

The University of Hong Kong

香 港 大 學



Department of Politics and Public Administration

Presents

Perceived Social Mobility and Political Trust in China

Existing studies have traced China's high level of political trust to three main sources: traditional cultural values, the state's success in fostering economic growth, and ideological propaganda. We identify a fourth source: perceived social mobility. We argue that to the extent people perceive a reasonable chance for upward mobility based on personal initiatives and efforts, the status quo becomes more justifiable because individuals are seen as responsible for their own successes and failures. As such, perceived social mobility exonerates the political establishment from certain types of blames and thereby enhances political trust. Regression analysis of the China portion of the 2007 World Values Survey (WVS) data shows that respondents who saw themselves as having choices and control in life were indeed more likely to trust the ruling communist party. The WVS sample also reveals a high level of perceived social mobility, which is consistent with China's broad-based development and the massive shake-up of the preexisting social order in the post-1978 era.

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Zhenhua Su is an associate professor in the College of Public Administration, Zhejiang University. He obtained his Ph.D. in economics from Zhejiang University in 2003. He was a visiting professor to University of Chicago (2010). His areas of specialization include China Politics, Political Economy and Political Philosophy. His research interests have focused on China politics, Chinese reforms, Democratization of China, Contentious Politics in China. He has published more than 40 articles both in English and Chinese such as *Journal of Democracy*, *Asian Perspective*, *Sociological Research (Shehuixue yanjiu)* and *Philosophical Research (Zhexueyanjiu)*, etc. Also, he is a columnist for many Chinese major media.

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