



# Political freedom, news consumption, and patterns of political trust: evidence from East and Southeast Asia, 2001-2016

Anli Jiang & Tony Huiquan Zhang

To cite this article: Anli Jiang & Tony Huiquan Zhang (2021): Political freedom, news consumption, and patterns of political trust: evidence from East and Southeast Asia, 2001-2016, Political Science, DOI: [10.1080/00323187.2021.1968767](https://doi.org/10.1080/00323187.2021.1968767)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00323187.2021.1968767>



Published online: 10 Sep 2021.



[Submit your article to this journal](#)



[View related articles](#)



[View Crossmark data](#)



# Political freedom, news consumption, and patterns of political trust: evidence from East and Southeast Asia, 2001-2016

Anli Jiang<sup>a</sup> and Tony Huiquan Zhang<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Centre for Governance Studies, Beijing Normal University, Zhuhai; <sup>b</sup>Department of Sociology, University of Macau, Taipa, Macao

## ABSTRACT

The gap between trust in central and local governments remains an unsolved puzzle in social sciences. Based on existing theoretical frameworks and our analyses of the Asian Barometer Survey data (2001–2016), we found three types of trust gaps in Asian societies: equal trust, paradoxical trust, and hierarchical trust. We speculated the differences could be explained by macro-level political freedom and individual-level predictors such as how people consume political news. Multilevel analyses revealed the political freedom of a society is a critical predictor of the trust gap: people from politically unfree societies tend to trust their central governments the most. Furthermore, freedom and frequency of news consumption interact in shaping political trust: in free societies, people who follow news frequently have less political trust; in unfree societies, the opposite is true, suggesting media propaganda plays a role in shaping political trust. This study helps to explain authoritarian resilience in East and Southeast Asia.

## KEYWORDS

Political trust; informed citizenry; news consumption; authoritarian resilience; legitimacy; Asia

## Introduction

Political trust, or people's confidence in their government, is a critical topic in social sciences, especially political science, public administration, and sociology. The importance of trust in government is two-fold. First, as an outcome variable, it is an indicator of several critical social processes such as democratisation, expansion of higher education, and rising social capital (Wang 2016; Mishler and Richard 2005). Second, trust in government may generate other important political and social consequences, including rising regime legitimacy, better evaluation of government performance, the collaboration between civil society and the government, and good governance (Newton 2001; Mishler and Richard 2001, 2005).

In their analyses of trust in government, scholars have noted its complex nature. In a horizontal context, people may view multiple political establishments differently: the executive, the legislature, the judicial system, the electoral system, the military, the police, and other law enforcement agencies (Andrain and Smith 2006; Zhang, Sun, and Cao 2021). In a vertical context, people may hold different opinions on the central government

and the grassroots or local government (Li 2004, 2016). The vertical dimension, especially the political trust gap between the central and local levels, is the focus of our study. More specifically, we are interested in the gap between trust in higher- and lower-level governments in the context of East and Southeast Asia. Asian societies have a fragmented pattern concerning political trust (Jiang and Zhang 2021; Li 2004, 2016; Tan and Tambyah 2011). While the patterns of many Asian countries are consistent with those of Western societies – namely, their citizens trust local governments more than central ones – several outliers show the opposite pattern (Tan and Tambyah 2011). The outliers, often authoritarian countries, show high trust in central governments and distrust in local ones.

To understand why political trust patterns differ among the East and Southeast Asian societies, we analysed 14 societies using all four waves of the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) data (2001–2016). Based on Lianjiang Li's (2016) typology and our observations of the aggregate-level statistics, we found Asian countries can be categorised into three types of political trust in different levels of governments: 'equal trust', where people hold a similar level of trust in their central and local governments; 'paradoxical trust', where people trust local governments more than central ones; and 'hierarchical trust', where people trust in central governments more than local governments.

Since the pattern of 'hierarchical trust' are mainly found in the authoritarian societies (e.g. China, Vietnam, and Singapore) and the 'paradoxical trust' cases are liberal democracies, we hypothesised that this variation in political trust patterns might be explained at the macro level by the political freedom a society enjoys. We further speculate that the individual-level variation in the political trust may result from media influence – as authoritarian regimes usually exert strict media control. Therefore, we hypothesised that political freedom at the aggregate level, and media consumption at the individual level, may jointly affect one's political trust.

To examine the hypotheses, we applied multilevel modelling to the ABS data. We investigated how macro-level factors interacted with micro-level processes in shaping political trust and gaps in trust. The multilevel models generated the following findings. First, people from unfree societies tend to have higher trust in central governments than free societies. Second, they also tend to have higher trust in local governments, but this effect is less salient. Third, people from unfree societies tend to have a higher trust gap, mainly caused by their higher trust in central governments. Finally, in unfree societies, people who frequently consume political news tend to have much higher trust in central governments.

The findings helped us understand how trust gaps emerge in East and Southeast Asia. Based on the empirical evidence, it is plausible that authoritarian regimes' efforts to foster trust in central governments can influence their citizens, especially those who consume more media reports. In unfree societies, media are usually under direct or indirect state control, and the government uses media to spread pro-regime information. This could also explain why trust in local governments is less biased: the state's propaganda mainly targets the central offices and top leaders; it cares less about the image of lower levels of government. Our findings contribute to the research fields of public opinion and political culture, civil society, and democratisation in Asia.

## Political trust in central and local governments

Political trust is a basic evaluation of government founded on how well the government operates according to people's expectations (see Levi and Stoker 2000). Conventional wisdom says political trust is conducive to active political participation, economic and governmental performance, and the reduction of corruption (Inglehart 2018; Uslaner 2005; Morris and Klesner 2010). In addition, it can stimulate a well-organised government and underpins state legitimacy (Hetherington and Husser 2012). If they have high political trust, citizens will collaborate with governments, participate in political processes, and work together to build a robust civil society (Aberbach and Walker 1970).

Given the importance of political trust, many scholars are interested in identifying its determinants. Much of the work to date has considered aggregate-level factors. One thrust of the research focuses on the institutional features of a political system, while another emphasises society's cultural traditions and values. Early work on political trust mainly took an institutional approach, with many identifying a regime's legitimacy as a major macro-level factor (Aberbach and Walker 1970). However, this view has been challenged by the fact that many democratic regimes are seeing a downtrend in political trust (Pharr and Putnam 2000; Pharr, Putnam, and Dalton 2000), while authoritarian regimes remain stably high (Inoguchi 2017, 2005; Li 2004; Shi 2001).

It seems democratic procedural legitimacy alone is insufficient for political trust (Grimes 2006). Scholars have stated that political efficacy or government performance matters (Abramson 1972; Hooghe and Marien 2013). Governments are expected to provide public goods, such as public education, health care, national security, and crime reduction; people may assess their performance in these areas and assign their trust accordingly (Newton and Norris 1999; Hetherington and Rudolph 2008). However, despite many governments' excellent performance during the post-WWII era, people's trust has experienced a steady decline (Pharr, Putnam, and Dalton 2000). Some say this can be seen as political cynicism due to a lack of citizen involvement in government (Hooghe and Marien 2013; Putnam 2000). Others attribute it to higher expectations and stricter criteria for governments (Hetherington and Rudolph 2008). Still, others argue increased education levels lead to more criticism of government performance (Hakhverdian and Mayne 2012; Newton and Norris 1999).

The cultural approach explains political trust differently, paying attention to the impacts of traditional and civic culture. Civic culture is an essential pillar of a robust democracy (Muller and Seligson 1994; Tocqueville 1856). Societies with a rich civic tradition usually have more political participation, more voluntary activities and charity groups, a lively media environment, high social capital, accessible political processes, and accountable governments (Putnam 2000, 1993). However, civic culture is also associated with higher expectations of government performance, greater exposure to diverse information sources, and more critical thinking, all of which could erode a government's authority and shake people's confidence (Orren 1997). Civic culture is associated with education and information; after all, only informed citizens could serve as the foundation for the democratic rule (Zhang, Sun, and Cao 2021). Informed citizens, or critical citizens, tend to trust governments and other institutions less (Norris 1999; Kim 2010; Mishler and Richard 2001). This 'critical citizen' thesis may partially explain what institutionalist and culturalist explanations cannot.

Despite the value of the existing studies, most are based on empirical cases in Western Europe and North America (Andrain and Smith 2006; Hetherington and Husser 2012; Morris and Klesner 2010). Not all countries follow the same patterns or use the same mechanisms. Asian countries, especially those in East and Southeast Asia, are often categorised as 'Asian exceptionalism'. In any event, East and Southeast Asian democracies are unlike their counterparts in Europe and North America (Inoguchi 2017) because of their Confucian traditions and related paternalistic cultures. Arguably, in such societies, the government sees itself as the political authority, and citizens generally agree (Kikuchi 2008; Kim 2010). Ample empirical evidence suggests Asians have more trust in political systems than those in other regions, while political institutions and civic values matter less (Ma and Yang 2014; Kikuchi 2008; Tan and Tambyah 2011; Wang and Tan 2006).

Another unique aspect of Asian politics is what has been labelled 'hierarchical trust' (Li 2004, 2016). Based on evidence found in East and Southeast Asia, people often have high trust in central governments and low trust in local governments (Chen and Shi 2001). Why would these Asian countries show such a different trust pattern? We will discuss the literature on political trust in Asia which motivates our research.

### **Patterns and variations of political trust gaps in Asia**

Scholars have examined the patterns/typology/classification of different societies' political trust using different classification criteria. In his pioneering study, Fukuyama (1995) classifies countries into low-and high-trust societies based on the prevalence of shared values. Long-standing group-oriented societies, such as Germany, Japan, and the United States, are high-trust. Societies that emphasise loyalty within family boundaries instead of communities, such as Italy, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China, are low-trust (Fukuyama 1995). Inoguchi contributes to the literature by looking specifically at Asia and characterising political trust by location: low levels of political trust appear in Northeast Asian democratic societies, such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan; high levels of trust appear in Southeast Asian authoritarian democracies, such as Singapore and Malaysia, and Southeast Asian democracies, such as Thailand and Indonesia (Inoguchi 2017, 148). However, studies about political trust in Asia have noted that Asians' political orientations are simultaneously influenced by traditionalism, authoritarianism, and post-materialism (Wang 2016). It may be oversimplified to classify them by only the prevalence of shared norms or the location.

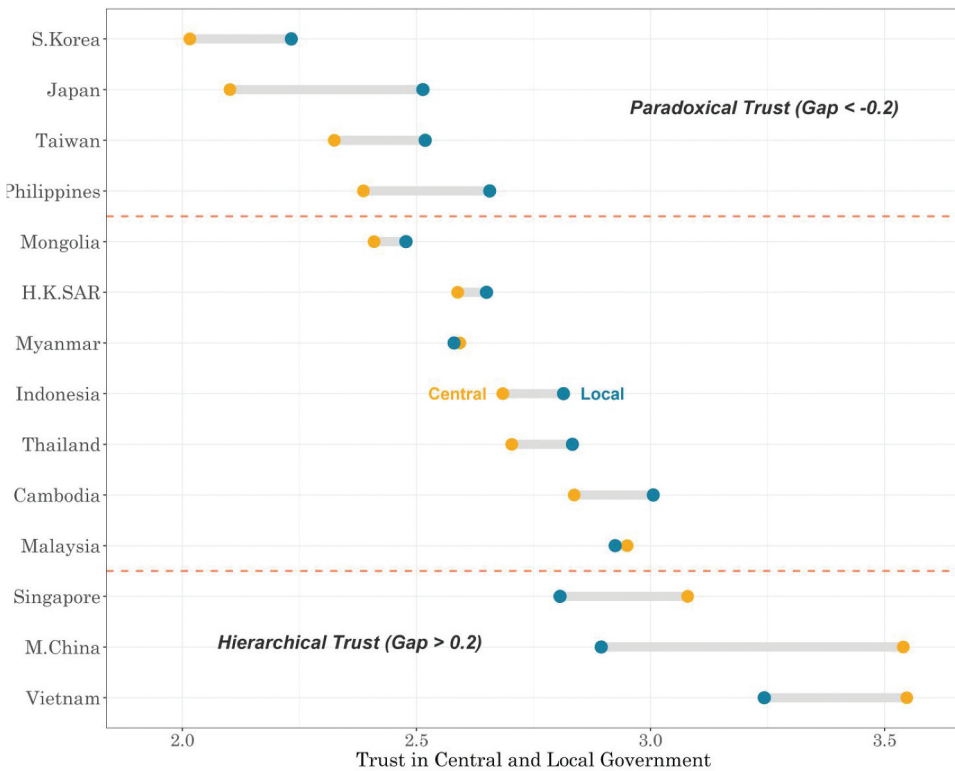
Though existing classifications tend to consider political trust as a whole, Lianjiang Li (2004) noticed the discrepancies in political trust at different levels. Li (2016) distinguishes four types of societies in terms of their patterns of trust in central and local governments: 'people may have (1) equal trust in all levels; (2) equal distrust in all levels; (3) stronger trust in local authority than in the national government, which is known as "paradox of distance"; and (4) stronger confidence in the central government than in local government, which can be called hierarchical trust' (Li 2016). Based on such typology, he notes Chinese people tend to have high confidence in their central leadership. The opposite is true for local officials. Li terms this phenomenon 'hierarchical trust' (Li 2016). In most democratic societies, people usually have higher trust in local governments than central ones. Other scholars have noted similar patterns in other Asian societies (Tan and Tambyah 2011), but little work comparatively analyses the political trust gap in Asian countries.

We selected the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) as our primary data source to study political trust in Asia. The ABS project collects public opinion data from 14 East and Southeast Asian societies: Cambodia, China (Mainland), Hong Kong SAR, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Taiwan (R.O.C.), Thailand, and Vietnam. These societies represent a variety of political regimes, including democratic, authoritarian, and hybrid systems. Some are developing societies, like Cambodia, while others, like Japan, are highly developed. Some share similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds but have different economic or political environments.

Since the political trust gap is defined as the difference in people's trust of central vs. local governments, we selected two response variables: trust in central governments and trust in local governments. The survey questions were worded in the following way: 'I'm going to name a number of institutions. For each one, please tell me how much trust you have in them.'<sup>1</sup> Respondents rated their level of trust in the central and local governments, selecting from four possible responses: 'a great deal', 'quite a lot of trust', 'not very much trust', and 'none at all'. We assigned the responses with values 4, 3, 2, and 1 representing descending level of trust, with 4 meaning more trust in government, and 1 meaning less trust. We then calculated the societal-level average trust in central and local governments in the 14 societies. The results are shown in [Figure 1](#).

According to the figure, the 14 societies can be separated into three groups based on the patterns of their political trust in different levels of governments. To ensure each group had a roughly equal number of cases, we set the threshold at an absolute value of 0.2. In other words, we generated three groups: trust gap  $< -0.2$ ; trust gap between  $-0.2$  and  $0.2$ ; trust gap  $> 0.2$ .<sup>2</sup> Using Lianjiang Li's typology, the three groups can be termed 'paradoxical trust', 'equal trust', and 'hierarchical trust'. The first group, paradoxical trust, includes Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and the Philippines. The second group, equal trust, includes Mongolia, Myanmar, Hong Kong SAR, Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia, and Malaysia. The hierarchical trust group includes Singapore, Mainland China, and Vietnam.

The three groups of countries and regions have some in-group similarities and between-group variations. For example, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are all consolidated liberal democracies, while the Philippines established democratic rule more recently. The three societies from the hierarchical trust group, namely Singapore, China, and Vietnam, are all authoritarian regimes, and their people trust central governments more than local governments. The remaining seven societies in the equal trust group are Mongolia, Myanmar, Indonesia, Hong Kong SAR, Thailand, Cambodia, and Malaysia. Their governments enjoy a medium level of public trust, and there is no significant difference between the trust in central and local governments.



**Figure 1.** Hierarchical political trust in governments in 14 Asian societies (note: displayed in descending order of trust in the central government; average values are used for countries surveyed in multiple waves).

### Research hypotheses: political freedom, news consumption and political trust

Based on the observations from the aggregate level data, we can see that the difference across the trust patterns mainly takes place along the line between authoritarian societies and liberal democracies. Therefore, we speculate that the various Asia’s trust gap patterns might be explained by the different political systems, or the variation in political freedom.

Why would the differences in political systems or political freedom matter in public opinion and people’s confidence in government? First, scholars contended that societies where democratisation could take place and succeed are intrinsically unique: consolidated democracies usually have a more developed economy, a larger and stronger middle class, an educated population, and a more robust civil society to nourish the civic participation and defend freedom (Diamond 1999). In contrast, the lack of political freedom signals the lack of these factors, not to mention some more fundamental distinctions in civic tradition and authoritarian value preferences in certain religion and cultures (Foa and Ekiert 2017). It is therefore understandable that people from democratic and non-democratic societies have divergent perceptions of their government and political leaders.

Second, different from democratic governments, authoritarian regimes and leaders have a stronger incentive and capability to encourage confidence in their rule (Chen and Shi 2001). With efforts in mass persuasion, authoritarian governments could legitimise and secure their position in power. Mass persuasion in authoritarian societies can be achieved via the education systems, mass media and social media (Weiss 2014; Zhang 2020). The propaganda usually contains nationalistic and patriotic education, hostility against certain external enemies, personal cult, and of course, trust in governments and officials.

Though authoritarian governments actively seek to encourage political trust, we need to note that their attention is unevenly distributed – most of the efforts are paid to maintain the image of central government and leaders, instead of the local level governments and members (Strong and Killingsworth 2011). Sometimes, the central governments allow critiques against lower-level governments and officials to alleviate social tension and show a gesture of transparency and tolerance (Weiss 2014). Given the discussions above, we expect that in unfree societies, people generally have higher political trust. We further expect that they would have extremely high trust in central governments, and fairly high trust in local governments. In contrast, in free societies, people's trust in both levels of governments would be low. Hence, we could formulate the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: People in unfree regimes tend to have higher trust in central governments.

Hypothesis 2: People in unfree regimes tend to have higher trust in local governments.

Hypothesis 3: People in unfree regimes tend to have a higher trust gap, mainly because of their high trust in the central government.

As an aggregate-level factor, political freedom could only explain to a certain extent. How does the macro-level difference result in micro-level variation in opinion? To establish the macro-micro link, we turn to the literature on critical citizens and informed citizens. The critical citizen and informed citizen theses both argue educated and informed individuals (with higher degrees, more human capital, more access to information and news) tend to have high expectations of government performance and lower confidence in political authorities. Thus, a group of critical citizens serves as a solid base for a robust democracy. These critical citizens tend to question governments and officials and often refuse to follow the authorities blindly (Milner 2002). Previous work has found a relationship between literacy, education, news consumption, and a critical mindset in public affairs (Eveland, 2004; Zhang, Sun, and Cao 2021).

However, these optimistic findings mainly come from advanced industrial societies, mostly democratic countries where people's civil rights are ensured. In the unfree world where critical thinking is discouraged, the situation may be more complex. For example, education, a variable commonly considered a positive predictor of critical thinking and open-mindedness, could exert divergent effects in different political contexts. Hakhverdian and Mayne (2012) suggest the effects of education on political trust may



be moderated by institutional performance, such as the extent of a government's corruption. Zhang and Brym (2019) find that education is a liberalising force in free societies, but in non-free societies, education generates intolerance and bigotry.

The role of news consumption and political information may be contingent on the macro context as well. Research on authoritarianism has shown regimes energetically attempt to influence public opinion through educational systems (Yan 2014), mass media (Huang 2018), and social media (Gunitsky 2015). There is some evidence that being selectively exposed to positive reports of government performance will enhance people's confidence in political authorities and regime legitimacy (Hart et al. 2009). Therefore, we expect only free societies will show the positive effect of information and education; in unfree societies, confidence in political authorities may be based on the amount of information people acquire. Based on the preceding argumentation, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: People in unfree regimes who read political news more frequently have more trust in central governments.

## Data and methods

### *Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) data*

To test our hypotheses, we used data from the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) project, an international survey in East and Southeast Asia that collects representative data to capture attitudes and opinions. We had access to four waves: 2001–2003, 2005–2008, 2010–2012, and 2014–2016. The ABS data come from repeated cross-sectional surveys and represent a good source to reveal political opinions in many fields.

### *Aggregate-level predictors*

At the aggregate level, we had access to data from 14 societies, both countries and regions: Japan, Hong Kong SAR (China), South Korea, Mainland China, Mongolia, Philippines, Taiwan (ROC), Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Myanmar. Some were surveyed in all four waves (e.g. China, Japan), while some latecomers were surveyed once or twice (e.g. Myanmar in Wave 4). Since not all countries and regions have data for all four waves, there are 48 region-year observations.

We controlled several aggregate-level factors for contextual effects. The first was GDP per capita, a standard measure of socio-economic development and affluence. We used this variable to control for variations in economic development. Another control variable at the macro-level was the Gini coefficient provided by the Standardised World Income Inequality Database (SWIID), an indicator of the wealth inequality among residents within a society. Lastly, we included the Freedom House rating of society as a focal predictor at the contextual level. Freedom House includes ratings for any given society in its database

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics at the aggregate level.

Country/Region by Survey Year	GDP per capita, PPP adjusted (from IMF)	Gini Coefficient (from SWIID)	Societal Freedom Status (from Freedom House)
Cambodia_2008	741.855	39.1	Not Free
Cambodia_2012	945.702	37.9	Not Free
Cambodia_2015	1163.414	37.9	Not Free
Hong_Kong_2001	25,166.9	45.7	Partly Free
Hong_Kong_2007	30,494.55	46.4	Partly Free
Hong_Kong_2012	36,619.81	46.6	Partly Free
Hong_Kong_2016	43,496.3	46.6	Partly Free
Indonesia_2006	1764.79	42.4	Free
Indonesia_2011	3688.531	43.7	Free
Indonesia_2016	3605.721	44.4	Partly Free
Japan_2003	34,831.2	42.5	Free
Japan_2007	35,342.87	42.8	Free
Japan_2011	48,168.8	44.1	Free
Japan_2016	38,804.86	44.1	Free
Korea_2003	14,209.34	32	Free
Korea_2006	20,888.38	33.2	Free
Korea_2011	24,079.79	33.9	Free
Korea_2015	27,105.08	33.6	Free
Mainland_China_2002	1150.227	42.1	Not Free
Mainland_China_2008	3467.03	46.2	Not Free
Mainland_China_2011	5582.887	47.1	Not Free
Mainland_China_2015	8166.756	46.9	Not Free
Malaysia_2007	7378.585	45.2	Partly Free
Malaysia_2011	10,252.59	44.2	Partly Free
Malaysia_2014	11,008.87	43.3	Partly Free
Mongolia_2003	747.092	37.1	Free
Mongolia_2006	1321.611	37.5	Free
Mongolia_2010	2602.373	37.3	Free
Mongolia_2014	4081.015	37.1	Free
Myanmar_2015	1219.478	37.5	Not Free
Philippines_2002	1013.424	47.2	Free
Philippines_2005	1208.934	46.9	Free
Philippines_2010	2155.409	46.6	Partly Free
Philippines_2014	2849.267	46.1	Partly Free
Singapore_2006	33,579.16	44.2	Partly Free
Singapore_2010	46,569.4	44.3	Partly Free
Singapore_2014	57,271.72	43.8	Partly Free
Taiwan_2001	13,408.38	31.7	Free
Taiwan_2006	16,984.54	32.3	Free
Taiwan_2010	19,261.67	32.6	Free
Taiwan_2014	22,638.92	32	Free
Thailand_2002	2133.115	47.5	Free
Thailand_2006	3442.387	46.7	Partly Free
Thailand_2010	5174.529	44.8	Partly Free
Thailand_2014	6079.686	43	Partly Free
Vietnam_2006	796.928	41.2	Not Free
Vietnam_2010	1297.226	41.6	Not Free
Vietnam_2015	2085.714	41.2	Not Free

and categorises them into three levels: free, partly free, and unfree societies. This variable permitted us to see how political freedom could influence individual-level political trust. The aggregate level information is listed in [Table 1](#).

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics at the individual level.

	Overall
<b>Num. of Obs.</b>	72,118
<b>Independent Variables</b>	
Waves (%)	
ABS1	12,217 (16.9)
ABS2	19,798 (27.5)
ABS3	19,436 (27.0)
ABS4	20,667 (28.7)
Societies (%)	
Japan	5446 (7.6)
H.K. SAR	4084 (5.7)
S. Korea	5119 (7.1)
Mainland China	15,822 (21.9)
Mongolia	4793 (6.6)
Philippines	4800 (6.7)
Taiwan	6251 (8.7)
Thailand	5804 (8.0)
Indonesia	4698 (6.5)
Singapore	3051 (4.2)
Vietnam	3591 (5.0)
Cambodia	3400 (4.7)
Malaysia	3639 (5.0)
Myanmar	1620 (2.2)
Male = 1 (%)	35,526 (49.3)
Age in years (mean (SD)) [18–99]	44.72 (15.71)
Marital (%)	
Unmarried	13,413 (18.6)
Married	53,296 (73.9)
Other	5409 (7.5)
Education in years (mean (SD)) [0–20]	9.37 (4.71)
Urban = 1 (%)	40,484 (56.14%)
Frequency of Reading Political News (mean(SD))	3.66 (1.40)
<b>Dependent Variables</b>	
Trust in Central Gov't (mean (SD)) [1 to 4]	2.78 (0.90)
Trust in Local Gov't (mean (SD)) [1 to 4]	2.73 (0.82)
Trust Gap (mean(SD)) [–3 to 3]	0.05 (0.93)

### *Individual-level predictors*

At the individual level, we selected the following variables: gender, age, marital status, years of education, and location of residence (urban-rural divide). Among the predictors, gender (Female = 0, Male = 1) and location of residence (Rural = 0, Urban = 1) were dummy variables. Age and education were continuous variables measured in years. Marital status comprised three categories: single (the reference group), married, and other. The latter two groups were converted into dummy variables.

The focal variable was the frequency of political news consumption. This variable measured how often respondents used any media platforms, such as newspaper, TV, radio, the Internet, or other channels, to acquire political news and relevant information. Other than 'don't know' or 'refuse to answer', respondents could reply with the following valid options: 'never', 'monthly', 'once or twice weekly', 'several times per week', 'daily'. We recoded these responses into a 1–5 continuous scale tapping the respondent's level of interest in politics and how much the media influenced them. This variable allowed us to see the different political orientations of people who read political news often and those who barely care about politics. The descriptive statistics of the individual-level variables are shown in [Table 2](#).

### **Hierarchical linear modelling**

We employed hierarchical linear modelling (HLM) to accommodate both individual (Level 1) and aggregate (Level 2) effects. Individual respondents were nested within country/region-year observations (e.g. Japan-2002, the Philippines-2014). We had a total of 72,118 observations at the individual level and 48 observations at the country-year level.<sup>3</sup>

We fitted the models with random intercepts and fixed effects of predictors at both levels. This mixed-effect modelling design can be formally specified as follows: let  $Y_{ij}$  be the outcome variable for the Level-1 unit  $i$  ( $i = 1, \dots, I$ ), which stands for an individual who lives in a country-year context, or Level-2 unit  $j$  ( $j = 1, \dots, J$ ). Then, the outcome variable  $Y_{ij}$  can be expressed as:

$$Y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \delta X_{ij} + e_{ij} \quad (1)$$

The Level 2 effect is a decomposition of  $\beta_{0j}$ , which can be stated as:

$$\beta_{0j} = \beta_0 + e_j \quad (2)$$

where  $\beta_0$  is the overall control group means, and  $e_j$  is the corresponding residual, assumed to be independent of  $X_{ij}$  and other residuals. As discussed, the individual level predictors included the wave of the survey, age, gender, marital status, location of residence, size of household, income level, years of education, and our focal variable, frequency of political news consumption. At the national level, we introduced logged GDP per capita (with purchase power parity adjusted), Gini coefficient, and the political freedom status of a society.

We built the regression models in the following sequence. First, we predict trust in the central government (Model 1); second, trust in local government (Model 2); and third, the gap between the two as the dependent variable (Model 3). The three models test the first three hypotheses, respectively. Lastly, we fitted a model specifically testing the interaction effects between political freedom and frequency of reading political news on the trust in central governments. With the last model (Model 4), we aim at explaining the extremely high trust in central government in several societies.

### **Findings**

Estimates from the HLM models are displayed in [Table 3](#). From the table, we notice some overall patterns across models. First, different waves of the survey differ little in terms of political trust. In Models 1, 3, and 4, we see the long-term political trust trend is decreasing. This echoes the modernisation theory and critical citizen theory that people will become more critical of authority as the economy grows. However, this does not apply to the local government trust, which remains stable across waves (see [Table 3](#), Model 2). Similarly, urban residents are less supportive of central and local governments. Another common finding across models is that being younger and better-educated means lower levels of trust in political authorities, and this is true at both central and local levels. The fact that younger, educated, urban residents have lower confidence in governments is consistent with previous arguments from the critical citizen thesis (Zhang, Sun, and Cao 2021).

**Table 3.** Multilevel models predicting trust in central and local governments (standard errors in parentheses).

	Model 1 Central Trust	Model 2 Local Trust	Model 3 Trust Gap	Model 4 Central Trust
Intercept	1.003 (0.595)	2.709*** (0.405)	-1.706*** (0.461)	1.089 (0.589)
<i>Individual-level</i>				
Wave of Survey (reference = ABS1)				
ABS2	-0.092 (0.122)	0.014 (0.083)	-0.107 (0.094)	-0.093 (0.120)
ABS3	-0.202 (0.124)	-0.000 (0.085)	-0.202* (0.096)	-0.204 (0.123)
ABS4	-0.287* (0.126)	-0.092 (0.086)	-0.195* (0.098)	-0.286* (0.125)
Male (reference = female)	0.000 (0.005)	-0.031*** (0.006)	0.031*** (0.006)	-0.000 (0.005)
Age in years	9.039*** (0.889)	6.027*** (0.948)	3.037** (1.045)	9.011*** (0.888)
Age square	4.692*** (0.789)	5.574*** (0.842)	-0.878 (0.928)	4.686*** (0.789)
Marital Status (reference = single)				
Married	0.012 (0.008)	0.013 (0.009)	-0.001 (0.010)	0.014 (0.008)
Other	-0.029* (0.013)	-0.011 (0.014)	-0.018 (0.015)	-0.027* (0.013)
Years of Education	-0.010*** (0.001)	-0.012*** (0.001)	0.002* (0.001)	-0.010*** (0.001)
Urban (reference = Rural)	-0.107*** (0.007)	-0.096*** (0.007)	-0.011 (0.008)	-0.107*** (0.007)
Frequency of Reading Political News (1-5)	0.009*** (0.002)	0.005* (0.002)	0.004 (0.002)	-0.008* (0.003)
<i>Aggregate-level</i>				
Logged GDP per capita	0.046 (0.037)	-0.031 (0.025)	0.077** (0.029)	0.047 (0.037)
Gini Coefficient	0.034** (0.011)	0.008 (0.007)	0.026** (0.008)	0.033** (0.010)
Political Freedom Status (Free as reference)				
Not Free	0.893*** (0.117)	0.360*** (0.080)	0.533*** (0.091)	0.778*** (0.117)
Partly Free	0.249* (0.122)	0.246** (0.083)	0.003 (0.095)	0.172 (0.122)
<i>Interaction Effects</i>				
Not Free * Frequency of Reading News				0.033*** (0.005)
Partly Free * Frequency of Reading News				0.022*** (0.005)
AIC	165981.959	175,216.894	189,327.685	165,957.272
BIC	166147.308	175,382.243	189,493.034	166,140.994
Log Likelihood	-82,972.979	-87,590.447	-94,645.842	-82,958.636
Num. obs.	72,118	72,118	72,118	72,118
Num. groups: CY	48	48	48	48
Var: CY (Intercept)	0.070	0.032	0.042	0.069
Var: Residual	0.521	0.593	0.721	0.521

\*\*\*p &lt; 0.001, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*p &lt; 0.05.

Model 1 focuses on trust in central governments. Ageing leads to higher trust; being educated and living in an urban area means less trust. Surprisingly, reading more political news does not lead to critical citizens, as previously argued (Ekström and Östman 2015). Instead, the more political information people obtain, the more confidence they have in the central government (.009,  $p < .001$ ). However, as we go on to show, this mainly applies

to people in unfree societies. At the macro level, GDP per capita does not show a significant effect, but inequality, measured by the Gini coefficient, is associated with more confidence in central governments. This challenges previous findings that inequality hurts political trust but supports work arguing that in certain contexts, rising inequality triggers populism and authoritarianism; those in the lower classes may more zealously support the regime and call for radical redistributive policies (Jay et al. 2019; Zhang, Brym, and Andersen 2017). At the aggregate level, political freedom has an interesting pattern: both unfree (.893,  $p < .001$ ) and partly free societies (.249,  $p < .001$ ) show higher political trust in central governments than free societies.

Model 2 predicts the trust in local governments. This model's findings are quite different from those of Model 1. The waves show no difference across time; the effects of reading political news, inequality, and political freedom all decrease or are insignificant. This shows trust in local governments is less affected by the factors found to affect trust in central governments in Model 1. Hypothesis 2 is supported: people from unfree and partly free societies show higher trust in local governments (by .360,  $p < .001$  and .246,  $p < .002$ ) than those in free societies (the reference group). However, these effect sizes are much smaller than in Model 1, suggesting political trust mainly relates to central governments.

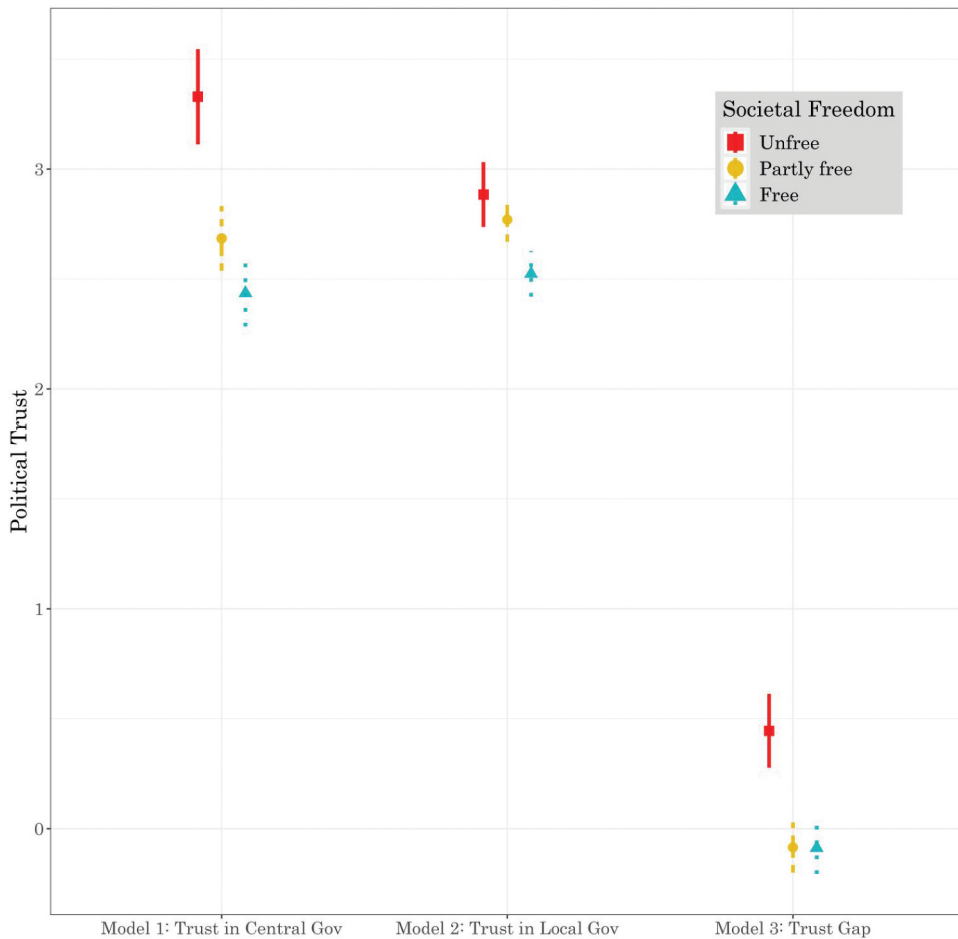
Model 3 predicts the political trust gap. The estimates for Model 3 are simply the difference between Models 1 and 2. The estimates and corresponding significance levels yield several findings worth highlighting. First, GDP per capita and Gini coefficient both contribute to a greater trust gap (via a strong preference for the central government). Second, unfree societies tend to have a greater trust gap than free societies (.533 ( $p < .001$ )), while partly free societies do not differ significantly from free societies.

The main findings from Models 1, 2, and 3 are plotted in [Figure 2](#). The x-axis shows the three models, and the y-axis shows the political trust levels. The points indicate the fitted values of political trust predicted by political freedom status, and the ranges represent the confidence intervals. The unfree societies (represented by red points and ranges) tend to have high trust in central governments and a high trust gap; free societies (represented by blue points and ranges) tend to have low trust in central governments and a low trust gap. The partly free societies fall between the other two groups.

Model 4 tests Hypothesis 4. This model introduces the interaction between political freedom and individual consumption of political news. The model shows a positive interaction effect in both unfree and partly free societies. In other words, in unfree and partly free societies, reading political news leads to greater trust in central governments. However, this interaction does not apply to trust in local governments. This finding is visualised in [Figure 3](#) in a more intuitive way. As the figure indicates, in unfree societies, increased consumption of political news is associated with a higher level of political trust; the opposite is true in free societies. In other words, we observe a diverging effect of reading political news in different social contexts.

## Conclusion and discussion

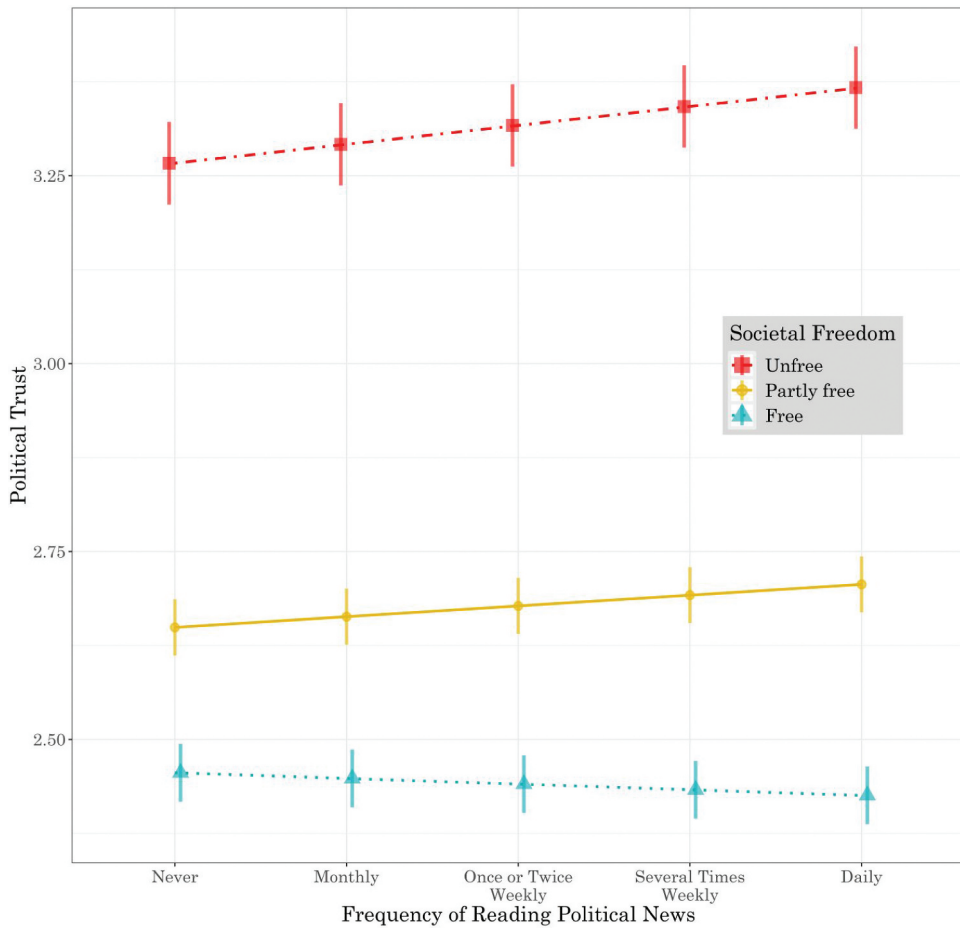
Following the literature on political trust, we focused on Asian societies' political trust patterns and sought to explain the variations between countries. Drawing on Lianjiang Li's typology, we classified Asian societies into three categories according to their trust



**Figure 2.** Societal freedom's effects on trust in central/local governments and trust gap (note: fitted values from Models 1, 2 & 3; all variables except political freedom are set to typical values – mean values for quantitative variables and proportions for categorical variables).

patterns: hierarchical trust, paradoxical trust, and equal trust. Based on the typology and the observation of the aggregate-level political trust, we hypothesised political freedom might be the key to answering why trust patterns diverge in Asia.

Our analysis found evidence supporting the following hypotheses. First, political freedom is an important predictor of political trust patterns. People from politically unfree societies tend to have strong confidence in central governments and fairly high trust in local governments. In contrast, people from free societies tend to have low confidence in central governments. This difference means most unfree societies in Asia fall into the hierarchical trust group while free societies fall into the paradoxical trust group. Second, political freedom mainly affects differences in trust of central governments. As Figure 2 suggests, the differences in local government trust are less salient. We contend this could be attributed to the state propaganda effect. Authoritarian regimes tend to use propaganda to affect public perception of governments. However, their efforts are mainly to maintain the positive image of the central government; they care less about local



**Figure 3.** Interaction effects of reading political news and political freedom in predicting trust in central governments (note: fitted values from Model 4; all variables except political freedom and frequency of reading political news are set to typical values – mean values for quantitative variables and proportions for categorical variables).

governments. Following this rationale, we speculated people who acquire political news more often will be more influenced by the regime. Our corresponding model, Model 4, provides supporting evidence for this speculation. We find that in unfree societies, the more often people read political news, the more supportive they are of central governments. Meanwhile, in free societies, the more often people read political news, the less supportive they are of central governments.

Our findings have important implications for public opinion research and democratisation studies. They help to explain the puzzle of hierarchical trust. Most modern societies are relatively critical of their governments, making places where people have high trust in the central government stand out. Specifically, in Asian societies like China, Singapore, and Vietnam, many people have high confidence in central leadership and low confidence in local officials. Cultural explanations are unsatisfying, as Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Japan do not share similar trust patterns despite their common cultural heritage. Our study



adds to the field by pointing out the importance of regime types and political freedom; authoritarian regimes maintain a high level of political trust, arguably through the impact of the media.

Furthermore, our findings enrich the informed citizen thesis (Milner 2002). Although previous work argues education and information can lead to the development of critical citizens (Quinn 2003; Zhang, Sun, and Cao 2021), we suggest the context matters and should not be ignored. Our evidence shows consumption of political information alone cannot lead to a critical mindset. A free political environment is a prerequisite for awareness and a critical mindset. Finally, the findings shed light on 'authoritarian resilience' (Nathan 2003; Fewsmith and Nathan 2019) in the context of modern Asia. Many argue authoritarian regimes use propaganda or media to boost their public support, but our study provides a measurement of how much influence these regimes have on their citizens. We find that in a non-free environment, the more people read political news, the more supportive they are of their leadership. The state and its agenda deeply influence the media; arguably, then, when authoritarian regimes intentionally discourage critical citizens, their value preferences will be reflected in their citizens. If we are correct, this has important implications for the literature on authoritarian resilience and democratisation.

Our data reveal potential mechanisms leading to hierarchical trust, but we cannot formulate a causal explanation. Nevertheless, we have some suggestions, and we hope future researchers will follow up on them. One suggestion is that the media in different political contexts work differently. In democratic environments, they can report negative news of the governments. They tend to focus on higher government levels, as their issues are usually more critical and eye-catching. In authoritarian environments, reports on senior officials are strictly controlled, and only scandals from the lower-level offices appear in the media. In the long run, because of the nature of the reporting, people from democratic societies will have more negative attitudes about governments, especially central ones; people from authoritarian societies will show the opposite pattern. Another explanation points to the paternalistic cultural tradition in Asian societies, where the central government is considered the father of a big family. Such an image may prevent people from criticising central governments, but it may not apply to lower-level offices, especially at the grassroots level.

Admittedly, our work has limitations, and we hope our future work or that of other researchers will resolve them. First, as the ABS data are longitudinal and cross-sectional, it is hard to make causal arguments based on our regression analysis. For that, we need panel data. Second, given the nature of the survey items, our measurement of political information consumption is relatively simple and may preclude an understanding of the complexity of political news and mass communication. For example, people who consume information on different media sources may already have different political orientations. We may better understand media influence if we have information on the frequency, the sources, and types of media usage (e.g. online/offline).

We need to note that the results need to be interpreted with caution, as social desirability bias and political pressure. It could be a factor in yielding high political trust in central government, especially in authoritarian societies. However, even if originating from the social pressures, the observed patterns still reveal something about the society – that is, the lack of political freedom is associated with high political trust. Moreover, as countries and regions in Asia are of different sizes, people's interpretation and perception of 'central' and 'local' offices could vary across contexts. For example, in city-sized societies such as Singapore and

Hong Kong, the distance between central and local offices is much smaller than in China and Japan.<sup>4</sup> The implications for those societies, therefore, should be interpreted carefully. Finally, the ABS data only covers 2001 to 2016. It would be useful to expand the scope to a more extended historical period and see more dynamics in the value changes, such as the impacts of the third wave of democratisation during 1980–1990 in Asia. We invite other researchers to work together with us and complete the picture.

## Notes

1. In ABS data, the number of the question on trust in central government is q008 (for Wave 1 and 2) and q9 (for Wave 3 and 4); the number of the question on trust in local government is q014 (for Wave 1 and 2) and q15 (for Wave 3 and 4).
2. We set the thresholds at different levels, and the regression analyses showed similar findings. Our presentation here maximises the in-group similarities and between-group variations; the cases within each group show the most consistency.
3. Since not all 14 societies were surveyed in all four waves, instead of 56 country-year observations, there are 48.
4. We appreciate one anonymous reviewer for raising this concern.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## Funding

This work was supported by the start-up research grant provided by Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Macau [Grant Number: SRG2019-00171-FSS].

## Notes on contributors

**Anli Jiang** (PhD, University of Macau) is a Assistant Professor at Centre for Governance Studies, Beijing Normal University-Zhuhai. Her research focuses on political sociology, public opinion, public administration and social control in China.

**Tony Huiquan Zhang** (PhD, University of Toronto) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Macau. His research interest includes public opinion, political culture, social movements, and politics in East Asia.

## References

- Aberbach, J. D., and J. L. Walker. 1970. "Political Trust and Racial Ideology." *American Political Science Review* 64 (4): 1199–1219. doi:10.2307/1958366.
- Abramson, P. R. 1972. "Political Efficacy and Political Trust among Black Schoolchildren: Two Explanations." *The Journal of Politics* 34 (4): 1243–1275. doi:10.2307/2128934.
- Andrain, C. F., and J. T. Smith. 2006. *Political Democracy, Trust, and Social Justice: A Comparative Overview*. London: UPNE.
- Chen, X., and T. Shi. 2001. "Media Effects on Political Confidence and Trust in the People's Republic of China in the post-Tiananmen Period." *East Asia* 19 (3): 84–118. doi:10.1007/s12140-001-0011-3.
- Diamond, L. 1999. *Developing Democracy: Toward Consolidation*. London: JHU Press.

- Ekström, M., and J. Östman. 2015. "Information, Interaction, and Creative Production: The Effects of Three Forms of Internet Use on Youth Democratic Engagement." *Communication Research* 42 (6): 796–818. doi:10.1177/0093650213476295.
- Eveland, W. P., J. R. 2004. "The Effect of Political Discussion in Producing Informed Citizens: The Roles of Information, Motivation, and Elaboration." *Political Communication* 21 (2): 177–193. doi:10.1080/10584600490443877.
- Fewsmith, J., and A. J. Nathan. 2019. "Authoritarian Resilience Revisited: Joseph Fewsmith with Response from Andrew J. Nathan." *Journal of Contemporary China* 28 (116): 167–179. doi:10.1080/10670564.2018.1511390.
- Foa, R. S., and G. Ekiert. 2017. "The Weakness of Postcommunist Civil Society Reassessed." *European Journal of Political Research* 56 (2): 419–439. doi:10.1111/1475-6765.12182.
- Fukuyama, F. 1995. *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*. New York: Free press.
- Grimes, M. 2006. "Organizing Consent: The Role of Procedural Fairness in Political Trust and Compliance." *European Journal of Political Research* 45 (2): 285–315. doi:10.1111/j.1475-6765.2006.00299.x.
- Gunitsky, S. 2015. "Corrupting the Cyber-commons: Social Media as a Tool of Autocratic Stability." *Perspectives on Politics* 13 (1): 42–54. doi:10.1017/S1537592714003120.
- Hakhverdian, A., and Q. Mayne. 2012. "Institutional Trust, Education, and Corruption: A Micro-macro Interactive Approach." *The Journal of Politics* 74 (3): 739–750. doi:10.1017/S0022381612000412.
- Hart, W., D. Albarracín, A. H. Eagly, I. Brechan, M. J. Lindberg, and L. Merrill. 2009. "Feeling Validated versus Being Correct: A Meta-analysis of Selective Exposure to Information." *Psychological Bulletin* 135 (4): 555. doi:10.1037/a0015701.
- Hetherington, M. J., and J. A. Husser. 2012. "How Trust Matters: The Changing Political Relevance of Political Trust." *American Journal of Political Science* 56 (2): 312–325. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5907.2011.00548.x.
- Hetherington, M. J., and T. J. Rudolph. 2008. "Priming, Performance, and the Dynamics of Political Trust." *The Journal of Politics* 70 (2): 498–512. doi:10.1017/S0022381608080468.
- Hooghe, M., and S. Marien. 2013. "A Comparative Analysis of the Relation between Political Trust and Forms of Political Participation in Europe." *European Societies* 15 (1): 131–152. doi:10.1080/14616696.2012.692807.
- Huang, H. 2018. "The Pathology of Hard Propaganda." *The Journal of Politics* 80 (3): 1034–1038. doi:10.1086/696863.
- Inglehart, R. 2018. *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Inoguchi, T. 2005. *Values and Life Styles in Urban Asia: A Cross-cultural Analysis and Sourcebook Based on the Asia Barometer Survey of 2003*. Tokyo: Oriental Culture and Akashi Shoten Publisher.
- Inoguchi, T. 2017. "Confidence in Institutions." In *Trust with Asian Characteristics*, edited by T. Inoguchi, 143–168. Singapore: Springer.
- Jay, S., A. Batruch, J. Jetten, C. McGarty, and O. T. Muldoon. 2019. "Economic Inequality and the Rise of Far-right Populism: A Social Psychological Analysis." *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology* 29 (5): 418–428. doi:10.1002/casp.2409.
- Kikuchi, M. 2008. "Assessing Government Efforts to (Re) Build Trust in Government: Challenges and Lessons Learned from Japanese Experiences." *Research in Public Policy Analysis and Management* 17: 201–225.
- Kim, S. 2010. "Public Trust in Government in Japan and South Korea: Does the Rise of Critical Citizens Matter?" *Public Administration Review* 70 (5): 801–810. doi:10.1111/j.1540-6210.2010.02207.x.
- Levi, M., and L. Stoker. 2000. "Political Trust and Trustworthiness." *Annual Review of Political Science* 3 (1): 475–507. doi:10.1146/annurev.polisci.3.1.475.
- Li, L. 2004. "Political Trust in Rural China." *Modern China* 30 (2): 228–258. doi:10.1177/0097700403261824.
- Li, L. 2016. "Reassessing Trust in the Central Government: Evidence from Five National Surveys." *The China Quarterly* 225: 100–121. doi:10.1017/S0305741015001629.
- Ma, D., and F. Yang. 2014. "Authoritarian Orientations and Political Trust in East Asian Societies." *East Asia* 31 (4): 323–341. doi:10.1007/s12140-014-9217-z.

- Milner, H. 2002. *Civic Literacy: How Informed Citizens Make Democracy Work*. London: UPNE.
- Mishler, W., and R. Richard. 2001. "What are the Origins of Political Trust? Testing Institutional and Cultural Theories in Post-communist Societies." *Comparative Political Studies* 34 (1): 30–62. doi:10.1177/0010414001034001002.
- Mishler, W., and R. Richard. 2005. "What are the Political Consequences of Trust? A Test of Cultural and Institutional Theories in Russia." *Comparative Political Studies* 38 (9): 1050–1078. doi:10.1177/0010414005278419.
- Morris, S. D., and J. L. Klesner. 2010. "Corruption and Trust: Theoretical Considerations and Evidence from Mexico." *Comparative Political Studies* 43 (10): 1258–1285. doi:10.1177/0010414010369072.
- Muller, E. N., and M. A. Seligson. 1994. "Civic Culture and Democracy: The Question of Causal Relationships." *American Political Science Review* 88 (3): 635–652. doi:10.2307/2944800.
- Nathan, A. J. 2003. "Authoritarian Resilience." *Journal of Democracy* 14 (1): 6–17. doi:10.1353/jod.2003.0019.
- Newton, K., and P. Norris. 1999. "Confidence in Public Institutions: Faith, Culture or Performance?" In *Disaffected Democracies: What's Troubling the Trilateral Countries*, edited by S. Pharr and R. Putnam, 52–73. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Newton, K. 2001. "Trust, Social Capital, Civil Society, and Democracy." *International Political Science Review* 22 (2): 201–214. doi:10.1177/0192512101222004.
- Norris, P. 1999. *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Orren, G. 1997. "Fall from Grace: The Public's Loss of Faith in Government." In *Why People Don't Trust Government*, edited by S. Joseph, J. Nye, P.D. Zelikow, and D.C. King, 77–107. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Pharr, S. J., and R. D. Putnam. 2000. *Disaffected Democracies: What's Troubling the Trilateral Countries?* Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Pharr, S. J., R. D. Putnam, and R. J. Dalton. 2000. "Trouble in the Advanced Democracies? A Quarter-century of Declining Confidence." *Journal of Democracy* 11 (2): 5–25. doi:10.1353/jod.2000.0043.
- Putnam, R. 1993. *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Putnam, R. 2000. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Quinn, A. C. 2003. "Keeping the Citizenry Informed: Early Congressional Printing and 21st Century Information Policy." *Government Information Quarterly* 20 (3): 281–293. doi:10.1016/S0740-624X(03)00055-8.
- Shi, T. 2001. "Cultural Values and Political Trust: A Comparison of the People's Republic of China and Taiwan." *Comparative Politics* 33: 401–419. doi:10.2307/422441.
- Strong, C., and M. Killingsworth. 2011. "Stalin the Charismatic Leader?: Explaining the 'Cult of Personality' as a Legitimation Technique." *Politics, Religion & Ideology* 12 (4): 391–411. doi:10.1080/21567689.2011.624410.
- Tan, S. J., and S. K. Tambyah. 2011. "Generalized Trust and Trust in Institutions in Confucian Asia." *Social Indicators Research* 103 (3): 357–377. doi:10.1007/s11205-010-9703-7.
- Tocqueville, A. D. 1856. *The Old Regime and the French Revolution*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Uslaner, E. M. 2005. *Trust and Corruption*. New York: Routledge.
- Wang, C. H. 2016. "Government Performance, Corruption, and Political Trust in East Asia." *Social Science Quarterly* 97 (2): 211–231. doi:10.1111/ssqu.12223.
- Wang, Z., and E-S. Tan. 2006. "Self-expression, Asian Values, and Democracy: East Asia in Global Perspective." In *Citizens, Democracy, and Markets around the Pacific Rim: Congruence Theory and Political Culture*, edited by R. J. Dalton and D. C. Shin, 50–72. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Weiss, J. C. 2014. *Powerful Patriots: Nationalist Protest in China's Foreign Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Yan, X. 2014. "Engineering Stability: Authoritarian Political Control over University Students in post-Deng China." *The China Quarterly* 218: 493–513. doi:10.1017/S0305741014000332.

- Zhang, T. H. 2020. "Political Freedom, Education, and Value Liberalization and Deliberalization: A Cross-national Analysis of the World Values Survey, 1981-2014." *The Social Science Journal* 1–18. doi:[10.1080/03623319.2020.1727221](https://doi.org/10.1080/03623319.2020.1727221).
- Zhang, T. H., J. Sun, and L. Cao. 2021. "Education, Internet Use, and Confidence in the Police: Testing the 'Informed Citizen' Thesis in the Philippines." *Asian Journal of Criminology* 16 (2): 165–182.
- Zhang, T. H., and R. Brym. 2019. "Tolerance of Homosexuality in 88 Countries: Education, Political Freedom, and Liberalism." *Sociological Forum* 34 (2): 501–521. doi:[10.1111/socf.12507](https://doi.org/10.1111/socf.12507).
- Zhang, T. H., R. Brym, and R. Andersen. 2017. "Liberalism and Postmaterialism in China: The Role of Social Class and Inequality." *Chinese Sociological Review* 49 (1): 65–87. doi:[10.1080/21620555.2016.1227239](https://doi.org/10.1080/21620555.2016.1227239).