic growth do not accurately capture the central leadership's target values. First of all, central leaders may not assume a linear relationship between growth and promotion. In line with political concerns on growing inter-provincial inequality, central leaders might instead apply a non-linear function, making sure that excessive provincial growth promotion exceeding a certain benchmark is not rewarded, but rather punished. To explore this possibility, we include a square term of economic growth into our benchmark model. However, we find no support for the existence of a non-linear relationship. Further, we have explored whether promotion chances respond to per capita growth instead of total economic growth. The motivation is similar. If leaders are placing a strong emphasis on individual well-being and development, per capita measures might offer a more appropriate assessment strategy. Once again, we do not find confirmatory evidence, but find the economic performance argument rejected. The positive and significant association between homophily and promotion chances, however, remains intact independent of the chosen performance measure.<sup>9</sup> Briefly, our results support our conjecture that China's political elite are promoted not on the basis of a provincial leader's record in enabling and guiding economic performance (H1), but on the basis of homophily and prior work experience (H2).

Although specification tests of our baseline model do not suggest biased results, skeptics may wish to see the additional inclusion of fixed effects for time and region. A standard strategy in panel data analysis is to include year and/or regional fixed effects to control for unobserved variables, which may vary across time and geographic units (see Table 2). Models 1 through 4 present our findings, which consistently confirm the impact of homophily on promotion chances. Interestingly, the idiosyncratic provincial growth component turns negative and is statistically significant once we control both for time and provincial fixed effects. This could potentially indicate the central leadership's intention to penalize those leaders who leave the national growth path and pose a risk for economic over-heating. However, since the actual proceedings for performance-based promotions are not truly transparent, we wish not to attach too much weight to this rather unexpected finding.

Models 1 and 3 are also estimated for the group of governors and party secretaries separately suggesting a generally smaller homophily effect for governors than for party secretaries. Using Model 1 the homophily effect is no longer significant at conventional levels for governors (with 11% significance); for Model 3 the level of significance is 10%. This finding is mirrored for the effect of annual and average GDP growth which is positive and significant for promotion chances of party secretaries but not for governors. This positive promotion effect, however, is partly compensated by negative effects associated with provincial idiosyncratic growth.

A downside to the inclusion of year and province-fixed effects is the reduction of our sample size (by up to 20% for the joint sample and more than 36% for separate estimations for both positions) and the loss of a lot of the signal in the data, which necessarily wipes out some of the variation and limits possibilities for further model extensions. Given that each province has only two provincial leadership positions to compare (one governor and one party secretary) at any point in time, a sensible strategy is therefore to use the joint sample (controlling for different positions via control variables) and to control for broader regional (not provincial) effects.

To this end we construct eight regional dummy variables organizing all 31 provinces in regional clubs (see Table 3). Under inclusion of the whole set of control variables and time and regional fixed effects, our results are broadly confirmed, although with a slightly smaller level of statistical significance for homophily in Model 2 (10%) than under inclusion of time-fixed effects only (Model 1). This is a logical consequence of the fact that components of the homophily index are correlated with geography. Yet for model specifications including average GDP growth, homophily remains significant at the 5% level also under inclusion of time and regional controls (Model 4).

Second, we have also experimented with the introduction of political election cycles instead of year fixed effects. Fig. 2 illustrates that leadership recruitment displays a certain political cycle corresponding with the five office years of the elected PSC.

Models 5 and 6 (see Table 3) show that our findings are not sensitive to inclusion of office year and regional controls which further emphasizes the general relevance of homophily for individual promotion chances (as specified by Hypothesis 2). Inclusion of both measures for economic performance once again leads to a rejection of Hypothesis 1 confirming our baseline models. The goodness of fit of Models 5 and 6 is marginally higher than in the case of year fixed effects (with 93.3% of the cases correctly specified).

<sup>9</sup> Results are available upon request.

**Table 1**  
Homophily, economic performance and promotion chances, 1979–2011.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9
Homophily	0.870 <sup>***</sup> (3.82)		0.869 <sup>***</sup> (6.26)	0.875 <sup>***</sup> (6.65)	0.645 <sup>***</sup> (4.90)	0.869 <sup>***</sup> (6.52)		0.869 <sup>***</sup> (6.67)	0.633 <sup>***</sup> (4.44)
Annual GDP growth	0.144 (0.14)	0.882 (0.66)		1.061 (0.81)	1.233 (0.74)				
Avg. real GDP growth						0.096 (0.13)	−0.900 (−0.78)	−0.903 (−0.94)	−1.788 (−1.03)
Provincial idiosyncratic growth		−1.533 (−0.70)	−0.669 (−0.57)	−1.746 (−0.86)	−2.480 (−1.03)		1.776 (0.91)	1.790 (1.02)	1.625 (0.63)
Age					−0.007 (−0.60)				−0.008 (−0.72)
Age65					−0.269 (−0.79)				−0.273 (−0.79)
University					0.092 (1.02)				0.096 (1.03)
Second term					0.185 (1.15)				0.185 (1.14)
Center					0.504 <sup>***</sup> (4.08)				0.499 <sup>***</sup> (4.17)
Party Secretary					−0.547 <sup>***</sup> (−5.25)				−0.541 <sup>***</sup> (−5.23)
Lagged p.c. GDP					−2.85e−06 (0.93)				−1.65e−07 (−0.05)
Constant	−1.676 <sup>***</sup> (−12.81)	−1.615 <sup>***</sup> (−8.10)	−1.661 <sup>***</sup> (−24.75)	−1.778 <sup>***</sup> (−10.08)	−1.300 <sup>*</sup> (−2.13)	−1.671 <sup>***</sup> (13.98)	−1.422 <sup>***</sup> (−8.88)	−1.564 <sup>***</sup> (−11.72)	−0.911 (−1.36)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.0147	0.0006	0.0149	0.0154	0.0730	0.0147	0.0005	0.0152	0.0724
Log likelihood	−467.62	−474.34	−467.52	−467.29	−436.41	−467.63	−474.38	−467.408	−436.70
N	1984	1984	1984	1984	1967	1984	1984	1984	1967

z-statistics in parenthesis, all estimates based on robust standard errors clustered by region.

\*  $p < 0.05$ .

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 2**  
Homophily, performance and promotion with fixed effects, 1979–2011.

	Model 1	Governor only	Party sec. only	Model 2	Model 3	Governor only	Party sec. only	Model 4
Homophily	0.715 <sup>***</sup> (4.54)	0.414 (1.59)	1.920 <sup>***</sup> (5.75)	0.454 <sup>**</sup> (3.42)	0.706 <sup>***</sup> (4.74)	0.432 (1.71)	1.809 <sup>***</sup> (5.12)	0.453 <sup>***</sup> (3.68)
Annual GDP growth	4.496 (1.16)	0.083 (0.04)	22.468 <sup>***</sup> (5.29)	1285.656 <sup>***</sup> (13.91)				
Avg. GDP growth					1.829 (0.56)	−5.285 (−1.72)	24.431 <sup>***</sup> (5.28)	193.346 <sup>***</sup> (12.37)
Prov. idiosyncratic growth	−5.151 (−1.07)	0.193 (0.04)	−26.005 <sup>***</sup> (−6.38)	−1286.57 <sup>***</sup> (−13.99)	−0.575 (−0.13)	9.380 <sup>*</sup> (2.06)	−29.899 <sup>***</sup> (−5.61)	−191.76 <sup>***</sup> (−11.96)
Lagged p.c. GDP	0.00001 (1.93)	0.00000 (1.19)	0.00004 <sup>**</sup> (2.85)	−0.00001 (−1.41)	0.00001 (1.92)	0.00001 (1.40)	0.00003 <sup>*</sup> (2.27)	−0.00001 (−1.40)
Year dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Province dummies	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Constant	−1.753 <sup>***</sup> (−7.22)	−1.760 <sup>***</sup> (−3.80)	−3.195 <sup>***</sup> (−12.85)	−96.761 <sup>***</sup> (−13.96)	−1.541 <sup>***</sup> (−6.27)	−1.349 <sup>**</sup> (−2.87)	−3.335 <sup>***</sup> (−9.63)	−16.684 <sup>***</sup> (−12.64)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.0675	0.050	0.196	0.1116	0.0668	0.056	0.203	0.1119
Log likelihood	−422.13	−275.33	−98.667	−394.02	−422.46	−273.66	−97.743	−393.86
N	1682	837	418	1570	1682	837	418	1570

z-statistics in parenthesis, all estimates based on robust standard errors clustered by region.

\*  $p < 0.05$ .

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

#### 4.1. Robustness

Our robustness tests pursue three different dimensions. First, we explore potential variation over time, exploiting regime changes as well as institutional changes. Second, we include additional control variables capturing personal credentials and factional associations to separate our homophily index from competing concepts focusing on political associations. Third, we

**Table 3**

Homophily, performance, personal characteristics and promotion with fixed effects, 1979–2011.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Homophily	0.460 <sup>*</sup> (2.51)	0.415 (1.94)	0.454 <sup>*</sup> (2.43)	0.399 <sup>*</sup> (1.94)	0.470 <sup>*</sup> (2.42)	0.451 <sup>*</sup> (2.17)
Annual GDP growth	5.388 (1.46)	6.462 (10.28)			0.680 (0.36)	
Avg. GDP growth			3.028 (0.98)	6.706 (0.81)		−1.706 (−0.70)
Prov. idiosyncratic growth	−6.584 (−1.43)	−8.879 (10.811)	−2.960 (−0.66)	−6.693 (−0.82)	−2.107 (−0.76)	1.457 (0.51)
Age	−0.013 (−1.01)	−0.15 (−1.28)	−0.140 (−1.05)	−0.16 (−1.26)	−0.009 (−0.87)	−0.010 (−1.02)
Age65	−0.365 (−1.08)	−0.367 (−1.06)	−0.342 (−0.97)	−0.356 (−0.99)	−0.304 (−0.83)	−0.305 (−0.82)
University	0.121 (1.06)	.129 (1.26)	0.117 (0.99)	0.119 (1.04)	0.100 (1.13)	0.102 (1.08)
Second term	0.223 (1.46)	.256 (1.76)	0.226 (1.43)	0.265 <sup>*</sup> (1.73)	0.216 (1.27)	0.221 (1.28)
Center	0.510 <sup>***</sup> (3.98)	0.607 <sup>***</sup> (3.53)	0.510 <sup>***</sup> (4.00)	0.500 <sup>***</sup> (3.52)	0.493 <sup>***</sup> (3.57)	0.487 <sup>***</sup> (3.65)
Party secretary	−0.636 <sup>***</sup> (−6.22)	−0.645 <sup>***</sup> (−5.88)	−0.632 <sup>***</sup> (−6.41)	−0.644 <sup>***</sup> (−5.99)	−0.543 <sup>***</sup> (−5.14)	−0.539 <sup>***</sup> (−5.15)
Lagged p.c. GDP	0.00001 (1.73)	2.83e−06 (0.44)	0.00001 (1.69)	1.59e−06 (0.27)	−5.20e−06 (−1.55)	−3.05e−06 (−0.85)
Year dummies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Office year dummies	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Region dummies	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	−0.670 (−0.84)	−0.390 (−0.76)	−0.454 (−0.52)	−0.327 (−0.60)	−0.932 (−1.78)	−0.649 (−1.18)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.1348	0.1517	0.1332	0.1509	0.1016	0.1020
Log likelihood	−388.80	−381.24	−389.55	−381.61	−419.13	−419.37
N	1672	1672	1672	1672	1911	1911

z-statistics in parenthesis, all estimates based on robust standard errors clustered by region.

\*  $p < 0.05$ .\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

apply our model to the subsample of turnover candidates rather than to the entire population of political leaders. We then discuss how our findings compare with prior attempts to identify promotion patterns of China's provincial elite.

#### 4.1.1. The periodicity of promotion effects

The relatively long observation period stretching over more than three decades offers the possibility to explore the stability of promotion drivers over time. Is homophily, as we hypothesize, a general principle of leadership promotion, or do we see some form of fluctuation corresponding with distinct political regimes, policy priorities or institutional settings? It is beyond doubt that policy style, political priorities as well as economic institutions have changed substantively since Deng Xiaoping initiated China's reform course in 1978. An open question is, whether any of these changes correspond with changes in promotion strategies.

We explore three different change dimensions, to test the general validity of our homophily argument (see Table 4). First, we acknowledge that leadership under Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, was associated with different intensities of political control and policy priorities. To control for potential interfering effects, we introduce two binary variables to control for regime changes under Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao (using the leadership of Deng Xiaoping as our benchmark). Further we let each of the regime-dummies interact with homophily and our growth measures (Models 1 and 2). Second, we explore whether the promulgation of a socialist market economy in 1992, and the ensuing acceleration of economic reforms and privatization may have modified the relative role of homophily versus performance as predictors of elite promotion (Models 3 and 4). Finally, we explore whether China's growing economic integration and liberalization following the WTO membership in 2001 led to a modification of top-level career recruitment (Models 5 and 6).

Estimation results across all six specifications reject economic performance (Hypothesis 1) and confirm homophily (Hypothesis 2) as general principles of career advancement, although the direct homophily effect in Models 4–6 drops to the 10% level of significance. Positive promotion effects associated with economic growth are only observed under the leadership of general secretary Hun Jintao (Models 1 and 2). Further our estimation results suggest a growing importance of the homophily effect since China's WTO accession (Models 5 and 6).

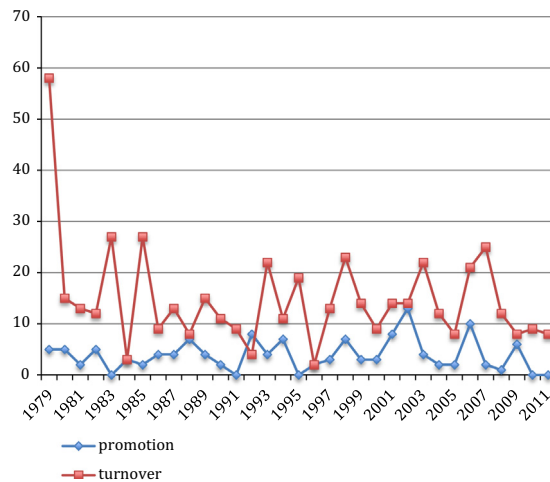


Fig. 2. Turnover over time.

#### 4.1.2. The distinction between homophily and personal credentials

First we take into account that joint school experience of candidates and central leaders as one of the three dimensions of our homophily index may not only be a reflection of similarity, but may also be interpreted as a signal of elite education and human capital sorting. To avoid that our index of homophily is simply driven by human capital selection we censor our panel, and exclude observations scoring among the top five percent in terms of joint school experience. This eliminates from our estimation – for instance current general secretary Xi Jinping – who is a Tsinghua University graduate. In total we eliminate 92 observations from our sample. Model 1 (Table 5) replicates Model 5 (Table 3) confirming the general validity of homophily even under exclusion of elite school graduates. We have conducted a parallel exercise for high values of the work-dimension (censored at 95%) in our homophily index to avoid picking up a political grooming effect rather than a feature of homophily (Model 2, Table 5).

One could think of a multitude of additional control variables capturing distinct personal features. However, not all of these would be highly correlated with our variables of interest. We choose two additional control variables that may in fact be related to a person's chances to develop homophilous associations with members of PSC. The literature reports that provincial leaders serving in their home province generally face weaker promotion chances than those leaders serving outside of their province of birth. This points to limited chances for coalition building outside of their home province and also to limitations in their accumulated work experience. To control for such local types we thus include *Native* as a binary variable that takes the value 1 for leaders serving in their home province. We also include a continuous variable *Tenure* indicating the number of years a leader has already served on the current position. Longer tenure is assumed to provide better opportunities for ongoing and frequent social interactions in the workplace, which Homans (1950) shows reinforces shared sentiments and durable ties. However, there is obviously also a limit to tenure, when continuation of the same position evolves into closed localized networks (Burt, 2005). While *Native* and *Tenure* turn out to be statistically significant and coefficient estimates show the expected sign, they do not strongly correlate with our measure of homophily. Coefficient estimates for homophily remain significant at the 0.1% level and drop only marginally in size (see Table 5, Models 3 and 4).

Further, we wish to ascertain that our homophily measure is not simply a proxy for political factions. We include one dummy variable capturing membership in China's Communist Youth League (CCYL), which is often portrayed as a signal of factional associations and ideological orientation. While one could argue that CCYL-membership could also be interpreted as a sign of homophilous associations, it does not qualify as a personal similarity in the narrow sense of the homophily-literature. We also need to rule out that our measure of homophily does not simply reflect family ties between political leaders and the old party veterans, which could in turn have inspired similar career pathways. We use Shih's (2008) classification of so-called princelings to construct binary variables capturing such family ties (*Princeling*). Models 5 and 6 show that these measures are – as expected – slightly correlated with our homophily measure, but also confirm the independent effect of homophily, though the level of significance drops to 10% (Model 6) under inclusion of time and regional fixed effects (Appendix C gives an overview of those leaders in our sample who have notable family ties with the party elite). We have also explored potential interaction effects between homophily, CCYL, and princeling, yet without identifying significant effects.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Results are available upon request.

**Table 4**  
Periodicity of homophily, performance and promotion (fixed effect models), 1979–2011.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Homophily	0.609 <sup>*</sup> (2.17)	0.573 <sup>*</sup> (2.05)	0.540 <sup>*</sup> (3.07)	0.529 (0.88)	0.320 (1.73)	0.321 (1.72)
Annual GDP growth	1.475 (0.47)		0.064 (0.03)		0.194 (0.09)	
Average GDP growth		-.415 (-0.14)		-1.885 (-0.58)		-2.635 (-0.87)
Prov. idiosyncratic growth	-3.149 (-1.01)	0.302 (0.09)	-1.856 (-0.60)	2.109 (-0.58)	-1.576 (-0.51)	2.328 (0.71)
Era Jiang	0.272 (1.10)	.698 (3.11)				
Jiang * Homophily	-0.609 (-1.56)	-0.575 (-1.45)				
Jiang * annual growth	-1.254 (-0.63)					
Jiang * average growth		-4.974 <sup>*</sup> (2.15)				
Era Hu	-1.346 <sup>**</sup> (-2.64)	-1.509 <sup>**</sup> (-3.11)				
Hu * Homophily	0.618 (0.97)	.779 (1.13)				
Hu * annual growth	7.618 <sup>*</sup> (0.97)					
Hu * average growth		9.688 <sup>*</sup> (2.47)				
Socialist market economy (year ≥ 1993)			-0.993 (-0.35)	0.258 (0.88)		
Socialist market economy * Homophily			-0.125 (-0.37)	-0.194 (-0.64)		
Socialist market economy * annual growth			1.435 (0.65)			
Socialist market economy * average growth				-1.409 (-0.58)		
WTO-membership (year ≥ 2001)					0.219 (-0.51)	-0.005 (-0.01)
WTO * homophily					0.684 <sup>*</sup> (2.56)	0.666 <sup>*</sup> (2.48)
WTO * annual growth					-0.725 (-0.30)	
WTO * average growth						1.537 (0.37)
Control <sup>a</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Office years	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Region	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	-1.089 <sup>**</sup> (-1.97)	-0.931 (-1.84)	-0.912 <sup>*</sup> (-1.74)	-0.675 (-1.44)	-0.901 (-1.69)	-0.602 (-1.10)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.1094	0.1109	0.1030	0.1027	0.1074	0.1074
Log likelihood	-415.90	-415.23	-418.91	-418.91	-416.837	-416.838
N	1911	1911	1911	1911	1911	1911

z-statistics in parenthesis, all estimates based on robust standard errors clustered by region.

<sup>\*</sup>  $p < 0.05$ .

<sup>\*\*</sup>  $p < 0.01$ .

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>  $p < 0.001$ .

<sup>a</sup> Controls not reported here are age, age65, university, center, second term, party secretary, lagged per capita GDP.

#### 4.1.3. The pool of turnover candidates

Up to this point we have closely followed the literature on political leadership promotions in China and used the complete provincial leadership elite as our focal group. However, it may be inaccurate to assume that all leaders are considered for promotion at any point in time. It is likely that the central leadership selects candidates for promotion from a sub-sample of provincial leaders coming up for routine review. The literature is relatively silent about general patterns of turnover decisions. While the largest group of leaders faces a turnover after three years in office, this group is still relatively small, with only 23% of the overall turnover sample. Tenure ranges from one year to fifteen years. Closer exploration of the turnover timing suggests a complex web of interdependencies with local political and social concerns that influence the duration of tenure and the timing of a turnover. Take for instance the province Xinjiang, where party secretaries in the early 1980s experienced relatively short tenure periods of two to four years, whereas the successors Song Hanliang and Wang Lequan served respectively for ten and fifteen years without experiencing a single lateral turnover. This example illustrates the complex reasoning the central leadership applies when it comes to identifying individuals for promotion. Given these difficulties, we do not pretend to have a full spec-

**Table 5**  
Homophily, performance and personal credentials, 1979–2011.

	Model 1 Censored panel	Model 2 Censored panel	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Homophily	0.531 <sup>*</sup> (2.11)	0.847 <sup>*</sup> (2.50)	0.576 <sup>***</sup> (4.58)	0.355 <sup>***</sup> (2.17)	0.357 <sup>*</sup> (2.44)	0.297 (1.65)
Annual GDP growth <sup>a</sup>	0.828 (0.41)	2.071 (1.31)	0.888 (0.66)	6.988 (1.74)	6.195 (1.35)	0.125 (0.06)
Prov. idiosync. growth	-2.279 (-0.82)	-3.033 (-1.23)	-2.204 (-1.04)	-8.314 (-1.73)	-7.641 (-1.45)	-1.813 (-0.61)
Tenure			0.102 <sup>**</sup> (3.38)	0.099 <sup>***</sup> (4.29)	0.134 <sup>***</sup> (5.11)	0.117 <sup>***</sup> (4.11)
Native			-0.277 <sup>*</sup> (-2.50)	-0.347 <sup>**</sup> (-2.56)	-0.332 <sup>*</sup> (-2.58)	-0.356 <sup>**</sup> (-3.30)
Princeling					0.067 (0.52)	0.131 (0.79)
CCYL					0.173 (1.77)	0.267 <sup>**</sup> (2.75)
Age	-0.004 (-0.38)	-0.020 <sup>*</sup> (-1.74)	-0.015 (-1.23)	-0.025 (-1.82)	-0.204 (-0.87)	-0.15 (-1.37)
Age65	-0.405 (-1.07)	-0.151 (-0.45)	-0.207 (-0.54)	-0.308 (-0.88)	-0.321 (-0.87)	-0.258 (-0.64)
University	0.111 (1.30)	0.027 (0.26)	0.088 (0.85)	0.133 (1.01)	0.120 (0.91)	0.070 (0.63)
Second term	0.097 (0.46)	0.129 (0.223)	-0.226 (-1.18)		-0.292 (-1.54)	-0.227 (-1.24)
Center	0.521 <sup>***</sup> (3.51)	0.537 <sup>**</sup> (3.73)	0.509 <sup>**</sup> (4.09)	0.521 <sup>***</sup> (3.96)	0.522 <sup>***</sup> (4.34)	0.499 <sup>**</sup> (3.68)
Party secretary	-0.558 <sup>***</sup> (-5.68)	-0.597 <sup>***</sup> (-4.89)	-0.591 <sup>***</sup> (-5.82)	-0.686 <sup>***</sup> (-6.58)	-0.697 <sup>***</sup> (-6.85)	-0.620 <sup>***</sup> (-5.83)
Lagged p.c. GDP	-0.00001 (-0.82)	-0.0000 (-1.82)	-0.028 (-1.97)	0.0000 (1.61)	0.00001 (1.60)	-0.00001 (-4.51)
Year dummies	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
Office year dummies	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Region dummies	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Constant	-1.248 <sup>**</sup> (-2.90)	-0.439 (-0.66)	-0.732 (-1.52)	-0.092 (-0.10)	-0.374 (-0.37)	-0.745 (-1.24)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.1007	0.1028	0.0889	0.1546	0.1672	0.1317
Log likelihood	-390.454	-350.696	-428.89	-379.91	-377.90	-405.38
N	1819	1737	1966	1672	1591	1909

z-statistics in parenthesis, all estimates based on robust standard errors clustered by region.

<sup>\*</sup>  $p < 0.05$ .

<sup>\*\*</sup>  $p < 0.01$ .

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>  $p < 0.001$ .

<sup>a</sup> Estimation models including average economic growth rates are consistent with the presented findings. Results are available upon request.

ification that would promise reliable estimates based on a two-stage probit selection model. Instead we consider a final robustness test of our model using turnover-observations as a sub-sample. Clearly the rationale is to identify whether homophilous association and economic performance pose any advantages once a pool of candidates is considered for a positional turnover. This exercise seems to be an important complement, as it is unlikely to assume that promotion decisions are made without considering the specific pool of individuals coming up for a positional change.

Table 6 summarizes our findings. We continue to use Model 5 of our prior robustness tests (Table 5) as it provides the broadest collection of explanatory factors beyond the influence of homophily and performance. Clearly, the significance and impact of homophily increases in all four specifications, confirming that affinity and closeness become even more decisive selection criteria once the pool of potential candidates is narrowed down. Notable is also that economic growth measures remain insignificant in all specifications.

#### 4.2. How do our results relate to prior findings?

Given the wide circulation and broad acceptance of the performance hypothesis, particularly in the economic science discipline, a final question is this: What accounts for the difference between our findings and earlier results (Li and Zhou, 2005) supporting the performance hypothesis?

Three crucial factors are worth noting.<sup>11</sup> First, Li and Zhou (2005) work with a much smaller panel, stretching from 1979 to 1995. Second, we observe a number of sharp differences between their growth data and officially published growth records as available today. Finally, they do not control for what we call the “luck of the draw,” that is for being recruited to a certain posi-

<sup>11</sup> We thank Hongbin Li and Li-An Zhou for making their dataset available to us.

**Table 6**  
Promotion of turnover candidates, 1979–2011.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Homophily	0.957** (3.25)	0.933*** (4.58)	0.820** (3.03)	0.906*** (4.34)
Annual GDP growth <sup>a</sup>	33.323 (1.82)	14.387 (1.22)	-1.606 (-0.56)	-0.803 (-0.26)
Prov. idiosync. growth	-34.827 (-1.90)	-16.801 (-1.29)	0.934 (0.22)	-0.463 (-0.11)
Tenure	-0.177 (-0.41)	-0.027 (-0.54)	-0.095* (-2.21)	-0.094 (-1.75)
Native	-0.372** (-2.82)	-0.328* (-2.19)	-0.260 (-1.75)	-0.265 (-1.73)
Princeling	0.584 (1.52)	0.366 (1.13)	0.679 (1.80)	0.532 (1.83)
CCYL	0.467** (3.05)	0.362** (2.69)	0.477* (2.56)	0.323 (1.95)
Age	-0.077** (-2.79)	-0.060** (-3.00)	-0.053** (-3.23)	-0.40** (-3.16)
Age65	-0.438 (-0.98)	-0.654 (-1.67)	-0.648 (-1.36)	-0.704 (-1.60)
University	0.024 (0.14)	0.080 (-0.08)	-0.087 (-0.69)	0.009 (0.08)
Second term	0.104 (0.40)	-0.021 (-0.08)	0.480* (2.03)	0.344 (1.38)
Center	0.636* (2.31)	0.739** (3.42)	0.577* (2.21)	0.662** (2.99)
Party secretary	-1.132*** (-4.37)	-1.097*** (-4.56)	-0.961*** (-4.86)	-0.883*** (-4.80)
Lagged p.c. GDP	-3.33e-06 (-0.33)	0.00001 (1.59)	-0.00003*** (-0.32)	-0.00003*** (-4.44)
Year dummies	Yes	Yes	No	No
Province dummies	Yes	No	Yes	No
Office year dummies	No	No	Yes	Yes
Region dummies	No	Yes	No	Yes
Constant	3.279*** (3.80)	3.796* (2.40)	3.925** (3.13)	2.643** (2.76)
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.3636	0.3344	0.2905	0.246
Log likelihood	-160.60	-174.45	-181.10	-199.65
N	426	457	435	466

z-statistics in parenthesis, all estimates based on robust standard errors clustered by region.

\*  $p < 0.05$ .

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

<sup>a</sup> Estimation models including average economic growth rates are consistent with the presented findings. Results are available upon request.

tion at times of a generally good economic climate. Not separating out an idiosyncratic provincial growth component, however, conflates the economic performance effects. The consequence is all but trivial. For illustration, consider the promotion choice in Beijing in the year 1992, when the governor Chen Xitong was promoted after 10 years in office with an average growth rate of 10.42%. The party secretary Li Ximing had in fact a lower average growth rate of 8.7% after five years in office and was not promoted. Does this confirm that promotion was performance-based? Clearly not! What it shows is that Mr. Li was unfortunate enough to be recruited to his position just one year before the Tiananmen incident and the subsequent economic downturn. The drop in economic performance following the incident showed strong effect during Mr. Li's term, whereas average calculations for Mr. Chen still benefited from the boom years preceding the incident. This illustration does not present a special case, but clarifies a general problem when using provincial growth rates. With average growth rates calculated over individual office terms, a common China effect (or national business cycle effect) will inevitably mask the idiosyncratic provincial performance calculations. In fact, once the idiosyncratic provincial performance is controlled for, provincial performance even loses its explanatory power in the shorter panel used by [Li and Zhou \(2005\)](#).<sup>12</sup>

## 5. Discussion

Our comparative analysis of the performance and homophily hypotheses suggests robust reliance on homophilous associations when central leaders select provincial leaders for further promotion. None of our models indicate that economic performance plays a significant role after assignment to a provincial leadership. Naturally, our findings should not be taken

<sup>12</sup> Results are available upon request.

to imply that economic performance is irrelevant for a political career in China. A broad and convincing literature has shown that merit-based recruitment and promotion strategies have played a critical role in the country's reform process (Li, 1998). Also fiscal reforms and subsequent intergovernmental competition for extra-budgetary revenues have undoubtedly not only contributed to the country's growth performance but have also helped local political leaders to advance their careers.

However, our analysis does suggest that there may be limits to the career-promoting effect of economic performance once politicians have secured their first position as a provincial leader. Risk of power struggles and the need to solidify internal stability along crucial vertical and horizontal command structures may very well trump economic concerns and underscore the importance of homophilous associations with China's central leadership.

Naturally, some caveats still apply, which our study shares with all academic efforts in modeling non-public selection processes. Our key variables of interest are based on external observations and interpretations rather than first-hand information describing the information used for actual selection decisions. For instance, one could make the case that performance measures available to the public through annual statistical yearbooks are not identical with the information available to China's leadership. Second, our choice of homophily indicators follows general principles and publicly available information, but may overlook certain unobservable or hard-to-detect soft facts. Moreover, our homophily index focused attention on the small circle of current members of the Politbureau's Standing Committee. Skeptics may argue that former PSC-members may still be able to exercise power through informal networks reaching into China's highest decision-making group. However, such influence can only be decisive if current PSC members are close allies of former leaders. Finally, we acknowledge that we have no means to effectively take into account unobservable time- and space invariant factors. Notwithstanding, we believe that time and space variant unobservables may pose a stronger risk. Following the previous literature, we have made extended efforts to control for unobserved variable influence that may vary over time and/or space.

## 6. Conclusion

While most transition economies underwent deep economic and political crises, China's economic reforms and wide-ranging institutional restructuring proceeded smoothly. Successions of post-reform leadership proceeded according to plan, and serious disintegrative regional tendencies were avoided. None of this was to be expected at the outset of economic reform. With a population of 1.3 billion, a country extreme in geographical and ecological diversity, Chinese society underwent transformative changes which exacerbated social inequalities: the rural–urban divide increased; income inequality rose to levels higher than in the US; and inter-provincial income disparities deepened. In spite of growing social inequalities and structural tensions intensifying political competition between factions in the ruling elite, reform leaders were able to maintain political stability.

Our analysis confirms that homophily constitutes a key mechanism in recruitment and promotion of leaders to the top echelon of the ruling elite. Rulers face an incorrigible dilemma insofar as success in promoting transformative economic growth and structural change of the economy exacerbates social divisions and conflicts. This in turn fuels intensification of competition for hegemonic power within the ruling elite. As contending factions on the right and left build strategic alliances, power struggles at the top take on the atmosphere of palace intrigue, as revealed by Zhao Ziyang's (2010) account of leadership conflicts and intrigues leading to the suppression of the pro-democracy movement in 1989. The political fragility of China's elite, especially during episodes of leadership succession, is a structural feature of its party-led regime (Nee and Lian, 1994; Shirk, 2010).

This is not to say that political careers are independent of individual capabilities. Quite clearly, the Chinese government has made substantial efforts to increase educational levels and professional training. Nor do our results suggest that homophily-based recruitment patterns are in conflict with provincial or national economic performance. To the contrary, we agree with Gould's (1996) interpretation that clientelism can be an effective strategy of state-building in China's unitary political order where democratic mechanisms for leadership selection are missing. In such an environment, reliance on homophily-based promotions may provide the internal political stability—both at the national level and along vertical command structures—needed for the implementation of encompassing institutional reforms.

Relatively little research has examined homophily as a mechanism for selection into the elite. Rivera's (2012) study of cultural filters in the recruitment of professionals in corporations is suggestive of the importance of choice homophily—selecting on shared attitudes, values and beliefs—in large corporations. Similarly, it is well known that newly elected American presidents bring to the White House similar others from their city and state of origin, place of higher education, and previous place of work. What corporate and political elites have in common is the need to rely on complex vertical and horizontal command structures, which not only require placement of competent and skilled agents but also loyal allies in order to secure both effective governance and internal stability. This dual task may well systematically bias decisions to reliance on homophily when two equally or almost equally capable candidates are compared.

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**Appendix B. Summary statistics (n = 1967/Table 1; Model 5/9).**

Variable	Mean	Std. dev.	Min.	Max.
Promotion	.065	.246	0	1
Homophily	.143	.174	0	1
Annual real GDP growth	.109	.043	-.092	.415
Average real GDP growth	.107	.034	-.091	.282
Annual idiosyncratic growth	.00004	.0314	-.159	.266
Average idiosync. growth	.00004	.0258	-.154	.175
Age	58.886	5.220	42	75
Age65 (dummy variable = 1 if age >65)	.0864	.281	0	1
University degree	.443	.497	0	1
Second term (dummy)	.140	.347	0	1
Center connections (dummy)	.219	.413	0	1
Party secretary (dummy)	.504	.500	0	1
Per capita GDP (lagged)	7750.08	11059.79	175	76,074

**Appendix C. Homophily index of princelings**

Name	Highest homophily over time	Family ties
Bo Xilai	0.22	Son of Bo Yibo, member of the first generation of Chinese leaders, member of the CCP since 1925. He was a vice-premier between 1957 and 1966, and between 1979 and 1982. From 1982 to 1992, Bo Yibo served as the vice chairman of the Central Advisory Commission
Bu He	0	Son of Wu Lanfu, member of the first generation of Chinese leaders, member of the CCP since 1925. Wu Lanfu was Minister of the United Front Work Department of the CCP Central Committee between 1978 and 1982, member of the CCP Politburo between 1977 and 1985, and Vice-President of the PRC between 1983 and 1988. He was awarded the Liberation Medal and died in 1988
Guo Shuyan	0	Son of Guo Xiangsheng (also known as Guo Zhiqing), painter, poet, and revolutionary. He joined the CCP in 1938. Guo Xiangsheng fought in the anti-Japanese war and against the Guomindang. He was caught, tortured, and executed in 1947. Guo Xiangsheng died as Communist Martyr
Hong Hu	0.33	Son of Hong Xuezhi, member of the first generation of Chinese leaders. He joined the CCP in 1929, and joined the Long March in 1935. He was promoted to General in 1955, but removed from his position in 1959. Rehabilitated in 1960, he was again persecuted by the Red Guards during the Cultural revolution. After Deng Xiaoping came to power, Hong Xuezhi was rehabilitated, and joined the Central Military Commission, and remained in office until he retired in 1988
Jiang Zhuping	0.57	Son of Jiang Nanxiang, who joined the party in 1933, and became an intellectual and political leader at Tsinghua University, where he was promoted to University president in 1952. After 1977 he was appointed deputy director of the National Science Council, Minister of education and Central Party school vice principal. Jiang Nanxiang died in 1988
Li Yuanchao	0.11	Son of Li Gancheng, former Vice Mayor of Shanghai. During the Cultural Revolution, Li Gancheng and his wife were persecuted
Ruan Chongwu	0.43	Son of Ruan Muwei, a former mayor of Shijiazhuang (capital city of Hebei) and Hohot (capital of Inner Mongolia). Ruan Muwei joined the CCP in 1931. He was an unlikely candidate for a political career since his family owned extensive land holdings in Hebei, while he himself studied in Japan and became a professor in law. Ruan Muwei became

## Appendix C (continued)

Name	Highest homophily over time	Family ties
Wang Qishan	0.28	widely known when he handed over all his family's belongings to the local peasants in 1945. He served as mayor of Hohot from 1949 until he died in 1964 Son in law of Yao Yilin, who joined the CCP in 1935. During the reform period Yao Yilin was elected member of Politbureau Standing Committee of the CCP in 1987, and served as a vice premier between 1988 and 1993. Jointly with Li Peng, Yao Yilin led the conservative faction during the Tiananmen student demonstrations and is closely associated with the decision to initiate martial law on June 4, 1989
Xi Jinping	0.55	Son of Xi Zhongxun, member of the first generation of Chinese leaders, member of the CCP since 1928. In 1959, Xi Zhongxun became a vice premier under Zhou Enlai. During the cultural Revolution, he was persecuted and jailed and was released again in 1975. Fully rehabilitated in 1978, he held various provincial leadership positions in Guangdong province between 1978 and 1981. In 1981 he returned to Beijing, and was elected to the Politbureau in 1982. Xi Zhongxun retired from all his offices in 1988
Ye Xuanping	0.57	Son of Ye Jianying, who joined the Communist Party in 1927. Until 1968, Ye Jianying held various military positions including the office of the minister of defense. From 1978 until 1983, he was the chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress
Yu Zhengsheng	0.43	Son of Qu Qiwei (better known as Huang Jing), who served as a member of the 8th CPC between 1956 and 1969, and Fan Qin, a frontline journalist
Zhang Dejiang	0.22	Son of former PLA Major General Zhang Ziyi
Zhang Qingli	0.11	Nephew of PLA General Zhang Wannian, who had joined the People's Liberation Army in 1944 and the CCP in 1945. Over the decades he was promoted from soldier to general, and served as a Vice Chairmen of the Central Military commission from 1995 to 2002

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