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# Social Trust in Contemporary Rural China: Its Sources and Impacts on Public Goods Provision

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SOCIAL TRUST IN CONTEMPORARY RURAL CHINA:  
ITS SOURCES AND IMPACTS ON PUBLIC GOODS PROVISION

by

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## ABSTRACT

### SOCIAL TRUST IN CONTEMPORARY RURAL CHINA: ITS SOURCES AND IMPACTS ON PUBLIC GOODS PROVISION

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Social trust, as an essential element of political culture, is assumed to strongly affect the effectiveness of political institution. However, such studies in non-democratic settings are scarce, and even scarcer in the Chinese context. This dissertation, using data drawn from an original survey in rural China, examines the extent, sociopolitical origins, and political consequences of social trust in China. The results suggest that China has a unique pattern of social trust owing to its dual Confucian and Communist heritages. While trusts in relatives, neighbors, kinsman, and other villagers (i.e., particularized trust) are extensive, trust in strangers (generalized trust) is scarce. Using multilevel level analysis, this dissertation finds that both personal traits and village attributes help to explain the distributions of social trust in rural China. Finally, contrary to the common beliefs, this dissertation finds that variations in public goods provision in rural China can be best explained by particularized trust, but not generalized trust.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Social trust (or interpersonal trust), as individuals' basic mutual faith, is one of the fundamental essential elements—perhaps *the* fundamental essential element—of human society. Not only required in basic social interactions and daily economic transactions, social trust is also widely considered to be indispensable for effective governance at various levels. Given its crucial importance in various aspects of our life, social trust has been occupying a key position in modern political studies ever since Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's seminal work *The Civic Culture*.<sup>1</sup> In recent years, especially after the publication of Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work*,<sup>2</sup> the study of social trust has regained its momentum, attracting intense interest from not only political scientists, but also economists and sociologists.

However, a cursory survey will reveal the regrettable fact that, notwithstanding the massive and ever-increasing bulk of the literature, political scientists know very little about social trust in non-democratic countries.<sup>3</sup> Most contemporary studies of social trust, including both theoretical and empirical, focus mainly on how social trust emerges and operates in democratic societies; research of social trust in non-democracies appear

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<sup>1</sup> Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963). However, if we consider the writings of political philosophers, the studies of social trust can be even traced back to Hobbes' *Leviathan*, in which mutual distrust is depicted as a defining characteristic of the state of nature.

<sup>2</sup> See, Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> Amaney Jamal, "When Is Social Trust a Desirable Outcome?: Examining Levels of Trust in the Arab World," *Comparative Political Studies* 40, no. 11 (2007); Amaney Jamal and Irfan Nooruddin, "The Democratic Utility of Trust: A Cross-National Analysis," *The Journal of Politics* 72, no. 1 (2010).

to be the “residuals” of the studies of social trust in democracy, remaining gravely underdeveloped.

This neglect in both theoretical inquiries and empirical investigations leaves a series of important questions unanswered: Are the levels of social trust generally lower in non-democracies as commonly assumed? What are the most important forms of social trust in non-democracies? In non-democratic settings, what are the major determinants of social trust? Can social trust also make governments in non-democracies, which tend to be weak and ineffective, more responsive to citizens’ needs? More specifically, in non-democratic settings can social trust bring about desirable sociopolitical outcomes such as public goods provision when the governments have failed to do so? The answers to these questions are of critical importance not only for our understanding of the nature of social trust, but also for our assessment of the state-society relationship in non-democratic regimes.

Unfortunately, studies of social trust in non-democratic settings are regrettably scarce, and even scarcer where survey-based studies are concerned.<sup>4</sup> In order to fill this gap, this study empirically explores the extent, determinants, and consequences of social trust in nondemocratic settings. Specifically, this research, drawing upon data collected in a nation-wide representative survey conducted in rural China, attempts to clarify the forms and magnitudes of social trust, and to explore its origins and impacts on rural public goods provision in the Chinese context.

In this chapter, after a brief review of the existing literature, I will present my theoretical approach and working hypotheses, explain why China is a critical case, and

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<sup>4</sup> For examples of the few exceptions, see, Wenfang Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005).

then describe the empirical data employed in this study. Finally, an overview of the organization of this study will be presented.

## STUDY OF SOCIAL TRUST IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Ever since students of political science diverted their attention from the long-dominating formal-legalism to political behavior from the late 1950s,<sup>5</sup> such subjective attitudes as social trust have increasingly attracted attentions of political scientists.<sup>6</sup> The question of how social trust shapes various political activities, or using Rosenberg's words, "the *principles, practices, and policies* of a political system," has become one of the most important topics in the study of politics.<sup>7</sup> As Lucian Pye once noted, social trust is not only "of overriding importance" in structuring political behaviors, but is also one of the most important themes threading through comparative political studies.<sup>8</sup>

However, since the late 1950s the development of research on social trust is highly skewed towards the ways in which social trust and democracy reinforce each other, leaving non-democracies as a residual category. Such a biased research agenda not only constrains the theory-building of social trust in political science, but also significantly undermines our ability to understand the dynamic roles played by social trust in non-

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<sup>5</sup> See, Mark Irving Lichbach and Alan S. Zuckerman, eds., *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*.

<sup>6</sup> The earlier studies of social trust largely treat it as an integrative component of political culture. See, Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*; Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, eds., *Political Culture and Political Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965); Lucian W. Pye, "Political Culture Revisited," *Political Psychology* 12, no. 3 (1991).

<sup>6</sup> Morris Rosenberg, "Misanthropy and Political Ideology," *American Sociological Review* 21, no. 6 (1956), 690.

<sup>8</sup> Pye identifies four themes in cross-cultural comparisons: trust-distrust, hierarchy-equality, liberty-coercion, and loyalty-commitment. According to him, the interplay of these four sets of values can profoundly affect political development. See, Lucian W. Pye, "Introduction: Political Culture and Political Development," in *Political Culture and Political Development*, ed. Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 8, 21-3.

democracies. Before I present my approach to social trust, I will briefly describe the dominant *democratic theory of social trust* in political science and discuss its limitations in accounting for the roles of social trust in non-democratic settings.

### A. *Democratic Theory of Social Trust*

The democratic theory of social trust discussed here is by no means a single monolithic theory. Instead, it refers to a group of theories focusing the mutually reinforcing relationship between social trust and democracy. Specifically, although there is no general theory of trust in political science,<sup>9</sup> “the existing literature,” as Barbara Misztal noted, “is united in its vision of the preferable democratic order as one rooted in trust relations and as capable of ensuring trust among citizens.”<sup>10</sup> In other words, most political scientists tend to agree that social trust (or, at least, certain types of trust) is *consistently* and *intrinsically* pro-democratic.

There are three pillars of the democratic theory of social trust: (1) civic participation, (2) consensual politics, and (3) political trust. As first formulated by Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, social trust, in facilitating civic participation, is of essential importance to democracy.<sup>11</sup> Specifically, upon comparing the various mass attitudes across five nations, Almond and Verba have demonstrated that the preferable

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<sup>9</sup> See, Jan Delhey and Kenneth Newton, “Who Trusts? The Origins of Social Trust in Seven Societies,” *European Societies* 5, no. 2 (2003); Idem, “Predicting Cross-National Levels of Social Trust: Global Pattern or Nordic Exceptionalism?,” *European Sociological Review* 21, no. 4 (2005); Peter Nannestad, “What Have We Learned About Generalized Trust, If Anything?,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 11, no. (2008); Michael Woolcock, “The Rise and Routinization of Social Capital, 1988-2008,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 13, no. (2010).

<sup>10</sup> Barbara A. Misztal, “Trust and Cooperation: The Democratic Public Sphere,” *Journal of Sociology* 37, no. 4 (2001), 372; Idem, *Trust in Modern Societies: The Search for the Bases of Social Order* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1996); Mark E. Warren, “Democratic Theory and Trust,” in *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark E. Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*.

democratic order only exists in societies with a large reservoir of social trust.<sup>12</sup> Their key argument, therefore, can be stated as: “no trust, no secondary associations, no genuine political participation, and no democracy.”<sup>13</sup> Since their seminal work, social trust has been accepted by most students as an indispensable psychological underpinning of democracy.<sup>14</sup> In recent years, conceptualized as one of the most important components of social capital,<sup>15</sup> social trust has been an object of a new surge of studies, particularly with respect to its role in fostering voluntary participation and strengthening the performance of democratic institutions.<sup>16</sup>

Second, social trust appears to strengthen democracy by inducing consensual politics. Robert Dahl, in his *Polyarchy*, argues that “mutual trust favors polyarchy and

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Mitchell A. Seligson, “The Renaissance of Political Culture or the Renaissance of the Ecological Fallacy?,” *Comparative Politics* 34, no. 3 (2002), 273.

<sup>14</sup> John L. Sullivan and John E. Transue, “The Psychological Underpinnings of Democracy: A Selective Review of Research on Political Tolerance, Interpersonal Trust, and Social Capital,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 50, no. 1 (1999); Also see, Ronald Inglehart and Wayne E. Baker, “Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values,” *American Sociological Review* 65, no. 1 (2000); Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, “Changing Mass Priorities: The Link between Modernization and Democracy,” *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 2 (2010); Christian Welzel and Ronald Inglehart, “The Role of Ordinary People in Democratization,” *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 1 (2008); Christian Welzel, Ronald Inglehart, and Franziska Deutsch, “Social Capital, Voluntary Associations and Collective Action: Which Aspects of Social Capital Have the Greatest ‘Civic’ Payoff?,” *Journal of Civil Society* 1, no. 2 (2005).

<sup>15</sup> Considering the role of social trust in social capital thesis, Todd Kunioka and Gary Woller argue that “[i]f one needed to define social capital in a single word, that word would probably be ‘trust,’” see, Todd Kunioka and Gary M. Woller, “In (a) Democracy We Trust: Social and Economic Determinants of Support for Democratic Procedures in Central and Eastern Europe,” *Journal of Socio-Economics* 28, no. 5 (1999), 579. Also see, Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1995); Peter Nannestad, “What Have We Learned About Generalized Trust, If Anything?”; Eric M. Uslaner, “Democracy and Social Capital,” in *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark E. Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Idem, *The Moral Foundations of Trust* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Michael R. Welch et al., “Determinants and Consequences of Social Trust,” *Sociological Inquiry* 75, no. 4 (2005).

<sup>16</sup> For some good review articles on this topic, see Margaret Levi and Laura Stoker, “Political Trust and Trustworthiness,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 3, no. 1 (2000); Marc Hooghe, “Social Capital and Diversity: Generalized Trust, Social Cohesion and Regimes of Diversity,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 40, no. 03 (2007), 714.

public contestation while extreme distrust favors hegemony.”<sup>17</sup> Dahl’s arguments rest on his belief that the prevalence of faith in fellow citizens will not only reduce potential political conflicts across subcultural groups, but also prevent political disputes from becoming a source of severe enmity.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Ronald Inglehart also suggests that social trust warrants creditability to the notion of a “loyal opposition.”<sup>19</sup> More recently, this argument has undergirded the burgeoning and heated discussion on the relationship between social trust and increased social diversity in democratic countries.<sup>20</sup>

Third, social trust serves as an important source of political trust (or *political support*, as preferred by some political scientists),<sup>21</sup> which in turn is vital to the stability

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<sup>17</sup> Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971), 151. For a thorough discussion on the relationship between trust and public consensus, see Geraint Parry, “Trust, Distrust and Consensus,” *British Journal of Political Science* 6, no. 2 (1976).

<sup>18</sup> Dahl, *Polyarchy*.

<sup>19</sup> Ronald Inglehart, “The Renaissance of Political Culture,” *The American Political Science Review* 82, no. (1988), 1203-4; Also see, idem, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990); Idem, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Idem, “Trust, Wellbeing and Democracy,” in *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark E. Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, “The Mindsets of Political Compromise,” *Perspectives on Politics* 8, no. 4 (2010).

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Marc Hooghe, “Social Capital and Diversity”; Marcus Alexander, “Determinants of Social Capital: New Evidence on Religion, Diversity and Structural Change,” *British Journal of Political Science* 37, no. 2 (2007); Christopher J. Anderson and Aida Paskeviciute, “How Ethnic and Linguistic Heterogeneity Influence the Prospects for Civil Society: A Comparative Study of Citizenship Behavior,” *The Journal of Politics* 68, no. 4 (2006); Hilde Coffe and Benny Geys, “Community Heterogeneity: A Burden for the Creation of Social Capital?,” *Social Science Quarterly* 87, no. 5 (2006); Dora L. Costa and Matthew E. Kahn, “Civic Engagement and Community Heterogeneity: An Economist’s Perspective,” *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 01 (2003); Edward Fieldhouse and David Cutts, “Does Diversity Damage Social Capital? A Comparative Study of Neighbourhood Diversity and Social Capital in the Us and Britain,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 43, no. 02 (2010); Marc Hooghe et al., “Ethnic Diversity and Generalized Trust in Europe: A Cross-National Multilevel Study,” *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 2 (2009); Christel Kesler and Irene Bloemraad, “Does Immigration Erode Social Capital? The Conditional Effects of Immigration-Generated Diversity on Trust, Membership, and Participation across 19 Countries, 1981-2000,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 43, no. 02 (2010); Robert D. Putnam, “*E Pluribus Unum*: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-First Century,” *Scandinavian Political Studies* 30, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>21</sup> Arthur H. Miller, “Political Issues and Trust in Government: 1964-1970,” *The American Political Science Review* 68, no. 3 (1974); Paul R. Abramson and Ada W. Finifter, “On the Meaning of Political Trust: New Evidence from Items Introduced in 1978,” *American Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 2 (1981); Marc J. Hetherington, “The Political Relevance of Political Trust,” *The American Political Science Review* 92, no. 4 (1998); Idem, *Why Trust Matters: Declining Political Trust and the Demise of American Liberalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

and viability of democratic regimes. According to Lucian Pye, political trust, understood as ordinary citizens' basic faith in public officials, is an epiphenomenon of social trust.<sup>22</sup> In other words, political trust is embedded in a more pervasive trust in society at large.<sup>23</sup> Without basic social trust among citizens, it is difficult, if not impossible, to cultivate political trust. As revealed in studies of newly democratized countries, particularly countries of the post-Soviet bloc, a lack of basic social trust appears to be the major hindrance to the installation and consolidation of effective democratic institutions.<sup>24</sup>

From different angles, these three lines of argument testify to the critical roles of social trust in installing, maintaining, and perfecting democracy. In other words, social trust and democracy seems to occur in tandem. Hence, it is not surprising that Inglehart and Christian Welzel conclude that social trust—not, as is commonly believed, democratic values—seems to be the best indicator of healthy and stable democracy.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Pye, "Introduction."

<sup>23</sup> Pye, "Introduction." Also see, for example, Pippa Norris, ed. *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999); Max Kaase, "Interpersonal Trust, Political Trust and Non-Institutionalised Political Participation in Western Europe," *West European Politics* 22, no. 3 (1999); William Mishler and Richard Rose, "What Are the Origins of Political Trust?: Testing Institutional and Cultural Theories in Post-Communist Societies," *Comparative Political Studies* 34, no. 1 (2001).

<sup>24</sup> Martin Aberg and Mikael Sandberg, *Social Capital and Democratization: Roots of Trust in Post-Communist Poland and Ukraine* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003); Jan Fidrmuc and Klarita Gerxhani, "Mind the Gap! Social Capital, East and West," *Journal of Comparative Economics* 36, no. 2 (2008); Natalia Letki, "Socialization for Participation? Trust, Membership, and Democratization in East-Central Europe," *Political Research Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (2004); Natalia Letki and Geoffrey Evans, "Endogenizing Social Trust: Democratization in East-Central Europe," *British Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 3 (2005); Christopher Marsh, "Social Capital and Democracy in Russia," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 33, no. 2 (2000); Richard Rose, "Postcommunism and the Problem of Trust," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 3 (1994); Piotr Sztompka, "Trust and Emerging Democracy: Lessons from Poland," *International Sociology* 11, no. 1 (1996); Idem, "Trust, Distrust and Two Paradoxes of Democracy," *European Journal of Social Theory* 1, no. 1 (1998).

<sup>25</sup> Ronald Inglehart, "How Solid Is Mass Support for Democracy: And How Can We Measure It?," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 36, no. 1 (2003); Inglehart and Welzel, "Changing Mass Priorities."



### *B The Poverty of Democratic Theory of Social Trust*

What does the democratic theory of trust tell us about social trust in non-democracies? This question, as elaborated in the following part of this section, has not been adequately answered. For a long time most political scientists, guided by the democratic theory, have agreed that not only the levels of social trust are considerably lower, but social trust itself is less important in nondemocracies, where there is less meaningful participation and regimes are far less sensitive to the presence of sociopolitical divides and the absence of political trust.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, according to the democratic theory of social trust, in nondemocracies social trust seems to be irrelevant to or only play a trivial role in shaping various sociopolitical outcomes. This understanding of social trust in non-democracies is, however, being increasingly challenged by inconsistent and “abnormal” empirical evidence and new developments in social trust theories in various disciplines.

First, there is no conclusive and decisive evidence in support of democratic theory’s depiction that social trust and democracy come in tandem, and that non-democracies are necessarily low in the level of social trust.<sup>27</sup> For instance, many stable authoritarian regimes in the Middle East possess a very high level of social trust.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the level of social trust in Russia exceeds, despite its stagnant democracy,

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<sup>26</sup> For example, see Dahl, *Polyarchy*, Pye, “Introduction”, Parry, “Trust, Distrust and Consensus”, Richard Rose and Doh Chull Shin, “Democratization Backwards The Problem of Third-Wave Democracies,” *British Journal of Political Science* 31, no. 2 (2001)

<sup>27</sup> For examples of the projection about trust and democracy, see, Ronald Inglehart, “Trust, Wellbeing and Democracy”, Pamela M. Paxton, “Social Capital and Democracy An Interdependent Relationship,” *American Sociological Review* 67, no. 2 (2002)

<sup>28</sup> M. Steven Fish, “Islam and Authoritarianism,” *World Politics* 55, no. 1 (2002), 20, Sabrı Ciftçi, “Modernization, Islam, or Social Capital What Explains Attitudes toward Democracy in the Muslim World?,” *Comparative Political Studies* 43, no. 11 (2010), Jamal, “When Is Social Trust a Desirable Outcome?”

those in established democracies like France, Italy, Belgium, and Germany.<sup>29</sup> After a carefully conducted cross-national comparison, Mitchell Seligson concludes that:

[M]acro-level data measuring trust and democracy do not seem to fit most cases throughout the world, *except for a small group of highly industrialized, advanced democracies in northern Europe and North America*. The linear association between interpersonal trust and level of democracy disappears when a control is introduced for per capita income. At the micro level the expected association between the civic culture attitudes and preference for democracy did not emerge (emphasis added).<sup>30</sup>

In other words, even if we take into account the potential errors of “ecological fallacies” caused by cross-national studies at aggregate level,<sup>31</sup> the democratic theory of social trust holds only across a very limited number of countries (i.e., northern Europe and North America), leaving vast non-Western regions uncharted.

Second, besides the above-mentioned “abnormal” empirical findings, the democratic theory of social trust has been increasingly challenged by insights from disciplines other than political science and from newly emerged middle-range theories. Specifically, as a consequence of its vital importance to almost every aspect of human society, social trust has attracted an enormous amount of attentions from students in the fields of economics,<sup>32</sup> sociology,<sup>33</sup> and anthropology,<sup>34</sup> among others. Despite their

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<sup>29</sup> William M. Reisinger et al., “Political Values in Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania: Sources and Implications for Democracy,” *British Journal of Political Science* 24, no. 2 (1994), 207.

<sup>30</sup> Seligson, “The Renaissance of Political Culture,” 287.

<sup>31</sup> Seligson, “The Renaissance of Political Culture,” 273-4; John L. Hammond, “Two Sources of Error in Ecological Correlations,” *American Sociological Review* 38, no. 6 (1973); William S. Robinson, “Ecological Correlations and the Behavior of Individuals,” *American Sociological Review* 15, no. 3 (1950).

<sup>32</sup> For example, see, Kenneth J. Arrow, “Gifts and Exchanges,” *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1, no. 4 (1972); Kenneth J. Arrow, *The Limits of Organization* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton, 1974); Joyce Berg, John Dickhaut, and Kevin McCabe, “Trust, Reciprocity, and Social History,” *Games and Economic Behavior* 10, no. 1 (1995); Abigail Barr, “Trust and Expected Trustworthiness: Experimental Evidence from Zimbabwean Villages,” *The Economic Journal* 113, no. 489 (2003); James C. Cox, “How to Identify Trust and Reciprocity,” *Games and Economic Behavior* 46, no. 2 (2004); Fei Song, “Trust and Reciprocity Behavior and Behavioral Forecasts: Individuals Versus Group-Representatives,” *Games and Economic Behavior* 62, no. 2 (2008).

<sup>33</sup> For example, see, Diego Gambetta, ed. *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations* (New York, NY: Basil Blackwell, 1988); Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford Stanford

different backgrounds, most of these scholars tend to argue that individuals and their economic and political activities are deeply embedded in various trust relations.<sup>35</sup> As the “social glue” in society,<sup>36</sup> social trust not only plays a critical role in democracies, but might be of even greater importance in non-democracies. This is because the formal institutions are generally weak and irresponsible in non-democracies,<sup>37</sup> which in turn forces people to rely more upon trust relations in order to “get things done.”<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, the recent proliferation of middle-range theories also suggests that social trust is, if not more important, at least of equal importance in non-democracies. Specifically, political scientists, dissatisfied with broad and vague causal arguments presented by democratic theory of social trust, have started to direct their attention to the specific mechanisms linking social trust and various desirable socioeconomic and sociopolitical outcomes, such as the ways in which social trust can help reduce

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University Press, 1990); Niklas Luhmann, “Familiarity, Confidence, Trust: Problems and Alternatives,” in *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, ed. Diego Gambetta (New York, NY: Basil Blackwell, 1988); Piotr Sztompka, *Trust: A Sociological Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press, 1990); Bernard Barber, *The Logic and Limits of Trust* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983); Barbara Misztal, *Trust in Modern Societies*; Adam B. Seligman, *The Problem of Trust* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

<sup>34</sup> Jack Knight and Itai Sened, eds., *Explaining Social Institutions* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1995).

<sup>35</sup> For example, Arrow, “Gifts and Exchanges”; Mark S. Granovetter, “Problems of Explanation in Economic Sociology,” in *Networks and Organizations: Structure, Form, and Action*, ed. Nitin Nohria and Robert G. Eccles (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1992); Idem, “The Impact of Social Structure on Economic Outcomes,” *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 19, no. 1 (2005).

<sup>36</sup> Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1950).

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Steven Levitsky and María Murillo argues that in non-Western countries, “strong formal institutions are the exception, not the rule,” see Steven Levitsky and María Victoria Murillo, “Variation in Institutional Strength,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 12, no. 1 (2009), 116.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, Richard Rose, “Getting Things Done in an Antimodern Society: Social Capital Networks in Russia,” in *Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective*, ed. Partha Dasgupta and Ismail Serageldin (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2000); Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, eds., *Informal Institutions and Democracy: Lessons from Latin America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

transaction costs,<sup>39</sup> and the ways in which collective actions are fueled by trust<sup>40</sup> Those mechanisms not only exist and work in democracies, but also appears to be common in non-democracies.

From the above discussion, it is evident that the democratic theory of social trust, notwithstanding its valuable insights regarding the relationships between trust and democracy, fails to account for the levels of and the dynamic roles played by social trust in non-democracies. This failure requires us to pay more attention to social trust in non-democracies, exploring its magnitude, origins, and consequences in non-democratic settings. More fundamentally, it also suggests that we need a new approach to the analysis of social trust in non-democracies.

#### AN ECLECTIC APPROACH: A RELATIONAL FRAMEWORK

In this study, recognizing the problems associated with the democratic theory of social trust, I adopted a pragmatic approach to social trust, in which social trust is conceptualized as a *relational* concept. This relational conceptualization is flexible enough to incorporate the insights of political scientists and scholars from other disciplines, and also allows us to include many middle-range theories pertaining to the origins and functions of social trust. Therefore, I argue that the relational approach presented in this study is a more useful framework for the empirical and systematical exploration of social trust in non-democratic settings. I will elaborate on the ways in

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<sup>39</sup> Gaute Torsvik, "Social Capital and Economic Development: A Plea for the Mechanisms," *Rationality and Society* 12, no. 4 (2000); Paul J. Zak and Stephen Knack, "Trust and Growth," *The Economic Journal* 111, no. 470 (2001).

<sup>40</sup> Elinor Ostrom, "A Behavioral Approach to the Rational Choice Theory of Collective Action," *The American Political Science Review* 92, no. 1 (1998).

which this relational framework can help us understand the nature, forms, determinants, and functions of social trust.

### *A. Defining Social Trust and Its Two Sub-dimensions*

Across various disciplines, numerous attempts have been made to clarify the nature of social trust. While well-defined concepts and a shared understanding of categories are routinely viewed as a foundation of any research enterprise,<sup>41</sup> students of social trust neither agree upon a common understanding of what the term “social trust” designates,<sup>42</sup> nor accept a unified categorization of the various types of social trust.<sup>43</sup>

In this study, I argue that social trust can be best understood as a relational concept. This relational conceptualization of social trust can serve as common ground for scholars with different theoretical interests, and help us systematically categorize different types of social trust. As such, it is not surprising that Michael Welch and his associates argue that “trust makes most logical sense when it is treated as a relational concept.”<sup>44</sup> Specifically, I use the following working definition:

*Trust is the willingness to accept vulnerability in ongoing social interactions based on one's positive expectations as regards others' intentions or behaviors.*<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> David Collier and James E. Mahon, Jr., “Conceptual ‘Stretching’ Revisited: Adapting Categories in Comparative Analysis,” *The American Political Science Review* 87, no. 4 (1993), 845.

<sup>42</sup> Delhey and Newton, “Who Trusts?”; Idem, “Predicting Cross-National Levels of Social Trust”; Nannestad, “What Have We Learned about Generalized Trust, If Anything?”

<sup>43</sup> For example, see, Mark E. Warren, “Conclusion,” in *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark E. Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>44</sup> Welch et al., “Determinants and Consequences of Social Trust,” 457.

<sup>45</sup> It should be noted some scholars also developed similar definitions of social trust from a relational perspective. For instance, after comparing the definitions of social trust in various discipline, Denise Rousseau and his associates suggest that “[t]rust is psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another,” see, Denise M. Rousseau and others, “Not So Different after All: A Cross-Discipline View of Trust,” *The Academy of Management Review* 23, no. 3 (1998), 395. Similarly, Michael Welch et al. suggest that “[s]ocial trust is the mutually shared expectation, often expressed as confidence, that people will manifest sensible and,

By situating social trust in ongoing social interactions, this relational concept can help to: (1) mitigate the debate about the nature of social trust; (2) bridge micro- and macro-analysis of social trust; and (3) provide a viable way to distinguish different types of social trust.

First, by emphasizing that social trust is based on people's positive expectations, this relational definition presents us an alternative view about the nature of social trust beyond the current debate between cultural school and rational school. As mentioned above, the democratic theory of social trust in political science is far from being a monolithic theory, and has long been plagued by various internal divides and debates. One of the fiercest among them is the debate between the cultural school and the rational school on the nature of social trust.<sup>46</sup> The cultural school asserts that social trust is driven by long-term and durable cultural norms.<sup>47</sup> As the "long-standing and [deeply-seated] beliefs about people," social trust is "rooted in cultural norms and communicated through early life socialization."<sup>48</sup> The rational school, by contrast, treats social trust as rational calculation. Resting on the rational expectations of and choices made by individuals,<sup>49</sup>

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when needed, reciprocally beneficial behavior in their interactions with others," see Welch et al., "Determinants and Consequences of Social Trust," 457.

<sup>46</sup> For example, see Robert W. Jackman and Ross A. Miller, "Social Capital and Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science* 1, no. (1998); William Mishler and Richard Rose, "Trust, Distrust and Skepticism: Popular Evaluations of Civil and Political Institutions in Post-Communist Societies," *The Journal of Politics* 59, no. 2 (1997).

<sup>47</sup> For example, see Almond and Verba, *Civic Culture*; Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*; Fukuyama, *Trust*; Mishler and Rose, "What Are the Origins of Political Trust?"

<sup>48</sup> Mishler and Rose, "What Are the Origins of Political Trust?," 31.

<sup>49</sup> For example, see, Partha Dasgupta, "Trust as a Commodity," in *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, ed. Diego Gambetta (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1988); Russell Hardin, "The Street-Level Epistemology of Trust," *Politics & Society* 21, no. 4 (1993); Idem, "Trustworthiness," *Ethics* 107, no. 1 (1996); Levi and Stoker, "Political Trust and Trustworthiness"; Toshio Yamagishi, Karen S. Cook, and Motoki Watabe, "Uncertainty, Trust, and Commitment Formation in the United States and Japan," *The American Journal of Sociology* 104, no. 1 (1998); Toshio Yamagishi and Toko Kiyonari, "The Group as the Container of Generalized Reciprocity," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (2000).

social trust is determined by a variety of social and political factors, ranging from personal experience to income inequality.<sup>50</sup>

Although this divide has yielded a heated debate on which school is theoretically superior, increasingly students find that the boundary between the two is far more porous than they originally assumed, particularly at the empirical level. For instance, Mark Warren argues that trust, as a judgment of potential risks in social interactions, can be either “tacit or habitual.”<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, some students state that more efforts should be made to combine these two approaches. For instance, Bo Rothstein once noted, “in order to explain why social dilemmas can sometimes be solved, rationalistic theories must be combined with theories about how the agents come to embrace norms, ideas or a culture that make them refrain from self-defeating myopic instrumental behaviors.”<sup>52</sup> Myriads of studies from sociology and economics have confirmed that trust can be either norms- or rationality-driven or both.<sup>53</sup>

My relational definition in this study—assuming the positive expectations derived from either personal experiences or moral convictions, or both—encompasses both the rational and cultural approaches to social trust. According to this definition, individuals’

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<sup>50</sup> For example, see Perre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986); James S. Coleman and Thomas J. Fararo, *Rational Choice Theory: Advocacy and Critique* (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1992); Mark S. Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 6 (1973); Marc Hooghe and Dietlind Stolle, eds., *Generating Social Capital: Civil Society and Institutions in Comparative Perspective* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Laura Macdonald, “Generating Social Capital: Civil Society and Institutions in Comparative Perspective,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 37, no. 03 (2004); Elinor Ostrom, “A Behavioral” Dietlind Stolle, “The Sources of Social Capital,” in *Generating Social Capital: Civil Society and Institutions in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Marc Hooghe and Dietlind Stolle (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>51</sup> Warren, “Democratic Theory and Trust,” 311.

<sup>52</sup> Bo Rothstein, “Trust, Social Dilemmas and Collective Memories,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 12, no. 4 (2000), 490.

<sup>53</sup> For example, see Barr, “Trust and Expected Trustworthiness”; Rousseau et al., “Not So Different after All”; Song, “Trust and Reciprocity Behavior and Behavioral Forecasts.”

trusting proclivity can be influenced by both cultural norms and instrumental calculations.

Second, by highlighting social interactions, this relational definition suggests social trust is a meso-level concept, integrating individual psychologies at the micro level and group dynamics at the macro level.<sup>54</sup> Besides the above-mentioned divide between the cultural and rational schools, many students still disagree with each other on the question of the proper level of the analysis of social trust. While some scholars, focusing on micro mechanisms, theorize social trust as a property of individuals,<sup>55</sup> many others perceive social trust as an attribute possessed by collectives, instead of by individuals.<sup>56</sup>

On the basis of my relational definition of social trust, however, I do not assume that these two perspectives are incompatible. On the contrary, since social trust is essentially a meso-level (or a multilevel concept),<sup>57</sup> the insights from the micro and macro perspectives actually complement each other, which in turn can greatly advance our understanding of social trust. “One of the intellectual attractions of thinking about the phenomenon of social trust,” as stated by Claus Offe, “is the apparent potential this phenomenon to bridge the micro-macro-gap in social theory.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> For example, see Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy*.

<sup>55</sup> For example, see John Brehm and Wendy Rahn, “Individual-Level Evidence for the Causes and Consequences of Social Capital,” *American Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 3 (1997); Tarja Nieminen et al., “Measurement and Socio-Demographic Variation of Social Capital in a Large Population-Based Survey,” *Social Indicators Research* 85, no. (2008).

<sup>56</sup> For example, see Gema M. García Albacete, “The Saliency of Political Cleavages and the ‘Dark Sides’ of Social Capital: Evidence from Spain,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 53, no. 5 (2010); Hooghe and Stolle, eds., *Generating Social Capital*; Letki and Evans, “Endogenizing Social Trust”; Bo Rothstein and Eric M. Uslaner, “All for All: Equality, Corruption, and Social Trust,” *World Politics* 58, no. 1 (2005); Jan W. van Deth, “Participation in Voluntary Associations: Dark Shades in a Sunny World?,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 53, no. 5 (2010)

<sup>57</sup> Rousseau et al., “Not So Different after All.”

<sup>58</sup> Claus Offe, “How Can We Trust Our Fellow Citizens?,” in *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark E. Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 45.



Finally, the relational definition of social trust offers us a way to systematically categorize different types of social trust, by suggesting that social trust varies with according to the social categories of “the others.” As students from various disciplines have started to explore the issue of social trust in recent years, the literature has become increasingly fragmented and specialized.<sup>59</sup> The concept of social trust accordingly has been overstretched to denote various forms of social trust, including trust in organization, and even trust in institutions. The chaotic categorization of social trust severely undermines our knowledge accumulation of social trust.

Just as the term *political trust* can refer to trust in political community, regime, or authority,<sup>60</sup> so the use of the term *social trust* depends on the identities of participants in the trust relationship. Therefore, in this study I argue that we can effectively distinguish various types of social trust by specifying the relational categories of the trustees. In addition, I argue that there are two forms of social trust that are paramount: trust in people we know (i.e., particularized trust) and trust in strangers (i.e., generalized trust).

Indeed, most scholars have already agreed on the qualitative difference between particularized trust and generalized trust, although they use different concepts to describe this difference. Fukuyama uses the term *radius of trust* to characterize the “circle of people among whom co-operative norms are operative,” whose scope varies across groups.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, Misztal argues that a continuum of trust exists, moving from “thick”

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<sup>59</sup> Delhey and Newton, “Who Trusts?”

<sup>60</sup> David Easton, “Theoretical Approaches to Political Support,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique* 9, no. 3 (1976), Pippa Norris, “Introduction: The Growth of Critical Citizens?,” in *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government*, ed. Pippa Norris (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1999)

<sup>61</sup> Fukuyama, *Trust*, 108

to “thin”; while thick trust originates from close personal relations, thin trust results from the secondary relations of voluntary associations.<sup>62</sup>

On the basis of this conceptualization, Uslaner also divides people into two groups, generalized trusters and particularized trusters. With a larger radius of trust, the former believe that “most people share common values,” and so these generalized trusters “are willing to trust strangers who may outwardly seem quite different from themselves.”<sup>63</sup> Particularized trusters, on the other hand, are averse to the risks and uncertainty embedded in general reciprocity. With a smaller radius of trust, they only trust people on the basis of close and intensive personal interaction, such as family, close friends, or members of the same lineage, ethnic, and religious groups.

It seems that the most important forms of social trust are particularized trust and generalized trust. Therefore, following this distinction implied by both the relational definition of social trust and earlier studies, this study chooses to focus on the origins and impacts of these two types of trust.

In this section, I present a relational definition of social trust, which entails three important implications: (1) social trust is a multifaceted concept, driven by both cultural norms and individual rationality; (2) social trust is a meso-level concept, encompassing both individual psychologies and contextual dynamics; and (3) social trust can be divided into two fundamental categories—particularized trust (i.e., trust in people we personally know) and generalized trust (i.e., trust in strangers). These three points link useful insights that I draw from other general and middle-range theories, and unite the components of this study.

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<sup>62</sup> Misztal, *Trust in Modern Societies*.

<sup>63</sup> Eric M. Uslaner and Richard S. Conley, “Civic Engagement and Particularized Trust: The Ties That Bind People to Their Ethnic Communities,” *American Politics Research* 31, no. 4 (2003), 335.

*B. The Relationships between Generalized Trust and Particularized Trust*

Since generalized trust and particularized trust are the two basic components of social trust, it is imperative for us to examine the relationship between the two. This relationship involves at least two critical questions: Is generalized trust related to particularized trust? If they are interconnected, what is the nature of the relationship? Or to put it differently: are particularized trust and generalized trust intertwined in the minds of people, or do they differentiate between types of social trust? Are people with higher levels of particularized trust less willing to expand their trust to strangers, or in the opposite case, or are these two types of social trust independent from each other? The answers to these questions are of the utmost importance to our understanding of the internal dynamics of social trust, and consequently the impact of such dynamics on various socioeconomic and sociopolitical outcomes.

Although most scholars of social trust have agreed upon the qualitative distinction between particularized trust and generalized trust, there is virtually no consensus on *whether* or *how* particularized trust and generalized trust are related.<sup>64</sup> As for the question whether particularized and generalized trust are related, some students argue that all types of trust share certain psychological foundations.<sup>65</sup> Accordingly, we should expect that the two are closely related. But there are also some scholars rejecting any close relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust. For instance, Karen Cook, Russell Hardin, and Margaret Levi point out, our knowledge about surrounding

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<sup>64</sup> Dietlind Stolle, "Bowling Together, Bowling Alone: The Development of Generalized Trust in Voluntary Associations," *Political Psychology* 19, no. 3 (1998).

<sup>65</sup> Mishler and Rose, "What Are the Origins of Political Trust?"

people is of but little help in our attempts to predict strangers' intentions.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, from their theorization a reasonable inference is that the two are not related.

If we assume the two kinds of trust are related, there is an even more heated debate on *how* the two are related.<sup>67</sup> One perspective holds that particularized trust can transfer at some point to a trust that also encompasses people not personally known. As Fukuyama suggests, the only difference between generalized trust and particularized trust is the “radius” of trust.<sup>68</sup> Under some circumstances, it is so short that it would only covers acquaintances (i.e., particularized trust), while in other contexts the radius of trust may extend beyond families and friends to strangers (i.e., generalized trust). Generalized trusters tend to have a larger radius of trust, yet they place no less trust in people whom they are familiar with. In the same vein, Uslaner argues that “people who believe that ‘most people can be trusted’ place greater faith in friends and family, strangers, and government for every specific trust question.”<sup>69</sup> Therefore personalized trust and generalized trust would be positively correlated.

The second perspective, by contrast, sees the existence of strong in-group trust and bonds as a result of parochial social networks that limits and undercuts bridging social exchanges beyond group boundaries, leading to overall fragmentation and underdevelopment of generalized trust. According to Granovetter, strong in-group bonds do not necessarily create payoffs, but weaker bonds do. Strong group bonds prohibit the development of generalized trust; these strong ties and attachments do not foster an open

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<sup>66</sup> Karen S. Cook, Russell Hardin, and Margaret Levi, *Cooperation without Trust?* (New York, NY: Russell Sage, 2005).

<sup>67</sup> Stolle, “Bowling Together, Bowling Alone.”

<sup>68</sup> Fukuyama, *Trust*.

<sup>69</sup> Uslaner, *The Moral Foundations of Trust*, 54.

and welcoming view about the outside world.<sup>70</sup> Hence, particularized trust would be negatively correlated to generalized trust.

Unfortunately, given these controversies associated with the relationship between generalized trust and particularized trust, empirical studies, particularly survey-based researches, are scarce, making our evaluation and assessment of these competing claims even more difficult. A potential reason for such underdevelopment is scarcity of valid data. The most popular datasets used by scholars of social trust are created by the World Value Survey (WVS) and the General Social Survey (GSS),<sup>71</sup> but these datasets contain no survey item gauging particularized trust. In this study drawing on a unique set of trust measurements covering both generalized trust and particularized trust, I will test the aforementioned competing claims regarding the relationship between generalized trust and particularized trust in order to fill the gap in our understanding of the nature of social trust.

### *C. The Determinants of Generalized Trust and Particularized Trust*

In order to systematically explore social trust in contemporary rural China, one must have a grasp of the origins of social trust. As established earlier, social trust is essentially a relational concept, subject to the influences of both the cultural norms and rational calculation. Moreover, social trust, embedded in ongoing social relations, is shaped by factors at both the individual level and the aggregate level. As such, I focus on five principal categories of the determinants, encompassing both cultural and rational

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<sup>70</sup> Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties”; Also see Yamagishi and Yamagishi, “Trust and Commitment in the United States and Japan.”

<sup>71</sup> A cursory survey on top-tiered journals in political science reveals that many cross-nation studies rely on WVS data and studies on social trust in America rely on CGS data.

arguments at two different analytical levels: sociodemographic factors, subjective orientations, and informal social interactions at individual level, and sociogeographic factors and community heterogeneity at village level. Table 1.1 summarizes the expected impacts of the five categories of determinants on social trust. More details of the expected relationships between each of the determinants and social trust will be presented in Chapter IV. In the following part, I will briefly explain these categories in terms of their expected influences.

**Table 1. The Expected Relationships between Social Trust and the Five Categories of Determinants**

		Relational Approach	
		<i>Cultural Arguments</i>	<i>Rational Arguments</i>
<i>Individual Level</i>	Sociodemographic factors	+	+
	Subjective orientations	++	
	Informal social interactions		++
<i>Village Level</i>	Sociogeographic factors	+	+
	Village heterogeneity	++	++

*Note:* The sign of “+” represents the strength of the expected relationship.

*Sociodemographic Factors* This category includes such determinants as gender, age, education, marital status, income, and party membership. In this study, I expect that there should be strong relationships between most sociodemographic attributes of our respondents and their levels of social trust in others. Earlier studies have, from both

cultural and rational perspectives, argued that these attributes can strongly shape people's trust in each other, since they may capture some of the impacts of family, generations, social class, and socialization on the formation of social trust.<sup>72</sup> As argued by Pamela Paxton, "[i]n the absence of specific information about the trustee, individual characteristics of the trustor become more important in the assessment of the trustworthiness of generalized others."<sup>73</sup>

*Subjective Orientations* As mentioned above, the cultural explanations of social trust suggest that certain cultural norms and subjective values can strongly shape individuals' proclivity for trusting. In this study, I include subjective wellbeing, perception of equality, and norms of civility. I expect that most, if not all, determinants of subjective orientations are robustly correlated with social trust. These attitudes are a set of normative and subjective values and beliefs related closely to one's assessment of the outside world and others in general, and they therefore fundamentally shape her or his willingness to take the risk of trusting. Earlier cross-national studies also confirm that the influences of these subjective attitudes are prevalent across national borders.<sup>74</sup>

*Informal Social Interactions* The category of informal social interactions encompasses such items as intimacy with relatives and friends, familiarity with neighbors, and intensity of informal cooperation. For most rationalist scholars, this category of

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<sup>72</sup> Lucian W. Pye, "Civility, Social Capital, and Civil Society: Three Powerful Concepts for Explaining Asia," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 29, no. 4 (1999).

<sup>73</sup> Pamela M. Paxton, "Association Memberships and Generalized Trust: A Multilevel Model across 31 Countries," *Social Forces* 86, no. 1 (2007), 49. For similar emphasis on sociodemographic factors in trust formation, see, for example, Markus Freitag, "Social Capital in (Dis)Similar Democracies: The Development of Generalized Trust in Japan and Switzerland," *Comparative Political Studies* 36, no. 8 (2003), 946; Gerry Veenstra, "Explicating Social Capital: Trust and Participation in the Civil Space," *The Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie* 27, no. 4 (2002); Christian Bjørnskov, "Determinants of Generalized Trust: A Cross-Country Comparison," *Public Choice* 130, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>74</sup> For example, see Delhey and Newton, "Who Trusts?"; Delhey and Newton, "Predicting Cross-National Levels of Social Trust."

determinants tends to be the most potent. Specifically, at least two strands of explanations are presented. The first and most commonly cited explanation points out that trust is “learned” through various social exchanges. People learn to trust and develop “habits of heart” through participation in voluntary associations and other forms of civic interactions.<sup>75</sup> Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that informal social interactions have similar effects. Some earlier studies also find that there is a robust connection between informal social interactions and trust.

The second school builds their explanations on experimental researches that reveal how a trust relationship can emerge spontaneously among otherwise uncooperative and distrustful actors when they play various social dilemma games in a repeatedly. As Ostrom once illustrated, in iterated games trust is a valuable asset, because “trustworthy individuals who trust others with a reputation for being trustworthy (and try to avoid those who have a reputation for being untrustworthy) can engage in mutually productive social exchanges, even though they are dilemmas, so long as they can limit their interactions primarily to those with a reputation for keeping promises.”<sup>76</sup> Given these reasons, in this research I expect that the determinants of informal social interactions are significantly correlated with levels of social trust.

*Sociogeographic Factors* This category tackles such village-level determinants as population, territory, level of economic development, and distance from local political and economic centers. As mentioned above, social trust is essentially a meso concept. Under different socioeconomic and sociopolitical contexts, the same person can make different decisions on whether or not to trust. Although some earlier studies have already

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<sup>75</sup> Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*.

<sup>76</sup> Elinor Ostrom, “A Behavioral Approach,” 12.



incorporated certain macro-level determinants, their research stops at the national level.<sup>77</sup>

In this study, I expect that the sociogeographic attributes of a village can strongly influence residents' willingness to trust.

*Community Heterogeneity* In recent years, there has been an upsurge of studies on the relationship between the heterogeneity and social trust at various levels. In general, it is postulated that heterogeneity of a political collective ranging from local communities to nation states has a strong impact on the levels of social trust. Therefore, I expect the village heterogeneity—including lineage fragmentation and types of lineages—is closely related to social trust.

However, it should be noted that there are conflicting views on the exact impacts of heterogeneity. Some scholars argue that heterogeneity exerts a negative impact on generalized trust and encourages the formation of particularized trust. Specifically, many scholars argue that by increasing the social distance between individuals within a community, heterogeneity is potentially detrimental to generalized trust.<sup>78</sup> Alternatively, a second group of scholars argues that heterogeneity may positively affect generalized trust by creating opportunities for inter-group interactions. More inter-group interactions, as suggested by Marschall and Stolle, may “lead to greater tolerance and more favorable perceptions of out-group,” which will eventually help to cultivate generalized trust within a community.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> For example, Markus Freitag and Marc Bühlmann, “Crafting Trust: The Role of Political Institutions in a Comparative Perspective,” *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 12 (2009).

<sup>78</sup> Coffe and Geys, “Community Heterogeneity”; Costa and Kahn, “Civic Engagement and Community Heterogeneity.”

<sup>79</sup> Melissa J. Marschall and Dietlind Stolle, “Race and the City: Neighborhood Context and the Development of Generalized Trust,” *Political Behavior* 26, no. 2 (2004).

In summary, in this research I expect that the aforementioned five categories of determinants will likely exert strong impacts on the formation of social trust. While these five categories do not represent all of the possible determinants of social trust, as indicated in the previous discussion, they do encompass the major explanations of the formation of social trust.

#### *D. Social Trust and Public Goods Provision*

Scholars have long agreed that social trust is closely associated with various socioeconomic and sociopolitical outcomes. In this research, I focus on how social trust affects public good provisions at the local level: Does social trust affect the general socio-political outcomes? Is public goods provision variably influenced by particularized trust and generalized trust? If so, how?

The answers to these questions are very important in contemporary China for both practical and theoretical reasons. Practically speaking, public goods such as functioning irrigation systems, good schools, access to electricity, and bridges and roads strongly affect ordinary Chinese rural residents' well-being. Theoretically speaking, the earlier literature has mainly focused on the role of formal democratic institutions in providing public goods. Specifically, this institutional theory postulates that effective democratic institutions are the key to adequate public goods provision, since only under democratic institutions can ordinary citizens effectively monitor and sanctions public officials.<sup>80</sup> However, in countries like China, where democratic institutions are apparently absent, how can we explain the variations regarding public goods provision?

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<sup>80</sup> For example, see Dahl, *Polyarchy*.

Increasingly, scholars have found that in developing countries where democratic institutions are weak or simply nonexistent, social trust plays a deterministic role in the provision of basic public goods and services.<sup>81</sup> However, scholars differ as to how particularized trust and generalized trust variably influence local public goods provision. Basically, there are two theses that are heuristic for the inquiry into the impacts of social trust on public goods provision.

One is the *social capital thesis*, which emphasizes the importance of generalized trust in facilitating civic cooperation and participation, arguing that generalized trust is positively associated with public goods provision, whereas a large reservoir of particularized trust is detrimental to local public goods provisions by hindering cooperation across various social divides. Specifically, the thesis postulates that generalized trust not only facilitates cooperation among and contributions by individuals, but also helps to strengthen the accountability of government officials.<sup>82</sup>

The other is the *solidary group thesis*, which holds a very nuanced view on the impacts of social trust on public goods provision. Lily Tsai, for instance, finds that there is no universal formula to express the impacts of social trust.<sup>83</sup> Particularized-trust-based social networks (i.e., solidary groups) can positively influence public goods provision when there is a match between the administrative boundaries and social boundaries of

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<sup>81</sup> For example, see Elinor Ostrom, "Constituting Social Capital and Collective Action," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 6, no. 4 (1994).

<sup>82</sup> For example, see Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, "Social Capital and Community Governance," *The Economic Journal* 112, no. 483 (2002); Stephen Knack, "Social Capital and the Quality of Government: Evidence from the States," *American Journal of Political Science* 46, no. 4 (2002); Anirudh Krishna, *Active Social Capital Tracing the Roots of Development and Democracy* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2002).

<sup>83</sup> Lily L. Tsai, "Cadres, Temple and Lineage Institutions, and Governance in Rural China," *The China Journal* 48, no. July (2002), Idem, *Accountability without Democracy Solidary Groups and Public Goods Provision in Rural China* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Idem, "Solidary Groups, Informal Accountability, and Local Public Goods Provision in Rural China," *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 2 (2007).

these networks. In other words, this thesis suggests that particularized trust is contingently conducive to local public goods provision.

However, close scrutiny reveals that both of the two theses are flawed: The social capital thesis, by postulating generalized trust simply as “good” and particularized trust as “bad,” tends to be too stylized; the solidary group thesis appears to overplay intra-community conflicts entailed by particularized trust when there are multiple solidary groups.

More specifically, the social capital thesis overlooks the way in which cooperative relations are maintained in the long run. As mentioned in the discussion of our relational framework, generalized trust concerns trust in strangers, which in turn only affects the initiation of cooperation, and thus has little to do with the continuation of cooperation. Particularized trust, on the other hand, is based on intensive and close interactions among acquaintances, which significantly reduces the costs of monitoring and enforcement. Accordingly, it is plausible to expect that it is particularized trust that plays the pivotal role in local public goods provision, in which cooperation tends to be persistent.

As for the solidary group thesis, I argue that it is flawed by overstating the impacts of solidary groups. Specifically, an important characteristic of public goods (as opposed to “private” goods) is its inclusiveness. The existence of multiple solidary groups does not necessarily invoke intra-village tensions. There should be little conflict across different social groups over the receiving of public goods such as public order, schools, roads, and clinics. Therefore, the positive effects of particularized trust are not contingent on the types of solidary groups. In light of these observations concerning the solidary group thesis and the social capital thesis, I expect that *particularized trust is*

*significantly and positively correlated with local public goods provision, while generalized trust has little or no effect.*

## CHINA AS A CRITICAL CASE

For at least three important reasons, contemporary China provides us with an ideal laboratory in which to explore social trust in nondemocratic settings. First, owing to its non-democratic regime and political culture, China is commonly assumed to be a low-trust society, particularly in the works of China and Asia specialists.<sup>84</sup> However, this belief is in sharp contradiction to the empirical findings that have emerged from many cross-national surveys such as WVS and the East Asian Barometer (EAB), in which China occupies a very high rank in terms of social trust.<sup>85</sup> Unfortunately, until now there is virtually no study that has tackled this disparity. Some scholars, troubled with this “Chinese outlier,” have even excluded China from their analyses.<sup>86</sup> This kind of practices has, notwithstanding its convenience, fundamentally hindered our understanding of the nature of social trust, and leaves a series of important questions unanswered: Is social trust actually high in China? If it is not, then how can we explain this disparity? Drawing on data collected from a representative nationwide survey in

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<sup>84</sup> Fukuyama, *Trust*; Idem, “Social Capital, Civil Society and Development,” *Third World Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (2001); Lucian W. Pye, *The Mandarin and the Cadre: China's Political Cultures* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Chinese Studies, 1988); Idem, “Civility, Social Capital, and Civil Society”; Richard H. Solomon, *Mao's Revolution and the Chinese Political Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971).

<sup>85</sup> Inglehart, “Trust, Well-being and Democracy”; Delhey and Newton, “Predicting Cross-National Levels of Social Trust”; Soo Jiuan Tan and Siok Kuan Tambyah, “Generalized Trust and Trust in Institutions in Confucian Asia,” *Social Indicators Research* (2010).

<sup>86</sup> For instance, in one of her cross-country studies, Bjørnskov has noted: “it should be stressed that China is excluded in all but one of the following regressions as it is a strong outlier in all analyses, not only those presented in this paper.” See, Bjørnskov, “Determinants of Generalized Trust,” 10; Also see Uslaner, *The Moral Foundations of Trust*.

China, this study attempts to empirically explore these important yet unresolved questions.

Second, since the onset of post-Mao reform, China—particularly in its rural areas—has witnessed tremendous economic development and the *de facto* retreat of the state.<sup>87</sup> In this process, new spaces have been opened for various trust-based social networks, and the trust relations in rural China have also been undergoing rapid and fundamental changes. While some scholars have reported revivals of close-knit, particularized-trust-based groups like clans, lineages, and even secret societies,<sup>88</sup> some others have found a proliferation of bridging and generalized-trust-based networks and associations.<sup>89</sup> Given these facts, contemporary China seems to be a perfect case for us to improve our understanding of social trust in developing as well as non-democratic societies.

Finally, China scholars and specialists have always emphasized the impacts of extreme regional differences (e.g., coastal vs. inland) on sociopolitical developments in China.<sup>90</sup> Social trust and trust-related phenomena, therefore, can vary dramatically with the sociopolitical and demographic differences between regions in China. An investigation based on a nationwide representative survey will thus lead us to more generalizable and valid fieldwork observations and analyses on social trust.

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<sup>87</sup> Kevin J. O'Brien, "Implementing Political Reform in China's Villages," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 32 (1994); Kevin J. O'Brien and Liangjiang Li, "Accommodating 'Democracy' in a One-Party State: Introducing Village Elections in China," *The China Quarterly* 162, no. Jun. (2000); Elizabeth J. Perry, "Trends in the Study of Chinese Politics: State-Society Relations," *The China Quarterly* 139 (1994).

<sup>88</sup> Myron L. Cohen, "Lineage Organization in North China," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 49, no. 3 (1990); Tsai, "Solidary Groups"; Rui Wen and Guohe Jiang, "20 Shiji 90 Niandai Yilai Dangdai Zhongguo Nongcun Zongzu Wenti Yanjiu Guankui [Lineage Group Study in Contemporary Rural China since 1990s]," *Fujian Shifan Daxue Xuebao [Journal of Fujian Normal University]* 4, no. (2004).

<sup>89</sup> Ian Johnson, "The Death and Life of China's Civil Society," *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 3 (2003).

<sup>90</sup> C.W. Kenneth Keng, "China's Unbalanced Economic Growth," *Journal of Contemporary China* 15, no. 46 (2006); Qingshan Tan, "Growth Disparity in China: Provincial Causes," *Journal of Contemporary China* 11, no. 33 (2002); Yehua Dennis Wei, "Multiscale and Multimechanisms of Regional Inequality in China: Implications for Regional Policy," *Journal of Contemporary China* 11, no. 30 (2002).

## DATA

In general, this research is based on a quantitative inquiry of the extent, determinants, and consequences of social trust in contemporary rural China. Specifically, I try to explore social trust in China by using the data from a nation-wide survey conducted in rural China in 2005. In this section, I briefly explain how the survey was conducted, and then evaluate its reliability and generalizability.

### *A. The Chinese General Social Survey (CGSS), 2005*

The data in this study was primarily drawn from a survey of rural residents and village governments, carried out in twenty-four provincial units of China in 2005. It was conducted by one of the most reputable academic survey research organizations in China, the Public Opinion Research Institute (PORI) of Renmin University of China. Pursuing on a myriad of research purposes, the survey captures a comprehensive picture of rural China (excluding only the two minority regions, Tibet and Uyghur).

In this survey, two sets of questionnaires are used simultaneously at the individual and village levels. The samples were selected with a combination of probability proportional to size (PPS) and multistage sampling techniques. In the first stage, county-level units (*xian*, “县”) were selected within each of 24 surveyed provincial units using the PPS technique (see Table 1.2), in which the probability of selection is proportional to the population size of the province based on China’s 2000 census data. As demonstrated in Table 1.2, in this sampling step a total of 76 county-level units were randomly chosen. In the second stage, a total number of 205 township-level units (*zhen*, “镇”) were

randomly selected from the 92 country-level units. In the third stage, within each township-level unit, two villages (*cun*, “村”) were randomly selected, and a total of 410 villages were randomly selected.

In the fourth stage, one village official of each selected village was interviewed using the village level questionnaire. Among 408 completed questionnaires at the village level, 152 (37.9%) were finished by village party secretaries (*cunzhishu*, “村支书”), 103 (25.7%) by chairs of VCs (*cunzhuren*, “村主任”), 82 (20.4%) by village heads (*cunzhang*, “村长”), and 58 (14.5%) by members of village committee (*cunweihui chengyuan*, “村委会成员”). In the same stage, from the 410 selected villages, 4800 ordinary rural residents were randomly chosen. A total of 4,274 individual-level questionnaires were completed, with a response rate of 88.6%.



Table 2. **The Distribution of Sampled Counties, Villages, and Respondents**

	<i>Counties</i>		<i>Villages</i>		<i>Respondents</i>	
	N.	(%)	N.	(%)	N.	(%)
Hebei	4	5.3	22	5.4	238	5.6
Shanxi	2	2.6	8	2.0	83	1.9
Inner Mongolia	1	1.3	8	2.0	80	1.9
Liaoning	3	3.9	18	4.4	188	4.4
Jilin	1	1.3	4	1.0	42	1.0
Heilongjiang	2	2.6	6	1.5	62	1.5
Jiangsu	5	6.6	30	7.3	328	7.7
Zhejiang	4	5.3	18	4.4	181	4.2
Anhui	4	5.3	24	5.9	264	6.2
Fujian	2	2.6	12	2.9	120	2.8
Jiangxi	2	2.6	12	2.9	120	2.8
Shandong	5	6.6	32	7.8	333	7.8
Henan	6	7.9	36	8.8	373	8.7
Hubei	4	5.3	24	5.9	247	5.8
Hunan	4	5.3	20	4.9	206	4.8
Guangdong	5	6.6	20	4.9	208	4.9
Guangxi	3	3.9	16	3.9	160	3.7
Hainan	1	1.3	2	.5	20	.5
Chongqing	1	1.3	4	1.0	43	1.0
Sichuan	6	7.9	38	9.3	396	9.3
Guizhou	3	3.9	18	4.4	194	4.5
Yunnan	3	3.9	16	3.9	160	3.7
Shaanxi	3	3.9	12	2.9	125	2.9
Gansu	2	2.6	10	2.4	103	2.4
Total	76	100.0	410	100.0	4274	100.0

*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

Both the village-level and individual-level questionnaires were administered in the form of face-to-face interviews. Undergraduate and graduate college students were trained by project personnel to conduct the interviews. To assess the quality of the responses, interviewers were also asked to evaluate each respondent. The results of the evaluations indicated that nearly all respondents were perceived to be cooperative (98.6%) and open (98.2%).

### B. Reliability of 2005 CGSS Data

A key challenge for scholars in conducting fieldwork and survey research in non-democratic countries like China is that of ensuring the respondents respond to survey questions truthfully.<sup>91</sup> After examining the specific items in the two sets of questionnaires and the method by which the survey was conducted, I argue that the data is reliable, for at least three reasons. First, compared to many other surveys conducted in China on the topic of democratic values or political support, the two sets of questionnaires used in 2005 CGSS were by and large not political sensitive. Therefore, the respondents did not have any motive to hide their true opinions. Second, all the questionnaires were collected in a confidential manner by a non-government agency, PORI of Renmin University of China. Thus, individual respondents should have had no reason to worry about political persecution. Finally, our confidence in the reliability of the 2005 CGSS can also be confirmed by the low ratios of “Don’t-Know” answers. As many survey researchers point out, when asked the questions that they perceive to be politically sensitive, or when they fear political persecution, many Chinese respondents will choose to say “I don’t know,” “I have no opinion,” or simply refuse to answer the question.<sup>92</sup> In the 2005 CGSS, in regard to almost all of the questions, the “Don’t-Know” answers were lower than 1 percent. Hence, we can confidently assume the reliability of the data used in this study.

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<sup>91</sup> See Jie Chen, *Popular Political Support in Urban China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 34-5. Also see, Melanie Manion, “Survey Research in the Study of Contemporary China: Learning from Local Samples,” *The China Quarterly* 139 (1994); Jian-Hua Zhu, “‘I Don’t Know’ in Public Opinion Surveys in China: Individual and Contextual Causes of Item Non-Response,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 5, no. 12 (1996); Tianjian Shi, *Political Participation in Beijing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997); Lily L. Tsai, “Quantitative Research and Issues of Political Sensitivity in Rural China,” in *Contemporary Chinese Politics: New Sources, Methods, and Field Strategies*, ed. Allen Carlson et al. (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

<sup>92</sup> Zhu, “‘I Don’t Know’ in Public Opinion Surveys in China.”

### C. *Generalizability of 2005 CGSS Data*

Similar to other empirical studies, our analyses of this survey will produce two kinds of results: descriptive and relational.<sup>93</sup> I believe we can draw at least two general implications from these two kinds of results. First, the descriptive results from this survey—such as those about the magnitudes of particularized trust and generalized trust—can help establish important statistical baselines against which the findings from urban China and other countries with similar sociopolitical conditions can be compared. These baselines are particularly important to subsequent comparative studies on trust, not only between urban and rural China, but also between China and other countries.

Secondly, the relational findings from this survey on the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust, as well as the findings on the determinants, and consequences of social trust will lead us to generalizable knowledge about social trust. As many scholars point out, these kinds of relationships are generic in nature.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, our findings about the relationship between variables may be properly generalized to countries with sociopolitical conditions similar to those found in China.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY

The findings of this research will make important contributions to the study of social trust on at least four grounds. First, this study, as one of the few survey-based studies of social trust in non-democratic settings, will significantly supplement our understanding of social trust in non-democracies. As mentioned above, the democratic

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<sup>93</sup> Manion, “Survey Research in the Study of Contemporary China”; Chen, *Popular Political Support in Urban China*.

<sup>94</sup> For a detailed discussion, see Manion, “Survey Research in the Study of Contemporary China.” Also see, Chen, *Popular Political Support in Urban China*.

theory of social trust, though powerful in democracies, tells us little about the actual level of social trust and how it emerges and functions in non-democracies. By systematically exploring the extents, the origins, and the consequences of particularized trust and generalized trust in China, this study will present us with a more complete picture of social trust.

Second, the relational approach employed in this study will help us bridge the divides between (1) the rational and cultural explanations of social trust; and (2) the micro and macro theories of social trust. Specifically, by conceptualizing social trust as a relational concept, I argue that rational and cultural explanations actually are not only compatible but also complementary to each other. In addition, a relational approach also implies that social trust is a “meso” concept, correlated with phenomena at both micro (individual) and macro (village) level. Furthermore, by introducing multilevel analysis, I am able to empirically demonstrate the meso nature of social trust. Thus, the relational framework adopted in this study offers us a new approach to the analysis of social trust.

Third, in regard to methodological significance, the empirical results from this study will help us to answer a critical question: How can social trust be accurately measured in cross-national comparative studies? Specifically, this study introduces a new set of measures of social trust based on the relational conceptualization of trust. As demonstrated later (in Chapter II), this set of measurements appears to more reliably gauge people’s trust in each other. This new set of trust measures, therefore, will significantly help scholars refine and advance their operationalization of social trust in cross-national comparative studies.

Finally and with more relevance to policies, the findings from this study, particularly those concerning the relationship between the two types of trust and public goods provision, will aid us in our efforts to achieve better local governance in nondemocratic societies. In many non-democratic and non-Western countries, the formal institutions tend to be ineffective and weak in providing basic public goods and services. Therefore, a better understanding of how social trust can affect public goods provision is of great importance to the goal of achievement of to achieve a better life for ordinary people.

## AN OVERVIEW

Following this chapter, Chapter II intends to answer the critical research question: how can we accurately measure social trust? Specifically, I consider the following two questions: What are the most important forms of social trust in rural China? What is the magnitude of each type of social trust? I begin Chapter II with a general discussion of the measurement issue that has long plagued the research of social trust. Recognizing the problems associated with the popular measurements of social trust, I introduce a new set of measurements by distinguishing the identities of trustees. Using these measurements, I gauge the extent of six forms of trust in rural China. Subsequently, I find that these six forms of social trust converge into two basic forms of trust: particularized trust and generalized trust.

Chapter III is devoted to the exploration of the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust. As mentioned above, there is no consensus about the relationship between the two. In Chapter III, I empirically test those disparate arguments

about their relationship. Specifically, I conduct bivariate analyses of the two types of social trust. Then I examine the impacts of sociopolitical factors at the individual level and sociogeographic factors at the village level on the relationships between particularized trust and generalized trust. This chapter is designed to address several critical questions, such as: Are particularized trust and generalized trust related? If so, what is the strength of their interconnection? Does particularized trust hinder or facilitate the development of generalized trust? Does the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust vary across different social categories and localities?

In Chapter IV, I examine the determinants of particularized trust and generalized trust. As mentioned above, I concentrate on five categories of correlates at both the individual level and the village level: sociodemographic factors, subjective values, and informal social interactions at the individual level, and sociogeographic factors and village heterogeneity at the village level. Specifically, I specify and test the relationship between each explanatory variable and the two types of social trust. Moreover, some general inferences about the determinants of social trust in contemporary rural China have been drawn. The analyses in this chapter may help us to answer the following crucial questions: Who is more likely to trust surrounding people and strangers in rural China? What personal traits and community contexts can affect people's trusting attitude? Are informal social interactions an indispensable part of creation of social trust? Do subjective values affect people's proclivity for trusting?

Chapter V discusses how particularized trust and generalized trust affect public goods provision in rural China. Although earlier studies based on the social capital thesis and the solidary group thesis have already tackled the same question, I find their

arguments are flawed, due to an oversimplification of the patterns of cooperative activities at the local level. Specifically, I find particularized trust is more important to rural public goods provision given its decisive role in maintaining persistent cooperation. Generalized trust, in initiating cooperation among strangers, is less relevant to public goods provision at local level. After I examine and test how particularized trust and generalized trust affect the provision of various public goods in rural China, some important general implications will be drawn from the empirical findings.

Finally, I will summarize my major findings in Chapter VI, and illuminate the key political and theoretical implications that we can learn from these findings. The summary is structured around the three themes in this study, that is, the magnitude, origins, and impacts of social trust in contemporary rural China. The findings from this study significantly supplement our understanding of social trust, particularly in non-democratic settings. In addition, I discuss the limitations and drawbacks of this studies and possible directions for future studies.

## CHAPTER II

## MEASURING SOCIAL TRUST IN RURAL CHINA:

## WHOM DOES CHINESE VILLAGERS TRUST, AND TO WHAT EXTENT

This chapter intends to answer three questions of critical importance: What are the most important forms of social trust in the Chinese setting? How can we accurately measure social trust in the Chinese society? To what extent do Chinese residents trust each other? The answers to these questions will not only advance our understanding of the forms and magnitudes of social trust in China, but also have important and direct implications for cross-cultural studies of social trust. I begin with a general discussion of the problem that has long plagued the empirical research of social trust: the cross-cultural validity of the measurement social trust.

Comparative politics, albeit the only discipline in political science defined by the *method* of study, is far from being methodologically sophisticated. “Too many students of the field,” noted Arend Lijphart, “have been ... ‘unconscious thinkers,’”<sup>1</sup> unaware of the basal methodological question—how do comparativists ensure that they are actually comparing the same phenomena in the different sociopolitical contexts? Indeed, without confirming the validity of the measurements of interests in the different sociopolitical contexts, empirical studies can only result in “misinformation”; facts gathered under indefinite and blurred concepts rarely lead to meaningful accumulation of substantive knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Arend Lijphart, “Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method,” *The American Political Science Review* 65, no. 3 (1971), 682.

<sup>2</sup> Giovanni Sartori, “Concept Misformation in Comparative Politics,” *The American Political Science Review* 64, no. 4 (1970), 1039; Also see, idem, “Guidelines for Concept Analysis,” in *Social Science*



This problem is, unfortunately, particularly acute in the studies of social trust. Poorly designed measurements of social trust severely thwart our understanding of its magnitude, origins, and consequences. In this chapter, I first review the earlier studies of the extent of social trust in China, in which a sharp cleavage exists between area specialists and general comparativists. Subsequently, I find the contradiction can be traced back to the problematic measurements of social trust. In order to accurately measure social trust, I propose a new set of measurements based the relational approach established in Chapter I. Finally, using the unique data collected in rural China, I empirically explore whom Chinese residents trust, and to what extent.

Only when these objectives are achieved can I explore the relationships between the different types of social trust and examine how social trust emerges and functions in rural China. I believe my efforts to explore this measurement issue in the research of social trust are not only of critical importance to this study, but also of significance in regard to the cross-cultural study of social trust in general.

## CONFLICTING VIEWS ON SOCIAL TRUST IN CHINA

What does the existing literature tell about the forms and magnitudes of social trust in China? As a consequence of its vital importance, there has been a panoply of efforts to map and explain cross-national difference in the allocation of social trust.

Generally, there are two approaches—area studies based on interpretive researches,<sup>3</sup> and

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*Concepts: A Systematic Analysis*, ed. Giovanni Sartori (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1984). For more discussion, see Simon Jackman, “Measurement,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology*, ed. Janet M. Box-Steffensmeier, Henry E. Brady, and David Collier (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>3</sup> I borrow the term of “interpretative works” from Lucian Pye, and Andrew Nathan and Tianjian Shi to describe the studies “that are characteristically based on documentary sources, interviews, and field observation.” See, Lucian W. Pye, *The Mandarin and the Cadre: China's Political Cultures* (Ann Arbor,

comparative works drawn from the data of cross-national surveys. In accounting for the level of social trust in China, however, these two approaches present antithetical findings.

Among scholars interpretively analyzing social trust in China, one of most frequently cited contemporary thinkers is Francis Fukuyama. In his monograph *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* and many other articles, Fukuyama argues that, owing to China's traditional Confucian culture, trust in China circulates only among relatives and close friends; distrust of non-kin and strangers is pervasive.<sup>4</sup> In addition, Fukuyama argues that, China appears to be the least trusting society, compared to other Confucian countries in East Asia such as Japan and other industrialized countries like Germany and the United States. Specifically, he notes that:

[t]he primary (and often only) avenue to sociability is family and broader forms of kinship, like clans or tribes. Familistic societies frequently have weak voluntary associations because unrelated people have no basis for trusting on another. Chinese societies like Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the People's Republic of China itself are examples; the essence of Chinese Confucianism is the elevation of family bonds above all other social loyalties.<sup>5</sup>

Although well-endorsed by students of China and Asian studies,<sup>6</sup> Fukuyama's argument seems to be in sharp contradiction to conclusions reached by general

MI: Center for Chinese Studies, 1988); Andrew J. Nathan and Tianjian Shi, "Cultural Requisites for Democracy in China: Findings from a Survey," *Daedalus* 122, no. 2 (1993), 95.

<sup>4</sup> See Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1995); Also see, idem, "Social Capital and the Global Economy," *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 5 (1995).

<sup>5</sup> Fukuyama, *Trust*, 28-9.

<sup>6</sup> Pye, *The Mandarin and the Cadre: China's Political Cultures*; Idem, *Asian Power and Politics: The Cultural Dimensions of Authority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1951 [1920]); Idem, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2001 [1903]); Wei-ming Tu, "Cultural China: The Periphery as the Center," *Daedalus* 134, no. 4 (2005); Ming-cheng M. Lo and Eileen M. Otis, "Guanxi Civility: Processes, Potentials, and Contingencies," *Politics and Society* 31, no. 1 (2003); Snežina Michailova and Verner Worm, "Personal Networking in Russia and China: Blat and Guanxi," *European Management Journal* 21, no. 4 (2003); Alan Smart, "Gifts, Bribes, and Guanxi: A Reconsideration of Bourdieu's Social Capital," *Cultural Anthropology* 8, no. 3 (1993); Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, "The Resilience of Guanxi and Its New Deployments: A Critique of Some New Guanxi Scholarship," *The China Quarterly* 170 (2002).

comparativists, whose findings are primarily based on data collected from cross-national surveys.<sup>7</sup> In the project of the World Value Survey (WVS), for instance, Ronald Inglehart and his colleagues employ the canonical question—“generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?”<sup>8</sup>—to gauge social trust. Their findings show that, contrary to Fukuyama’s argument, the level of social trust in China is not only the highest among Confucian societies, but also considerably higher than the industrialized countries like Germany and the United States (see bolded in Table 3).<sup>9</sup> Table 3 summarizes the trust scores of selected countries in the recent wave of WVS.

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<sup>7</sup> For example, see Ronald Inglehart, “Trust, Well-being and Democracy,” in *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark E. Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Jan Delhey and Kenneth Newton, “Predicting Cross-National Levels of Social Trust: Global Pattern or Nordic Exceptionalism?,” *European Sociological Review* 21, no. 4 (2005); Soo Jiu Tan and Siok Kuan Tambyah, “Generalized Trust and Trust in Institutions in Confucian Asia,” *Social Indicators Research* (2010).

<sup>8</sup> See, Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997); Idem, “Trust, Well-being and Democracy.”

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Table 3. **Social Trust: The Rankings of Selected Countries**

Country	Rank	Survey_Year	Trust Score
Norway	1	WVS_2007	148.0
Sweden	2	WVS_2006	134.5
Denmark	3	EVS/WVS_1999	131.9
<b>China</b>	<b>4</b>	EAB_2008	<b>120.9</b>
Finland	5	WVS_2005	117.5
Switzerland	6	WVS_2007	107.4
Saudi Arabia	7	WVS_2005	105.8
...	...	...	...
Hong Kong	17	WVS_2005	82.4
Japan	18	WVS_2005	79.6
United States	19	WVS_2006	78.8
Germany	20	WVS_2006	75.8
...	...	...	...
Taiwan	25	EAB_2006	70.0
...	...	...	...

*Source:* WVS, the European Value Survey (EVS) and the East Asian Barometer (EAB), 1990-2008.

As shown in Table 3, of the 117 surveyed countries considered, China ranks, surprisingly, the fourth place, alongside the traditionally high-trust Nordic bloc. These results cause Inglehart to conclude that “[a]lthough we agree with most of what Fukuyama says about the importance of trust, he may be mistaken in characterizing China as a low-trust society.”<sup>10</sup> In another survey-based study covering 55 countries, Jan Delhey and Kenneth Newton also find that with respect to the magnitude of social trust, China not only ranks more highly than any other Asian country, but also is one of the few countries that can be categorized as a high-trust society<sup>11</sup> Specifically, Delhey and Newton conclude that “[i]n only six countries does as much as half the population express trust, these being Scandinavian nations (Norway, Sweden, and Denmark), and the

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 93.

<sup>11</sup> Delhey and Newton, “Predicting Cross-National Levels of Social Trust.”

Netherlands, Canada, and China.”<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, Soo Juan Tan and Siok Kuan Tambyah find that even when a two-item trust scale was used, China still ranks more highly than any other Asian country.<sup>13</sup>

**Table 4. Social Trust in China: “Do you think most people can be trusted,” WVS/EAB (1990-2008)**

	<i>1990</i>		<i>1995</i>		<i>2001</i>		<i>2008</i>	
	N.	(%)	N.	(%)	N.	(%)	N.	(%)
Most people can be trusted	591	60.0	751	52.0	530	55.0	974	52.0
Can't be too careful	394	40.0	694	48.0	433	45.0	899	48.0
Total	985	100.0	1445	100.0	963	100.0	1873	100.0

*Source:* The World Value Survey and the East Asian Barometer Survey, 1990-2008.

In addition, longitudinal survey data also shows that social trust in China not only was remarkably high, but also remained relatively stable in the past two decades. Table 4 shows the levels of social trust in China, measured from 1990 to 2008. In all the four waves of WVS/EAB, more than half of the Chinese respondents reported that most people can be trusted, slightly fluctuating between 60 percent in 1990 and 52 percent in 1998 and 2008.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, 315.

<sup>13</sup> Tan et al., “Generalized Trust and Trust in Institutions in Confucian Asia.”

## PROBLEMATIC CONCEPTUALIZATION AND OPERATIONALIZATION OF SOCIAL TRUST

How can we explain the contradiction between China specialists and general comparativists regarding the magnitude of social trust in China? Are Fukuyama and other area specialists mistakenly characterizing Chinese society? Or does the survey instrument used by Inglehart and other general comparativists fail to gauge the actual level of social trust in China? Unfortunately, few efforts have been made by political scientists to solve the puzzle.<sup>14</sup> Some students, treating China as an “outlier case,” even exclude it from their analyses,<sup>15</sup> Even worse, such a problem is not unique to China. Studies of social trust in countries such as the Arab nations and Russia have also been plagued by the same problem.<sup>16</sup>

Closer scrutiny reveals that the above-mentioned contradiction reflects the problem that has long been embedded in empirical political studies—the challenge of enhancing the validity and comparability of the measurements of social trust used in survey research. As emphasized by Gary King and his associates, without properly and adequately measured variables, it is “virtually impossible to achieve the goals of theoretical and causal goals of our field and all empirical fields.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> For an exception, see Wenfang Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005). Although he does introduce a new set of trust questions, Tang does not directly tackle the contradiction between the China specialists and general comparativists.

<sup>15</sup> See Christian Bjørnskov, “Determinants of Generalized Trust: A Cross-Country Comparison,” *Public Choice* 130, no. 1 (2007), 10. For another example, see Eric M. Uslaner, “Producing and Consuming Trust,” *Political Science Quarterly* 115, no. 4 (2000).

<sup>16</sup> For Arabic countries, see Sabri Ciftci, “Modernization, Islam, or Social Capital: What Explains Attitudes toward Democracy in the Muslim World?,” *Comparative Political Studies* 43, no. 11 (2010); M. Steven Fish, “Islam and Authoritarianism,” *World Politics* 55, no. 1 (2002). For Russia and some other post-Communist countries, see, for example, William M. Reisinger et al., “Political Values in Russia, Ukraine and Lithuania: Sources and Implications for Democracy,” *British Journal of Political Science* 24, no. 2 (1994).

<sup>17</sup> Gary King et al., “Enhancing the Validity and Cross-Cultural Comparability of Measurement in Survey Research,” *The American Political Science Review* 98, no. 1 (2004), 191.

With respect to the studies of social trust, the problem can be traced back to both the conceptualization and the operationalization of social trust. As noted by Patrick Sturgis and his colleagues, “empirical scholars [of social trust] have paid insufficient attention to distinctions drawn in *theoretical accounts between different kinds of interpersonal trust and how these should be measured empirically*” (emphasis added).<sup>18</sup>

Many researchers do not make a clear distinction between different types of social trust. As addressed in Chapter I, social trust essentially is a multifaceted concept, encompassing at least two major conceptually discernible components: trust in people we personally know (i.e., particularized trust) and trust invested in strangers (i.e., generalized trust). These two types of social trust have dramatically different roles in the initiation and continuation of trust relations. Unfortunately, many studies do not make a distinction between these two types of trusts, treating social trust as a monolithic concept.

Such neglect in theoretical construction inevitably leads to error in the operationalization of social trust. Most studies simply employ the “most people can be trusted” question to gauge social trust in general, overlooking the important distinction between different types of social trust. Given this, it is not surprising that Andrew Mitchell and Thomas Bossert would question “how well one item on trust can simultaneously represent everything.”<sup>19</sup>

Furthermore, even when some students have recognized the necessity to distinguish between particularized trust and generalized trust, they mistakenly assume the “most people can be trusted” survey question can accurately measure one’s trust in

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<sup>18</sup> Patrick Sturgis et al., “Does Ethnic Diversity Erode Trust? Putnam’s ‘Hunkering Down’ Thesis Reconsidered,” *British Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 1 (2010), 58.

<sup>19</sup> Andrew David Mitchell and Thomas J. Bossert, “Measuring Dimensions of Social Capital: Evidence from Surveys in Poor Communities in Nicaragua,” *Social Science & Medicine* 64, no. 1 (2007), 50.

strangers (i.e. generalized trust). As a matter of fact, the validity of the “most people can be trust” question is highly doubtful. This question was first introduced by Morris Rosenberg in 1952, not to gauge social trust but rather to quantitatively investigate misanthropy in individuals.<sup>20</sup> Later, in 1972, this question was incorporated into the National Opinion Research Center’s General Social Survey (GSS) as an inverting cynicism scale.<sup>21</sup> Since then, Rosenberg’s misanthropy measurement has been asked almost continually across various large-scale public opinion surveys as an indicator of generalized trust.<sup>22</sup> In the recent burgeoning empirical studies of social trust, most scholars simply assume the measurement is reliable, failing to question its validity and comparability.

Notwithstanding its popularity in empirical studies, some scholars have raised concerns about the extent to which this measurement actually captures generalized trust.<sup>23</sup> As Cook, Hardin, and Levi point out, the term “most people” is too vague to be interpreted uniformly by respondents.<sup>24</sup> People with different socioeconomic backgrounds and life experiences may interpret “most people” in dramatically different ways. Generational change, for instance, can exert a strong influence on the content of “most people.” Given changes of demography, due to the influx of immigrants and civil

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<sup>20</sup> See, Morris Rosenberg, “Misanthropy and Political Ideology,” *American Sociological Review* 21, no. 6 (1956).

<sup>21</sup> For a detailed discussion on development and usage of this question, see Karen S. Cook, Russell Hardin, and Margaret Levi, *Cooperation without Trust?* (New York, NY: Russessll Sage, 2005); Also see Tim Reeskens and Marc Hooghe, “Cross-Cultural Measurement Equivalence of Generalized Trust: Evidence from the European Social Survey (2002 and 2004),” *Social Indicators Research* 85, no. 3 (2008).

<sup>22</sup> Cook et al., *Cooperation without Trust?*; Patrick Sturgis and Patten Smith, “Assessing the Validity of Generalized Trust Questions: What Kind of Trust Are We Measuring?,” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 22, no. 1 (2010).

<sup>23</sup> For example, see Bo Rothstein, “Trust, Social Dilemmas and Collective Memories,” *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 12, no. 4 (2000); Lars Torpe and Henrik Lolle, “Identifying Social Trust in Cross-Country Analysis: Do We Really Measure the Same?,” *Social Indicators Research* (2010).

<sup>24</sup> Cook et al., *Cooperation without Trust?*



rights movement, “for current generation,” as by Cook, Hardin and Levi observe, the term represents “a much larger category than for respondents forty or fifty year ago.”<sup>25</sup>

Patrick Sturgis and Patten Smith further suggest that the issue of non-uniform interpretations to the “most people can be trusted” question occurs among not only respondents, but also researchers, which in turn appears to be even more detrimental to the study of social trust.<sup>26</sup> Specifically, they argue that scholars should be cautious in dealing with the following two assumptions:

[a] key, though usually implicit, assumption underlying the validity of any survey question is that all respondents interpret its intended meaning in a consistent manner. ... An equally important assumption is, of course, that respondents should interpret and respond to a survey question in a manner which corresponds to the conceptual definition of the researcher analyzing the data.<sup>27</sup>

Their carefully designed survey study reveals that, unfortunately, these two assumptions are constantly violated when the “most people can be trusted” question is asked.<sup>28</sup>

Given its inherent vagueness, the “most people can be trusted” question cannot help us to accurately gauge generalized trust. As Sturgis and Smith conclude, “[c]ounter to the widespread assumption that these questions measure generalized trust, we find that a substantial number of respondents report having thought about people who are known to them personally.”<sup>29</sup> In other words, the measurement tends to reflect particularized trust. As a consequence, since people tend place more trust in people they know, the question is likely to over-estimate the true level of generalized trust. Hence, we cannot confidently say that the “most people can be trusted” question is measuring generalized trust.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 14.

<sup>26</sup> Sturgis and Smith, “Assessing the Validity of Generalized Trust Questions.”

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, 88-9.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, 74.

Recognizing these problems associated with the measurement of social trust, some students have proposed a multiple-item approach to fathoming social trust. Tim Reeskens and Marc Hooghe, for example, argue that the current single-item measurement of social trust is unreliable because (1) people may not produce consistent responses over time; (2) limited answering categories lack precision and undercut statistical power, and (3) the single-item measurement lacks sufficient scope to encompass all the characteristics of the measured object. Accordingly, they use the following three different statements to measure social trust:

Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? (variable 'cantrust')

Do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair? (variable 'peoplefair')

Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves? (variable 'peoplehelp')<sup>30</sup>

Although it has gained popularity in recent years,<sup>31</sup> this approach to measuring social trust is not flawless. Specifically, this approach still fails to solve the problem of vagueness discussed above, not to mention the need to distinguish between particularized trust and generalized trust. In other words, rather than tackling the question of whether we are actually measuring what we believe we are measuring, they focus on how to

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<sup>30</sup> Reeskens and Hooghe, "Cross-Cultural Measurement Equivalence of Generalized Trust," 522.

<sup>31</sup> In recent years, increasing number of political scientists has adopted this approach. For instance, Natalia Letki uses a four-itemed trust measurement, including questions: "(1) Most people can be trusted. (2) If someone is in serious trouble, no one else cares about it. (3) If you are not always on your guard other people will take advantage of you. (4) A person cooperates with other people only when he or she sees it is in his or her own interest." See, Natalia Letki, "Socialization for Participation? Trust, Membership, and Democratization in East-Central Europe," *Political Research Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (2004), 670. In another study, Tarja Nieminen and his colleagues use a different set of questions: "Feeling safe in neighborhood (no. 24); Feeling safe walking out alone after 10 p.m. (no. 25); Cynical mistrust (nos. 32-39); Been surprised by the behavior of people you thought you knew well (no. 30); Has it happened that people whom you counted on disappointed you (no. 31)." See, Tarja Nieminen et al., "Measurement and Socio-Demographic Variation of Social Capital in a Large Population-Based Survey," *Social Indicators Research* 85, no. (2008), 414.

increase the precision of the theoretically ill-constructed concept, which contributes little to our understanding of the actual levels of generalized trust and particularized trust.

The current studies of social trust are fundamentally constrained by ill-designed measurements. Without a combination of theoretical clarification and measurement refinement, it is impossible for us to gauge social trust. In the following section, I explain how we can accurately measure social trust using a relational approach.

### A NEW APPROACH TO MEASURING SOCIAL TRUST

As discussed in Chapter I, social trust should be understood in a more eclectic way. The identities of “others” can strongly shape one’s willingness to trust. Therefore, in this research, I adopted a set of measurements of social trust based on the different identities of “most people.” Specifically, I asked respondents to report their trust in people belonging to different relational categories respectively. When the identities of “most people” are specified as relatives, close friends, classmates, colleagues, or strangers, the problem of misinterpretation will be reduced to a minimum level. Therefore, compared to the canonical “most people” approach or the multi-item approach, this approach allows us to gauge whom an individual trusts and to what extent, in a more accurate way.

Indeed, a handful of students have already used this relational approach to measure different types of social trust, and found it to be valid and reliable. For example, Christiaan Grootaert and her colleagues have designed a comprehensive questionnaire of social capital, SC-IQ. Focusing “both on generalized trust (the extent to which one trusts

people overall) and on the extent of trust in specific types of people,”<sup>32</sup> they find that respondents’ trusting scores change substantially when measured across different relational categories. Similarly, in a study in Uganda, Deepa Narayan and Michael Cassidy asked their respondents to report their levels of trust with respect to various categories of people.<sup>33</sup> After analysis, three types of relational trust stand out: trust in agencies, trust in members of one’s immediate environment, and trust in the business community.

However, it should be noted that the specific measurements of this relational approach are highly sensitive to the sociopolitical contexts. Although some relational categories, such as relatives and strangers appear to be universal, many others are not. For example, while Radnitz and his associates could use relational categories like *urug* (i.e., local kin groups) to measure social trust in Central Asian countries,<sup>34</sup> the same social category cannot be used in the Chinese context. Therefore, in order to accurately measure social trust in rural China, we need to ascertain the identities of the most relevant social categories in the Chinese setting. In the follow section, drawing on earlier interpretive works, I try to identify the principal relational categories in rural China.

#### WHOM DOES CHINESE VILLAGERS TRUST?

As noted above, the body of empirical research on social trust in China is not sufficient to provide a reliable source from which to develop new measurements of social

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<sup>32</sup> Christiaan Grootaert et al., *Measuring Social Capital: An Integrated Questionnaire* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2004), 12.

<sup>33</sup> Deepa Narayan and Michael F. Cassidy, “A Dimensional Approach to Measuring Social Capital: Development and Validation of a Social Capital Inventory,” *Current Sociology* 49, no. 2 (2001).

<sup>34</sup> Scott Radnitz, Jonathan Wheatley, and Christoph Zürn, “The Origins of Social Capital: Evidence from a Survey of Post-Soviet Central Asia,” *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 6 (2009).

trust.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, in this dissertation I develop the measurements of social trust primarily from two other sources: (1) findings from non-survey-based or interpretive works by China observers, and (2) theoretical justifications and empirical findings from studies in non-Chinese settings. There are three schools of thoughts on the possible principal social categories in rural China: the cultural thesis, the statist thesis, and the social distance thesis.

#### *A. Cultural Thesis: Clans and the Others*

The cultural thesis appears to be the earliest school of thoughts regarding the effort to account for social trust in China. Ever since the work of Max Weber, China scholars have emphasized the deterministic role played by the Confucian tradition in shaping trust relations in China.<sup>36</sup> Generally, the cultural thesis suggests that in rural China clans and lineages are the most important social category, and ordinary Chinese villagers only trust people from the same lineages or clans, and are not willing to extend their trust to people outside this category.

Specifically, the cultural thesis suggests that social life China is fundamentally shaped by Confucianism. Unlike western cultures, Confucian culture is, in its essence, a familistic culture, emphasizing family lines and mutual obligations among clan members.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, bonded by familistic values, villagers from same clans or lineages tend to place great trust in one another. As Lucian Pye once noted, “people [under

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<sup>35</sup> For an example of the few exceptions, see Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China*.

<sup>36</sup> For example, see Weber, *The Religion of China*; Idem, *The Protestant Ethic*; Pye, *The Mandarin and the Cadre*; Idem, “Civility, Social Capital, and Civil Society”; Fukuyama, *Trust*.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

Confucian influences] are expected to be honest and helpful mainly with family and members of clans.”<sup>38</sup>

While investing enormous trust in peers of the same clans or lineages, Chinese rural residents generally are suspicious of other villagers and strangers. As observed by the prominent China specialist Richard Solomon,

[a]ctually, social transactions between people of equal or near-equal social status were relatively ‘underdeveloped’ in the Chinese tradition. ... From the time children begin to have contact with nonfamily peers, they are led to acquire a distrust of other people’s motives ... The legacy of these early life images of social relations beyond the family is a limited sense of interpersonal trust.<sup>39</sup>

In other words, since people outside clans or lineages are excluded from such family networks and are not governed by shared familistic values, they are considered not trustworthy. Even today, such clan and lineage networks are well organized in some part of China, and villages in many areas have built their own temples where they worship their ancestors together and make important decisions for their clans and lineages.

Therefore, according to the cultural thesis, the most important social category pertaining to trust in rural China is clan and lineage: while people from the same clans or lineages can be trusted, other villagers and strangers cannot.

#### *B. Statist Thesis: Relatives and the Others*

This line of thinking emphasizes the impacts of Communist rule in Chinese society. According to this approach, long-term Communist rule has led to social atomization and pervasive distrust in China. People could only trust people with whom

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<sup>38</sup> Pye, “Civility, Social Capital, and Civil Society,” 770.

<sup>39</sup> Richard H. Solomon, *Mao’s Revolution and the Chinese Political Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971), 125-6.

they had direct family ties, and so relatives seem to represent the most important social category in determining who can be trusted and who cannot.

Specifically, as many scholars have pointed out, a defining characteristic of Communist rule is the “organizational compulsion,” that is, the compulsion “to absorb or destroy all social groups that might even constitute passive obstructions to the movement’s dynamic need to subordinate society totally to its power.”<sup>40</sup> Torn from their traditional social groups (clans and lineages, in the case of China), the atomized masses would become the subjects of mobilization by the party-state.<sup>41</sup>

After the CCP had consolidated its grip on the state, in the mid-1950s, the CCP regime launched multiple social movements intended to destroy various social groups in order to atomize Chinese society. As noted by Thomas Gold,

the state or party controlled mass, compulsory-membership organizations of peasants, workers, students, women, writers, scientists, and so on, all of which monitored and propagandized their members. ... *The party even sowed distrust in hopes that they would break former ties and submit themselves instead to CCP leadership in all things* ... In sum, the CCP erected a multilayered system designed to transform China’s social structure, supervise as many aspects of everyone’s life as possible, remove alternatives, make people dependent on party-led entities for their livelihood and status, and curtail geographical and occupational mobility (emphasis added).<sup>42</sup>

Since after several waves of these political campaigns there was virtually no social group remaining outside of direct relatives, the statist thesis implies that under the CCP rule ordinary Chinese can only trust their relatives.

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<sup>40</sup> Zbigniew Brzezinski, “The Nature of the Soviet System,” *Slavic Review* 20, no. 3 (1961), 353; Also see Hannah Arendt, *The Origin of Totalitarianism* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973).

<sup>41</sup> Sheri Berman, “Civil Society and Political Institutionalization,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 40, no. 5 (1997); Idem, “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic,” *World Politics* 49, no. 3 (1997); James L. Gibson, “Social Networks, Civil Society, and the Prospects for Consolidating Russia’s Democratic Transition,” *American Journal of Political Science* 45, no. 1 (2001)

<sup>42</sup> Thomas B. Gold, “The Resurgence of Civil Society in China,” *Journal of Democracy* 1, no. 1 (1990), 24; Also see Ian Johnson, “The Death and Life of China’s Civil Society,” *Perspectives on Politics* 1, no. 3 (2003).

Indeed, this projection of the statist thesis has already been confirmed by many studies conducted in the post-Soviet bloc. Even after the collapses of the Communist regimes, these societies are still suffering from social atomization and pervasive distrust.<sup>43</sup> In Poland, for instance, Piotr Sztompka uses the term, “culture of distrust,” to describe the lack of trust resulting from the prior Communist rule.<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, if we focus on the impacts of the CCP rule, it is reasonable to assume that the only trustworthy category is relative. Beyond that, no one can be trusted.

### *C. Social Distance Thesis: Neighbors and the Others*

This thesis focuses on the impacts of social exchange on the formation of social trust. In general, the social distance thesis suggests that social trust in rural China is strongly affected by social interactions among villagers. The more frequently they interact with each other, the more likely they are to develop trust in each other.

One of most influential advocates of the social distance thesis is Fei Xiaotong. In his *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society*, Fei argues that in rural China “trust derives from familiarity,”<sup>45</sup> and that the only way to achieve familiarity is through intensive social interactions. This familiarity-based view of trust is echoed in the writings of many other sociologists.<sup>46</sup> Niklas Luhmann, for instance, argues that “[t]rust

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<sup>43</sup> Richard Rose, “Postcommunism and the Problem of Trust,” *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 3 (1994); Martin and Sandberg, *Social Capital and Democratization*; Christopher Marsh, “Social Capital and Democracy in Russia,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 33, no. 2 (2000).

<sup>44</sup> See Piotr Sztompka, “Trust and Emerging Democracy: Lessons from Poland,” *International Sociology* 11, no. 1 (1996); Idem, “Trust, Distrust and Two Paradoxes of Democracy,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 1, no. 1 (1998).

<sup>45</sup> Xiaotong Fei, *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society*, trans., Gary G. Hamilton and Wang Zheng (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1992), 43.

<sup>46</sup> For example, see Barbara A. Misztal, “Trust and Cooperation: The Democratic Public Sphere,” *Journal of Sociology* 37, no. 4 (2001); Adam B. Seligman, *The Problem of Trust* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton



is a solution for specific problems of risk. But trust has to be achieved within a familiar world.”<sup>47</sup>

According to this line of arguments, neighbors can also qualify as an important social category pertaining to social trust in rural China. Specifically, owing to the physical proximity, Chinese ordinary villagers are commonly engaged in more social interactions with their neighbors, and therefore it is reasonable to assume that neighbors are more likely to develop trust in each other. Moreover, as the old Chinese proverb goes, “near neighbors are much better than remote relatives.”

In sum, the earlier interpretative studies of social trust suggest that there are at least three potentially important social categories related to trust. In the next section, I will describe my specific measurements of social trust, and empirically explore the critical questions that I have raised at the very beginning of this chapter: Whom do Chinese rural residents trust? And to what extent do they trust them?

## HOW MUCH SOCIAL TRUST IS THERE IN RURAL CHINA?

### *A. Measurements of Social Trust*

By reviewing the interpretive works on social trust in rural China, I have established that there are three important social categories pertaining to trust: clans/lineages, relatives, and neighbors. On the basis of these three categories, I constructed six survey items to gauge ordinary Chinese rural residents’ trust in different

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University Press, 1997); Idem, “Trust and Sociability: On the Limits of Confidence and Role Expectations,” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 57, no. 4 (1998).

<sup>47</sup> Niklas Luhmann, “Familiarity, Confidence, Trust: Problems and Alternatives,” in *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, ed. Diego Gambetta (New York, NY: Basil Blackwell, 1988, 95.

types of people: relatives, villagers of same surname, villagers of different surnames, neighboring villagers, non-neighboring villagers, and strangers. It should be noted that in rural China, several expressions—such as *daxing*, *zongzu*, *jiazu*, or *zong*—are used interchangeably to describe a clan/lineage group.<sup>48</sup> In this survey, I use the term “*xing*” (which literally means “surnames”), since it commonly refers to the major clan or lineage group in a village. Table 5 presents the ways in which these six relational categories fit into the above-mentioned three theses.

**Table 5. Relational Categories of Social Trust in China by Different Approaches**

	Radius of Trust
<i>Cultural</i>	Relatives, Kinsmen > Non-Kinsmen, Neighbors, Non-Neighbors > Strangers
<i>Statist</i>	Relatives > Kinsmen, Non-Kinsmen, Neighbors, Non-Neighbors, Strangers
<i>Social Distance</i>	Relatives, Kinsmen, Neighbors > Non-Kinsmen, Non-Neighbors > Strangers

<sup>48</sup> Melanie Manion, "Democracy, Community, Trust: The Impact of Elections in Rural China," *Comparative Political Studies* 39, no. 3 (2006); Chenggui Li, "Dangdai Zhongguo Nongcun Zongzu Wenti Yanjiu [Lineage Group Study in Contemporary Rural China]," *Guanli Shijie [Management World]* 5, no. (1994); Rui Wen and Guohe Jiang, "20 Shiji 90 Niandai Yilai Dangdai Zhongguo Nongcun Zongzu Wenti Yanjiu Guankui [Lineage Group Study in Contemporary Rural China since 1990s]," *Fujian Shifan Daxue Xuebao [Journal of Fujian Normal University]* 4, no. (2004).

The respondents in this nation-wide survey were asked to answer the question, “Generally speaking, if there are no direct economic concerns, would you please tell me how trustworthy these categories of people are?” For each category of people, respondents were asked to assess their levels of trustworthiness on a 5-point scale, where “1” stands for “most of them cannot be trusted,” “2” for “more than a half cannot be trusted,” “3” for “Half can be trusted, but half cannot be trusted,” “4” for “More than a half can be trusted,” and “5” for “most of them can be trusted.”

#### *A. The Extent of Different Types of Social Trust*

Table 2.4 presents the distributions of all the items of social trust on the basis of the six relational categories in rural China. We can draw three important findings from the distribution. First, the overall results of the distribution tend to confirm the views held by the China specialists: the majority of our Chinese rural respondents apparently trusted people they know personally, which is a clear indication of a high degree of particularized trust.<sup>49</sup> Specifically, the number of respondents who indicate that either more than half or most of the members of the five non-stranger relational categories can be trusted ranges from a low of 67 percent for trust in non-neighboring villagers to a high of 91 percent for trust in relatives. This finding is further reinforced by the fact that the mean scores of all the five items of social trust in non-stranger categories are well above “3” (which indicates that half of the members with a specific relational category can be trusted), ranging from a low of 3.83 for trust in villagers of different surnames to a high of 4.47 for trust in relatives. Together these findings suggest that in general the

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<sup>49</sup> For example, Fukuyama, *Trust*; Pye, “Civility, Social Capital, and Civil Society.”

respondents in rural China have very strong levels of trust in people of non-stranger categories, encompassing relatives and all the other villagers.

A second important finding that we can draw from the results presented in Table 6 is that rural residents in China are generally suspicious of people they do not know personally, and are reluctant to extend their trust to strangers. Specifically, the mean score of the item of trust in strangers was only 1.88, well below “2” (which indicates more than half of the strangers cannot be trusted). Moreover, the survey also reveals that only less than 6 percent of all respondent agreed that either more than half or most of the strangers can be trusted. Such a finding implies that distrust in strangers is prevalent in rural China; most rural residents are not willing to extend their radius of trust to people whom they do not know personally.

**Table 6. The Distribution of Different Types of Social Trust in Rural China**

	<i>Relatives</i>		<i>Neighbors</i>		<i>Non-Neighbors</i>		<i>Villagers of Same Surname</i>		<i>Villagers of Diff. Surname</i>		<i>Strangers</i>	
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)
Most of them can be trusted (5)	2429	57.0	1923	45.0	1158	27.1	1390	32.8	1059	25.0	54	1.3
More than half of them can be trusted (4)	1459	34.3	1721	40.3	1883	44.1	1877	44.3	1770	41.8	188	4.5
Half of them can be trusted (3)	317	7.4	470	11.0	939	22.0	784	18.5	1104	26.0	862	20.5
More than half cannot be trusted (2)	44	1.0	130	3.0	249	5.8	160	3.8	253	6.0	1184	28.1
Most cannot be trusted (1)	10	.2	26	.6	41	1.0	27	.6	53	1.3	1924	45.7
Mean Score	4.47		4.26		3.91		4.05		3.83		1.88	
Standard Deviation	.699		.818		.896		.848		.913		.970	
N. of observations	4259		4270		4270		4238		4239		4212	

*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

Third, a juxtaposition of the above two findings clearly reveals a sharp contrast between the measurements of the five items of trust with respect to people whom respondents know personally and the measurements with respect to trust in strangers. Specifically, while reporting high scores for the five items of non-stranger relational categories (i.e., relative, villagers of same/different surnames, and non-/neighboring villagers), our respondents gave low scores for the item of trust in strangers. This confirms our earlier suggestion regarding the internal complexity of social trust. Instead of being a monolithic whole, social trust differentiates into a variety of specific instances of trusts in the course of daily social interactions. The levels of social trust vary across different relational categories. Therefore it is misleading to describe the level of social trust without making reference to the specific relational categories. The conceptual differences between the different types of social trust are not only theoretically coherent, but also empirically concrete.

To a certain degree, these findings can help us resolve the contradiction mentioned at the start of this chapter, that is, the contrary descriptions presented by area specialists and general comparativists. Generally, the overall results of the distribution of different types of social trusts tend to confirm the propositions made by the area specialists, that is, that Chinese society is a society processing high levels of particularized trust and low levels of generalized trust. Accordingly, a possible explanation to the reported high trust score in cross-national surveys such as the WVS and the EAB is that most Chinese respondents might be interpreting the term “most people” in such a way as to include people they personally know, but not strangers. In

other words, the commonly used generalized-trust measure (i.e., the “most people can be trusted” question) might be contaminated by individuals’ particularized trust.

The study conducted by Sturgis and Smith provides a strong support to our speculation. Specifically, to explore the issue of whom people are thinking of when they are responding to the “most people can be trusted” question, they asked the following two questions in sequence:

Q1: “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?”<sup>50</sup>

Q2: “In answering the last question, who came to mind when you were thinking about ‘most people’?”<sup>51</sup>

Upon examining the respondents to these two questions, Sturgis and Smith found that only 22 percent of respondents were thinking of strangers when they were asked the first questions. Therefore, the “most people can be trusted” question is not always measuring people’s trust in strangers. Given the relatively lower openness and mobility in China, it is reasonable to assume that the percentage of people who are thinking of strangers when they are asked the “most people can be trusted” question is even smaller. Therefore, it would be quite misleading to use data collected on the basis of the “most people can be trusted” question to declare that China is a high (generalized) trust society.

### *B. The Two Dimensions of Social Trust*

A closer look at the distribution of the six types of trust reveals that, besides the apparent difference between trust in people we know and trust in strangers, there was a

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<sup>50</sup> Sturgis and Smith, “Assessing the Validity of Generalized Trust Questions.”

<sup>51</sup> *Idem*, 79-80.

certain degree of variations in respondents' assessments with respect to the five items of trust in the non-stranger categories. Specifically, the respondents gave substantially higher scores of trust for relatives and neighbors than they did for other groups (i.e., non-neighbors, and villagers of different surnames): the mean scores of trust for relatives, neighbors, and villagers of same surnames were all above "4," while those for non-neighbors and villagers of different surnames were below "4."

How can we explain such variations within the respondents' assessment of the five particularized trust items? Are there new conceptual components of social trust other than particularized trust and generalized trust? The answers to these questions are of great importance to our understanding of the different dimensions of social trust, and hence the evaluations of the uniqueness of the forms of social trust in China.

To provide some initial answers to these questions, I will first try to identify the most important conceptual components of social trust in the Chinese setting. In survey-based public opinions studies, a well-accepted approach to the categorization of the sub-dimensions of certain general attitudes (e.g., democratic values), is to employ factor analysis to sort out the "naturally occurring clusters."<sup>52</sup> Resting on "socially or psychologically defined standards of consistency," factor analysis can help determine the consistent sub-dimensions of social trust in rural China. In this dissertation, I conducted an exploratory factor analysis with all the six items regarding trust in different social categories. The results are reported in Table 7.

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<sup>52</sup> See Arthur H. Miller, Vicki L. Hesli, and William M. Reisinger, "Comparing Citizen and Elite Belief Systems in Post-Soviet Russia and Ukraine," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (1995), 8; Also see Robert C. MacCallum, "Factor Analysis," in *The Sage Handbook of Quantitative Methods in Psychology* (London, UK: Sage, 2009). For similar practices in the studies of social trust, see Mitchell and Bossert, "Measuring Dimensions of Social Capital."



**Table 7. Factor Analysis of Social Trust Items in Rural China**

Items	Trust in Neighbors <i>Factor 1</i>	Trust in Strangers <i>Factor 2</i>
Trust in villagers of the same surnames	.846	
Trust in non-neighboring villagers	.812	
Trust in neighboring villagers	.808	
Trust in villagers of different surnames	.805	
Trust in relatives	.607	
Trust in strangers		.950

*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

*Note:* Figures in this table are factor loadings of .25 or larger from the varimax rotated matrix for all factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0.

As presented in Table 7, two factors, composed of all the six trust items, emerge from the factor analysis. These two factors neatly deal with particularized trust and generalized trust respectively: the factor of particularized trust encompasses the five items of trust in non-strangers (relatives, non-/neighbors, and villagers of same/different surnames); only trust in strangers loaded in the factor of generalized trust. Together, the two factors explain two thirds (68.4 percent) of the item variance among all the six items of social trust.

From the results of this factors analysis, we can reach at least two conclusions of considerable importance. First, the results presented in Table 7 confirm our expectation that the most important distinction between different types of social trust is the one between particularized trust and generalized trust. Specifically, although in this dissertation we employ six trust items encompassing various relational categories in rural China, we ended up with only two components after the factor analysis. Hence, it is

reasonable to assume that ordinary Chinese rural residents markedly differentiate between trust in fellow villagers and trust in strangers.

A second and even more important conclusion that we can draw from this finding is that particularized trust in rural China seems to be far less particularistic than many scholars have suggested. Specifically, although the average of Chinese villagers' trust in relatives was slightly higher than the other four categories of particularized trust (i.e., villagers of same surname, villagers of different surnames, neighboring villagers, and non-neighboring villagers), the gap is neither substantive nor statistically significant. In other words, the ordinary Chinese villagers generally trust their fellow villagers equally, regardless of their clan or lineage identities or whether or not the villagers are their neighbors. Therefore, the results from this nation-wide survey contradict the view held by many Chinese specialists that social trust in China only circulates only within a small circle. Instead, social trust in rural China extends well beyond the boundaries of direct family, clans or lineages, and neighbors, encompassing all members of village communities.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter seeks to investigate three basic questions: What are the principal forms of social trust in China? How can we accurately measure the different variants of social trust? To what extent do Chinese rural residents trust people of different social categories? So as to answer these three questions, this chapter has achieved the following tasks.

First, I have explored the key methodological problem associated with the study of social trust: the underdevelopment of the measurements. The discrepancy between area specialists and general comparativists in depicting the extent of social trust in China is the best example. The validity of the commonly used “most be people can trusted” question is, given its inherent vagueness highly questionable. After comparing the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to improving the measurements of social trust, I have argued that the most reliable approach is to specify the relational categories of the trustees.

Second, in order to ascertain the principal relational categories in the Chinese context, I have explored the earlier interpretative works on social trust in China. On the basis of these works, I have established the measurement of social trust with reference to six social categories: relatives, neighbors, non-neighbors, villagers of same surnames, villagers of different surnames, and strangers. The validity of these relational categories in the Chinese context has been thoroughly discussed with reference to earlier interpretive works. The indexes not only have been used as indicators in this chapter to determine the extent of social trust in China, but will serve as dependent variables in the analysis of the relationship between the different types of social trust and various socioeconomic and sociopolitical factors in the following chapters.

Third, using the relation-based measurement I constructed, I have examined Chinese villagers’ trust in people from each social category. The results indicated that our respondent in rural China have quite strong trust in their surrounding people, such as relatives, neighbors, non-neighbors, villagers of same surname and villagers of different surnames. However, compared to the great trust in people they personally know, the

Chinese villagers demonstrated deep distrust in strangers. A majority of our respondents suggest that most strangers could not be trusted.

Fourth, to further explore the Chinese rural residents' undergirding conceptualization of social trust, I have conducted a factor analysis on the basis of the six survey items of trust. The results of the factor analysis clearly indicate that there were only two discernible components of social trust in the minds of ordinary Chinese villagers—particularized trust and generalized trust. While our respondents did not differentiate between people they personally know, such as relatives, neighbors or non-neighbors, and villagers of same or different surname(s), they did make a clear distinction between strangers and their fellow villagers.

From these findings about the forms and levels of social trust in rural China, we can draw at least two important conclusions. One is that Chinese society is abundant in particularized trust but lacks generalized trust. Consequently, it would be misleading to simply declare that China is a high- or low-trust society. Without specifying the types of social trust under scrutiny, the exploration of social trust can lead only to inconsistent or even contradictory findings. Moreover, the findings presented in this chapter indicate that since the current “most people can be trusted” question cannot effectively distinguish between particularized trust and generalized trust, it cannot serve as a reliable measurement in cross-national studies.

Second, although there is abundant particularized trust in rural China, it is not as particularistic as many China specialists have postulated. On the contrary, our respondents did not reduce their trust substantially when the trustees were not their relative or neighbors, or were not from the same lineage/clan group. It seems that neither

traditional Confucian culture nor Mao's totalitarian rule has constrained trust formation within village communities; the ordinary villagers still were able to develop strong bonds of trust in each other.

However, the above two conclusions raise another important question: given rural China's high levels of particularized trust and low generalized trust, is it the case that particularized trust hinders the development of generalized trust? In the following chapter, I will respond to this question by systematically examining the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust.

## CHAPTER III

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENERALIZED AND PARTICULARIZED TRUST

The analysis in the previous chapter has successfully established and validated our approach to the measurements of social trust in the context of rural China. After exploring the variability across the six survey items, two latent sub-dimensions of trust—particularized trust and generalized trust—have emerged. This confirms our expectation, stated in Chapter I, that the most important distinction between different types of social trust is whether the participants possess prior information about each other (i.e., strangers vs. non-strangers). These findings about the two principal components of social trust raise a series of questions of great importance. Specifically, granted there are significant differences between particularized trust and generalized trust, but is there also a relationship between the two? If so, what are the relationships? Does the ordinary Chinese rural residents' trust in people they know erode or foster their trust in strangers?

However, little attention has been paid to these questions. Students of social trust know surprisingly little about the relationship between different types of trust, not to mention how the two types of trust are associated in China. As noted by Mark Warren, the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust still remain “uncharted territory.”<sup>1</sup>

This chapter, therefore, is devoted to the investigation of these critical questions, empirically examining and testing the competing arguments about the relationship

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<sup>1</sup> Mark E. Warren, “Conclusion,” in *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark E. Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 357. For a similar concern, see Marc Hooghe, “Social Capital and Diversity: Generalized Trust, Social Cohesion and Regimes of Diversity,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 40, no. 3 (2007), 714-5.

between particularized trust and generalized trust against the data collected in rural China. To this end, this chapter begins with a brief review of the theoretical discussion about the differences between these two types of social trust, and then turns to an overview of the disparate arguments on the strength and nature of their relationship. Subsequently, empirical analysis is introduced to test the relationship between these two types of social trust. Finally, a brief discussion on the implications of the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust in rural China is presented.

## THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

As discussed in Chapter I, although most scholars of social trust have agreed upon the basic distinction between particularized trust and generalized trust, their reasons are varied.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, there is virtually no consensus on *whether* and *how* particularized trust and generalized trust are related. So as to systematically explore the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust, I start my analysis with a review of the literature pertaining to the theoretical and political importance of the distinction between particularized trust and generalized trust, which will help us to understand importance and necessity of this exploration of the relationship between the two.

### *A. The Difference between Particularized Trust and Generalized Trust*

Although agreeing upon the importance of the distinction between particularized trust and generalized trust, scholars interpret this distinction in different ways. Some

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<sup>2</sup> For instance, Peter Nannestad once commented that “[s]o far, research on generalized trust—or other types of trust for that matter—does (still) not proceed from a common understanding of what the term ‘trust’ designates. There is not even agreement on the category to which trust belongs.” See Peter Nannestad, “What Have We Learned About Generalized Trust, If Anything?,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 11, no. (2008), 414.

early studies argue that the importance of this distinction lies in its utility to democracy at the macro level. Recent studies, influenced by many middle-range theories, focus more on how particularized trust and generalized trust variably shape cooperation at the micro level. Jointly, these two perspectives necessitate the exploration of the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust.

*Trusts Differentiated by Democratic Utility* As discussed in Chapter I, the very early studies of social trust in political science stemmed, by and large, from political scientists' interests in its relationship to democracy.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, many democratic theorists have argued that for democracy to survive and work, citizens must "have trust and confidence in their fellow political actors."<sup>4</sup> With the further development of research on trust and democracy, scholars have noted that social trust does not have a uniform impact on the stability and viability of democracy. While some kinds of trust strengthen these civic virtues, others apparently do not.<sup>5</sup>

Recognizing the differing impacts of social trust on democracy, political scientists have introduced the distinction between generalized trust and particularized trust,<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For example, see Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1963); Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba, eds., *Political Culture and Political Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965).

<sup>4</sup> Sidney Verba, "Comparative Political Culture," in *Political Culture and Political Development*, ed. Lucian W. Pye and Sidney Verba (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 535. Also see, Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971), 150; Ronald Inglehart, "The Renaissance of Political Culture," *The American Political Science Review* 82, no. 4 (1988).

<sup>5</sup> Warren, "Conclusion," 356. Also see Eric M. Uslaner, "Producing and Consuming Trust," *Political Science Quarterly* 115, no. 4 (2000); Idem, *The Moral Foundations of Trust* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Eric M. Uslaner and Richard S. Conley, "Civic Engagement and Particularized Trust: The Ties That Bind People to Their Ethnic Communities," *American Politics Research* 31, no. 4 (2003).

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. It should be noted that such this kind of terminology is a very *political* one, only observable in the writings of political scientists. Occasionally, students of political science also use other terms such as "bonding/bridging," "thick/thin," and "parochial/general."



arguing that generalized trust is an attitude that entails desirable consequences for democracy, and that particularized trust tends to be detrimental to the health of democratic institutions. Specifically, it is argued that generalized trusters are more active in civic participation, more tolerant, and more likely to make compromises in the public sphere.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, particularized trusters are regarded as the parochials in the society—less active, less tolerant, and less compatible with pluralist democracy.<sup>8</sup> Given this, it is not surprising that, in referring to these two types of trust, many scholars use the expressions “good trust” and “bad trust.”<sup>9</sup>

Hence, from the perspective of the roles of trust in affecting democracy, it is of critical importance to explore the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust, or, in the words of Mark Warren suggested, “the ‘convertibility’ of trust relations—from forms of trust that are bad for democracy to those are good.”<sup>10</sup>

*Trusts Differentiated by Cooperative Utility* Not only perceived to be important for the viability and stability of democracy at the macro level, the distinction between particularized trust and generalized trust is also found consequential for social cooperation at the micro level. Specifically, political scientists, sociologists, and economists have all agreed that social trust, understood as people’s basic expectations regarding social interactions, can fundamentally shape their decision as to whether or not

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<sup>7</sup> For example, see John L. Sullivan and John E. Transue, “The Psychological Underpinnings of Democracy: A Selective Review of Research on Political Tolerance, Interpersonal Trust, and Social Capital,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 50, no. 1 (1999).

<sup>8</sup> Uslaner and Conley, “Civic Engagement and Particularized Trust.” For similar arguments, see Gema M. García Albacete, “The Saliency of Political Cleavages and the ‘Dark Sides’ of Social Capital: Evidence from Spain,” *American Behavioral Scientist* 53, no. 5 (2010).

<sup>9</sup> Warren, “Conclusion,” 356-7.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 357.

they participate in cooperative activities.<sup>11</sup> Yet close scrutiny reveals that particularized trust and generalized trust tend to play dramatically different roles.

On the one hand, trust in strangers is widely perceived to be the key to the initiation of spontaneous cooperation. Without generalized trust, individuals acting in a rational manner can never escape from the collective action problem.<sup>12</sup> As such, generalized trust is “a booster rocket that helps one to engage in broader social cooperation.”<sup>13</sup> Therefore, generalized trust significantly reduces opportunity cost for individuals, since the generalized truster can harvest more opportunities.<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, the impacts of particularized trust on social cooperation seem to be mixed. While strong trust within close-knit networks is conducive to in-group cooperation by sustaining secure and committed relations and by reducing such transaction costs as monitoring and enforcement,<sup>15</sup> many scholars have argued that strong norms of particularized trust may obstruct intergroup cooperation, substantially increasing opportunity costs for individuals.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> For three thorough reviews, see Denise M. Rousseau and others, “Not So Different after All: A Cross-Discipline View of Trust,” *The Academy of Management Review* 23, no. 3 (1998); Paul S. Adler and Seok-Woo Kwon, “Social Capital: Prospects for a New Concept,” *The Academy of Management Review* 27, no. 1 (2002); Frane Adam and Borut Roncevic, “Social Capital: Recent Debates and Research Trends,” *Social Science Information* 42, no. 2 (2003); .

<sup>12</sup> For example, see Bo Rothstein and Daniel Eek, “Political Corruption and Social Trust,” *Rationality and Society* 21, no. 1 (2009).

<sup>13</sup> Toshio Yamagishi and Midori Yamagishi, “Trust and Commitment in the United States and Japan,” *Motivation and Emotion* 18, no. 2 (1994), 138.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Michael W. Macy and John Skvoretz, “The Evolution of Trust and Cooperation between Strangers: A Computational Model,” *American Sociological Review* 63, no. 5 (1998); Toshio Yamagishi, “Seriousness of Social Dilemmas and the Provision of a Sanctioning System,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (1988); Toshio Yamagishi, Karen S. Cook, and Motoki Watabe, “Uncertainty, Trust, and Commitment Formation in the United States and Japan,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 104, no. 1 (1998); Toshio Yamagishi and Toko Kiyonari, “The Group as the Container of Generalized Reciprocity,” *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (2000)

<sup>16</sup> Yamagishi and Yamagishi, “Trust and Commitment”; Yamagishi et al., “Uncertainty, Trust, and Commitment Formation.”

In sum, both generalized trust and particularized trust are closely intertwined in people's social cooperation. Without clarifying the relationship between the two types of trust, it is difficult for us to disentangle the dynamic relationship between social trust and cooperation in general.

In the following part of this section, I will examine the current literature on *whether* and *how* particularized trust and generalized trust are related.

### *B. Are Particularized Trust and Generalized Trust Related?*

With regard to whether the two types of social trust are related, the answer offered by most students of social trust would be yes. Indeed, as many scholars have already pointed out, both particularized trust and generalized trust are developed based on individual personality, life experiences or/and cultural backgrounds.<sup>17</sup> As summarized by Jan Delhey and Kenneth Newton, trust, in general, is “part of a broader syndrome of personality characteristics that includes optimism, a belief in co-operation, and confidence in that individuals can resolve their differences and live a satisfactory social life together.”<sup>18</sup> Therefore, one's trust in surrounding people and trust in stranger are not developed independently, and therefore the two should be robustly correlated.

However, some scholars have postulated an antithetical argument, suggesting that particularized trust and generalized trust are actually only weakly associated, if not completely unrelated. Karen Cook, Russell Hardin, and Levi Margaret, for instance,

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<sup>17</sup> For example, Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*; Ronald Inglehart, “Trust, Well-being and Democracy,” in *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark E. Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Idem, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

<sup>18</sup> Jan Delhey and Kenneth Newton, “Who Trusts? The Origins of Social Trust in Seven Societies,” *European Societies* 5, no. 2 (2003), 95.

argue that persons' trust in surrounding people is grounded in their prior knowledge of each other.<sup>19</sup> Only when equipped with previous records of social exchanges, can individuals decide whether or not to trust. As for trust in complete strangers, the situation is problematic, since ordinary people do not have prior information about general others. Moreover, one's knowledge of surrounding people cannot be used to determine the trustworthiness of strangers, and therefore it is questionable to state that one can trust strangers. In particular, Cook, Hardin, and Levi assert that:

[i]t is true that in our various limited contexts of family, neighborhood, work group, and so forth, we depend on some shared values and probably prosper much better in these relationships if we have relatively good trust relations. That is because being able to rely on each other enables us to benefit from cooperative endeavors more readily and at lower costs. It is hard to say what could be the cooperative endeavors that a whole society wishes to share in ... Hence, some of the concern with so-called social or generalized trust—meaning universal trust in the random other person in our society—is surely misplaced. It would be pointless for us even to assess the trustworthiness of most people, and it often clearly would not benefit us to trust the general other.<sup>20</sup>

Therefore, according to Cook et al., there should be no strong association between particularized trust and generalized trust.

### *C. How Are Particularized Trust and Generalized Trust Related?*

Among those scholars who assume that particularized trust and generalized trust are closely related, there is an even more heated debate regarding the ways in which the two types of trust are related.

One group of scholars suggests that particularized trust and generalized trust are actually positively associated. They argue that individuals' trust in general others is an

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<sup>19</sup> Karen S. Cook, Russell Hardin, and Margaret Levi, *Cooperation without Trust?* (New York, NY: Russell Sage, 2005).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

extension of their trust in their relatives, friends, and other people they personally know.<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, particularized trust may transfer or “spill-over” to trust in general others.

Francis Fukuyama, for instance, suggests that the only difference between generalized trust and particularized trust is the “radius” of trust.<sup>22</sup> While under some circumstances, it is so short that it covers only acquaintances (i.e., particularized trusters), in other contexts the radius of trust may extend beyond families and friends to strangers (i.e., generalized trusters). Generalized trusters tend to have a larger radius of trust, yet they place no less trust in people whom they are familiar with. In other words, people who are willing to trust strangers are also trust their relatives, friends, and acquaintances more, and vice versa. If a person cannot trust even his family or close friends, it is hardly possible for her or him to trust strangers.

In the same vein, William Mishler and Richard Rose introduce the concept of a “trust hierarchy” to elaborate how particularized trust can be transferred to generalized trust.<sup>23</sup> Specifically, they argue in this hierarchy of trust

[t]he base of [trust hierarchy] consists of the strong interpersonal bonds of trust [i.e., particularized trust] among family members and members of face-to-face groups originating in socialization experiences linked to the individual’s position in society. A second level of ‘impersonal trust’ [i.e., generalized trust] extends to individuals who are not known personally and results from the generalization of personal trust discounted by the psychological distance of impersonal ‘others.’ A third level of trust extends to political institutions, reflecting the spill-over of interpersonal trust.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> See, William Mishler and Richard Rose, “What Are the Origins of Political Trust?: Testing Institutional and Cultural Theories in Post-Communist Societies,” *Comparative Political Studies* 34, no. 1 (2001), 31; Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*.

<sup>22</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1995).

<sup>23</sup> Mishler and Rose, “What Are the Origins of Political Trust?”

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 1053.

Therefore, it would be reasonable to say that particularized trust serves as the “foundation” of generalized trust (and institutional trust). Without strong particularized trust, it is difficult to form trust between strangers.

In sharp contrast to the above-mentioned spillover view, a second group of scholars argues that strong norms of particularized trust would hinder the development of people’s trust in strangers, and therefore that the relationship between the two types of trust should be negative. Specifically, according to this line of argument, when locked in bonding and close-knit trust relations, individuals are less likely to extend their trust to strangers.

Toshio Yamagishi, Karen Cook, and Motoki Watabe summarize their view of this kind of relationship as follows:

intense group ties, often observed in collectivist cultures, prevent trust from developing beyond group boundaries. ... strong and stable social relations (such as family ties and group ties) promote a sense of security within such relations but endanger trust that extends beyond these relations.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, as Mark Granovetter observes, particularized trusters, relying on “strong ties,”<sup>26</sup> avoid strangers and base their social circles on family, close friends, and members of their own kinds.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, particularized trust fosters group identities at the expense of the larger community, and hence individuals’ trust in members of their own group bears a robust but negative correlation with their trust in general strangers.

Up to this point, I have explored the intellectual debate about the relationship between the two different types of social trust. Specifically, there are competing views

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<sup>25</sup> Yamagishi et al., “Uncertainty, Trust, and Commitment Formation,” 116.

<sup>26</sup> See Mark S. Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 6 (1973).

<sup>27</sup> Uslaner and Conley, “Civic Engagement and Particularized Trust,” 335.

on *whether* particularized trust and generalized trust are connected, and the *strength* of any such interconnections.

Unfortunately, the paucity of comparable data on particularized trust and generalized trust undermines our efforts to understand how these two types of social trust are interconnected.<sup>28</sup> In particular, most popular cross-national surveys like the World Value Survey do not include questions for particularized trust.<sup>29</sup> Certainly, scholars were doing their best to gain a better understanding of the interrelationship between particularize trust and generalized trust. For instance, Eric Uslaner has constructed indices of in-group and out-group affects to gauge particularized trust.<sup>30</sup> However, as he himself admitted, “[t]here are no good questions on particularized trust,” and the indices he employed were merely “the closest [he could] get.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, our ability to understand this interrelationship is fundamentally constrained by the absence of reliable measurements of particularized trust and generalized trust.

As established in Chapter II, this study solves the measurement problem by creating relation-based measurements of social trust. Therefore, in the following section I will empirically examine and test the precise relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust using our data from the 2005 rural China survey. The findings will significantly contribute to our understanding of the relationship between the two types of trust in rural China, and comparative studies of social trust in general.

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<sup>28</sup> For a few exceptions, see Eric M. Uslaner, “Democracy and Social Capital,” in *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark E. Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Michael R. Welch, David Sikkink, and Matthew T. Loveland, “The Radius of Trust: Religion, Social Embeddedness and Trust in Strangers,” *Social Forces* 86, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>29</sup> See Chapter II for detailed discussion.

<sup>30</sup> Uslaner, “Democracy and Social Capital.”

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 126.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO TYPES OF SOCIAL TRUST

A key goal of this chapter is to assess the interrelationship between particularized trust and generalized trust. Are particularized trust and generalized trust intertwined in the minds of ordinary Chinese rural residents, or do they differentiate between types of social trust? Or to put it differently, what is the connection between the two types of trust? Are people who have higher particularized trust less willing to expand their trust to strangers, or is the opposite the case, or are these two types of social trust independent of each other? As I noted in the previous section, there is a heated debate about the interrelationship between particularized trust and generalized trust, and there is rationale for each of the possible interconnections.

### *A. Correlation between Generalized Trust and Particularized Trust*

To test these disparate arguments discussed earlier, I have run both cross-tabulations between the particularized trust and generalized trust indexes and correlations of all specific trust items.



**Table 8. Correlation between Particularized Trust and Generalized Trust in Rural China**

Generalized Trust	Particularized Trust		
	Low (%)	Medium (%)	High (%)
Low	53.5	41.5	42.5
Medium	27.0	30.8	25.9
High	19.5	27.7	31.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Gamma = .15\*\*

*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

*Note:* The original particularized trust and generalized trust indexes are trichotomized into high, medium, and low levels, with \* $p < .05$ , and \*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 8 presents the results of the cross-tabulations, and there are at least two important findings that stand out. The first thing to note about these results is that particularized trust and generalized trust are indeed related, albeit not strongly. Specifically, the Gamma value for the relationship between the two types of social trust, though statistically significant, was not high in this survey. Respondents' particularized trust and generalized trust were only weakly or moderately correlated.

Such a moderate association is further confirmed by the Spearman correlations between all the trust items, as presented in Table 9. Specifically, while there were strong and significant correlations between five items of particularized trust—the bivariate Spearman correlation coefficient range from .33 to .71—the associations between trust in strangers and other types of trust were only moderate at best, with the highest Spearman coefficient being .16. Jointly, these results suggest that in rural China people's particularized trust only moderately influences their disposition to trust strangers.

Table 9. Correlation between All Trust Items in Rural China

	Particularized Trust					General Trust
	<i>Relatives</i>	<i>Neighbors</i>	<i>Non-Neighbors</i>	<i>Villagers of Same Surname</i>	<i>Villagers of Diff. Surname</i>	<i>Strangers</i>
<i>Relatives</i>	1.00 (4259)	.397** (4256)	.330** (4256)	.361** (4223)	.315** (4224)	.007 (4198)
<i>Neighbors</i>		1.00 (4259)	.598** (4267)	.567** (4235)	.490** (4235)	.033* (4208)
<i>Non-Neighbors</i>			1.00 (4259)	.590** (4235)	.606** (4235)	.146** (4208)
<i>Villagers of Same Surname</i>				1.00 (4259)	.711** (4228)	.090** (4176)
<i>Villagers of Diff. Surname</i>					1.00 (4259)	.159** (4177)
<i>Strangers</i>						1.00 (4212)

Source: The 2005 China General Social Survey.

Note: All entries are the Spearman correlation ( $r_s$ ), with \* $p < .05$ , and \*\* $p < .01$ .

Second, and more interestingly, the results in Table 8 indicate that particularized trust and generalized trust are positively correlated. Specifically, while 31.6 percent of those who demonstrated high levels of particularized trust reported high levels of generalized trust, only 19.5 percent of those having low levels of particularized trust registered high generalized trust. Moreover, as the level of particularized trust increased, the percentage of high-generalized trusters grew consistently.

The same positive association between particularized trust and generalized trust is also evident in the Spearman correlations between all the trust items. As demonstrated in

Table 9, all five items of particularized trust were positively correlated with trust in strangers, and four of the bivariate correlations were statistically significant (the only exception being the one between trust in relatives and trust in strangers). Thus, the results indicate that in rural China those who trust their relatives, kinsmen, neighbors, and the like more are also more likely to trust strangers.

From these two findings, we can reach the preliminary conclusion that in rural China ordinary residents' particularized trust was *positively*, albeit *moderately* associated with their trust in strangers. More importantly, and contrary to many China specialists' and trust theorists' projections, Chinese rural residents' high levels of trust in people whom they personally know was far from being a hindrance to the development of generalized trust. Instead, strong particularized trust seems to be a necessary, albeit not robustly correlated, condition for the formation of trust in strangers. Such a preliminary conclusion prompts us to ask, what are the origins of particularized trust and generalized trust? What are the factors affecting the formation of particularized trust and generalized trust in rural China? I will return to these important questions in Chapter IV, where the potential determinants of the two types of social trust will be systematically examined.

#### *B. Impacts of Sociodemographic and Contextual Factors on the Correlation between Generalized Trust and Particularized Trust*

Throughout the above discussion, we have found that across rural China there was a positive, albeit weak or moderate, relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust. This finding raises a further question of critical importance: Does the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust persist across different

groups and localities with different contextual profiles? Or to put it somewhat differently, is the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust that we find above prevalent across both *social categories* and *geographical boundaries*?

The answer to this question not only helps us to gain a better understanding of the complex relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust, but also has direct implications for this study. Specifically, if the relationship is prevalent across all the important sociodemographic categories and localities with different sociogeographic profiles, it is reasonable for us to conclude that the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust is universal and generalizable. However, if the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust varied across different sociodemographic groups and localities of different sociogeographic conditions, then it is imperative for us to explore the interactions between particularized trust and generalized trust in a more systematic way.

In the following parts, I will empirically examine the impacts of sociodemographic factors at the individual level and contextual factors at the village level on the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust respectively.

*Impacts of Sociodemographic Factors* In order to understand the impacts of sociodemographic factors on the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust, we need to answer the following questions: Do various sociodemographic factors affect the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust? Does this kind relationship persist across different sociodemographic categories? More specifically, in rural China, is our finding concerning the positive relationship between particularized

trust and generalized trust representative of all rural residents with various sociodemographic profiles?

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, there is virtually no systematic study on the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust, not to mention the way in which sociodemographic attributes could affect this kind of relationship. However, many earlier studies of social trust have suggested that certain sociodemographic attributes—such as sex, age, marital status, education, and income level—could strongly influence people’s trust in others, as measured by the question of “most-people can be trusted”.<sup>32</sup> For instance, drawing on data collected from a large population-based survey in Europe, Tarja Niemine and his associates have explored the variation of individual social trust according to sociodemographic factors.<sup>33</sup> Their findings suggest that the levels of social trust vary significantly across different sociodemographic categories. In particular, they find that “people who are young, married, educated, and well-off” are more likely to trust others.<sup>34</sup> Thus, sociodemographic factors seem to be strongly associated with people’s trust in each other.

These earlier studies of social trust do not directly examine the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust. However, these studies do suggest that people of different sociodemographic categories demonstrate different dispositions of trusting, which in turn might be reflected in the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust. Hence, it is plausible to expect that the above-mentioned major sociodemographic attributes may affect this relationship.

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<sup>32</sup> For example, see Delhey and Newton, “Who Trusts?”; Robert D. Putnam, “Tuning in, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28, no. 4 (1995).

<sup>33</sup> Tarja Nieminen et al., “Measurement and Socio-Demographic Variation of Social Capital in a Large Population-Based Survey,” *Social Indicators Research* 85, no. (2008).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 406.

To empirically test whether the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust varies across major sociodemographic categories, I have examined the correlations between the indexes of particularized trust and generalized trust, controlling for individual respondents' sociodemographic attributes, such as sex, age, marital status, education, , and income. Specifically, I have compared the correlations *before* and *after* controlling for these sociodemographic factors, the results are presented in Table 10.

**Table 10. The Relationship between Generalized Trust and Particularized Trust by Partial Correlation Controlling for Sex, Age, Marital Status, Education, and Income**

(1) Correlation Coefficient:	.122** (4148)
<hr/>	
(2) Partial Correlation Coefficient:	
Controlling for	
Sex (0-1)	.137** (4145)
Age	.135** (4145)
Marital status (0-1)	.137** (4145)
Education <sup>a</sup>	.138** (4140)
Income	.143** (3915)
All of the above	.142** (3906)

*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

*Note:* \*  $p < .05$ , and \*\*  $p < .01$ .

<sup>a</sup> “Elementary school or lower” = 1; “Middle school” = 2; “High school” = 3; and “College or higher” = 4.

As shown in Table 10, the correlation between particularized trust and generalized trust did not change substantially after we controlled for the major sociodemographic factors. Specifically, the largest change (0.021, a very low number) occurred after personal income has been controlled for. The results, therefore, indicate that the sociodemographic factors examined in this study have virtually no substantial impact on the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust. In other words, in rural China the positive albeit weak association between particularized trust and generalized trust was prevalent across all major sociodemographic categories.

Such a finding has an important implication for our understanding of the nature of social trust and the relationship between different types of social trust. Although sociodemographic factors tend to be robust predictors of individuals' trust in others (measured as particularized trust and generalized trust in this study), these attributes appear to be irrelevant to the relationships between different types of social trust.

*Impacts of Contextual Factors* As discussed in Chapter I, social trust in its essence is a meso-level concept, and is closely related to various factors at both the individual level and the aggregate level. "Trust," Jan Delhey and Kenneth Newton note, "is the product of experience, and we constantly modify and update our trustful and distrustful feelings in response to changing circumstances."<sup>35</sup> Therefore, it seems that social trust is also shaped by people's surrounding environment, and it is plausible to assume that the certain contextual factors at the aggregate level may play an important role in shaping the relationship.

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<sup>35</sup> Delhey and Newton, "Who Trust?," 97.

Specifically, in this dissertation I use sociogeographic attributes of villages to explore the potential impacts of contextual factors. In doing so, I intend to answer the following questions of critical importance: Do various contextual factors affect the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust? Does the positive relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust persist across villages with different sociogeographic profiles? More specifically, in rural China, is our finding about the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust representative of all localities?

Although earlier studies of social trust have failed to systematically and directly examine the impacts of various contextual factors on the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust, many have argued that certain attributes of communities such as population size, territory size, level of economic development, and heterogeneity may strongly affect people's trust in each other.<sup>36</sup> For instance, Putnam finds that the size of a community is robustly correlated with the level of social trust in the United States. In particular, he concludes, "residents of small towns and rural areas are more altruistic, honest, and trusting than other Americans. In fact, even among suburbs, smaller is better from the social capital point of view."<sup>37</sup> In addition, many earlier studies suggest that the ethnic, linguistic, and religious heterogeneity of a

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<sup>36</sup> For example, Markus Freitag and Marc Bühlmann, "Crafting Trust: The Role of Political Institutions in a Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 12 (2009); Marc Hooghe et al., "Ethnic Diversity and Generalized Trust in Europe: A Cross-National Multilevel Study," *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 2 (2009); Pamela M. Paxton, "Association Memberships and Generalized Trust: A Multilevel Model across 31 Countries," *Social Forces* 86, no. 1 (2007); Robert D. Putnam, "*E Pluribus Unum*: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-First Century," *Scandinavian Political Studies* 30, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>37</sup> Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 205.



community plays a deterministic role in shaping individuals' trust, particularly trust in strangers.<sup>38</sup>

Given the pivotal role of contextual factors with respect to the level of social trust, it is reasonable to assume that certain attributes of village may influence the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust. After all, this kind of relationship is essentially determined by levels of the two types of trust. To empirically examine the impacts of various contextual factors, I have examined the correlations between the aggregate values of particularized trust and generalized trust at the village level, after controlling for the major contextual factors, such as village population, territory size, economic development, geographic isolation, and surname fragmentation.<sup>39</sup> The results are presented in Table 11.

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<sup>38</sup> For example, see Putnam, "*E Pluribus Unum*."

<sup>39</sup> This measure has been used in a study of elections in rural China by Manion. Specifically, in this dissertation, the following formula has been used,

$$Frag. Index = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^3 p_i^2} \quad (1)$$

where,  $p_i$  stands for the percentage of  $i$ th largest surname group in a given village. See, Manion, "Democracy, Community, Trust," 306-7.

**Table 11. The Relationship between Generalized Trust and Particularized Trust by Partial Correlation Controlling for Contextual Factors**

(1) Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ):	.198** (410)
(2) Partial Correlation Coefficient ( $r$ ):	
Controlling for	
Population ( $\log$ )	.196** (392)
Territory ( $\log$ )	.206** (381)
Income per capita ( $\log$ )	.212** (387)
Village-owned enterprise (0-1)	.205** (391)
Surname Fragmentation	.211** (375)
Distance for the nearest fair (in kilometer)	.203** (392)
Distance for the seat of <i>Xiang/Zhen</i> Government (in kilometer)	.204** (392)
All of the above	.209** (360)

Source: The 2005 China General Social Survey.

Note: \*  $p < .05$ , and \*\*  $p < .01$ .

As shown in Table 11, I compared two kinds of correlations between particularized trust and generalized trust at the village level: the correlations *before* and *after* controlling for the key contextual variables. Overall, the comparison indicates that the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust is largely *independent* of the major sociogeographic attributes of villages. Specifically, even when all the contextual factors were controlled for, the correlation score between particularized trust and generalized trust was increased by only 0.011. The results suggest that in rural China, villages' basic attributes like population size, territory, local economy, geographic location, and heterogeneity did not influence the relationship between particularized trust

and generalized trust. This kind of relationship seems to be prevalent across different localities in rural China.

Combining these results with our earlier finding about the impact of sociodemographic factors on the relationship between the two types of trust, we can conclude that the weak yet positive relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust seems to be universal across both social domains and geographic space.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have attempted to answer three questions of considerable importance: Are particularized trust and generalized trust intertwined in the minds of ordinary Chinese rural residents, or do they differentiate between these types of social trust? If there is connection, does Chinese rural residents' trust in their fellow residents hinder or foster their trust in strangers? Moreover, does the relationship between the two types of trust vary across different social categories or localities? The answers to these questions are not only important to our understanding of social trust in rural China, but also to our efforts to shed light on the unresolved debates pertaining to the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust.

Specifically, I have empirically examined those disparate arguments using data from the 2005 rural China survey. The findings that emerge from bivariate analyses indicate that there is a weak yet positive correlation between our Chinese rural respondents' trust in fellow villagers and their trust in strangers. Moreover, this kind of weak yet positive relationship is prevalent across both major sociodemographic divides (i.e., sex, age, marital status, education, and income) and villages with various

sociogeographic profile (i.e., population, territory, income per capita, village-owned enterprise, surname fragmentation, distance from nearest fair and the seat of township government).

One implication that we can draw from these findings is that Chinese villagers' intense trust in their fellow villagers is not a hindrance to the development of their trust in general strangers. On the contrary, the ordinary Chinese rural residents' trust in surrounding people might help cultivate and build their positive expectations about strangers, although this process is likely to be weak and slow. More importantly, these findings appear to be in direct contradiction to the conventional view among China scholars that the Chinese villagers' bonding and parochial trust constrain their trust in general others.<sup>40</sup> In fact, the particularized trust in rural China is not as parochial as they have suggested.

As for the implication for comparative studies of social trust, the findings suggest that the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust is far more complicated than that of a simple picture of "bad" trust and "good" trust. As Eric Uslaner has noted, "[o]ur views of generalized trust and particularized trust are highly stylized. The former is universally good, the latter unconditionally bad. But this view may be too simplistic."<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, the findings in this chapter are only based on one country. Further studies are required to conclusively reveal the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust.

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<sup>40</sup> Lucian W. Pye, *The Mandarin and the Cadre: China's Political Cultures* (Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Chinese Studies, 1988); Idem, *Asian Power and Politics: The Cultural Dimensions of Authority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989); Richard H. Solomon, *Mao's Revolution and the Chinese Political Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971).

<sup>41</sup> Uslaner, "Democracy and Social Capital," 128.

CHAPTER IV  
SOURCES OF PARTICULARIZED TRUST AND GENERALIZED TRUST:  
A MULTILEVEL ANALYSIS

The analysis in the previous chapters has described the distributions of and the interaction between particularized trust and generalized trust. The findings indicate that our respondents in rural China seem to conceptualize the two dimensions of social trust differently, which implies that the formation of each dimension may be shaped by different combinations of socioeconomic and sociopolitical factors. As a consequence, it is imperative to investigate the ways in which different factors influence the people learn to trust people whom they know personally (i.e., particularized trust) and strangers (i.e., generalized trust). To address this crucial question, in this chapter I will examine various socioeconomic and sociopolitical factors, at both the individual level and the village level, that are expected to influence the two types of social trust. Through examination of these determinants, I will address the following questions of great importance: Who is more likely to trust in contemporary China? More specifically, what sorts of people choose to trust or not to do so, and in what kinds of villages they are more likely to develop trust in surrounding people and strangers?

Previous empirical studies on the origins of social trust have exclusively focused on either the aggregate level or the individual level. While researches ground in aggregated data, as warned by Mitchell Seligson, may easily become preys to the “ecological fallacies,”<sup>1</sup> analyses at individuals tend to exclude many important contextual

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<sup>1</sup> Specifically, ecological fallacies, as Seligson summarized, refer to the error “of incorrectly imputing to the higher order unit the aggregation of values of individuals,” which are more likely to occur in cross-

factors out of consideration.<sup>2</sup> Recognizing the limitations associated with both the aggregate and the individualistic approach, I conduct a multilevel analysis of particularized trust and generalized trust by incorporating five categories of sociopolitical factors at both the individual and the aggregate (i.e., village) levels into analysis. Specifically, I examine three categories of socioeconomic and sociopolitical factors at the individual level—sociodemographic attributes, subjective orientations, and informal social interactions, and two categories at the village level—sociogeographic attributes and community heterogeneity.

As discussed in Chapter I, both theoretical and empirical findings from earlier studies suggests that all these five categories of determinants may robustly shape individuals' trust in each other. In this chapter, I will first theoretically explore why we need a multilevel analysis, and subsequently I will present empirical evidence illustrating why a multilevel approach is superior to the traditional multivariate regression analyses. Establishing a multilevel framework, I will discuss theoretical propositions of the relationship between variables in each of the five categories on the one hand, and particularized trust and generalized trust on the other. In addition, such relationships will be examined against the data collected from the rural China. Finally, I will conclude this chapter with a discussion on implications from our empirical findings for both China studies and comparative studies of social trust in general.

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national studies. See, Mitchell A. Seligson, "The Renaissance of Political Culture or the Renaissance of the Ecological Fallacy?," *Comparative Politics* 34, no. 3 (2002), 273, 276-8.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see Glenn Firebaugh, "A Rule for Inferring Individual-Level Relationships from Aggregate Data," *American Sociological Review* 43, no. 4 (1978); Marco R. Steenbergen and Bradford S. Jones, "Modeling Multilevel Data Structures," *American Journal of Political Science* 46, no. 1 (2002); Nathaniel Beck, "Multilevel Analyses of Comparative Data: A Comment," *Political Analysis* 13, no. 4 (2005); Pamela M. Paxton, "Association Memberships and Generalized Trust: A Multilevel Model across 31 Countries," *Social Forces* 86, no. 1 (2007).

## WHY WE NEED A MULTILEVEL APPROACH?

Theory building in political science is increasingly characterized by incorporating explanatory variables at different levels. As noted by Marco Steenbergen and Bradford Jones, more and more theories “hinge on the presumption that ‘something’ observed at one level is related to ‘something’ observed at another level.”<sup>3</sup> Concerning the studies of the origins of social trust, this trend is particularly evident, for at least two reasons. First, as discussed in Chapter I, social trust is inherently a meso or “multilevel concept,”<sup>4</sup> and, therefore, it is shaped by variables at both the individual and the aggregate level simultaneously. Second, the increasing availability of multilevel data provides scholars with more opportunities for theory testing and development. Therefore it is *theoretically desirable* and *empirically practical* to conduct multilevel analyses of the origins of social trust. In the following parts of this section, I will find illustrate these two points respectively.

### *A. Social Trust and Multilevel Analysis: From A Theoretical Perspective*

Social trust, as discussed in Chapter I, is a key concept in both micro and macro theories. Consequently, students of social trust can largely be divided on the basis of the ways in which they locate their levels of analysis. Specifically, there are two broad schools of thoughts.<sup>5</sup> The first school, focusing on micro mechanisms, theorizes social

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<sup>3</sup> Steenbergen and Jone, 218.

<sup>4</sup> See, Margaret Levi and Laura Stoker, “Political Trust and Trustworthiness,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 3, no. (2000). For further dicussion on concepts across different level, see, for example, M. Stephen Weatherford, “Measuring Political Legitimacy,” *The American Political Science Review* 86, no. 1 (1992).

<sup>5</sup> Jan Delhey and Kenneth Newton, “Who Trusts? The Origins of Social Trust in Seven Societies,” *European Societies* 5, no. 2 (2003); Marc Hooghe, “Social Capital and Diversity: Generalized Trust, Social Cohesion and Regimes of Diversity,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science*

trust as a property of individuals, and therefore it is argued that social trust is more associated with individual traits like personalities or such sociodemographic features like age, gender, education, economic status, and class.<sup>6</sup> The second school, on the other hand, perceives social trust is a property possessed by collectives. Accordingly, social trust is more correlated with certain contextual and aggregate factors, such as community heterogeneity, income inequality, and presence of trust networks.<sup>7</sup>

This divide with regard to the levels of analysis profoundly influences how empirical studies are conducted, and is conspicuously reflected in the different ways in which social trust is operationalized by political scientists. John Brehm and Wendy Rahn, for instance, argue that social trust reflects a person's psychological involvement and commitment in each other, and therefore has its basis at individual levels.<sup>8</sup>

Correspondingly, they test the origins and consequences of social trust against data collected at the individual level. By contrast, Ronald Inglehart suggests that social trust "is a relatively enduring characteristic of *given societies*: it reflects the entire historical heritage of *a given people*, including economic, political, religious, and other factors"

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*politique* 40, no. 3 (2007); Marc Hooghe et al., "Ethnic Diversity and Generalized Trust in Europe: A Cross-National Multilevel Study," *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 2 (2009)

<sup>6</sup> Treating social trust as an individual property is more popular in economics, sociology, and psychology. For example, see John Brehm and Wendy Rahn, "Individual-Level Evidence for the Causes and Consequences of Social Capital," *American Journal of Political Science* 41, no. 3 (1997); Tarja Nieminen et al., "Measurement and Socio-Demographic Variation of Social Capital in a Large Population-Based Survey," *Social Indicators Research* 85, no. (2008).

<sup>7</sup> For example, see Gema M. García Albacete, "The Saliency of Political Cleavages and the 'Dark Sides' of Social Capital: Evidence from Spain," *American Behavioral Scientist* 53, no. 5 (2010); Marc Hooghe and Dietlind Stolle, eds., *Generating Social Capital: Civil Society and Institutions in Comparative Perspective* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Natalia Letki and Geoffrey Evans, "Endogenizing Social Trust: Democratization in East-Central Europe," *British Journal of Political Science* 35, no. 3 (2005); Bo Rothstein and Eric M. Uslaner, "All for All: Equality, Corruption, and Social Trust," *World Politics* 58, no. 1 (2005); Jan W. van Deth, "Participation in Voluntary Associations: Dark Shades in a Sunny World?," *American Behavioral Scientist* 53, no. 5 (2010)

<sup>8</sup> Brehm and Rahn, "Individual-Level Evidence," 1001.



(emphasis added).<sup>9</sup> Guided by this collective view of social trust, Inglehart and his colleagues aggregate data obtained from individual questionnaires into units of countries, and examine the relationship between social trust, economic development, and democracy at the societal level.

Given this divide, a natural question is: how can we situate our analysis at seemingly incompatible analytical levels? To put it differently, how can we overcome the micro-macro divide in the studies of the origins of social trust? As suggested in Chapter I, I argue that factors at both the individual and the aggregate level can strongly affect the formation of social trust. It is both imperative and promising to incorporate theories at these two different levels. The two levels of analyses, and theories subscribed under them, are not mutually exclusive or irreconcilable. On the contrary, these theories can complement each other by highlighting different causal mechanisms. A research agenda encompassing different levels of analysis, therefore, can significantly advance our understanding of the origins of social trust. The validity and necessity of such a cross-level research approach is best articulated by Jan Delhey and Kenneth Newton as follows:

In the first place, some of them are concerned with different types and levels of explanation. ... In the second place, while different theories may contribute to explaining the origins of social trust, either separately or in combination, they may also have different effects in different circumstances. And in the third place, both the theories and their indicators overlap to some extent.<sup>10</sup>

Given the theoretical advantages associated with this cross-level approach, how can we realize it in empirical research? In this study, I employ a multilevel model to test the independent effects of a variety of individual characteristics and village attributes on the formation of social trust.

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<sup>9</sup> Ronald Inglehart, "Trust, Well-being and Democracy," in *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark E. Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 88.

<sup>10</sup> Delhey and Newton, "Who Trusts?," 100-1.

The multilevel model or hierarchical model, as noted by Nathaniel Beck, is “obviously a good thing, for both methodology and comparative politics,”<sup>11</sup> since it provides a reliable tool for political scientists to assess the micro and the macro variables simultaneously. While traditional ordinary least squares (OLS) and related single-equation techniques are built upon the assumption that the all the independent variables are at the same analytical level, multilevel analyses allow scholars to “tie together micro and macro variables” of theoretical interests.<sup>12</sup> Specifically, the multilevel analysis, as a variant of random coefficient model, assumes observations of micro level is nested within the macro-level units (in this study, the village). Therefore, multilevel analysis is “less likely to suffer from model misspecification than when compared to models comprised of a single level,”<sup>13</sup> and accordingly is more appropriate when the causal mechanisms of interest encompass different analytical levels.

Given its apparent theoretical and methodological advantages, or in the words of Steenbergen and Jones, “substantive and statistical strengths,”<sup>14</sup> the multilevel analysis has been increasingly applied in the studies of the origins of social trust, and has been proved to be reliable for overcoming micro-macro dualism.<sup>15</sup> For instance, recognizing

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<sup>11</sup> Beck, “Multilevel Analyses of Comparative Data,” 457.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Steenbergen and Jones, “Modeling Multilevel Data Structures,” 219.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> For multilevel studies of social trust, see, for example, Edward Fieldhouse and David Cutts, “Does Diversity Damage Social Capital? A Comparative Study of Neighbourhood Diversity and Social Capital in the Us and Britain,” *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique* 43, no. 02 (2010); Christopher J. Anderson and Aida Paskeviciute, “How Ethnic and Linguistic Heterogeneity Influence the Prospects for Civil Society: A Comparative Study of Citizenship Behavior,” *The Journal of Politics* 68, no. 4 (2006); Francisco Herreros and Henar Criado, “The State and the Development of Social Trust,” *International Political Science Review* 29, no. 1 (2008); Markus Freitag and Marc Bühlmann, “Crafting Trust: The Role of Political Institutions in a Comparative Perspective,” *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 12 (2009); Marc Hooghe et al., “Ethnic Diversity and Generalized Trust in Europe.”; Amaney Jamal and Irfan Nooruddin, “The Democratic Utility of Trust: A Cross-National Analysis,” *The Journal of Politics* 72, no. 1 (2010); Natalia Letki, “Socialization for Participation? Trust, Membership, and

the dangers embedded in the single-level analysis, Putnam, in one of his recent articles, employs a multilevel model to explore the impacts of ethnic diversity at the aggregate level on people's trust at individual level. Specifically, his finds that the results emerged from the multilevel analysis are significantly different from, and more reliable than that generated by single-level regression models.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Paxton uses multilevel models to test the relationship between connected and isolated associational activities at the country level and social trust expressed by individual respondents. After examining the empirical results, she concludes that a multilevel approach tends to be more appropriate in exploring the origins of social trust.<sup>17</sup>

In sum, regarding the sources of social trust, both theoretical and methodological considerations favor a multilevel approach. However, it is still too early to conclude that the multilevel level analysis is appropriate for the studies focusing on a single country. Grounded in the assumption that socioeconomic and sociopolitical conditions vary dramatically across countries, virtually all the multilevel studies of social trust hitherto have treated country as the aggregate unit. For a study focusing on one country—China—we have to answer a series of questions before we can conduct a multilevel analysis: Do socioeconomic and sociopolitical conditions vary dramatically across different localities and regions in China? Do these different conditions actually affect Chinese rural residents' trust in their fellow villagers and strangers? If so, to what extent the variation of social trust can be explained by the attributes of such regional units like the village in China? In the following section, combining both interpretive findings and

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Democratization in East-Central Europe," *Political Research Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (2004); Pamela M. Paxton, "Association Memberships and Generalized Trust."

<sup>16</sup> Robert D. Putnam, "*E Pluribus Unum*: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-First Century," *Scandinavian Political Studies* 30, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>17</sup> Pamela M. Paxton, "Association Memberships and Generalized Trust."

empirical evidence, I will demonstrate: (1) the necessity of a multilevel analysis in the Chinese settings, (2) why village is an ideal unit, and (3) to what extent village attributes can help us to explain the variations of social trust at individual level.

*B. Social Trust and Multilevel Model: From An Empirical Perspective*

Ever since Edward Banfield's 1958, social trust has been found varying within a nation.<sup>18</sup> In his canonical work *Making Democracy Work*, Putnam reiterates the regional differences pertaining to social trust, by dividing Italy into the North and South on the basis of their different cultural heritages and paths of political developments.<sup>19</sup> He further concludes that it is these regional differences that fundamentally shape the volume and distribution of social trust in Italy. Although Putnam's division of north-south Italy is criticized for being too arbitrary and neglecting more subtle and nuanced regional differences, few would deny the importance of regional difference in affecting the levels of social trust.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly, in China studies, scholars have frequently emphasized the effects of the regional differences (e.g., south vs. north, and coast vs. inland) on sociopolitical development in the country.<sup>21</sup> Owing to the limitations of available data and analytical tools, however, no systematic studies at national level has been conducted to explore to

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<sup>18</sup> Edward C. Banfield, *Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (Riverside, NJ: Free Press, [1958] 1976).

<sup>19</sup> Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*.

<sup>20</sup> For example, while accepting the importance of regional differences in shaping social trust, Sidney Tarrow ascribes such differences to political institutions, rather than the cultural and historical factors proposed by Putnam. See, Sidney Tarrow, "Making Social Science Work across Space and Time: A Critical Reflection on Robert Putnam's *Making Democracy Work*," *The American Political Science Review* 90, no. 2 (1996).

<sup>21</sup> For discussion on regional difference in China, see, for example, C.W. Kenneth Keng, "China's Unbalanced Economic Growth," *Journal of Contemporary China* 15, no. 46 (2006); Qingshan Tan, "Growth Disparity in China: Provincial Causes," *Journal of Contemporary China* 11, no. 33 (2002); Yehua Dennis Wei, "Multiscale and Multimechanisms of Regional Inequality in China: Implications for Regional Policy," *Journal of Contemporary China* 11, no. 30 (2002); Yanrui Wu, "Understanding Growth in China's Regional Economies," *Journal of Contemporary China* 14, no. 42 (2005).

what extent the regional differences can affect the formation of social trust. In other words, we still have no concrete knowledge about to what extent the variation of social trust can be explained by the attributes of subnational units in China.

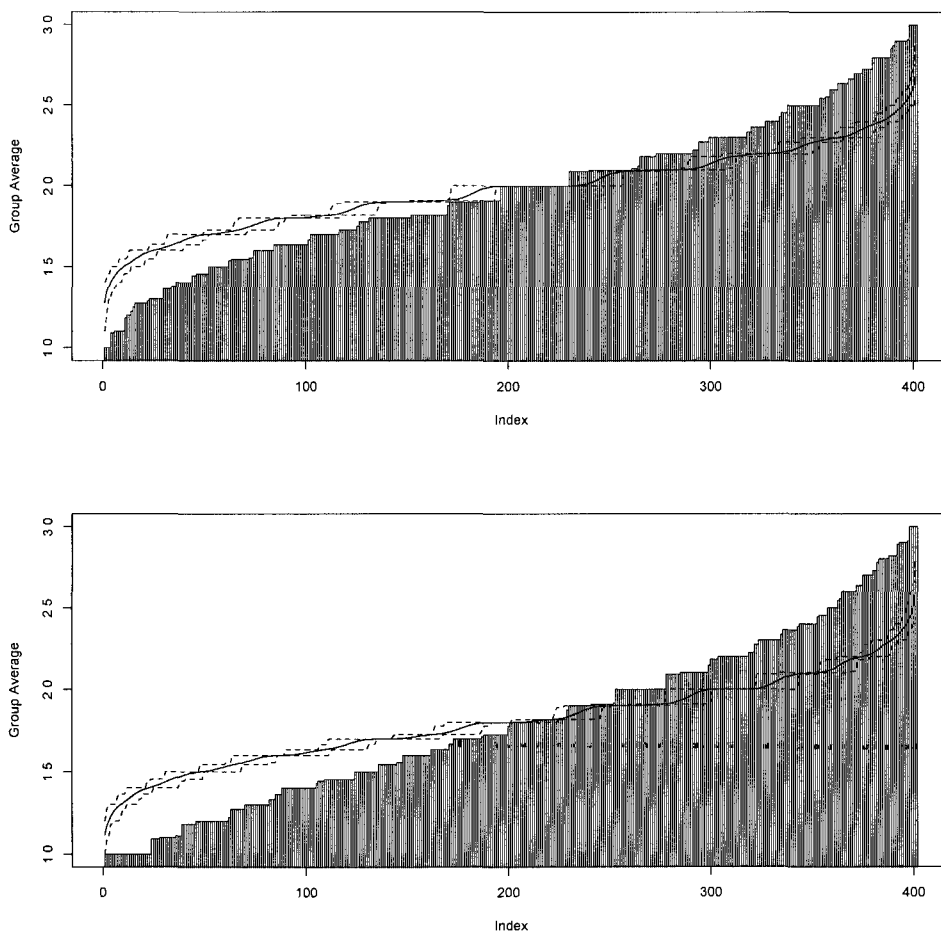
Taking advantages of the 2005 nation-wide China survey and new statistical methods, I am able to quantitatively demonstrate how differences of such aggregate units as the village can affect the levels of social trust. As many researchers find out, an intuitive way to examine the potential impacts of aggregate units is to contrast the observed aggregate means (i.e., means by village in this dissertation) with group means that are the results of randomly assigning individuals to simulated groups.<sup>22</sup> If actual group means and the simulated group means are identical, there is no evidence of group effects. However, if a number of groups have higher than expected means, and a number have lower than expected means, it suggests that attributes of aggregate units strongly affect the distribution of the measured variable.

To detect the magnitude of aggregate-level factors, I contrast the village-means of both generalized trust and particularized with simulated village means. The results are presented in Figure 1 (the top for particularized trust and the bottom for generalized trust). In the figure, the bar charts represent each village's average particularized (and generalized) trust sorted from highest to lowest, and the line solid represent a random distribution where 401 pseudo villages (with exact size characteristics of the actual villages) were created 100 times and the sorted values were averaged across 1000

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<sup>22</sup> Paul D. Bliese, "Group Size, ICC Values, and Group-Level Correlations: A Simulation," *Organizational Research Methods* 1, no. 4 (1998); Idem, "Within-Group Agreement, Non-Independence, and Reliability: Implications for Data Aggregation and Analysis.," in *Multilevel Theory, Research, and Methods in Organizations: Foundations, Extensions, and New Directions*, ed. Katherine J. Klein and Steve W. J. Kozlowski (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 2000); Joop J. Hox, *Multilevel Analysis: Techniques and Applications*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2010).

iterations. The dotted lines represent the upper and lower 90% confidence interval estimates. In other words, the line represents the expected distribution if there were no village-level properties associated with the data. The graphs, however, apparently suggest village level properties were associated with both particularized trust and generalized trust in rural China.



**Figure 1. Contrast between Actual and Simulated Village Means of Particularized Trust and Generalized Trust**

*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

*Note:* N. of villages = 401.

Furthermore, the importance of village-level properties in explaining the variations of particularized trust and generalized trust can be confirmed by two multilevel reliability measures, ICC (1) and ICC (2).<sup>23</sup> Specifically, the ICC (1) gauges to what extent the variance in variables at the individual level (level-1) can be explained by properties of villages (level-2); the ICC (2) indicates to what extent the village unit can be reliably differentiated in terms of the variables at the individual level, in our case, particularized trust and generalized trust.

The results of the ICC (1) and ICC (2) are reported in Table 12. The overall results reassure our observation of the substantial impacts of village properties on particularized trust and generalized trust. First, the ICC (1) value of particularized trust is .2349, which suggests that almost one quarter of variance in particularized trust possessed by individuals can be explained by village identities. Similarly, for generalized trust the ICC (1) score is .3061, indicating village properties can explain almost one third of variance in individual generalized trust. Second, the ICC (2) value of particularized trust and generalized trust is .9293 and .8192, which means that villages can be reliably differentiated in terms of both particularized trust and generalized trust. Together, these findings suggest that the village attributes strongly and substantially shape the volume of both particularized trust and generalized trust. Therefore, it is not only appropriate but also imperative to incorporate key variables at village level into our analysis.

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<sup>23</sup> In multilevel analysis, intraclass correlation (ICC) is the proportion of total variance that is between groups. In a two-level model, the ICC is found by dividing the variance at the aggregate level (in this dissertation level-2) by the sum of the variances at the individual level (in level-1) and the aggregate level. In other words, as Equation (1) explains,  $ICC(\rho)$  for a two-level model is the proportion of group level variance from the total variance, where  $\sigma_{u0}^2$  represents the level-2 variance and  $\sigma_{e0}^2$  represents the level-1 variance:

$$\rho = \frac{\sigma_{u0}^2}{\sigma_{u0}^2 + \sigma_{e0}^2} \quad (1)$$

For more details on ICC, see Katherine and Kozlowski, *Multilevel Theory, Research, and Methods*; Hox, *Multilevel Analysis*.

**Table 12. The Multilevel Reliability Test by Particularized Trust and Generalized Trust**

Index	<i>Particularized Trust</i>	<i>Generalized Trust</i>
ICC (1)	.2349	.3061
ICC (2)	.9293	.8192
N. of Respondents	4027	
N. of Villages	401	

*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

*Note:* While ICC (1) returns to ICC score at individual level, ICC (2) at village level.

In this section, we review the debate about the levels of analysis in the study of origins of social trust, and illustrate the necessity of adopting a multilevel approach. Drawing on data collected from 2005, I further demonstrate that besides variables at individual level, attributes of village in China also play a pivotal role in shaping both types of social trust. In the following section, I will describe the relationship between major explanatory variables at both individual and village level on one hand, and the two types of social trust on the other hand, and test their the relationship against the data collected in rural China.

#### EXPLANATORY VARIABLES AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

A quick survey of the literature reveals that current individual-level theories of social trust are strongly shaped by socio-psychological school of thought in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>24</sup> In general, this school emphasizes the role of individual psychology in political analysis, arguing that personal traits, life experience and socialization process can play a decisive role in forming one's attitudes like trust. For

<sup>24</sup> Delhey and Newton, "Who Trusts?"



instance, Lucian Pye, one of the pioneers of this approach, argues that “how to go from our rich knowledge of individual psychology to the analysis of collective behavior, ranging from that of groups to whole nations” is the key to our understanding of various political phenomena.<sup>25</sup> Following this vein of thinking, most micro theories of social trust tend to agree that:

[Social trust] is learned in early childhood, and tends to persist in later life, changing only slowly as a result of experience thereafter ... [Social trust] is part of a broader syndrome of personality characteristics that includes optimism, a belief in co-operation, and confidence that that individual can resolve their differences and live a satisfactory social life together.<sup>26</sup>

As discussed in Chapter, I include three categories of determinants at individual level that are expected to be strongly associated with formation of social trust: 1) socio-demographic factors like gender, age, education, and etc.; 2) subjective orientations like life satisfaction, perception of equality, and norms of civility; and 3) intensity of informal social interactions.

#### *A. Sociodemographic Factors and Their Impacts*

The current literature on the sources of social trust has suggested that many sociodemographic factors at individual levels can profoundly affect the development of social trust. Paxton, for instance, argues that: “In the absence of specific information about the trustee, individual characteristics *of the trustor* become more important in the

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<sup>25</sup> Lucian W. Pye, “The Elusive Concept of Culture and the Vivid Reality of Personality,” *Political Psychology* 18, no. 2 (1997), 241.

<sup>26</sup> Delhey and Newton, “Who Trusts?,” 94. Similarly, Pye also argues that: “Viewed from the perspective of the individual, trust emanates from two sources. The first relates to the basic personality of the individual that is established during infancy and early childhood. ... The second source of trust comes at a later phase of socialization when children learn to distinguish between friends and enemies.” See, Lucian W. Pye, “Civility, Social Capital, and Civil Society: Three Powerful Concepts for Explaining Asia,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 29, no. 4 (1999), 770.

assessment of the trustworthiness of generalized others.”<sup>27</sup> In this dissertation, I focus on age, sex, education, marital status, economic status, and the membership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). These attributes, as discussed in Chapter I, are expected to be strongly correlated with both particularized trust and generalized trust.<sup>28</sup> Capturing key aspects of socialization, such sociodemographic factors as age, gender, and education tend to have a strong and long-lasting impact on people’s predisposition of trusting others.

In earlier empirical studies of social trust in democratic, transitional, and non-Chinese settings, there is a widespread consensus that such sociodemographic factors as age, gender, and education can influence individuals’ social trust, measured by the “most-people” question. Particularly, in exploring the declining social trust and social capital in the United States, Putnam has found out it is the key demographic changes that contributes to the erosion of social trust.<sup>29</sup> Tarja Nieminen and his colleagues also report that the levels of social trust vary significantly across different sociodemographic categories like gender, age, and income.<sup>30</sup> In general, these empirical findings have strongly support a general hypotheses that that people’s trust in each other are affected by

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<sup>27</sup> Paxton, “Association Memberships and Generalized Trust,” 49. For similar emphasis on sociodemographic factors in trust formation, see, for example, Markus Freitag, “Social Capital in (Dis)Similar Democracies: The Development of Generalized Trust in Japan and Switzerland,” *Comparative Political Studies* 36, no. 8 (2003), 946; Gerry Veenstra, “Explicating Social Capital: Trust and Participation in the Civil Space,” *The Canadian Journal of Sociology/Cahiers canadiens de sociologie* 27, no. 4 (2002); Christian Bjørnskov, “Determinants of Generalized Trust: A Cross-Country Comparison,” *Public Choice* 130, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>28</sup> For impacts of sociodemographic factors on both types of social trust, see, for example, Maria L. Chávez, Brian Wampler, and Ross E. Burkhart, “Left Out: Trust and Social Capital among Migrant Seasonal Farmworkers,” *Social Science Quarterly* 87, no. 5 (2006), 1021. .

<sup>29</sup> Robert D. Putnam, “Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital,” *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 1 (1995); Idem, “Tuning in, Tuning Out: The Strange Disappearance of Social Capital in America,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 28, no. 4 (1995); Idem, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000).

<sup>30</sup> Nieminen, et al., “Measurement and Socio-Demographic Variation.”

various process of socialization processes, which are attributable to key sociodemographic factors.

Drawing upon these prior studies, it is plausible to assume that major sociodemographic attributes may exert strong impacts on particularized trust and generalized trust respectively. Thus, I expect that our respondents with different sociodemographic characteristics vary in their particularized trust and generalized trust. In this section, I will explore the relationship between each of the sociodemographic variables and particularized trust and generalized trust.

*Age* Students of social trust have frequently emphasized the generational cohort effects on a person's inclination of trust. As Putnam points out, people of different generations have been socialized under dramatically different sociopolitical environments, and consequently a clear cohort pattern of social trust can be observed.<sup>31</sup> In particular, he finds precisely such a pattern in the United States, and he ascribes this pattern to the contrast between a "long civic generation" born between 1910 and 1940 and a less civic generation born after 1940. Putnam's finding that the generational change in trust are further confirmed by many following empirical studies.<sup>32</sup> Concerning studies at individual level, Alberto Alesina and Eliana La Ferrara find a positive effect of age structure in the United States.<sup>33</sup> More importantly, the impacts of age on formation of social seem to prevail across national borders. After in examining social trust in the United Kingdom, Peter Hall have found that "overall levels of social trust [in Britain]

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<sup>31</sup> Putnam, "Bowling Alone."; Idem, "Tuning in."

<sup>32</sup> For example, Veenstra, "Explicating Social Capital."; Eric M. Uslaner, "Social Capital, Television, and the 'Mean World': Trust, Optimism, and Civic Participation," *Political Psychology* 19, no. 3 (1998).

<sup>33</sup> Alberto Alesina and Eliana La Ferrara, "Who Trusts Others?," *Journal of Public Economics* 85, no. 2 (2002).

declined between 1959 when 56 per cent of respondents said they generally trust others and 1990 when only 44 per cent said they do. There is almost certainly a general period effect here of some magnitude.”<sup>34</sup>

The relationship between generation change and the propensity of trusting has been confirmed by the evidence emerged from some earlier surveys in China. Based on data collected from a six-city sample survey in 1999, Wenfang Tang finds that there is an apparent cohort effect in China, and the correlation is largely positive.<sup>35</sup> Specifically, Tang divides the respondents into five age groups: the pre-socialist generation, the socialist generation, the Cultural Revolution generation, the post-Cultural Revolution generation, and the reform generation. The two Cultural Revolution generations, owing to their traumatic experiences obtained from the totalitarian political campaigns, were the least trusting compared to other respondents.

The theory and empirical findings from earlier studies in Chinese and non-Chinese settings simply suggest that the older a person, the more likely she or he is to trust other people. In this study, then, I expect our respondents' age to be positively associated with their levels of particularized trust and generalized trust. In other words, while older respondents are more likely to be trusting, younger ones are more likely to distrust other people. To explore this expectation, I compare the distribution of the two types of trusts among six age groups. The results of the comparison are presented in Table 13.

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<sup>34</sup> Peter A. Hall, “Social Capital in Britain,” *British Journal of Political Science* 29, no. 3 (1999), 431-2.

<sup>35</sup> Wenfang Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 108-10.

Table 13. **Particularized Trust and Generalized Trust by Age, 2005**

Trust Index	Age					
	18-25 (%)	26-35 (%)	36-45 (%)	46-55 (%)	56-65 (%)	65-over (%)
<i>Particularized Trust</i>						
Low	43	35	31	30	31	26
Medium	33	37	40	39	36	35
High	24	27	29	31	33	40
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Gamma = .10 <sup>***</sup>						
<i>Generalized Trust</i>						
Low	46	48	46	46	41	46
Medium	30	27	29	27	31	25
High	25	25	25	27	28	29
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Gamma = .04 <sup>*</sup>						

*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

*Note:* The original particularized trust and generalized trust indexes are trichotomized into high, medium, and low levels.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>  $p < 0.001$ , <sup>\*\*</sup>  $p < 0.01$ , <sup>\*</sup>  $p < 0.05$ .

As Table 13 indicates, generally, respondents' ages were positively associated with both particularized trust and generalized trust in our survey. Specifically, while 40 percent of people at 65 or older demonstrated high level of particularized trust, only 25 percent of people at age of 18 to 25 registered the same level. With respect to generalized trust, while 29 percent of people at 65 or older demonstrated high level of particularized trust, only 25 percent of people at age of 18 to 25 registered the same level. In addition, between these two age groups, the levels of particularized trust and generalized trust grew consistently with increasing age. Together, these results support

our expectation about the effect of aging on social trust: Age is positively associated with the level of both particularized trust and generalized trust in China.

*Sex* Some earlier studies have found that women and men are different with regard to their inclination of trusting. As Vivien Lowndes argues, with respect to social trust, “gender differences are clearly important (across and within other social categories).”<sup>36</sup> But there is no consensus among students as to how gender actually affects the levels of social trust.

In general, there are at least two competing arguments about the effects of gender on the formation of social trust. One suggests that, compared to men, women are less likely to trust other people, either strangers or people in neighborhood.<sup>37</sup> A major reason frequently cited is women’s isolation from various sociopolitical interactions. Across various societies, women are traditionally holding the responsibility for caring and domestic work.<sup>38</sup> As a consequence, women largely cannot invest as much time as men in various social activities and political participation.<sup>39</sup> As suggested by Alesina and La Ferrara, “[w]omen participate less in social activities because of a time constraint.”<sup>40</sup> With limited range of social activity, it is hard for women to develop social trust equivalent to that of men.

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<sup>36</sup> Vivien Lowndes, “Women and Social Capital: A Comment on Hall’s ‘Social Capital in Britain,’” *British Journal of Political Science* 30, no. 3 (2000), 536.

<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Nieminen et al., “Measurement and Socio-Demographic Variation”; Luke Keele, “Macro Measures and Mechanics of Social Capital,” *Political Analysis* 13, no. 2 (2005).

<sup>38</sup> Lowndes, “Women and Social Capital.”

<sup>39</sup> For a general discussion on the gender inequality in available time outside domestic affairs see, Nancy Burns, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Sidney Verba, “The Public Consequences of Private Inequality: Family Life and Citizen Participation,” *The American Political Science Review* 91, no. 2 (1997). In China, the gender inequality in political participation is particularly acute. See, for example, M. Kent Jennings, “Gender and Political Participation in the Chinese Countryside,” *The Journal of Politics* 60, no. 4 (1998).

<sup>40</sup> Alesina and La Ferrara, “Who Trusts Others?,” 218.

Moreover, some empirical studies have also warranted support to this theoretical proposition. Hall, for instance, compares data drawn from three sample surveys conduct in Britain from 1959 to 1999, and finds that women were not only less active in various formal or informal civic participations, but also demonstrated lower levels of social trust consistently.<sup>41</sup> In the United States, similar relationship between gender and social trust has been found. Alesina and La Ferrara, using data collected from 1974-94 General Social Survey (GSS), find that women in the United States are significantly less trusting than men.<sup>42</sup>

The other argument contends that women are no less, if not more, trusting than men. Specifically, Lowndes argues that “there are important differences in the types of activity undertaken by women and men,” and current survey studies often overlook the informal social activities in which women are more active.<sup>43</sup> As a matter of fact, taking these “informal sociability” into account, Lowndes finds that women are socially active and accordingly more trusting than men.<sup>44</sup> Similarly, in addressing the creation of social capital, in which social trust is an essential component, Putnam also suggests that women are more likely to be trusting due to their informal sociability: “Most of our mothers were house-wives, and most of them invested heavily in social capital formation—a jargony way of referring to untold, unpaid hours in church suppers, PTA meetings, neighborhood coffee klatches, and visits to friends and relatives.”<sup>45</sup>

In sum, the two competing arguments leave us with two contradictory hypotheses. While one expects women are less trusting, the other suggests the opposite. To examine

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<sup>41</sup> Hall, “Social Capital in Britain.”

<sup>42</sup> Alesina and La Ferrara, “Who Trusts Others?,” 217-9.

<sup>43</sup> Lowndes, “Women and Social Capital,” 534.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 535.

<sup>45</sup> Putnam, “Tuning In,” 670; *Idem*, *Bowling Alone*.

these two hypotheses, I conducted cross-tabulations between respondents' gender and registered levels of particularized trust and generalized trust. The results are demonstrated in the table.

**Table 14. Particularized Trust and Generalized Trust by Sex, 2005**

Sex	<i>Particularized Trust Index</i>				<i>Generalized Trust Index</i>			
	Low (%)	Med. (%)	High (%)	Total (%)	Low (%)	Med. (%)	High (%)	Total (%)
Female	33	37	29	100	45	28	25	100
Male	31	38	30	100	45	27	26	100
	Gamma = .03				Gamma = .02			

*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

*Note:* The original particularized trust and generalized trust indexes are trichotomized into high, medium, and low levels.

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

As Table 14 reveals, women seemed to be less willing to place trust in surrounding people and complete strangers, albeit the impacts were quite weak. Specifically, our female respondents registered more in “low” and less in “high” than male respondents for both types of social trust. These results, thus, lend support to one of the two above-mentioned hypotheses that women in China are less trusting than men.



*Marital Status* Some students of social trust have also noted that individuals' marital status could affect their trust levels.<sup>46</sup> Specifically, they cite two mechanisms linking marriage and social trust: (1) building family per se as a process of trust creation;<sup>47</sup> (2) the negative impacts of marriage on people's available time and energy.<sup>48</sup> Yet, these two mechanisms lead to contradictory conclusion on the relationship between marriage and social trust.

The first argument suggests that married couples are more trusting because marriage life per se is a trust creation process. For instance, Michael Welch and his colleagues find that "[i]n dyadic relationships ... the more an individual trusts his or her significant other, the more likely that a long-term commitment will be made with that person."<sup>49</sup> Similarly Putnam argues that "[s]ince the family itself is, by some accounts, a key form of social capital [in which trust is a principal component], perhaps its eclipse is part of the explanation for the reduction in joining and trusting in the wider community." He further supports his argument by presenting empirical results emerged from the US GSS. Specifically, Putnam finds that "controlling for education, age, race, and so on, single people—both men and women, divorced, separated, and never-married—are significantly less trusting and less engaged civically than married people. Roughly speaking, married men and women are about a third more trusting and belong to about 15-25% more groups than comparable single men and women. ... In short, successful

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<sup>46</sup> See, for example, John F. Helliwell and Robert D. Putnam, "The Social Context of Well-Being," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London B* 359, no. 1449 (2004); Scott D. McClurg, "Social Networks and Political Participation: The Role of Social Interaction in Explaining Political Participation," *Political Research Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (2003); Laura Stoker and M. Kent Jennings, "Life-Cycle Transitions and Political Participation: The Case of Marriage," *The American Political Science Review* 89, no. 2 (1995).

<sup>47</sup> Putnam, "Tuning In," 671; Idem, *Bowling Alone*.

<sup>48</sup> Stoker and Jennings, "Life-Cycle Transitions and Political Participation."

<sup>49</sup> Michael R. Welch et al., "Determinants and Consequences of Social Trust," *Sociological Inquiry* 75, no. 4 (2005).

marriage (especially if the family unit includes children) is statistically associated with greater social trust and civic engagement.”<sup>50</sup>

The other argument, on the contrary, contends that married people tend to be less trusting in others, since they could not spend as much time as unmarried individuals in various social activities. Specifically, they argue that married couples are often caught by various domestic issues. As a consequence, they either do not have time, or just are unwilling to participate in various social interactions.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, marriage tends to be a constraint for people to develop and sustain their trust relationships. Moreover, some empirical evidences have also been found to support this argument.<sup>52</sup>

In sum, two competing propositions can be found with respect to the role of marriage in shaping one’s social trust. While one proposition suggests marriage is positively correlated with interpersonal trust, the other implies the opposite. To examine these two competing propositions, I ran cross-tabulation between respondents’ marital status and particularized trust and generalized trust. The results are presented in Table 15. As indicated in the table, our married respondents’ were generally lower in both particularized trust and generalized trust; unmarried individuals tended to be more trusting. Such results confirm the second argument about marriage and social trust: marriage is negatively associated with social trust.

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<sup>50</sup> Putnam, “Tuning In,” 671.

<sup>51</sup> Stoker and Jennings, “Life-Cycle Transitions and Political Participation.”

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

Table 15. Particularized Trust and Generalized Trust by Marital Status, 2005

	<i>Particularized Trust Index</i>				<i>Generalized Trust Index</i>			
	Low (%)	Med. (%)	High (%)	Total (%)	Low (%)	Med. (%)	High (%)	Total (%)
Non-Married	32	38	30	100	46	28	26	100
Married	45	29	26	100	47	29	24	100
	Gamma = -.19**				Gamma = -.03			

Source: The 2005 China General Social Survey.

Note: The original particularized trust and generalized trust indexes are trichotomized into high, medium, and low levels.

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

*Education* Ever since Almond and Verba's seminal work *The Civic Culture*, education has been widely perceived to be robustly associated with social trust.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, education as a predictor of social trust has appeared in virtually all empirical studies pertaining to the origins of social trust. In general, students of social trust believe that people's level of educational attainment is positively related to the levels of generalized trust, and negatively to those of particularized trust.<sup>54</sup> In other words, the higher a person's level education, the more likely she or he is willing to trust strangers and place less trust in people she or he knows personally. As Stephen Knack and Philip Keefer suggest, educational system can make individuals better informed and more cooperative, reduce uncertainty about the behaviors of strangers, and therefore

<sup>53</sup> Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1963).

<sup>54</sup> For example, see, Putnam, "Tuning In," 667-8; Idem, *Bowling Alone*; Delhey and "Who Trusts?"; Alesina and La Ferrara, "Who Trusts Others?"; Marcus Alexander, "Determinants of Social Capital: New Evidence on Religion, Diversity and Structural Change," *British Journal of Political Science* 37, no. 2 (2007); Bjørnskov, "Determinants of Generalized Trust."

alleviate the distrust resulted from ignorance.<sup>55</sup> In other words, schooling, as an important socialization process, may give people more positive attitudes towards strangers. Furthermore, people with longer years of education are commonly high in social mobility, and therefore are less confined to closed and parochial trust relations.<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, individuals with higher educational achievement are less likely to develop strong sense of particularized trust.

Evidences from earlier survey studies in non-Chinese settings have also confirmed the relationship between education and social trust.<sup>57</sup> For example, based on General Social Survey conducted from 1974 to 1994 in the United State, Putnam concludes that “[e]ducation is by far the strongest correlate that I have discovered of ... social trust,” even controlling for income, life satisfaction, and social status.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, Delhey and Newton, after situating the relationship between social trust and education in seven different societies, find that individuals with higher levels of education are more trusting.<sup>59</sup> Even more relevant to our study of social trust in China, using data from Eurobarometer survey encompassing post-Soviet Central and East European countries, Jan Fidrmuc and Klarita Gerxhani have also found a potent and positive connection between social trust and education, which further implies that the impacts of education on social trust prevails across various sociopolitical settings.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Knack and Keefer conclude that: “In short, highly educated people are much more likely to be joiners and trusters, partly because they are better off economically, but mostly because of the skills, resources, and inclinations that were imparted to them at home and in school.” See, Stephen Knack and Philip Keefer, “Does Social Capital Have an Economic Payoff? A Cross-Country Investigation,” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 112, no. 4 (1997), 1270-1.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> For example, see Putnam, “Tuning In”; Idem, *Bowling Alone*; Hall, “Social Capital in Britain.”

<sup>58</sup> Putnam, “Tuning In,” 667; Idem, *Bowling Alone*.

<sup>59</sup> Delhey and Newton, “Who Trusts?”; Idem, “Predicting Cross-National Levels of Social Trust.”

<sup>60</sup> Jan Fidrmuc and Klarita Gerxhani, “Mind the Gap! Social Capital, East and West,” *Journal of Comparative Economics* 36, no. 2 (2008).

Table 16. Particularized Trust and Generalized Trust by Education, 2005

Trust Index	Education			
	Elementary or Lower (%)	Middle School (%)	High School (%)	Undergraduate or Higher (%)
<i>Particularized Trust</i>				
Low	31	34	32	42
Medium	37	38	39	31
High	31	28	28	27
Total	100	100	100	100
Gamma = -.05*				
<i>Generalized Trust</i>				
Low	45	48	40	39
Medium	28	27	32	18
High	27	25	29	43
Total	100	100	100	100
Gamma = .01				

*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

*Note:* The original particularized trust and generalized trust indexes are trichotomized into high, medium, and low levels.

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

Does the above-mentioned proposition about social trust and education hold in China? The results from a cross-tabulation test imply a positive answer to this question. Specifically, as presented in Table 16, with improving level of educational attainment, from “elementary or lower,” “middle school,” “high school,” to “undergraduate or higher,” the percentage of respondents registered in high particularized trust dropped accordingly. With respect to generalized trust, the increment in educational attainments is accompanied by increasing trust in strangers, albeit the trend was quite weak. Therefore, the results for our data support the propositions developed in earlier studies about the impacts of education on social trust.

*Economic Status* Few students would deny the critical importance of economic wellbeing in shaping individuals' trust in others. In general, drawing on both modernization theory and personal resource theory,<sup>61</sup> they postulate that individuals with more economic resources are more likely to trust other people.<sup>62</sup> There are at least three frequently referred reasons. In the first place, richer people generally have more opportunities to participate in various social activities and civic organization. Given the extensive interactions, they are more likely to develop trust in others.<sup>63</sup> Second, as discussed in Chapter I, trust reflects individuals' willingness to risk their interests. Given more economic freedom, the costs of being trusting seem to be smaller to wealthy people than the less affluent. As Christian Bjørnskov suggests, "rich people are more willing to take a chance in trusting strangers, hence capturing a difference of relative risk aversion that would tend to decrease as incomes increase."<sup>64</sup> Thirdly, compared to people less affluent, economically successful individuals tend to be more optimistic about the world, and therefore are more likely to develop benign views about others. As a result, wealthy people tend to be more trusting.<sup>65</sup> Collectively, all these three reasons lead us to the conclusion that income level is positively associated with social trust.

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<sup>61</sup> For arguments drawn from modernization theory, see, for example, Delhey and Newton, "Predicting Cross-National Levels of Social Trust"; Idem, "Who Trusts?"; Freitag, "Social Capital in (Dis)Similar Democracies." For arguments rested on personal resources, see, for example, Henry E. Brady, Sidney Verba, and Kay Lehman Schlozman, "Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation," *The American Political Science Review* 89, no. 2 (1995)

<sup>62</sup> See, for example, Freitag, "Social Capital in (Dis)Similar Democracies," 948; Putnam, "Tuning In," 668-9.

<sup>63</sup> See, for example, Brehm and Rahn, "Individual-Level Evidence."; Brady et al., "Beyond SES."; Putnam, "Tuning In"; Idem, *Bowling Alone*.

<sup>64</sup> Bjørnskov, "Determinants of Generalized Trust," 7. Similarly, Delhey and Newton also suggest that: "Risk and trust are closely associated, and it has been argued that the wealthier the society, and the more it meets basic material needs, the more its members are able to take risks by virtue of their trusting attitudes, while at the same time, making it both less necessary and less rewarding to act in an untrustworthy manner." See, Delhey and Newton, "Predicting Cross-National Levels of Social Trust," 312.

<sup>65</sup> Uslaner, *The Moral Foundations of Trust*.

Along the consensus on the role of income, the empirical studies under various settings have also warranted credentials to the claim at both national level and individual level. At national level, for instance, Inglehart and his colleagues have found that economic development is a strong predictor of social trust.<sup>66</sup> Similar association has been identified at individual level in Delhey and Newton's cross-national comparisons and Alesina and La Ferrara's study in the United States.<sup>67</sup>

To examine whether such a postposition hold in China, I conducted a bivariate test of income and social trust. Specifically, based on respondents' gross personal income in 2004, I divide them into three income groups. The results of the bivariate analysis are presented in Table 17.

**Table 17. Particularized Trust and Generalized Trust by Income Level, 2005**

Income Level	<i>Particularized Trust Index</i>				<i>Generalized Trust Index</i>			
	Low (%)	Med. (%)	High (%)	Total (%)	Low (%)	Med. (%)	High (%)	Total (%)
Low	32	37	32	100	44	29	27	44
Medium	32	38	30		48	28	24	48
High	36	37	27	100	41	30	32	41
	Gamma = -.07*				Gamma = .05			

*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

*Note:* The original particularized trust and generalized trust indexes are trichotomized into high, medium, and low levels.

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

<sup>66</sup> Ronald Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997).

<sup>67</sup> Delhey and Newton, "Who Trusts?"; Alesina and Eliana La Ferrara, "Who Trusts Others?"

The results from Table 4.6 indicate that personal wealth may have mixed impacts on the two types of social trust. While wealthier people are less likely to trust their fellow villagers, they invest more trust in strangers. One possible explanation is that in China to be rich one has to search economic opportunities outside the villages, and hence one would have more socioeconomic changes with strangers.

*Party Membership* In China and other countries with the Communist legacies, one of most controversial sociodemographic categories pertaining to the creation of social trust is the membership of Communist party. There is no consensus on the impact of party membership yet. On one hand, according to social capital theory, participations in various associations may facilitate the formation of social trust. Specifically, party members, exposed to various and intensive sociopolitical activities, should have a higher level of social trust.<sup>68</sup> Tang, for instance, argues that the Communist party may well function “as a formal association promotes interpersonal trust, just as social capital theory would predict. ... The modernization of the party organization therefore makes its members function similar to members in any modern association.”<sup>69</sup> On the other hand, as discussed in Chapter II, communist control over the society is characterized by atomization of individual citizens.<sup>70</sup> The party-state, carrying out various political campaigns, deliberately eradicates any trust groups that might potentially challenge its

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<sup>68</sup> For a general discussion on the role of formal association, see Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*. For arguments on the impacts of party membership on various civic participation, see, for example, Letki, “Socialization for Participation?”

<sup>69</sup> Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change*, 110. For discussion on the modernization of CCP, see, for example, Yanjie Bian, Xiaoling Shu, and John R. Logan, “Communist Party Membership and Regime Dynamics in China,” *Social Forces* 79, no. 3 (2001).

<sup>70</sup> For example, see, Hannah Arendt, *The Origin of Totalitarianism* (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973); Berman, “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic,” *World Politics* 49, no. 3 (1997).



control.<sup>71</sup> As a consequence, party members should consistently demonstrate long levels of social trust.

Up until now, there are few systematic empirical studies have been conducted to explore the correlation between party membership and the levels of social trust.<sup>72</sup> To preliminarily investigate this question, I ran cross-tabulation tests of party membership between particularized trust and generalized trust. The results are present in Table 4.6.

**Table 18. Particularized Trust and Generalized Trust by CCP Membership, 2005**

	<i>Particularized Trust Index</i>				<i>Generalized Trust Index</i>			
	Low (%)	Med. (%)	High (%)	Total (%)	Low (%)	Med. (%)	High (%)	Total (%)
Non-CCP	33	38	30	100	46	28	26	100
CCP	26	39	35	100	43	26	30	100
	Gamma = -.13*				Gamma = .09			

*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

*Note:* The original particularized trust and generalized trust indexes are trichotomized into high, medium, and low levels.

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

<sup>71</sup> Concerning the Communist party's political campaigns in destroying social trust, Bahry and Silver have suggested that totalitarian regimes, like the ones under Stalin and Mao, "atomize society so that people become isolated and mistrustful of one another and hence unable to concert their efforts in organized political activity." See, Donna Bahry and Brian D. Silver, "Intimidation and the Symbolic Uses of Terror in the USSR," *The American Political Science Review* 81, no. 4 (1987), 1065.

<sup>72</sup> It should be noted that Tang has carried out a study on the relationship between party membership and social trust in China. However, his study, based on data collected in six major cities, is highly skewed to sociopolitical situations in larger urban areas, and therefore, provides us with few insights about the relationship in the rest of China. See, Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change*.

From Table 18, we can draw at least two important findings. First, in rural China, party membership is significantly and negatively correlated with particularized trust. This indicates that being a party member means being less trusting in fellow villagers. This finding is consistent with our prior discussion about the impacts of communist rule. Specifically, party-state's penetration will reduce the level of social trust circulated within a village, and socialization within party system will create personal detachment from local and personal trust relations.

Second, party membership is positively, albeit not significantly, associated with generalized trust. In other words, party members are less suspicious about the complete strangers, and more willing to place trust in them. Such a finding seems to confirm the social capital thesis that interaction creates social trust. Specifically, "skills and civic resources learned under a non-democratic political system can well be used in a democracy. Party membership is a type of conventional activism that socializes citizens to be interested and participate in politics."<sup>73</sup>

### *B. Attitudinal Factors and Their Impacts*

Our discussion thus far has helped us identify who is most likely to trust in the Chinese context. However, it is still unclear why people in China choose to or not to trust. Particularly we are not equipped with knowledge about the psychological paths leading people to trust. To explore these unspecified psychological mechanisms, I will examine the effects major attitudinal factors in this section. Specifically, I include three important attitudes—subjective well-being, perception of equality, and norms of civility,

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<sup>73</sup> Letki, "Socialization for Participation," 667; Also see, Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change*; Bian et al., "Communist Party Membership."

which reflects one's basic views on personal life, the society, and morality. As discussed in Chapter I, I expect that all these three attitudes robustly affect one's predisposition of trusting. Briefly, this is because these attitudes are a set of normative and subjective values and beliefs related closely to the one's assessment of the outside world and others in general, and therefore fundamentally shape her or his willingness to take the risk of trust, or using Bernard Barber's words, to believe in "the persistence and fulfillment the natural and moral orders."<sup>74</sup>

*Subjective Well-being* It has been argued that people's subjective evaluation of their overall well-being is potently associated with social trust.<sup>75</sup> Specifically, some scholars argue the personal experiences strongly shape one's inclination of trusting; how well things are going with one affect her or his view about others.<sup>76</sup> As Freitag comments, people's life experiences "influence the extent of one's life satisfaction ... individuals who are more happy and satisfied with their lives are more likely to trust other people than are individuals who are unhappy or dissatisfied. Life satisfaction reflects whether one has a generally positive or negative bearing toward the environment or the world in which one lives."<sup>77</sup> While positive evaluation of one's own life leads to higher social trust, "anxiety and insecurity," as noted by Patterson, "are clearly the most powerful forces driving distrust."<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Bernard Barber, *The Logic and Limits of Trust* (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 9.

<sup>75</sup> For example, see Putnam, "Bowling Alone."; Idem, *Bowling Alone*; Orlando Patterson, "Liberty against the Democratic State: On the Historical and Contemporary Sources of American Distrust," in *Democracy and Trust*, ed. Mark E. Warren (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

<sup>76</sup> For example, Alesina and La Ferrara, "Who Trust Others?"; Paul F. Whiteley, "Economic Growth and Social Capital," *Political Studies* 48, no. 3 (2000).

<sup>77</sup> Freitag, "Social Capital in (Dis)Similar Democracies," 946.

<sup>78</sup> Patterson, "Liberty against the Democratic State," 190.

Earlier empirical studies at both societal and individual level have also confirmed such a strong relation between life satisfaction and social trust. For instance, drawing on data collected from various waves of WVS, Inglehart and his colleagues have found that “life satisfaction, happiness, interpersonal trust ... all tend to go together in a cultural cluster.”<sup>79</sup> At individual level, Freitag, after comparing Japan and Switzerland, reports that life satisfaction seems to yield positive impacts on social trust in both societies.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, similar results have been found by Delhey and Newton with references to a more comprehensive comparison across seven countries.<sup>81</sup>

Is the above-mentioned proposition about social trust and subjective well-being supported by the data in our survey? To answer this question, I conducted a bivariate analysis of life satisfaction and social trust. As confirmed and regularly used by various representative surveys, “satisfaction with one’s life as a whole is one of the best available indicator of subjective well-being.”<sup>82</sup> Specifically, in this study, respondents were asked to evaluate their satisfaction with their life on the basis of a ten-point scale.

The results of this bivariate analysis is presented in Figure 4.2. Deviated from observations obtained in non-Chinese settings, life satisfaction seems not to have a linear and positive effect on particularized trust or generalized trust. Our respondents registered higher level of life satisfaction did not express more particularized trust and generalized trust. Surprisingly, regarding generalized trust people who trusted most were those least satisfied with their own lives. With respect to particularized trust, its relationship with life satisfaction appears to be a concave curve: life satisfaction increases the likelihood

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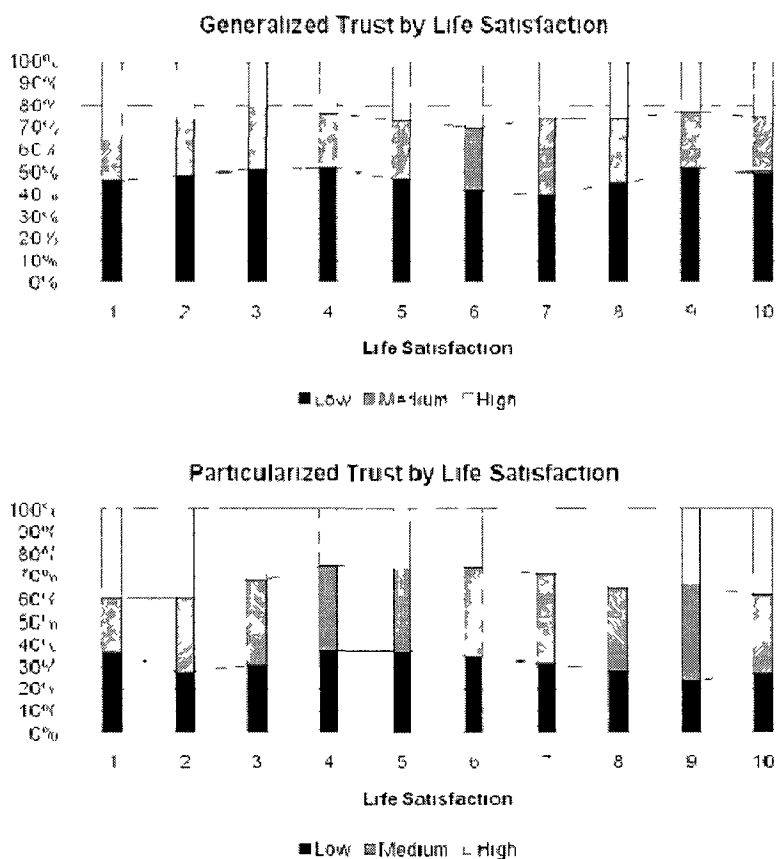
<sup>79</sup> Inglehart, *Modernization and Postmodernization*.

<sup>80</sup> Freitag, “Social Capital in (Dis)Similar Democracies,” 955-6.

<sup>81</sup> Delhey and Newton, “Who Trusts,” 131.

<sup>82</sup> Inglehart, “Trust, Well-Being and Democracy,” 105; Also see, Helliwell and Robert D. Putnam, “The Social Context of Well-Being,” 1435-6.

that a person will place moderate trust in people she or he knows personally, but its impacts diminishes as life satisfaction further increases



**Figure 2 Particularized Trust and Generalized Trust by Life Satisfaction**

*Source* The 2005 China General Social Survey

One possible explanation to the findings emerged from our survey is that life satisfaction, as an assessment ones' own well-being, is only weakly associated with individuals' willingness to take the risk of trusting. After all, social trust is "inherently a

matter of the beliefs that one agents has about the behavior of another,”<sup>83</sup> and, therefore are mainly influenced by the confidence that other people “will manifest sensible and, when, needed, reciprocally beneficial behavior in their interactions.”<sup>84</sup>

*Perception of Equality* Increasingly students of social trust emphasize the effects of equality on the formation of social trust. In general, they have argued the inequality in income and opportunity is detrimental to the development of social trust. As Uslaner and Brown suggest, there are at least two mechanisms linking income inequality and distrust in a given society:

[T]rust in others rests on a foundation of economic equality. When resources are distributed inequitably, people at the top and the bottom will not see each other as facing a shared fate. Therefore, they will have less reason to trust people of different backgrounds. Also, trust rests on a psychological foundation of optimism and control over one’s environment. Where inequality is high, people will be less likely to believe that the future looks bright, and they will have even fewer reasons to believe that they are the masters of their own fate.<sup>85</sup>

Following the same vein, some studies further suggest equality in opportunity could also lead to creation of social trust in a society. Specifically, reflecting upon socioeconomic and sociopolitical progresses in the future, people with strong sense of equality in opportunity may still develop strong social trust even when the society is highly stratified now.<sup>86</sup> Jointly these earlier studies simply suggest that equality in both forms is positively and significantly associated with social trust circulated in a society.

Empirical studies conducted in non-Chinese settings have also confirmed such a strong association between equality and social trust. Uslaner and Brown, using a variety

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<sup>83</sup> James C. Cox, “How to Identify Trust and Reciprocity,” *Games and Economic Behavior* 46, no. 2 (2004), 263.

<sup>84</sup> Welch et al., “Determinants and Consequences of Social Trust,” 457.

<sup>85</sup> Uslaner and Brown, “Inequality, Trust, and Civic Engagement,” 869.

<sup>86</sup> Rothstein and Uslaner, “All for All.”

of data sources collected in the United State, have found that economic inequality could exert “a dampening effect” on the development of social trust.<sup>87</sup> In another cross-national study, Rothstein and Uslaner have concluded that the effects of equality in income and opportunity trump national borders, and social trust is universally generated by the two types of equality.<sup>88</sup> In a word, the more a society is characterized by income and opportunity equality, the more likely citizens are going to trust each others. Yet does this proposition hold in the Chinese context?

Before moving to examine the relationship between equality and social trust in China, it is imperative for us to specify the measurement of equality in this dissertation. When students of social trust assess equality, they usually rely on objective measures like the Gini score.<sup>89</sup> Theoretically, discrepancies can exist between a society’s objective reality and people’s perceptions of such reality. Although certainly valuable, objective evaluations do not tell us how people within China perceive equality in their daily life. Since only when individuals perceive the society to be plagued by inequality in income and opportunity, do they feel less optimistic and place less trust in others. Subjective evaluations therefore are more pertinent to social trust. Given this, in this dissertation I have chosen to use subjective indicators—the respondents’ subjective evaluation of economic equality and opportunity equality—to gauge equality.

Specifically, in order to measure our respondents’ belief in equality, I asked them to assess following three statements:

1. Currently some people earn a lot of money, while others only a little. This is fair.

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<sup>87</sup> Uslaner and Brown, “Inequality, Trust, and Civic Engagement,” 889.

<sup>88</sup> Rothstein and Uslaner, “All for All,” 70-1.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 43.

2. If my children work hard and smart enough, they have an equal chance to receive higher education.
3. In our society, children of workers and peasants have an equal chance to become people of great wealth and social status.

Given our prior discussion that both income equality and opportunity equality is of critical importance in the development of social trust, question 1 is tapped to measure income equality, and question 2 and 3 is designed for opportunity equality. For all the three items, the respondents were asked to assess the corresponding behaviors on a five-point scale. Specifically, “strongly agree” is coded 5, and “Strongly disagree” is coded 1. The three items were further combined to form an additive index, and reliability test for the index indicated that the standardized Cronbach’s alpha is 0.758. To examine the relationship between norms of civility and particularize trust and generalized trust, I conducted bivariate correlation test. The results are presented in Table 19.



**Table 19. Correlation between Perception of Equality and Particularized Trust and Generalized Trust, 2005**

Equality Index	<i>Particularized Trust Index</i>				<i>Generalized Trust Index</i>			
	Low (%)	Med. (%)	High (%)	Total (%)	Low (%)	Med. (%)	High (%)	Total (%)
Low	37	38	25	100	44	31	25	100
Medium	29	40	31	100	46	28	26	100
High	31	34	35	100	46	26	28	100
	Gamma = .10 <sup>***</sup>				Gamma = .02			

*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

*Note:* The original perception of equality, particularized trust and generalized trust indexes are trichotomized into high, medium, and low levels.

<sup>\*\*\*</sup>  $p < 0.001$ , <sup>\*\*</sup>  $p < 0.01$ , <sup>\*</sup>  $p < 0.05$ .

From Table 19, at least two important findings stand out. First, there is a fairly strong relationship between one's perception of equality and particularized trust. Specifically, while only 25 percent of those who have reported low equality highly trusted people they personally know, 35 percent of those who have express high equality registered the same level of particularized trust. This result means that the more one believes in income and opportunity equality, the more likely she or he is going to trust surrounding people.

Second, contrary to the strong association between perception of equality and particularized trust, there is only a weak relationship between generalized trust and equality—the gamma coefficient is as low as .02. This finding appears to be significantly deviating from the results emerged from empirical studies in non-Chinese settings, where

generalized trust and perception of equality comes hand-in-hand.<sup>90</sup> A possible explanation to this is that most of our rural respondents form their views about equality by observing people around them. Therefore, their perception of equality is more related to particularized trust than trust in strangers.

*Norms of Civility* Norms of civility has long been perceived to be strongly associated with social trust.<sup>91</sup> In recent decades, such a proposition has revived under social capital theories, in which social trust is a product of strong moral norms.<sup>92</sup> More provocatively, some scholars have further claimed that trust per se is a moral norm.<sup>93</sup> In general, students have argued that norms of civility facilitate the formation of trust in strangers and constrain the overdevelopment of particularized trust. This line of arguments is well articulated in Uslaner's writings:

Generalized trust encompasses the belief that people who are different from us nevertheless are part of our '*moral communities*.' We have a responsibility for taking care of the less fortunate (emphasis added).<sup>94</sup>

Trust in people we know, which I call 'strategic trust,' helps us decide which stockbroker we use or which electrician we hire. ... We usually don't know all potential bowling league members, but we do rely upon friends of friends, which also depends upon *knowledge* and *experience*, even if not so directly (emphasis added).<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> For example, see, Uslaner and Brown, "Inequality, Trust, and Civic Engagement."; Rothstein and Uslaner, "All for All."

<sup>91</sup> Almond and Verba, *The Civic Culture*.

<sup>92</sup> With regard to trust as a product of social norms, Rahn and Transue suggest that a central theme threading Tocqueville and Durkheim's theories is social trust as a value commitment. See, Wendy M. Rahn and John E. Transue, "Social Trust and Value Change: The Decline of Social Capital in American Youth, 1976-1995," *Political Psychology* 19, no. 3 (1998).

<sup>93</sup> For discussion on trust per se as social norms, see, for example, Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1995); Uslaner, "Democracy and Social Capital."

<sup>94</sup> Eric M. Uslaner, "Trust and Social Bonds: Faith in Others and Policy Outcomes Reconsidered," *Political Research Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (2004), 501.

<sup>95</sup> Uslaner, "Producing and Consuming Trust," 571.

Therefore, earlier studies tend to suggest that generalized trust is more correlated with norms of civility than particularized trust: while generalized trust is largely driven by individuals' morality, particularized trust is based direct or indirect personal knowledge and experience.

However, such a proposition is largely formulated in the Western context, shedding little light on how distinct cultures like Confucianism may alter the relationship between norms of civility and social trust. As Lucian Pye points out, the relationships between norms of civility and generalized trust and particularized trust are not universal.<sup>96</sup> Instead, the relationship is highly context-based, varying dramatically across different cultures.

With regard to the relationship between norms of civility and social trust in China, most China specialists point out that although traditional Confucianism leads to strong norms of civility, such norms in China encourage distrust in strangers and extensive trust in surrounding people. Richard Solomon, for instance, argue that in China “[f]rom the time children begin to have contact with nonfamily peers, they are led to acquire a distrust of other people’s motives ... The legacy of these early life images of social relations beyond the family is a limited sense of interpersonal trust.”<sup>97</sup>

While confirmed by many following interpretative studies and field observations, such a proposition is not tested by any survey-based empirical studies. To fill this gap, I try to test the relationship between the norms of civility. In order to measure our

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<sup>96</sup> Pye, “Civility, Social Capital, and Civil Society.”

<sup>97</sup> Richard H. Solomon, *Mao's Revolution and the Chinese Political Culture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1971), 2, 125-6. Similarly, Pye argues that “Confucian culture had powerful norms of civility, but it lacked the rules for impersonal dealings beyond the face-to-face level that are critical for the development of a pluralistic democracy.” See, Pye, “Civility, Social Capital, and Civil Society,” 780; Wenfang Tang, “Interpersonal Trust and Civil Society,” in *Citizens Participation and Regime Legitimacy in Contemporary China, Urban and Rural China in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Zengke He, Thomas Heberer, and Gunter Schubter (Beijing: Central Compilation & Translation Press, 2007).

respondents' belief in basic norms of civility, I asked them to assess following three types of behaviors:

1. Not caring for the elderly, the sick, the disabled, the pregnant and children.
2. Not being punctual.
3. Not being credible

For all the three items, the respondents were asked to assess the corresponding behaviors on a five-point scale. Specifically, “strongly dislike” is coded 5, and “highly acceptable” is coded 1. The three items were further combined to form an additive index, and reliability test for the index indicated that the standardized Cronbach's alpha is 0.758. To examine the relationship between norms of civility and particularize trust and generalized trust, I conducted bivariate correlation test. The results are presented in Table 20.

**Table 20. Correlation between Norms of Civility Particularized Trust and Generalized Trust, 2005**

Norms of Civility Index	<i>Particularized Trust Index</i>				<i>Generalized Trust Index</i>			
	Low (%)	Med. (%)	High (%)	Total (%)	Low (%)	Med. (%)	High (%)	Total (%)
Low	40	36	24	100	39	34	28	100
Medium	30	40	30	100	43	29	28	100
High	32	36	33	100	52	24	24	100
	Gamma = .09***				Gamma = -.13***			

*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

*Note:* The original norms of civility, particularized trust and generalized trust indexes are trichotomized into high, medium, and low levels.

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

From the results of Table 20, we can draw at least two important conclusions about the relationships between norms of civility and social trust. First, our findings confirm that social trust, either particularized or generalized trust, is strongly affected by norms of civility. The scores of gamma coefficients—.09 for particularized trust and -.13 for generalized trust—are not only substantial but also statistically significant. Although the directions of impacts are different, it is evident that norms of civility robustly shape social trust.

Second, the results demonstrated in Table 4.8 lend a strong support to the argument put forward by China specialists—that is, the traditional and prevailing norms of civility in China, while emphasizing intimate trust, discourage the development trust in strangers. Specifically, those who demonstrated strong preferences of norms of civility were more likely to trust people they personally know; yet, the same norm-oriented group of people appeared to be more suspicious of the strangers. Such a finding confirms our general proposition in Chapter I: social trust is strongly correlated with cultural norms.

### *C. Social Interactions and Their Impacts*

As discussed in Chapter I, individuals are deeply embedded in various social networks and interactions. Correspondingly, individuals' trust in each other is also shaped by their experiences in various social interactions. As articulated by Alesina and La Ferrara:

[P]eople may trust more others with whom they have had a longer interaction. Also, trust may be increased by an expectation of repeated interaction in the future. The possibility of retaliation is a basic requirement for cooperative equilibria, so sporadic interactions should be less conducive to 'trust' in the sense of expecting cooperative behavior. If this is the case, people who have lived

longer in a community may be more likely to trust. In the aggregate, the more stable and less ‘transient’ a community is, the higher should be trust.<sup>98</sup>

Across various disciplines, students of social trust have all listed social interactions as the most important determinant of social trust. Specifically, political scientists like Putnam and Fukuyama have constantly emphasized the role of various social interactions in fostering social trust.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, Luhmann, Giddens, and many other sociologists also argue that without familiarity resulted from extensive social interaction, social trust is unlikely to emerge.<sup>100</sup> With regards to the field of economics, it is well accepted that trust between different participants can be only created through repetitive interactions.<sup>101</sup> All in all, social trust is a product of social interactions.

Both survey-based empirical studies and experimental studies have warranted strong support to this proposition. Brehm and Rahn, for instance, using data collected from 1972-94 GSS in the United States, demonstrate that at individual level, social trust is strongly determined by the intensity of social interactions; the more an individual communal activities, the more likely she or he trust others.<sup>102</sup> In addition, many studies based cross-national surveys also confirm this finding. Paxton tests the relationship between social interactions, measured in associational membership on one hand, and on the other hand, social trust. Her research demonstrates that association membership not

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<sup>98</sup> Alesina and La Ferrara, “Who Trust Others?,” 210.

<sup>99</sup> It should be noted that Putnam and Fukuyama stress different types of sociopolitical interactions. While Putnam focuses on social interactions pertaining to formal civic association, Fukuyama stresses “spontaneous sociability,” which appears to be less formal, and more characterized as informal social networks and activities. See, Putnam, “Tuning In.”

<sup>100</sup> Niklas Luhmann, “Familiarity, Confidence, Trust: Problems and Alternatives,” in *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, ed. Diego Gambetta (New York, NY: Basil Blackwell, Inc., 1988); Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).

<sup>101</sup> See, for example, Joyce Berg, John Dickhaut, and Kevin McCabe, “Trust, Reciprocity, and Social History,” *Games and Economic Behavior* 10, no. 1 (1995).

<sup>102</sup> Brehm and Rahn, “Individual-Level Evidence.”

only strong affects one's inclination of trust others, but such impacts prevail across all the 31 societies included in the study.<sup>103</sup>

Paralleled to survey-based studies, numerous experimental studies also confirm the causal relationship running from repetitive social interactions to social trust. For example, in a classic experiment that is well cited by economists, Beck, Dickhaut, and McCabe find conclusive evidence that participants' knowledge about prior social interactions can strongly influence their future trusting behaviors.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, in another research combining both sample survey and experiments, Glaeser and his colleague find that individuals' trusting behaviors can be best explained by their past experience of social exchanges, which leads them to conclude: "When individuals are closer socially, both trust and trustworthiness rise."<sup>105</sup>

Furthermore, some earlier studies have also explored the relationship between specific types of social interactions on one hand, and on the other hand, particularized trust and generalized trust. Generally, they agree that the open and civic social interactions leads to creation of generalized trust, while closed and parochial ones leads to formation of particularized trust.<sup>106</sup> As summarized by Sullivan and Transue, "when people are loosely bound to an association, their trust for their fellow members generalizes, but when they are tightly bound, they are more likely to trust only their fellow members."<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Paxton, "Association Memberships and Generalized Trust."

<sup>104</sup> Berg et al, "Trust, Reciprocity, and Social History."

<sup>105</sup> Edward L. Glaeser et al., "Measuring Trust," *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 115, no. 3 (2000), 811.

<sup>106</sup> See, for example, Paxton, "Association Memberships and Generalized Trust."

<sup>107</sup> John L. Sullivan and John E. Transue, "The Psychological Underpinnings of Democracy: A Selective Review of Research on Political Tolerance, Interpersonal Trust, and Social Capital," *Annual Review of Psychology* 50, no. 1 (1999), 647.

Based on the earlier theoretical, empirical, and experimental studies, in this dissertation I expect that respondents' reported intensity of social interaction to be positively associated with their trust in fellow villagers (i.e. particularized trust), but negatively with trust in strangers (i.e. generalized trust).

Specifically, I used the following three subjective measurements to gauge respondents' involvement in social interactions:

1. How could you describe the intimacy level between you and your relatives/friends?
2. How could you describe the familiarity level between you and your neighbors?
3. How could you describe the intensity of cooperative activities between you and your neighbors?

For all the three items, the respondents were asked to assess the corresponding behaviors on a five-point scale. Specifically, "strongly dislike" is coded 5, and "highly acceptable" is coded 1. It should be noted that although many students of social trust reply on objective measurement like membership to gauge the intensity of social interaction, I believe subjective measurement is more appropriate in the Chinese setting.

First, such objective measures as associational membership is widely criticized for their inability to reflect actual intensity and type of social interactions. As many scholars state, the simply index of membership, also known as Putnam's index, cannot reflect to the respondents' actual participation in the associations.<sup>108</sup> Worse more,

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<sup>108</sup> Bob Edwards and Michael W. Foley, "Civil Society and Social Capital Beyond Putnam," *American Behavioral Scientist* 42, no. 1 (1998).



associations per se are notoriously for categorization.<sup>109</sup> For the majority of associations it is hard tell whether or not they are closed.

Second, formal membership excludes a lot of informal social activities which tends to more prevalent in China. For most non-western countries, due to various reasons, formal associations remain largely underdevelopment. Therefore, informal social activities serve as the main vehicle of trust creation. As Gibson observes, in Russia, it is the informal social interactions like “kitchen circles”—“groups of friends who met in the kitchens of their apartments and led endless conversations about the meaning of creation, art, and politic”—that have playing a pivotal role in shaping interpersonal trust.<sup>110</sup> Given this, it is reasonable to assume that people in China, sharing the same communist heritage like Russian, are more frequently participating in informal social exchanges.

Third, for purpose of this research, subject assessment of involvement in social interaction is more relevant to the formation of social trust. As Tang once points out, “it seems intuitively that one’s closeness to family members, neighbors, friends, co-workers, schoolmates, and so on should also build interpersonal trust.”<sup>111</sup>

To test our expectation on the relationship between intensity of social interaction and the two types of trust, I examined their bivariate correlations as presented in Figure 3.

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<sup>109</sup> For example, see, Sjoerd Beugelsdijk and Ton van Schaik, “Social Capital and Growth in European Regions: An Empirical Test,” *European Journal of Political Economy* 21, no. 2 (2005); Michele P. Claibourn and Paul S. Martin, “The Third Face of Social Capital: How Membership in Voluntary Associations Improves Policy Accountability,” *Political Research Quarterly* 60, no. 2 (2007).

<sup>110</sup> James L. Gibson, “Social Networks, Civil Society, and the Prospects for Consolidating Russia’s Democratic Transition,” *American Journal of Political Science* 45, no. 1 (2001), 54.

<sup>111</sup> Tang, *Public Opinion and Political Change in China*, 107

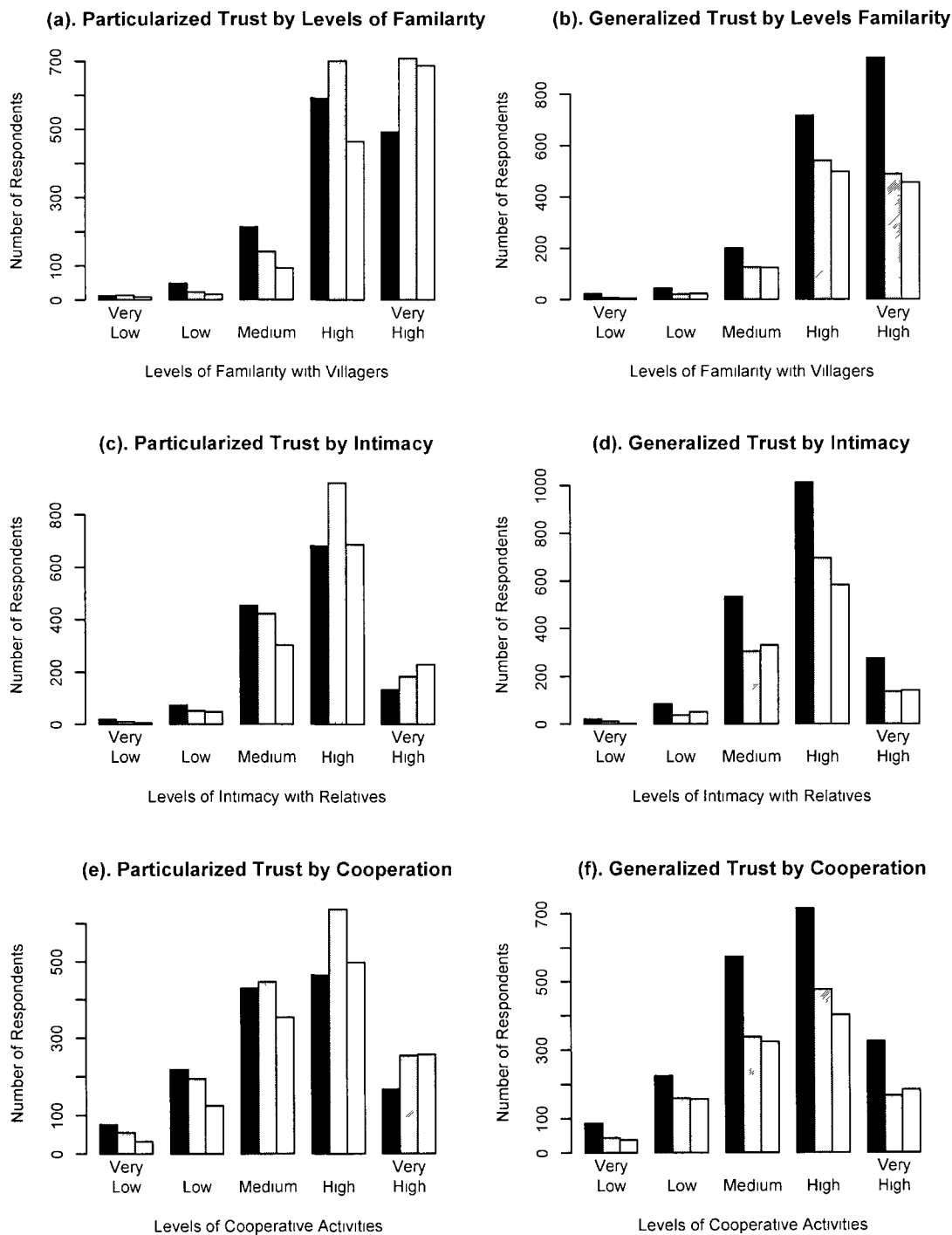


Figure 3. **Particularized Trust and Generalized Trust by Intensity of Social Interaction**  
*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

The results of Figure 4.4 largely confirm our expectation about the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust and intensity of social interactions. Specifically, two important findings stand out. First, as revealed in (a), (c), and (e), respondents' particularized trust rose with all three indicators of social interactions. This means that the more an individual is involved in social exchanges, the more likely she or he develops sense of trust in others. This finding is consistent with our aforementioned argument that trust is a product of social interactions.

Second, generalized trust is not positively correlated with localized social interactions. Throughout (b), (d), and (f), there is no sign that generalized trust will rise with increased intensity of social interaction. On the contrary, as indicated in (b), generalized trust declines with increased familiarity reported by respondents. Jointly, these results suggest that such informal social interactions will not lead to the creation of generalized trust. In other words, an individual who is active in village affairs is less likely to develop trust in strangers.

#### EXPLANATORY VARIABLES AT THE VILLAGE LEVEL

To this point, I have addressed individual-level influences on the two types of social trust. Besides the determinants at the individual level, many studies of social trust have already pointed out that aggregate features at national level could profoundly shape individuals' inclination of trusting.<sup>112</sup> In this dissertation, as demonstrated in the previous discussion, I argue that contextual influence can also be found at village level. Certain

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<sup>112</sup> For example, Paxton, "Association Memberships and Generalized Trust"; Jamal and Nooruddin, "The Democratic Utility of Trust."

contextual features of a *village* can strongly encourage or discourage trusting behaviors of individuals.

Although students of social trust have increasingly recognized the importance of the contextual factors in shaping social trust, few survey-based studies, particularly sample surveys other than WVS and GSS, have been devoted to explore the contextual origins of social trust.<sup>113</sup> To fill this gap, I will examine the effects of features of villages in this section. Specifically, I expect two categories of village features—sociogeographic features and community heterogeneity—to have strong impacts on the formation of social trust. However, since trust possessed by individuals and village features are at different levels, no bivariate analyses are conducted in this section.

#### *A. Sociogeographic features*

As discussed above, villages in China differentiate from each other dramatically in terms of basic sociogeographic situations. Similar to the category of socioeconomic factors discussed above, I expect villages with different sociogeographic features provide different conditions for the development of social trust. Specifically, in this dissertation, I focus on population size, the number of natural villages, territory size, income per capita, distance from the nearest fair and *Zhen/Xiang* government. Capturing key aspects of sociogeographic conditions of villages, these variables may tell us under what sort of situations people are more likely to trust others. In the following part of this section, I will briefly examine their relationship with the development of social trust.

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<sup>113</sup> A quick literature review will show that most multilevel studies of social trust are using the WVS dataset. See for example, Paxton, “Association Memberships and Generalized Trust

**Table 21. Descriptives of Explanatory Variables at Village Level**

Items	<i>N.</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
Population size	395	153	16,500	2148.7	1736.9
N. of natural villages	395	0	70	4.9	7.6
Territory size ( $Km^2$ )	384	1	600	20.5	67.8
Income per capita ( $\times 10^{-3}$ )	390	50	7,400	1899.2	1242.5
Distance from the nearest fair ( $Km$ )	395	0	100	4.9	7.2
Distance from <i>Zhen/Xiang</i> government ( $Km$ )	395	0	38	5.7	5.3
Largest surname group (%)	379	3	96	41.7	23
Second largest surname group (%)	385	0	46	18	9.6
Third largest surname group (%)	384	0	33	10.8	7.2
Existence of informal lineage group (0-1)	369			0.24	0.48
Existence of formal lineage group (0-1)	396			0.09	0.42

*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

*Population Size* Some earlier studies have emphasized that the population size of a community can strongly shape people's trust. Based on network analysis, they have concluded the social trust is most likely to evolve in smaller networks.<sup>114</sup> In addition, compared to small communities, larger communities tend to be more diverse, and therefore are inhospitable for the creation of various social trusts.<sup>115</sup> Some empirical studies also incorporate population size at national level in cross-national comparison.<sup>116</sup> In this study, I expect population size is negatively related to the levels of social trust. As indicated in Table 4.9, there are significant variations associated with the size of

<sup>114</sup> Bjørnskov, "Determinants of Generalized Trust," 7.

<sup>115</sup> For instance, see, Elinor Ostrom, "A Behavioral Approach to the Rational Choice Theory of Collective Action," *The American Political Science Review* 92, no. 1 (1998), 2.

<sup>116</sup> Freitag and Bußhmann, "Crafting Trust."

population, ranging from small villages with less than two hundred people to town-like villages with about 17 thousand villagers.

*Natural Village* A complication pertaining to the exploration of villages in China is that an administrative village is often composed of several geographically dispersed natural villages. As revealed in Table 4.9, nation-widely speaking, one administrative village in China normally encompasses about five natural villages. In some extreme examples, an administrative village could include as many as 70 villages.

What are the implications of dispersed natural villages for the development of social trust? Apparently with increased number of natural villages, the transaction cost of social interaction will be exponentially increased. This means, more natural village in an administrative village includes, the less frequently villagers of different natural village engage in interactions, and accordingly social trust is less likely to be developed. Thus, in this dissertation I expect that the number of natural village is negatively associated with social trust.

*Territory Size* Compared to population size and number of natural village, the relationship between territory size and social trust seems to be less certain. On one hand, territory size appears to be negatively linked to social trust since people residing within a small village are more likely to know each other and accordingly trust each other. On the other hand, social trust can be positively correlated with social trust because smaller territory means smaller resource pool and more chances of conflicts. Therefore,

concerning the relationship between territory sized and social trust, our expectation, like Gibson, Duch and Tedin, is “ambiguous, if not contradictory.”<sup>117</sup>

*Economic Development* Many students of social trust have found that at the global level, a nation’s economic development level (often operationalized as GDP per capita) is significantly correlated with social trust.<sup>118</sup> Specifically, Inglehart, using data collected from 61 countries from 1990 to 1997, finds that “[t]he people of rich societies show higher levels of interpersonal trust than the publics of poorer ones.”<sup>119</sup> As argued by Bjørnskov, this may reflect a scale-up effect of personal income at individual level, that is, within a country when more people are relatively economically secure, they are more likely to take the risks of trust, which will according lead to higher level of social trust.<sup>120</sup> The same logic can also be applied to village level. Hence, in this dissertation, I expect that the economic development level of a village, measured in village GDP per capita, is positively correlated with social trust. In other words, the wealthier a village is, the more likely the villagers develop social trust.

*Geographic Isolation* As discussed in Chapter I, the interaction and direct experiences with members of other social groups play a pivotal role in shaping the formation of social trust. In particular, the positive experience with dissimilar people may lead to higher level of generalized trust, while intensive intra-group activities could

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<sup>117</sup> James L. Gibson, Raymond M. Duch, and Kent L. Tedin, “Democratic Values and the Transformation of the Soviet Union,” *The Journal of Politics* 54, no. 2 (1992), 357.

<sup>118</sup> Knack and Keefer, “Does Social Capital Have an Economic Payoff?”; Zak and Knack, “Trust and Growth.”; Delhey and Newton, “Predicting Cross-National Levels of Social Trust.”

<sup>119</sup> Inglehart, “Trust, Well-being, and Democracy,” 89.

<sup>120</sup> Bjørnskov, “Determinants of Generalized Trust,” 7.

contribute little to the development of generalized trust.<sup>121</sup> As Melissa J. Marschall and Dietlind Stolle suggest, “social interactions among heterogeneous groups and individuals and positive cooperative experiences are more conducive to the development of trust that includes members of the former out-group.”<sup>122</sup> In light of this, a geographically isolated village will turn out to be inhospitable to the formation of social trust, since the villagers have few chances in engaging in interaction or cooperation with strangers. On the other hands, a village enjoying transporting advantages is more likely to develop generalized trust. Therefore, I expect the geographic isolation is positively associated with particularized trust, but negatively generalized social trust. Specifically, in this dissertation, I use two measures to gauge villages’ geographic isolation: distance from the nearest fair and distance from *Zhen/Xiang* government.

### *B. Heterogeneity*

Besides the basic sociogeographic features addressed above, heterogeneity of a community frequently appears in the literature, and is ascribed by most students as a key determinant of social trust.<sup>123</sup> In this study, I include in the category of community heterogeneity two items—surname fragmentation and solidary groups. As discussed in Chapter I and revealed in Chapter II, I expect there may be association between heterogeneity and social trust, but such associations should be weak. In this section, I will explore their associations.

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<sup>121</sup> Scott Radnitz, Jonathan Wheatley, and Christoph Zürn, “The Origins of Social Capital: Evidence from a Survey of Post-Soviet Central Asia,” *Comparative Political Studies* 42, no. 6 (2009).

<sup>122</sup> Melissa J. Marschall and Dietlind Stolle, “Race and the City: Neighborhood Context and the Development of Generalized Trust,” *Political Behavior* 26, no. 2 (2004), 130.

<sup>123</sup> For example, see Alberto Alesina, Reza Baqir, and William Easterly, “Public Goods and Ethnic Divisions,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 114, no. 4 (1999); Alexander, “Determinants of Social Capital.”



*Types of Lineage Groups* China scholars have long emphasized lineage identities helping rural Chinese to distinguish from each other is the lineage.<sup>124</sup> Villagers belonging to the same lineage groups are not only bonded by the same identity, but more likely to be intensively engaged in collective activities like lineage gatherings.<sup>125</sup> Accordingly, the presence of strong lineage groups is commonly perceived as a convenient indicator of high social trust. Therefore, earlier studies in general suggest that with the presence of lineage group, villagers are more likely to develop strong sense of particularized trust.

However, as revealed in Chapter II, there is no statistically significant difference between villagers' trust in kinsmen and non-kinsmen. The finding implies that the role of lineage groups in shaping social trust is limited. To certain extent, this can be explained by political campaigns of the communist party to destroy traditional social groups. Therefore, in this dissertation, I expected that the presence of lineage groups is weakly associated with particularized trust. Specifically, this variable encompasses three—the existence of lineage groups with ancestral halls, existence of lineage groups without ancestral halls, and non-existence of lineage groups.

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<sup>124</sup> For studies on lineage identities in China, see, for example, Susanne Brandtstadter, "Taking Elias to China (and Leaving Weber at Home): Post-Maoist Transformations and Neo-Traditional Revivals," *Sociologist* 50, no. 2 (2000); Myron L. Cohen, "Lineage Organization in North China," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 49, no. 3 (1990); Lily L. Tsai, *Accountability without Democracy: Solidary Groups and Public Goods Provision in Rural China* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

It should be noted that in rural China several expressions are interchangeably used to describe lineage group, such as *daxing*, *zongzu*, *jiazu*, or *zong*. In this survey, the term of "*daxing*" is used, since it commonly refers to the dominant or major lineage group in a village. For more detailed discussion, see, for example, Chenggui Li, "Dangdai Zhongguo Nongcun Zongzu Wenti Yanjiu [Lineage Group Study in Contemporary Rural China]," *Guanli Shijie [Management World]* 5, no. (1994); Rui Wen and Guohe Jiang, "20 Shiji 90 Niandai Yilai Dangdai Zhongguo Nongcun Zongzu Wenti Yanjiu Guankui [Lineage Group Study in Contemporary Rural China since 1990s]," *Fujian Shifan Daxue Xuebao [Journal of Fujian Normal University]* 4, no. (2004).

<sup>125</sup> Tsai, *Accountability without Democracy*.

*Lineage Fragmentation* Besides the presence of the lineage groups, some other scholar have further pointed out that their relationship may strongly affect the formation of social trust. Specifically, as a basal identity, surname identify can serve as a source of conflicts As Kennedy once observed, “the greater the number of relevant lineage organizations within the village, the greater the conflict over village resources, adding that village elections have exacerbated this conflict.”<sup>126</sup> Therefore, earlier studies suggest that lineage fragmentation is negatively associated with the formation of generalized social trust. However, as discussed the above, the role of lineage groups tend to be over-emphasized by prior studies. The results in this dissertation suggest no significant of lineage group. Based on this, I expect that fragmentation is also weakly associated with the formation of social trust. Specifically, we create a weighted score of the number of lineage groups for each sampled village, applying the standard formula for effective number of parities (ENP).<sup>127</sup> The larger the value of this measure, the more lineage groups exist in a village, and hence the more fragmented the village is.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> John James Kennedy, “The Face of ‘Grassroots Democracy’ in Rural China: Real Versus Cosmetic Elections,” *Asian Survey* 42, no. 3 (2002), 470. Also see, for example, Melanie Manion, “Democracy, Community, Trust: The Impact of Elections in Rural China,” *Comparative Political Studies* 39, no. 3 (2006).

<sup>127</sup> This measure was also used in a study of elections in rural China by Manion. Specifically, in this dissertation, the following formula has been used,

$$Frag. Index = \frac{1}{\sum_{i=1}^3 p_i^2} \quad (1)$$

where,  $p_i$  stands for the percentage of  $i$ th largest surname group in a given village. See, Manion, “Democracy, Community, Trust,” 306-7.

<sup>128</sup> For example, if there are two lineage groups in a village and they are exactly the same size, the value of the measure is 2. If, however, one lineage group consists of 80% of the villagers in a village and the other 20%, the value of the measure is just below 1.5.

## A MULTILEVEL ANALYSIS

Up to this point, I have addressed the relationship between various sociopolitical factors on one hand, and the two types of social trust on the other hand. In order to determine the independent effects of these explanatory variables at both individual level and village level, and the relative weights of these effects on social trust, we need to employ a multilevel analysis that incorporates all above-specified, explanatory variables at two different levels. Specifically, I will first briefly specify the model, and then discuss the results emerged from the analysis.

### *A. Multilevel Model*

Given aforementioned five categories of determinants, in this chapter I use multilevel models to test them against the data drawn from 2005 China General Social Survey. As described in Chapter I, unlike most representative surveys conducted in China,<sup>129</sup> this 2005 China survey has used two sets of questionnaires at both individual and village levels. Such a data structure allows us to simultaneously test the independent effects of our key explanatory variables at different levels.

While a comprehensive discussion of multilevel model is beyond the purpose and scope of this dissertation, I will provide a short overview.<sup>130</sup> The key to understanding multilevel model is to analyze how variances are introduced by contextual variables at the macro level. In other words, multilevel model is a method to model variance at macro level. One major variance term that distinguishes a multilevel model from a

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<sup>129</sup> Melanie Manion, "Survey Research in the Study of Contemporary China: Learning from Local Samples," *The China Quarterly* 139, no. Sep. (1994).

<sup>130</sup> For more detailed discussion of multilevel model, see, for example, Hox, *Multilevel Analysis*.

regression model is a term that allows aggregate units to differ in their mean values. For instance, a simple two-stage multilevel model can be stated as:

$$y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_1 X_{1ij} + \varepsilon_{ij} \quad (3)$$

$$\beta_{0j} = \beta_{00} + u_{0j} \quad (4)$$

In combined form, the model is:

$$y_{ij} = \beta_{00} + \beta_1 X_{1ij} + u_{0j} + \varepsilon_{ij} \quad (5)$$

This model states that the dependent variable,  $y_{ij}$ , at micro level is a function of a common intercept,  $\beta_{00}$ , and two error terms: the error term at macro level,  $u_{0j}$ , and the error term at micro level  $\varepsilon_{ij}$ . Essentially, the model suggests that any value of the dependent variable can be described in terms of an overall mean plus error associated with macro and micro error. In this dissertation, a multilevel model of social trust means that we do not assume that the two types of social trust, the intercept of  $\beta_{00}$ , and the influence of the micro-level independent variables  $\beta_j$  are the same in all villages. Instead, we are dealing with variables that can vary according to context. Furthermore, multilevel model allows us to model of specific contextual factors, such as the size of village, heterogeneity, geographic isolation, and etc., that explain variation on the macro level (e.g., from village to village). Schematically, such a two-level model takes the following form:

$$y_{ij} = \beta_{0j} + \beta_1 X_{1ij} + \dots + \beta_n X_{nij} + \varepsilon_{ij} \quad (6)$$

$$\beta_{0j} = \beta_{00} + \gamma_1 W_{1j} + \dots + \gamma_n W_{nj} + u_{0j} \quad (7)$$

In combined form, the model is:

$$y_{ij} = \beta_{00} + \beta_1 X_{1ij} + \dots + \beta_n X_{nij} + \gamma_1 W_{1j} + \dots + \gamma_n W_{nj} + \varepsilon_{ij} + u_{0j} \quad (8)$$

This model indicates that a specific type of social trust ( $y$ ) of an individual ( $i$ ) in a village ( $j$ ) is explained by the national average ( $\beta_{00}$ ), individual-level characteristics ( $X$ , or the coefficient  $\beta$ ), and properties of the various countries ( $W$ , or the coefficient  $\gamma$ ). In this manner, both individual differences ( $\varepsilon_{ij}$ ) and context-dependent differences in the underlying level of trust ( $u_{0j}$ ) are all covered in the model. Using the hierarchical model we estimate whether and to what extent the variance in individual generalized trust can be explained by differences between individuals, differences between countries, and differences in the effects of the independent variables.

### *B. Findings and Discussions*

In this section we subject our theory-derived relationships to empirical tests, exploring how factors at both individual and village level affect the formation of particularized trust and generalized trust. Specifically, for both generalized trust and particularized trust, I present a progression of models, beginning by estimating a baseline model with basic sociodemographic of individuals and sociogeographic of villages. I precede my analysis by adding other categories of independent variables into the model. Finally, a full model encompassing all categories of independent variables will be presented.

Table 22. Multilevel Model of Particularized Trust among Rural Resident in China

	Particularized Trust					
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<b>Intercept</b>	1.9736 <sup>***</sup> (0.2666)	1.9661 <sup>***</sup> (0.2763)	1.1974 <sup>***</sup> (0.2938)	1.1367 <sup>***</sup> (0.2804)	1.9841 <sup>***</sup> (0.2667)	0.5384 <sup>*</sup> (0.3121)
<b>Individual-Level Factors</b>						
Sex (M = 1; F = 0)	0.0036 (0.0253)	0.0037 (0.0253)	-0.0001 (0.0251)	0.0014 (0.0252)	0.0026 (0.0253)	-0.0024 (0.0251)
Age	0.0320 <sup>***</sup> (0.0103)	0.0319 <sup>***</sup> (0.0103)	0.0365 <sup>***</sup> (0.0103)	0.0325 <sup>***</sup> (0.0103)	0.0323 <sup>***</sup> (0.0103)	0.0360 <sup>***</sup> (0.0103)
Married (0-1)	-0.1368 <sup>**</sup> (0.0589)	-0.1365 <sup>**</sup> (0.0589)	-0.1194 <sup>**</sup> (0.0585)	-0.1062 <sup>*</sup> (0.0587)	-0.1365 <sup>**</sup> (0.0589)	-0.0927 (0.0585)
Education	-0.0085 (0.0198)	-0.0085 (0.0198)	-0.0176 (0.0197)	-0.0134 (0.0197)	-0.0082 (0.0198)	-0.0201 (0.0197)
Income ( $\times 10^{-3}$ )	-0.0105 (0.0186)	-0.0102 (0.0194)	-0.0208 (0.0187)	-0.0101 (0.1808)	-0.0106 (0.0186)	-0.0191 (0.1904)
CCP membership (0-1)	-0.0796 <sup>*</sup> (0.0415)	-0.0792 (0.0496)	-0.0677 (0.0492)	-0.0600 (0.0492)	-0.0793 (0.0496)	-0.0505 (0.0490)
Life satisfaction		0.2777 <sup>***</sup> (0.0653)				0.2337 <sup>***</sup> (0.0655)
Norms of civility		0.0253 <sup>***</sup> (0.0073)				0.0207 <sup>***</sup> (0.0073)
Perception of equality		0.0227 <sup>***</sup> (0.0058)				0.0218 <sup>***</sup> (0.0058)
Familiarity with fellow villagers			0.3200 <sup>***</sup> (0.0880)			0.2994 <sup>***</sup> (0.0876)
Cooperative activities			0.2280 <sup>***</sup> (0.0695)			0.2144 <sup>***</sup> (0.0693)
Intimacy with relatives			0.3371 <sup>***</sup> (0.0875)			0.2798 <sup>***</sup> (0.0878)
<b>Village-Level Factors</b>						

Table 22. **Continued**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Village population (log)	0.0058 (0.0340)	0.0049 (0.0346)	0.0112 (0.0341)	0.0251 (0.0332)	0.0040 (0.0341)	0.0261 (0.0340)
Number of natural villages	-0.0069** (0.0031)	-0.0068** (0.0031)	-0.0063** (0.0031)	-0.0066** (0.0030)	-0.0069** (0.0031)	-0.0061** (0.0031)
Village territory	-0.0009** (0.0004)	-0.0009** (0.0004)	-0.0009** (0.0004)	-0.0009** (0.0004)	-0.0009** (0.0003)	-0.0009** (0.0004)
Income per capita ( $\times 10^{-3}$ )				0.0028 (0.0670)		0.0261 (0.0655)
Distance from the nearest fair				0.0005 (0.0036)		0.0009 (0.0009)
Distance from the site of <i>Zhen/Xiang</i> government				0.0007 (0.0050)		0.0019 (0.0035)
Surname fragmentation					0.0009 (0.0009)	-0.0001 (0.0049)
Informal lineage networks (0-1)					0.0613 (0.0652)	0.0496 (0.0644)
Formal lineage groups (0-1)					0.0472 (0.1211)	0.0277 (0.1196)
Number of Observations				3504		
Number of Villages				370		
Pseudo-R Square	.11	.15	.16	.12	.12	.18

*Note:* Entries are maximum likelihood coefficients estimated using the packages of multilevel and nlme in R. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.10$ .

*Sources of Particularized Trust* Table 4.10 presents results of multilevel analysis of the impacts of variables on the formation of social trust. First conclusion we can draw from these results is that a multilevel analysis is appropriate for study of origins of social trust. It is clear the variation of particularized trust can be explained by variables at both individual level and village level. Such findings confirm our theorization that both individual and contextual factors are involved in the creation of social trust. Without taking explanatory variables at both levels into consideration, our answers to the origins of social tend to be incomplete, if not highly biased.

Second, just as we expected, particularized trust is a function of such socio-demographic factors at individual level as age and marital status. Specifically, the results indicate that those who were older and unmarried tend to place more trust in fellow villagers. Other social categories like gender, economic status, education, and party membership, albeit the correct signs, fail to exert significant impacts on particularized trust.

Third, the results in Table 4.10 demonstrate that even controlling for all the other factors, subjective orientations like life satisfaction, perception of equality, and norms of civility are significantly correlated with particularized trust. Such findings indicate that in rural China individuals who are highly satisfied with their live, believe in equality of income and opportunity, and adhere to norms of civility are more likely in place their trust in relative, neighbors, and other fellow villagers.

Forth, with regard to informal social interaction, the empirical evidence in Table 4.10 indicates that social interaction plays a deterministic role in the development of particularized trust. Specifically, both the two subjective and one objective measures of



social interaction are positively and significantly correlated with particularized trust, even controlling for other variables. In other words, people who were more intimate with relatives, more familiar with neighbors, and active in informal cooperation were more easily to trust people they know.

Finally, in examining explanatory variable at village level, only the territory size and number of natural villages yield strong impacts on particularized trust. Specifically, controlling for all other variables, both the territory size and number of natural villages are significantly and negatively associated with particularized trust. Such findings demonstrate that in an administrative village encompassing large territory and multiple natural villages, villagers are less likely to develop their trust in their fellow villagers. This evidence, along with the results associated with social interaction mentioned above, support one of the most important general hypotheses specified in Chapter I, that is, since people gain the knowledge and information of other people in the process of social interactions, the patterns and intensity can fundamentally shape the formation of particularized trust.

The final interesting finding standing out from Table 4.10 is that heterogeneity associated with lineage identifies fails to exert any substantial impact on the development of particularized trust. Specifically, neither lineage fragmentation index nor types of lineage groups are significantly correlated with the levels of particularized trust. Such findings confirm our earlier discussion on the distribution of social trust in China, that is, despite anecdotal cases of lineage-dominant villages, nation-wide speaking, the role of lineage groups is limited. In other words, with respect to the basic trust relation in China,

there is no significant difference between villages with lineage networks and villages without.

*Sources of Generalized Trust* Table 4.11 presents results of multilevel analysis of the impacts of variables on the formation of generalized trust (i.e., villagers' trust in strangers). Overall the results from the multilevel analysis confirm most of the results from the bivariate analyses above.

Table 23. Multilevel Model of Generalized Trust among Rural Resident in China

	Generalized Trust					
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<b>Intercept</b>	1.7664 <sup>***</sup> (0.2977)	2.3301 <sup>***</sup> (0.3217)	1.8842 <sup>***</sup> (0.3173)	1.8288 <sup>***</sup> (0.3086)	1.7594 <sup>***</sup> (0.2973)	2.3702 <sup>***</sup> (0.3430)
<b>Individual-Level Factors</b>						
Sex (M = 1; F = 0)	0.0314 (0.0258)	0.0376 (0.0257)	0.0325 (0.0258)	0.0316 (0.0258)	0.0322 (0.0258)	0.0118 (0.0105)
Age	0.0190 <sup>*</sup> (0.0105)	0.0151 (0.0105)	0.0200 (0.0106)	0.0190 <sup>*</sup> (0.0105)	0.0190 <sup>*</sup> (0.0110)	0.0310 (0.0597)
Married (0-1)	0.0191 (0.0599)	0.0183 (0.0598)	0.0182 (0.0602)	0.0187 (0.0599)	0.0198 (0.0600)	0.0208 (0.0202)
Education	0.0127 (0.0202)	0.0199 (0.0202)	0.0124 (0.0203)	0.0124 (0.0202)	0.0123 (0.0202)	0.0813 (0.0502)
Income ( $\times 10^{-3}$ )	-0.0128 (0.0210)	-0.0098 (0.0209)	-0.0132 (0.0210)	-0.0165 (0.0219)	-0.0129 (0.0210)	-0.0119 (0.0216)
CCP membership (0-1)	0.0780 (0.0505)	0.0843 <sup>*</sup> (0.0504)	0.0816 (0.0506)	0.0777 (0.0505)	0.0785 (0.0505)	0.0813 <sup>*</sup> (0.0494)
Life satisfaction		-0.0711 (0.0672)				-0.0974 (0.0676)
Norms of civility		-0.0406 <sup>***</sup> (0.0075)				-0.0422 <sup>***</sup> (0.0075)
Perception of equality		0.0026 (0.0060)				-0.0003 (0.0060)
Familiarity with fellow villagers			-0.1323 (0.0911)			-0.1477 (0.0905)
Cooperative activities			0.0028 (0.0718)			-0.0057 (0.0713)
Intimacy with relatives			0.0025 (0.0901)			-0.0051 (0.0902)
<b>Village-Level Factors</b>						

Table 23. **Continued**

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Village population (log)	-0.0215 (0.0385)	-0.0272 (0.0383)	-0.0235 (0.0386)	-0.0246 (0.0391)	-0.0204 (0.0385)	-0.0333 (0.0384)
Number of natural villages	-0.0062* (0.0035)	-0.0068* (0.0035)	-0.0061* (0.0034)	-0.0060* (0.0035)	-0.0062* (0.0035)	-0.0059* (0.0035)
Village territory	0.0005 (0.0004)	0.0005 (0.0004)	0.0005 (0.0004)	0.0005 (0.0004)	0.0005 (0.0004)	0.0006 (0.0004)
Village-owned enterprise (VOE) (0-1)				0.0034 (0.0757)		0.0010 (0.0742)
Distance from the nearest fair				-0.0008 (0.0010)		-0.0008 (0.0010)
Distance from the site of <i>Zhen/Xiang</i> government				-0.0012 (0.0040)		-0.0021 (0.0039)
Surname fragmentation					-0.0037 (0.0056)	-0.0026 (0.0055)
Informal lineage networks (0-1)					-0.0576 (0.0676)	-0.0538 (0.0670)
Formal lineage groups (0-1)					0.0363 (0.1237)	0.0244 (0.1226)
Number of Observations			3463			
Number of Villages			370			
Pseudo-R Square	.09	.11	.11	.12	.10	.10

*Note:* Entries are maximum likelihood coefficients estimated using the packages of multilevel and nlme in R. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.10$ .

First of all, among various sociodemographic factors, only age and party membership can strong influence one's trust in strangers. Specifically, across the five models, both age and party membership is positively and significantly correlated with generalized trust. In other words, older CCP members are more likely to place trust in strangers. However, other sociodemographic factors like sex, marital status, education, and personal income, could not independently influence generalized trust, albeit their correct signs.

Second, with respect to subjective orientations, only norms of civility had independent impacts on generalized trust. Specifically, the level of norms of civility is negatively and significantly associated with generalized trust. This means that those who expressed stronger moral obligations are less likely to trust strangers. Such a finding is consistent with our earlier discussion on why Chinese traditional culture discourage trust in strangers albeit its emphasis on the norms of civility. Meanwhile, it should be noted that the other two widely-accepted important predictor of generalized trust—life satisfaction and perception of equality—could not independently affect our respondents' trust in strangers.

Third, there is no strong relationship between intra-village interactions and generalized trust. Specifically none of three measures of intra-village interaction could independently exert strong impact on generalized trust. Such a finding implies that intensive intra-village interactions are far from being an obstacle to the development of generalized trust. Individuals who were locked in close-knit networks are not less likely to development generalized trust in others. Therefore, this is no necessary negative relationship between trust in strangers and intensive in-group activities.

Finally, at village level, only the number of natural village is significantly and negatively related to generalized trust, while all the other variables like economic development, geographic isolation, or heterogeneity had little independent and direct impact on generalized trust. Specifically, the number of natural village is negatively and significantly associated with generalized trust. This means that individuals who resided in an administrative village with multiple natural villages are less likely to develop trust in strangers.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Who is more likely to trust other in rural China? What are the most important psychological and sociopolitical factors prompting people to trust? In what kinds of villages people are more likely to develop trust in each other? In this chapter, I have addressed these three questions of critical importance by examining the impacts of five categories of explanatory variables—sociodemographic attributes, subjective orientations, and social interactions, at individual level, and sociogeographic attributes and community heterogeneity at village level—on the formation of particularized trust and generalized trust. The major findings and implications are reiterated as follows.

In the first place, who is more or less likely to trust surrounding people and strangers in rural China? From the 2005 nation-wide survey, I have found that (1) older people were more trusting with regard to their fellow villagers and general others; and (2) married people were generally invest less trust in their surrounding people. Besides these two, other sociodemographic factors failed to independently affect the development of particularized trust and generalized trust.

Second, why do the ordinary Chinese rural residents' choose to or not to trust others? Based on the findings from this survey, we may conclude that in rural China some villagers are more likely to trust their fellow villagers because they are more satisfied with their lives, believe in income and opportunity equality, demonstrate stronger norms of civility, or interact with their family, friends, and neighbors more frequently. Additionally, we could conclude that the ordinary Chinese rural residents are less likely to trust strangers when they attach great values to norms of civility like helping the weak, and being punctual and credible.

Third, in what kinds of villages people are more likely to develop trust in each other? The empirical evidence emerged from our analysis suggests that the Chinese villagers who live in administrative villages with multiple natural villages are less likely to trust either their fellow villagers or strangers. Also, one can conclude that villages with larger population are less likely to foster trust among the residents.

From these findings, one can easily find that the formation of particularized trust and generalized trust appear to follow different psychological paths. While particularized trust is strongly shaped by a various factors ranging from personal traits to intra-village, only a limited number of factors can independently affect generalized trust. This finding further confirms the necessity and validity to distinguish between particularized trust and generalized trust.

A second implication we can draw from above-mentioned findings is that both cultural arguments and rational arguments can help us to unveil the formation of social trust. Specifically, the Chinese villagers' trust level is not only influenced by their subjective orientation, but also shaped their personal experience gained in informal social

interactions. Therefore, it would be misleading to conceptualized social trust solely as cultural or rational phenomenon.

The empirical findings also imply that besides factors at individual levels, the attributes of community can robustly affect people's propensity to trust. However, my findings suggest that the presence of such solidary groups as lineages does not have a substantial impact on ordinary villagers' trust in each other. Therefore, it seems that role of solidary groups in rural China is not as influential as many scholars postulated, at least with regard to the trust relations among the ordinary Chinese rural residents.

Finally, our exploration of the determinants of social trust in rural China indicates that strong norms of civility are not always positively associated with people's trust in strangers. The relationship between civic norms and social trust is far from being universal. In the case of China, civic norms like help the weak, punctuality, and credibility prompts villagers to trust their surrounding people, and discourage people to engage in trust relations with stranger. Yet, if in China the prevalent social norms discourage people to trust strangers, does this imply that like southern Italy, the particularized-trust-abundant rural China will be unable to achieve good local governance? In the following chapter, I will visit this question by examining the impacts of particularized trust and generalized trust on rural public goods provision in China.



## CHAPTER V

## SOCIAL TRUST AND PUBLIC GOODS PROVISION IN RURAL CHINA

As illuminated in previous chapters, social trust is a multi-dimensional concept, encompassing two important sub-dimensions—particularized trust and generalized trust. Moreover, the discussion in Chapter IV demonstrates that Chinese rural residents develop these two types of trust through different psychological paths. Although increasing number of scholars have recognized the distinction between particularized trust and generalized trust, there is no consensus on what kinds of roles the two types of trusts play in shaping such desirable sociopolitical outcomes as public goods provision. Specifically, does a village's repertoire of particularized trust (i.e. trust in people we personally know) and generalized trust (i.e. trust in strangers) robustly affect its level of public goods provision? If so, how? The answers to these questions not only are of critical importance in advancing our understandings of social trust, but also have direct implications for how to improve the quality of rural governance. To fill this gap, in this chapter I will address these questions by examining the impacts of the two types of social trust on public goods provision in rural China.

## PREVIOUS SCHOLARSHIP AND THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

Ever since the late 1960s, political scientists have already noticed the pivotal role played by social trust in shaping public goods provision at the local level.<sup>1</sup> Particularly

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<sup>1</sup> Edward C. Banfield, *Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (Riverside, NJ: Free Press, [1958] 1976); Also see, for example, Celso Furtado, *Development and Underdevelopment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964); Pye and Sidney Verba, eds., *Political Culture and Political Development* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965).

after Putnam's path-breaking work, *Making Democracy Work*, there is a body of rapidly growing literature on the relationship between social trust and public goods provisions.<sup>2</sup> However, scholars are still exploring and debating on how exactly social trust affects the level public goods provision.<sup>3</sup> Generally, there are two general schools of thoughts, which I term as *Social Capital Thesis* and *Solidary Group Thesis* respectively.

Social capital thesis, derived from the Tocquevillian tradition, emphasizes the importance of generalized trust in facilitating civic cooperation and participation, arguing that while generalized trust is positively associated with public goods provisions, a large repertoire of particularized trust is detrimental to local public goods provisions by hindering cooperation across various social divides such as class and ethnicity.<sup>4</sup> Solidary group thesis makes an important revision to social capital thesis by suggesting that under certain sociopolitical environments, particularized trust could still contribute to public goods provision at local level.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, solidary group thesis argue that only when there is one single solidary group in a village (viz., the boundary of the solidary group

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<sup>2</sup> Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> See two good reviews on the debates of the impacts of social trust, Peter Nannestad, "What Have We Learned About Generalized Trust, If Anything?," *Annual Review of Political Science* 11, no. (2008); Michael Woolcock, "The Rise and Routinization of Social Capital, 1988-2008," *Annual Review of Political Science* 13, no. (2010).

<sup>4</sup> Gema M. García Albacete, "The Saliency of Political Cleavages and the 'Dark Sides' of Social Capital: Evidence from Spain," *American Behavioral Scientist* 53, no. 5 (2010); Jie Chen, Narisong Huhe, and Chunlong Lu, "Generalized vs. Particularized Social Capital: Social Trust and Grassroots Governance in Urban China," in *Toward Better Governance in China: An Unconventional Pathway of Political Reform*, ed. Baogang Guo and Dennis Hickey (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> Alejandro Portes, "Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, no. (1998); Alejandro Portes and Patricia Landolt, "Social Capital: Promise and Pitfalls of Its Role in Development," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 32, no. 02 (2000); Alejandro Portes and Julia Sensenbrenner, "Embeddedness and Immigration: Notes on the Social Determinants of Economic Action," *The American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 6 (1993); Rebecca L. Sandefur and Edward O. Laumann, "A Paradigm for Social Capital," *Rationality and Society* 10, no. 4 (1998); Lily L. Tsai, *Accountability without Democracy: Solidary Groups and Public Goods Provision in Rural China* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Idem, "Solidary Groups, Informal Accountability, and Local Public Goods Provision in Rural China," *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 2 (2007); Anirudh Krishna, *Active Social Capital: Tracing the Roots of Development and Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

coincides with the administrative boundary of the village), could particularized trust lead to sufficient public goods provision.

However, in this dissertation, I find both theses are flawed. As discussed in Chapter I, I argue that as far as local public goods provision is concerned, particularized trust is actually positively correlated with public goods provision, while generalized trust is only weakly associated with the provision of public goods. In the following parts of this section, I will first review the major arguments of the two theses. Subsequently, I explain why both social capital thesis and solidary group thesis are flawed. Finally, the testable hypotheses concerning the relationship between social trust and public goods provision will be addressed.

#### *A. Social Capital Thesis*

Social capital thesis, popularized by Bourdieu, Coleman, and Putnam, suggests that besides formal institutions, certain features of social organizations such as trust could significantly improve the overall efficiency of a society.<sup>6</sup> Having recognized shortcomings of the early conceptualization of social capital,<sup>7</sup> more and more scholars

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<sup>6</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G Richardson (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986); James S. Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital," in *Social Capital: A Multifaceted Perspective*, ed. Partha Dasgupta and Ismail Serageldin (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2000); Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*.

<sup>7</sup> The concept of social capital is notoriously difficult to accurately define and reliably measure. Drawing on intellectual roots in economics, sociology, and political science, the concept of social capital is endowed by different authors with various but distinct properties. As much empirical research reveals, the various dimensions of social capital do not function as a monolithic whole, see, for example, Christian Bjørnskov, "The Multiple Facets of Social Capital," *European Journal of Political Economy* 22, no. 1 (2006).

have agreed that social trust is *the* most important component of social capital,<sup>8</sup> and accordingly steered their attention to studies of the impacts of social trust.<sup>9</sup>

Concerning the relationship between social trust and public goods provision, most scholars of social capital thesis agree upon the difference between particularized trust and generalized trust,<sup>10</sup> and suggest that these two types of trusts have dramatically opposite impacts on various sociopolitical outcomes. In general, they postulate that only generalized trust is playing a positive role in the provision of public goods and services.

In the first place, social capital thesis postulates that generalized trust contributes to local public goods provision by facilitating social cooperation. As well established by political scientists and economists, public goods provisions at local level often involve in a collective action problem,<sup>11</sup> where every rational actors has a strong motivation to free ride on the contribution made by everyone else. Such a problem seems to be particularly acute among strangers. According to social capital thesis, such a problem could be easily solved when people possess strong generalized trust.<sup>12</sup> When one trusts in strangers, she or he is more likely to take the risk to cooperate. However, they argue that strong norms

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<sup>8</sup> Uslaner, "Democracy and Social Capital "

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Patrick Francois and Jan Zabojsnik, *Trust, Social Capital and Economic Development* (2005), Paul J Zak and Stephen Knack, "Trust and Growth," *The Economic Journal* 111, no 470 (2001)

<sup>10</sup> Fukuyama, *Trust The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York, NY Penguin Books, 1995), Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, William A. Callahan, "Social Capital and Corruption Vote Buying and the Politics of Reform in Thailand," *Perspectives on Politics* 3, no 3 (2005), Sonja Zmerli, "Applying the Concepts of Bonding and Bridging Social Capital to Empirical Research," *European Political Science* 2(3), (2003), 68-75

<sup>11</sup> Mancur Olson, *Logic of Collective Action Public Goods and the Theory of Groups* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), Lars Udehn, "Twenty-Five Years with the Logic of Collective Action," *Acta Sociologica* 36, no 3 (1993)

<sup>12</sup> Fukuyama, *Trust*, Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, Bo Rothstein, "Trust, Social Dilemmas and Collective Memories," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 12, no 4 (2000), 477

of particularized trust hinder social cooperation, since particularized trusters are less likely to extend their trust to strangers.<sup>13</sup>

Secondly, social capital thesis further suggests that generalized trust helps to hold public officials accountable, while particularized trust can only encourage corruption and parochial interests. Carles Boix and Daniel Posner, for instance, argue the generalized trust has important consequences for the extent to which public officials are accountable to ordinary citizens.<sup>14</sup> Specifically, they note that generalized trust can significantly expand the “opportunities for citizens to discuss civic affairs, increase their awareness of political issues and argue about whether or not the government is doing everything that it should to improve their welfare. Knowing that their constituents are monitoring and discussing their behaviour, elected political elites will work harder to govern effectively, lest they be removed from office at election-time.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Margit Tavits argues that when masses and bureaucrats share generalized trust, the latter are more likely to internalize the interests of masses, and therefore are more self-motivated to behavior in responsive manners.<sup>16</sup>

With regard to the relationship between particularized trust and governmental accountability, most students of social capital speculate a negative relationship. Specifically, in encouraging closed and strong ties among acquaintances, particularized trust tends to foster patronage and corruption in government. Rather than representing the broad masses, public officials in communities with abundant particularized trust are

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<sup>13</sup> Fukuyama, “Social Capital and Development”; Zmerli, “Applying the Concepts of Bonding and Bridging Social Capital.”

<sup>14</sup> Carles Boix and Daniel N. Posner, “Social Capital: Explaining Its Origins and Effects on Government Performance,” *British Journal of Political Science* 28, no. 4 (1998).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 690.

<sup>16</sup> Margit Tavits, “Making Democracy Work More? Exploring the Linkage between Social Capital and Government Performance,” *Political Research Quarterly* 59, no. 2 (2006).

more likely to speak for her or his own parochial groups.<sup>17</sup> As a result, communities with abundant particularized trust are usually plagued by irresponsible public officials and intergroup conflicts. After exploring trust relations in Thai local election, William Callahan finds that particularized trust, as the “complementary opposite” of generalized trust, is closely associated political corruption, vote buying in particular.

To take a stock of above, social capital thesis postulates that only generalized trust is conducive to the provision of public goods, and particularized trust appears to be toxic to rural governance.

### *B. Solidary Group Thesis*

With the development of studies on social trust, increasing numbers of students have recognized that social capital thesis appears to be too “neat” to fit the complex nexus between social trust and public goods provision in the real world. Departed from social capital thesis, many of them argue that particularized trust, under certain sociopolitical conditions, could still contribute to local governance.<sup>18</sup> For example, Lily L. Tsai, based on a representative survey conducted in China, finds particularized trust could lead to sufficient public goods provision only when the following two conditions are simultaneously met: 1) there is only one solidary group in the community (i.e., encompassment), and 2) public officials must be members of such solidary groups (i.e., embeddedness).<sup>19</sup> Specifically, with presence of both conditions, not only are there homogenous public interests shared by all the villagers, but also public officials are motivated by “informal accountability” to provide more public goods. Therefore,

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<sup>17</sup> Callahan, “Social Capital and Corruption,” 495.

<sup>18</sup> For example, see Portes, “Social Capital.”

<sup>19</sup> Tsai, *Accountability without Democracy*; Idem, “Solidary Groups.”

villages of encompassment and embeddedness are more likely to have better public goods provisions. On the other hand, if a village is occupied by multiple solidary groups, strong particularized trust, as suggested by Tsai, can only lead to inter-group conflicts, which will inevitably obstructs adequate provision of public goods.

Alejandro Portes and his colleagues also find strong particularized trust is contingently associated with better public goods provision. Specifically, Portes suggest that groups with abundant particularized trust, especially in the form of bounded solidary, could prompt members of a group to contribute to public goods within the group boundary. However, such “altruistic dispositions,” as emphasized by Portes, “are not universal but are bounded by the limits of their community.”<sup>20</sup> Moreover, Mark Granovetter finds such a closed-trust-relation arrangement is pervasive among overseas Chinese to solve public goods provision problem.<sup>21</sup> All in all, solidary group thesis makes a significant revision to social capital thesis by adding the particularized trust may be contingently conducive to the public goods provision.

### *C. An Alternative View*

Both social capital thesis and solidary group thesis has provided us with valuable insights on the relationship between social trust and public goods provision. However, as discussed in Chapter I, both thesis are flawed: while social capital thesis tends to overstate the importance of generalized trust, the role of particularized trust is underestimated by solidary group thesis. In this dissertation, I argue that particularized trust is more relevant to communal cooperation and governmental accountability than

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<sup>20</sup> Portes, “Social Capital,” 8. Also see, Portes and Sensenbrenner, “Embeddedness and Immigration.”

<sup>21</sup> Mark S. Granovetter, “Economic Institutions as Social Constructions: A Framework for Analysis,” *Acta Sociologica* 35, no. 1 (1992), 7-8.

generalized trust, and the presence of a single solidary group is not a necessary condition for particularized trust to work.

*Trust and Communal Cooperation* Although all scholars agree that communal cooperation is of momentous importance in provision of public goods, few have explored how exactly social trust functions at different stages of communal cooperation. A closer look at cooperation reveals that there are at least two important stages of communal cooperation—initiation and continuation of cooperation.<sup>22</sup> For public goods to be adequately provided in a community, cooperation should not only be initiated, but must be sustained in the long term. Moreover, many experimental studies on cooperation have already revealed that many people choose to quit cooperation game if there is an exit option, which indicates that continuation of cooperation is even harder to be achieved than initiation.<sup>23</sup>

A fundamental problem associated with social capital thesis, therefore, is that it solely focuses on how trust in strangers helps to initiate cooperation, but overlooks how cooperative relations are maintained in the long run. Specifically, as Boix and Posner once noted, social capital thesis is quite comfortable with a vague game theory

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<sup>22</sup> Avner Greif, "Political Organizations, Social Structure, and Institutional Success: Reflection from Genoa and Venice During the Commercial Revolution," *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 151, no. 4 (1995).

<sup>23</sup> Abigail Barr, "Trust and Expected Trustworthiness: Experimental Evidence from Zimbabwean Villages," *The Economic Journal* 113, no. 489 (2003); Joyce Berg, John Dickhaut, and Kevin McCabe, "Trust, Reciprocity, and Social History," *Games and Economic Behavior* 10, no. 1 (1995); Toshio Yamagishi, "Seriousness of Social Dilemmas and the Provision of a Sanctioning System," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (1988); Toshio Yamagishi, Karen S. Cook, and Motoki Watabe, "Uncertainty, Trust, and Commitment Formation in the United States and Japan," *The American Journal of Sociology* 104, no. 1 (1998); Toshio Yamagishi and Toko Kiyonari, "The Group as the Container of Generalized Reciprocity," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63, no. 2 (2000); Toshio Yamagishi and Midori Yamagishi, "Trust and Commitment in the United States and Japan," *Motivation and Emotion* 18, no. 2 (1994).



explanation on generalized trusters are more likely to initiate cooperation, but leaves us “without an explicit articulation of the mechanism.”<sup>24</sup>

Yet how can trust help to sustain cooperative relations in the long run? Or put it differently, what kind of social trust is more closely related to continuation of cooperative activities? In this dissertation, I argue that particularized trust is the key in sustaining long-term cooperative activities. Specifically, particularized trust helps to sustain cooperation by enabling self-monitoring and self-enforcement, which fundamentally reduces the transaction cost. By contrast, generalized trust, in reducing the opportunity cost, has little to do with the continuation of communal cooperation.

Different from formal institutional arrangements, communal cooperation in public goods provision lacks the third-party monitoring and punishment. Therefore, how to monitor and punish the free-riders is a key problem faced by the participants of communal cooperation. Particularized trust, characterized as close-knit ties and intensive interpersonal interactions, then provides a solution to this monitoring problem. Specifically, when individuals trust each other, less resource will be spent on monitoring free-riders. In addition, with a large repertoire of particularized trust, the risk of detection and punishment is significant higher than the benefits of free-riding. Free-riders within close-knit groups are not only more easily to be identified, but also facing severe social sanctions ranging from neighborhood boycott to ostracism.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Boix and Posner, “Social Capital,” 689.

<sup>25</sup> Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky, “Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda,” *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no. 4 (2004);

Toshio Yamagishi and his associates' works have robustly confirmed the critical role of particularized trust in maintain cooperation.<sup>26</sup> After comparing trusting behaviors of Americans and Japanese, Yamagishi proposes an "institutional view" of Japanese culture. Specifically, Yamagishi et al. argues that Japanese often "prefer" to cultivate particularized trust. In dealing with free-riding, abundant particularized trust in Japanese society help to develop "systems of mutual monitoring and sanctioning to curtail free riding, and these solutions work for the group insofar as such a 'collective' solution to the free rider problem is in place."<sup>27</sup> Moreover, in addressing why generalized trust is only weakly associate with communal cooperation, Yamagishi et al. find that "in groups artificially created in the laboratory without opportunities for face-to-face interactions such collective solutions as informal mutual monitoring and sanctioning do not exist."<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, Elinor Ostrom's studies on common pool resource problem also reveal that it is particularized trust that plays a decisive role in solving various social dilemmas. Specifically, she argues that particularized trust, emerged from "repeated, face-to-face" interactions, is robustly and positively related to norms of reciprocity and individual reputation, which in turn greatly increases the potential cost of free-riding.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, in communities of abundant particularized trust, common pool resources problems are more likely to be solved.

More importantly, this kind of relationship between particularized trust and communal cooperation has also been confirmed by some earlier anecdotal studies

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<sup>26</sup> Yamagishi, "Seriousness of Social Dilemmas"; Yamagishi et al., "Uncertainty, Trust, and Commitment Formation"; Yamagishi and Kiyonari, "The Group as the Container of Generalized Reciprocity"; Yamagishi and Yamagishi, "Trust and Commitment."

<sup>27</sup> Yamagishi et al., "Uncertainty, Trust, and Commitment Formation," 167-8.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 168.

<sup>29</sup> Ostrom, "A Behavioral Approach," 8, 13.

conducted in China. Jae Ho Chung, Hongyi Lai, and Ming Xia, for instance, find that when there is a large repertoire of particularized trust in forms of religious groups or kinship organizations, villagers in rural China more likely to cooperate with each other to provide basic public goods.<sup>30</sup> In some localities, such communal arrangement in public goods provision has been replacing the village governments. Specifically, as Chung et al. note, such self-organized trust groups are “competing with and in few areas even gradually replacing township and village governments as an institution with legitimacy, popular support, and the reputation of helping those in need.”<sup>31</sup>

All in all, particularized trust appears to be more important than generalized trust in maintain communal cooperation. Since public goods provisions rely more on persistent communal cooperation, it is reasonable to assume that particularized trust has a robust and positively impact, while generalized trust only has a marginal role in affecting communal cooperation in providing public goods.

*Trust and Governmental Accountability* Does particularized trust reduce governmental accountability? Specifically, does particularized trust, as suggested by social capital thesis, undermine accountability of public officials by fostering parochial interests? As far as public goods provision is concerned, the answer is probably negative.

Unlike private goods, public goods are neither excludable nor rival. Individuals and groups have no conflicting interests in enjoying such public goods as better schools, bridges, roads, and clinics. Therefore, with regard to public goods provision, it is reasonable to assume homogeneous interests.

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<sup>30</sup> Jae Ho Chung, Hongyi Lai, and Ming Xia, “Mounting Challenges to Governance in China: Surveying Collective Protestors, Religious Sects and Criminal Organizations,” *The China Journal* 56, no. Jul. (2006).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 27.

If particularized trust is not necessarily associated with representation of parochial interests, how does particularized trust help to install government accountability? There are at least two mechanisms. First of all, when local officials are embedded in strong trust ties, they are more likely to develop shared identities and norms with ordinary villagers. If public goods are to be provided effectively, local officials must first believe that they are part of the collectivity and that their contribution will be morally rewarded. As local officials develop bonding trust relations with villagers, they are more likely to identify themselves as members of the group and commit to shared norms, and thus have stronger moral incentives to contribute to the good of the groups.

Second, in villages where particularized trust is abundant, the costs for patrons to monitor and punish local officials' compliance with and deviations from the public interest are relatively low. Specifically, the intensive trust relations within communities provide ordinary group members with easier access to information concerning local officials' contribution or malfeasance. Moreover, when connected by strong bonding ties, ordinary group members will also have more opportunities to render their approval or disapproval, ranging from praise/shame to grant/denial, of officials' performance with regard to public goods provision. Aware of these social monitoring and punishment, local officials, motivated by either moral or instrumental rewards, are less likely to deviate from informal accountability.

While particularized trust tends to be robustly and positively related to public goods provision, the function of generalized trust is quite limited, particularly in developing countries where formal institutions are commonly weak and less accountable. Specifically, unlike countries with effective democratic institutions, the public in China

and many other developing countries have to rely more on personal connections (i.e. particularized trust relations) to exert influence on public officials. Compared to particularized trust, generalized trust, therefore, only has a remote impact on governmental accountability.

Moreover, earlier documentary and survey studies in China have also confirmed that interpersonal trust relations are closely related to accountability of public officials at local level.<sup>32</sup> For instance, M. Kent Jennings compares how cadres at different levels and villagers view their local problem based a representative survey conducted in Ahhui, Hebei, Hunan, and Tianjin.<sup>33</sup> Specifically, Jennings finds that public officials at higher levels (i.e., township and county) held markedly different views on local views from ordinary villagers. However, villager agendas were faithfully reflected in the village cadres, who enjoy “physical proximity” to ordinary villagers. Jointly these findings suggest that the more public officials are embedded local trust relations, the more policy congruence could be observed between public officials and villagers.

In short, both theoretical inquires and empirical evidences indicate that particularized trust plays a critical role in fostering accountability of public officials at local level, while generalized trust is only remotely and weakly associated with governmental accountability.

*Trust and Solidary Groups* Is the functioning of social trust, as argued by solidary group thesis, contingent on the different types of solidary groups? After

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<sup>32</sup> Vivien Shue, *Reach of the State: Sketches of the Chinese Body Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); Ignatius Wibowo, “Rural Party Rectification in China in the 1990s: Rectification or Reification?,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 7, no. 19 (1998).

<sup>33</sup> M. Kent Jennings, “Local Problem Agendas in the Chinese Countryside as Viewed by Cadres and Villagers,” *Acta Politica* 38, no. 4 (2003).

examining the inter-group relations in the context of public goods provision, I find that the most probable answer is negative. Specifically, as discussed earlier, an important characteristic of public goods (as opposed to “private” goods) is its inclusiveness. The existence of multiple trust groups does not necessarily invoke intra-village tensions. There should be little conflict across different social groups over receiving such public goods as public order, schools, roads, and clinics.

In a carefully designed research on interethnic cooperation, James Habyarimana and his colleagues find that such identities as ethnics do not necessarily obstruct intergroup cooperation in public goods provision at local level.<sup>34</sup> Specifically, with a combination of experimental studies and statistical analysis Habyarimana et al. have convincingly demonstrated that members of different ethnic groups do not care about whether the beneficiaries of public goods are all from the same group. Instead, what concerns them most is how effective the public goods can be provided and whether their wellbeing can be improved. Consequently, as long as public goods are adequately provided, the identities of social groups are far from being source of intra-community conflicts, or an obstruction of inter-group cooperation.

Moreover, recent field studies in China also indicate inter-group cooperation far more common than scholars expected before.<sup>35</sup> Mei’s study of Wang Village in Henan province reveals that although there are six major lineage groups within a village, public goods such as social order, aid to the needy, and irrigation system are adequately

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<sup>34</sup> James Habyarimana, Macartan Humphreys, Daniel N. Posner, and Jeremy M. Weinstein, “Why Does Ethnic Diversity Undermine Public Goods Provision?,” *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 4 (2007). Also see, James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Explaining Interethnic Cooperation,” *The American Political Science Review* 90, no. 4 (1996).

<sup>35</sup> For example, Zhigang Mei, “Chuantong Shehui Wenhua Beijing Xia De Junshi Xing Cunzhi [Balance of Village Governance under Traditional Cultural Background],” *Cunji Zhidu Yanjiu [Research on Village Institution]* 6, no. 2 (2009); Shuna Wang and Yang Yao, “Grassroots Democracy and Local Governance: Evidence from Rural China,” *World Development* 35, no. 10 (2007).

maintained and provided.<sup>36</sup> Not only is a harmonious relationship maintained among ordinary villagers, within village government a power-sharing mechanism is also formed to achieve better village governance. Seven positions of the village government are shared by all the major lineage groups, and the major decisions are made based on consensus.

Therefore, in the context of public goods provision, it is reasonable to assume that the functioning of social trust is not contingent to solidary groups. Even in village with multiple solidary groups, all the residents share the same interests in adequate provision of public goods.

#### *D. Testable Hypotheses*

Drawing on previous discussion on the relationship between social trust and public goods provision, I formulate my main hypothesis as follows,

*Particularized trust is significantly and positively correlated with quality of rural governance, while generalized trust has little or no effect on rural public goods provision.*

## PUBLIC GOODS PROVISION IN RURAL CHINA AND ITS MEASUREMENT

In order to better understand the impacts of the two types of social trust (i.e., generalized trust and particularized trust) on the public goods provision in rural China, in the section I will present an overview of the development of how public goods are provided at village level in contemporary China. Then I will explain how public goods provisions are measured in this dissertation.

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<sup>36</sup> Mei, “Balance of Village Governance.”

### A. Evolution Public Goods Provisions in Rural China

In China, rural public goods provisions have undergone substantially changes from Mao's era to post-Mao era. During the Mao's era, most functions of public goods provisions were carried out by village party branches. Specifically, a village in China is the lowest level within the government hierarchy.<sup>37</sup> In each village, there was a communist party branch and an administrative office, which was led by the party secretary and the villager head respectively. Yet, the secretary of party branch, although in theory only responsible for party affair, often took the leading role in allocating resources and providing basic public goods. The roles of the administrative office and the village heads were largely marginalized throughout Mao's era.<sup>38</sup>

Until the late 1970s, both village party secretaries and village heads were appointed by upper levels of governments (i.e. people's commune and township government). Besides providing basic public goods and services, the major responsibilities of village party secretaries and village heads are to enforce state policies: (1) collecting taxes and fees, (2) fulfilling family planning, and (3) implementing grain procurement.<sup>39</sup> Since their political promotions depend on upper-level governments' evaluation on how well state policies were implemented, appointed party secretaries and village heads were less interested in providing basic public goods and services, but more

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<sup>37</sup> It should be noted that technically, villages are an officially recognized level of government.

<sup>38</sup> Allen C. Choate, *Local Governance in China: An Assessment of Villagers Committees* (The Asia Foundation, 1997); Philip S. Hsu, "Deconstructing Decentralization in China: Fiscal Incentive Versus Local Autonomy in Policy Implementation," *Journal of Contemporary China* 13, no. 40 (2004); Yanzhong Huang, "Bringing the Local State Back In: The Political Economy of Public Health in Rural China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 13, no. 39 (2004).

<sup>39</sup> Wang and Yao, "Grassroots Democracy and Local Governance."



concerned with how to carry out the above-mentioned three unpopular state policies.<sup>40</sup>

Given this, it is not surprising that public goods were generally underprovided in Mao's era.<sup>41</sup>

With the death of Mao and the downfall of the Gang of Four in 1976, rural China started to witness rapid and radical changes. Specifically, the decollectivization of agricultural production and abolishment of commune system fundamentally changed how public goods and services are provided in China. In the first place, the programs of public goods investment are largely "self financed" in rural areas since the onset of post-Mao reform. In order to reduce financial burdens, the central government restructured public goods and services system, having those previously state-run services either marketized or decentralized in 1980s.<sup>42</sup> In rural China, the village turns out to be the major investor of public goods programs after the central government's withdrawal.<sup>43</sup>

Second, the post-Mao reform in rural China has significantly empowered ordinary rural residents, fueling communal cooperation on public goods provision. By the 1980s, virtually all communes had been disbanded. Correspondingly, village leaders had lost direct control over collective properties (most importantly, land), and ordinary rural resident had gain more autonomy in various socioeconomic activities.<sup>44</sup> The *de facto* retreat of state on village level and empowerment of ordinary villagers had opened new

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<sup>40</sup> Bevin J. O'Brien and Liangjiang Li, "Selective Policy Implementation in Rural China," *Comparative Politics* 31, no. 2 (1999); Jude Howell, "Prospects for Village Self-Governance in China," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 25, no. 3 (1998).

<sup>41</sup> See, Graeme Smith, "The Hollow State: Rural Governance in China," *The China Quarterly* 203, no. Sep. (2010).

<sup>42</sup> Sylvia Chan, "Research Notes on Villagers' Committee Election: Chinese-Style Democracy," *Journal of Contemporary China* 7, no. 19 (1998); Renfu Luo, Linxiu Zhang, Jikun Huang, and Scott Rozelle, "Elections, Fiscal Reform and Public Goods Provision in Rural China," *Journal of Comparative Economics* 35, no. 3 (2007).

<sup>43</sup> Luo et al., "Elections, Fiscal Reform and Public Goods Provision in Rural China."

<sup>44</sup> Kelliher, "The Chinese Debate over Village Self-Government"; Kevin J. O'Brien, "Implementing Political Reform in China's Villages," *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 32 (1994).

spaces for various social groups to organize socioeconomic life,<sup>45</sup> assert their interests,<sup>46</sup> and influence political outcomes.<sup>47</sup> With regard to public goods provision, villagers have become more active in organizing informal cooperation in maintaining and providing such public goods as bridges, schools, and irrigation systems.<sup>48</sup>

Third, the reform, particularly the introduction of village committee (VC) election, has made village leaders more concerned about public goods provision but not the unpopular state policies. Aware of authority break-down in rural areas, the Party adopted a decentralized approach to rural governance, leading to institutionalization of elected village committees.<sup>49</sup> Specifically, villagers' committees (VCs) elected by ordinary villagers—according to the Organic Law of Village Committees<sup>50</sup>—are supposed to be in charge of public goods provision at village level, pooling resources from villagers and administering public goods and services, such as village-own and -run primary schools, roads, and sanitation and irrigation systems.<sup>51</sup>

After the final promulgation of the Organic Law of Village Committees in 1998, villagers, at least in theory, could nominate candidates and have a choice among multiple candidates for seats of village committees (VCs). The results, as many students of China have pointed out, are that elected village leaders more likely to behave in villagers' interests, initiating programs benefiting villagers and counterfeiting unpopular state

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<sup>45</sup> Yusheng Peng, "Kinship Networks and Entrepreneurs in China's Transitional Economy," *The American Journal of Sociology* 109, no. 5 (2004); Martin King Whyte, "The Social Roots of China's Economic Development," *The China Quarterly* 144 (1995).

<sup>46</sup> For example, Lianjiang Li and Kevin J. O'Brien, "Protest Leadership in Rural China," *The China Quarterly* 193, no. Mar. (2008).

<sup>47</sup> Ben Hillman, "The Rise of the Community in Rural China: Village Politics, Cultural Identity and Religious Revival in a Hui Hamlet," *The China Journal* 51, no. Jan. (2004).

<sup>48</sup> Melanie Manion, "The Electoral Connection in the Chinese Countryside," *American Political Science Review* 90, no. 4 (1996).

<sup>49</sup> Luo et al., "Elections, Fiscal Reform and Public Goods Provision in Rural China."

<sup>50</sup> National People's Congress, *The Organic Law of Village Committees*, (Beijing, China: National People's Congress, 1998).

<sup>51</sup> Chan, "Research Notes on Villagers' Committee Election."

policies like one-child policy and compulsory grain procurement.<sup>52</sup> In pursuing local interest, village leaders often allied with their fellow villagers against upper-level governments. In some extreme cases, as Ignatius Wibowo observes: “[R]ural cadres [even] prefer to go to jail along with their fellow villagers. For them, obeying their superior is one thing and defending their fellow villagers is another.”<sup>53</sup>

In sum, the post-Mao reform has introduced significant changes to public goods provision in rural China, transforming it from state-funded and -directed system to self-financed and -governed. In this process, not only did ordinary villagers become more active, but village leaders turned to be more village-oriented.

### *B. Measuring Public Goods Provision in Rural China*

To measure public goods provision at local level, we focus on five categories of rural public goods: irrigation, transportation, education, health care, and electrification. While the five categories do not exhaust all aspects of public goods provision, they together capture major concerns of rural residents across various regions in rural China. The relevance and importance of the five categories to rural residents’ lives have been confirmed by many studies of rural governance in rural China.<sup>54</sup> Thus, we believe that the five categories can serve as a good test of public goods provision in rural China. In addition, it should be noted that focusing solely on a single indicator may lead us to highly biased conclusions about public goods provision. As revealed in many earlier

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<sup>52</sup> Zongze Hu, “Power to the People? Villagers’ Self-Rule in a North China Village from the Locals’ Point of View,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 17, no. 57 (2008).

<sup>53</sup> Ignatius Wibowo, “Rural Party Rectification in China in the 1990s: Rectification or Reification?,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 7, no. 19 (1998), 505.

<sup>54</sup> For example, Shenggen Fan and Xiaobo Zhang, “Infrastructure and Regional Economic Development in Rural China,” *China Economic Review* 15, no. (2004).

studies, localities differ dramatically with regard to their sociogeographic and socioeconomic conditions.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, different villages often have different demands and formulate different policies. For instance, a village with abundant water resources tends to spend less in irrigation system comparing to a village plagued by droughts. If simply relying on the measure of expenditure in irrigation system, we might easily make wrong inferences about the public goods provision in the village. In this respect, the multiple measures used in this dissertation can give us a more accurate picture about the public goods provision in rural China.

**Table 24. Descriptives of Dependent Variables**

Item	<i>N.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std.</i>
Investment in irrigation and agriculture per capita by thousand <i>yuan</i>	376	0.65	1.13
Village government expenditure on roads/bridges by thousand <i>yuan</i>	376	1.16	1.59
Number of schools per thousand population	381	0.97	1.65
Number of hospitals per thousand population	358	1.25	0.95
Percentage of household with electricity	394	0.98	0.09

*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

In terms of the specific measure for each of the five categories of public goods provision, we use per capita village expenditure for irrigation and roads in 2004, while we employ the number of school per thousand residents for education, number of clinics

<sup>55</sup> C.W. Kenneth Keng, "China's Unbalanced Economic Growth," *Journal of Contemporary China* 15, no. 46 (2006); Qingshan Tan, "Growth Disparity in China: Provincial Causes," *Journal of Contemporary China* 11, no. 33 (2002).

and hospitals per thousand residents for medical care, and percentage of households with electricity for electrification. The descriptives of these measures are reported in Table 24.

## MEASURING OF EXPLANATORY VARIABLES

In this chapter, to test the plausibility of our hypothesis about the relationship between the two types of trust and rural public goods provision at village level, I measure social trust as an attribute of village and use village as the basic unit. Such an approach has been widely used in studies on the relationship between social trust and aggregate sociopolitical outcomes. Specifically, in order to have a collective profile of each type of social trust in each surveyed village, I computed the community-average score for particularized trust and generalized trust along the with distinction we established in Chapter II. The descriptives of particularized trust and generalized trust by village is reported in Table 25.

**Table 25. Descriptives of Key Explanatory Variables: Particularized Trust and Generalized Trust**

Item	<i>N.</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std.</i>
Particularized Trust	410	14.9	24.8	20.5	1.77
Generalized Trust	410	1	4.5	1.9	.58

*Source:* The 2005 China General Social Survey.

## CONTROL VARIABLES

To determine the *independent* effect of the particularized trust and generalized trust as the determinants public goods provision, I control for six sets of factors that may also have an impact on village public goods provision: village committee elections, villagers' political interest, solidary groups, economic development, geographic/demographic traits and regions.

### A. Village Committee Election

The introduction of VC elections during post-Mao reform is widely perceived to be positively correlated with public goods provision in rural China.<sup>56</sup> Although these elections have by no means been fully competitive and democratic,<sup>57</sup> they appear to induce local officials to provide public goods by increasing the preference congruence between public officials and villagers.<sup>58</sup> Specifically, while local party branches and township leaders may decide who is nominated or appears on the final ballots,<sup>59</sup> the candidates still have to gain a majority of votes in the final ballot. Given the pressures of winning popular votes, local officials tend to be more responsive to needs and demands of villagers, and hence are more likely to invest in education, medical services and the likes. As a result, the implementation of VC elections may contribute to village public

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<sup>56</sup> Björn Alpermann, "Village Governance and Prospects for Democracy in China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 13, no. 38 (2004).

<sup>57</sup> For example, Jie Chen, "Popular Support for Village Self-Government in China: Intensity and Sources," *Asian Survey* 45, no. 6 (2005); Yang Zhong and Jie Chen, "To Vote or Not to Vote: An Analysis of Peasants' Participation in Chinese Village Elections," *Comparative Political Studies* 35, no. 6 (2002).

<sup>58</sup> Manion, "The Electoral Connection in the Chinese Countryside."

<sup>59</sup> As Elklit notes, there is huge regional variations associated with the implementation of VC elections, which leaves plenty of space for village party secretaries and township leaders to influence VC elections. In terms of candidate nomination, for instances, at least nine methods are observed, ranging from free nomination by villagers to nominations by township governments, see Jørgen Elklit, "The Chinese Village Committee Electoral System," *China Information* 11, no. 1 (1997). However, Manion suggests that the roles of township leaders as the "selectorates" should not be overstated, see Manion, "The Electoral Connection in the Chinese Countryside."

goods provision by introducing formal incentives. In this reassessment, we include a dummy variable for whether the VC elections are conducted in each surveyed village.

### *B. Villagers' Political Interests*

I expect that public goods provision by village governments are influenced by the political interests of rural residents. More specifically, I hypothesize that villagers' attentiveness to major local issues and politics is positively correlated with public goods provision. As revealed by previous findings from rural China,<sup>60</sup> villagers who are interested in local issues tend to be more active in rural affairs, and more inclined to use various channels to voice their demands and exert influences on village affairs. At the village level, the more villagers are interested in local politics, the more pressures are imposed on local officials to provide public goods. To measure villagers' interests in village affairs, we asked our respondents one question: "Are you concerned with daily operations and decisions of Village Committee?" The individual villagers were asked to assess their levels of interest on a five-point scale, where 1 stands for no interest ("do not care") and 5 refers to intense interest ("very concerned"). We then use the mean of villager's interest score within each village as the indicator of villagers' interest at village level.

### *C. Solidary Groups*

Solidary group thesis postulates that the existence of certain solidary groups is the prerequisite for adequate public goods provision at local level. However, as discussed earlier, I propose that with respect to public goods provision, multiple solidary groups

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<sup>60</sup> Zhong and Chen, "To Vote or Not to Vote."

within a village will not necessarily lead to inter-group conflicts. There should be little difference between villages with different profiles of solidary groups. In light of this, we expect that the simple presence of solidary groups is not significantly correlated with public goods provision. Specifically, I examine the impacts of solidary groups by looking at lineage groups. As many earlier studies reveal, in contemporary China, lineage groups have become the most potent and prevalent solidary group in rural areas.

To gauge the presence of lineage groups, I employ a survey item of existence of lineage groups with ancestral halls. In addition, although ancestral halls are important in lineages' ritual activities, not all lineage groups were able to build up their own ancestral halls due to various reasons. Due to historical factors, such as wars and migrations, many lineage groups were unable to build ancestral halls for the practice of ancestral cults and worship. Instead, lineage ritual activities are held in lineage graveyards or other corporate estates.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, in those localities with lineage halls, the buildings are open only for very limited events. For instance, Myron Cohen observes that in northern China many ancestral halls are open only for the celebration of the Chinese New Year.<sup>62</sup> In the rest of the year, lineage activities, such as the distribution of corporate and family property, are more frequently held at the homes of lineage leaders or other corporate estates. Given this, I incorporate another survey item, existence of lineage groups without ancestral halls to detect the impacts of solidary groups on rural public goods provision.

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<sup>61</sup> James L. Watson, "Chinese Kinship Reconsidered: Anthropological Perspectives on Historical Research," *The China Quarterly* 92, no. Dec. (1982).

<sup>62</sup> Myron L. Cohen, "Lineage Organization in North China," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 49, no. 3 (1990).



#### *D. Economic Development*

The level of economic development is widely perceived as one of determinants of public goods provisions. As the level of economic development rises, a village could have more resources available for improvement of public goods and services. Thus wealthy villages are more likely to have adequate public goods and services. To gauge economic development level, we employ village income per capita. In addition, to capture the level of industrialization of each village, which is related to the level of economic development, we also incorporate a dummy variable for the existence of village enterprises.

#### *E. Geographic and Demographic Traits*

The geographic and demographic variables in this study include village population, the number of natural villages under one VC, village terrain, arable land per capita, education level, and distance from the county site. All of these variables may have some implications for public goods provision. For example, larger population always increases demands of public goods provision. The number of natural village might be positively correlated with the costs of maintaining roads and bridges. Similarly The costs of constructing and maintaining roads and bridges are also positively related to the territory sizes of villages. The arable land per capita is also positively correlated with village investment in agriculture; the more arable land, the more investments are needed. In addition, demand for public goods provision should be higher in village where the average education level is high, since well-educated individuals tend to have higher expectations on the quality of life. Proximity to county site might be negatively

correlated with demands of better education and medical services, since individuals could easily travel to county sites for such services.

#### *F. Regions*

Regions might also play a role in shaping public goods provision, since, for example, the resources and demands for public goods and services might vary with regions due to their different economic, social and cultural conditions. This reassessment, therefore, we use regions to address the variations stemmed from regional differences. Drawing on the report by a national government agency, Development Research Center (DRC) of China,<sup>63</sup> I divided the country into eight major regions (see Figure 1): Northeastern, North-coastal, Yellow-River, Northwestern, East-coastal, Yangzi-River, South-coastal and Southwestern China. This geographic classification, we believe, can well capture China's regional differences in terms of natural endowment, population density, infrastructure, industry profiles, sub-cultural proximity, socioeconomic challenges, and so on. For instance, the three provinces in Northeastern China, Liaoning, Jilin, and Heilongjiang, share the similar climate and natural endowments. The industries in the three provinces are all characterized as heavy industries. In addition, the three provinces also face similar problems like depletion of natural resources, and unbalanced industrial structures.

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<sup>63</sup> Development Research Center of the State Council, *Shuxian Diqu Xietian Fazhan De Zhanlv Silu He Zhengce Cuozhi [Strategies and Policies Towards Balanced Regional Development]* (Beijing, China, 2005).

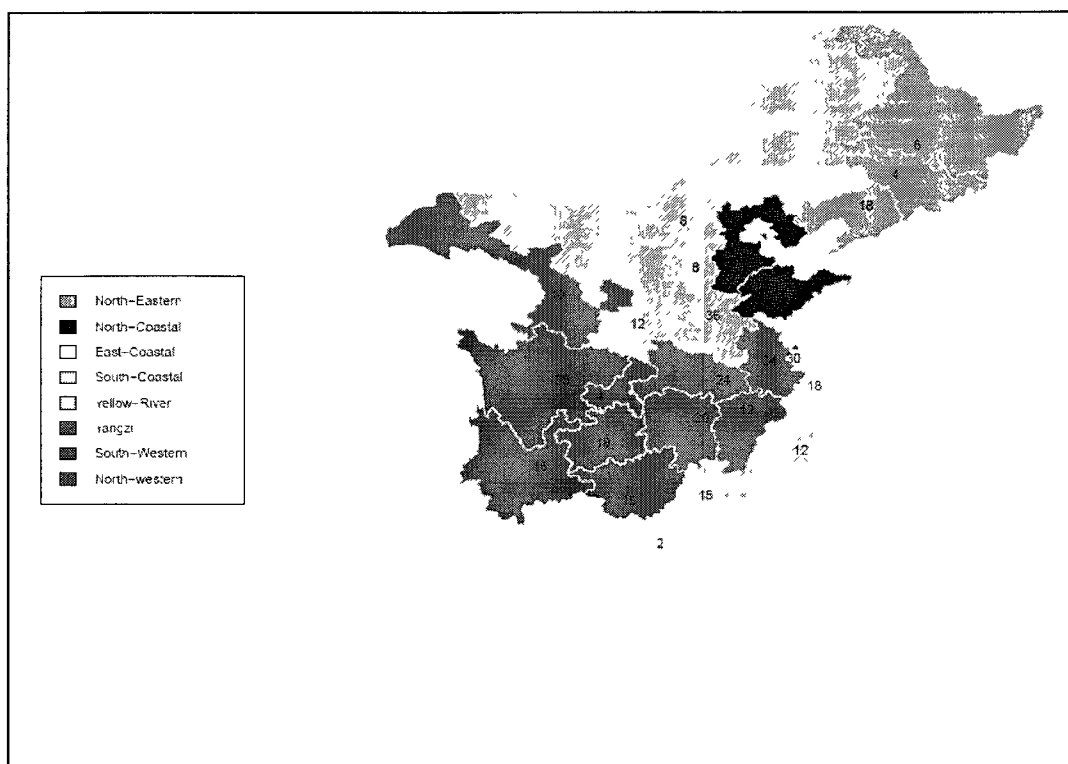


Figure 4. **Geographic Distribution of Surveyed Villages and Eight Regions of China**

*Note:* The figure is created by the author on the basis of data collected from the 2005 China General Social Survey. The numbers on the map indicate how many villages are surveyed in each of the sampled provinces.

The different socioeconomic and socio-cultural characteristics of each region may have an impact on resources available and people's expectation for public goods provision. For instance, rural residents in mountainous Southwestern China are more concerned with investment in transportations; peasants in Yangzi-River China are less worried about water resources due to their proximity to Yangzi River; and villagers in well-developed East-coastal and South-coastal China need far more electric power to boost their local economies. In other words, without considering the regional differences, we cannot accurately assess the public goods provisions in rural China.

## MODEL ANALYSIS

In this section, I subject our theory-derived relationships between social trust and public goods provision to empirical tests. I will first specify the seemingly unrelated regression model I employed, and explain the advantages associated with this model. Subsequently, discussion on empirical findings will be delivered.

### *A. Seemingly Unrelated Regression Model*

In order to explore the effects of embeddedness and encompassment on village public goods provision, we employ the following seemingly unrelated regression (SUR) model:

$$y_{ik} = \beta_{1k} + \beta_{2k}(\mathbf{P.Trust})_{ik} + \beta_{3k}(\mathbf{G.Trust})_{ik} + \beta_{4k}(\mathbf{Control})_{ik} + \varepsilon_{ik} \quad (1)$$

In this model, the dependent variable is  $y_{ik}$ , the public goods provision, where  $k$  indexes its five different categories: public irrigation, road and bridge, education, health service, and electrification, and  $i$  indexes different villages.  $(\mathbf{Embed})_{ik}$  represents the measure of embeddedness of local officials, while  $(\mathbf{Encomp})_{ik}$  denotes the measure of encompassment.  $(\mathbf{Control})_{ik}$  is a vector of the six sets of controls. In this model, we also employ a joint test for all categories of public goods provision. Specifically, the first joint null hypothesis is  $\beta_{2k} = 0$  for all  $k$  categories of public goods provision, while the second is  $\beta_{3k} = 0$  for all  $k$  categories of public goods provision. Rejection of the first hypothesis implies that embeddedness of local officials is significantly correlated with public goods provision, and rejection of the second hypothesis indicates that encompassment exerts significant influences on public goods provision.

One of the advantages of the SUR model is its superior capability to estimate multiple multivariate regression models simultaneously.<sup>64</sup> Such a capability is essential to an analysis of the multiple dimensions of public goods provision in rural China, because villages with different needs and limited resources usually have differing priorities with respect to public goods provision. For instance, villages with abundant water resources but roads in poor condition might first choose to invest in transportation before making any investments in an irrigation system. As Tsai suggests, “using SUR to look simultaneously at multiple measures of village governmental public goods provision allows for the possibility that different places prioritize different goods.”<sup>65</sup>

In this model, we employ the technique of multiple imputations to treat missing data, in order to achieve more accurate estimates and preserve more information. Specifically, for each missing data point five values are imputed using MCMC (Markov Chain Monte Carlo) method and five complete datasets are created.<sup>66</sup> The SUR analyses of these five datasets generate five different sets of point and variance estimates for each parameter. Finally, a combined estimate for each parameter is made, on the basis of the five sets of results from the imputed datasets. Such combined inferences usually generated more conservative and reliable estimates for parameters of interests. Table 1 reports the combined results of the SUR estimates generated from the imputed datasets.

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<sup>64</sup> William H. Greene, *Econometric Analysis*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002).

<sup>65</sup> Tsai, “Solidary Groups,” 363.

<sup>66</sup> An investigation of the pattern of missing data reveals an arbitrary pattern, and MCMC is widely accepted as a reliable tool to obtain the estimates of missing values, see Gary King et al., “Analyzing Incomplete Political Science Data: An Alternative Algorithm for Multiple Imputation,” *The American Political Science Review* 95, no. 1 (2001). Specifically, data augmentation is applied to Bayesian inference with missing data by repeating imputation (I-step) and posterior (P-step). The two steps are iterated long enough to achieve convergence to stationary distribution. Such convergences can be assessed with time-series and autocorrelations plots. In this study, 200 times burn-in iterations are conducted, and convergences are achieved, that is, there are no apparent trends and no autocorrelations in successive iterates. For detailed information about the pattern of missing data and times-series and autocorrelations plots, please see the Appendix C.

### *B. Empirical Findings and Discussion*

Table 1 reports the results of the SUR estimates of the model specified above. Overall, the results confirm our expectations explained earlier and contradict or differ from those suggested by social capital theses and solidary group theses.

First, the particularized trust is *independently, significantly, and positively* correlated with village public goods provision. Even when we control for generalized trust, VC elections, villagers' political interest, solidary groups, economic development, and other demographic and geographic factors, the estimated effect of particularized is still positive for four out of five categories of public goods provision (i.e., irrigation and agriculture, schools, clinics and hospitals, and electricity coverage) and statistically significant for irrigation and agriculture, clinics and hospitals, and electricity coverage. In addition, the estimated effect of particularized trust on roads and schools, though negatively signed, has a very high level of uncertainty. The null joint hypothesis that the coefficient of particularized across the five categories of public goods provision is equal to zero can also be rejected at a 95 percent confidence level, given its p-value equals to 0.0354. Based on these results, a one can say that *ceteris paribus* villages with high level of particularized trust are more likely to have effective public goods provision.

**Table 26. Particularized Trust, Generalized Trust and Public Goods Provision in Rural China**

	Public Goods Provision in Rural China					$H_0: B=0,$ P-value
	Irrigation & Agriculture	Roads & Bridges	Schools	Clinics & Hospitals	Electricity Coverage	
Particularized Trust	0.217* (0.112)	-0.013 (0.571)	0.012 (0.015)	0.152** (0.052)	0.067** (0.031)	0.0354**
Generalized Trust	-0.001 (0.003)	0.004 (0.004)	-0.0509 (0.0526)	0.0014 (0.0022)	-0.0004 (0.0003)	0.3721
Village Committee election (0-1)	-0.005 (0.008)	-0.003 (0.011)	-0.010 (0.014)	-0.004* (0.006)	0.001 (0.001)	
Interests in VC election	0.179 (0.129)	0.205 (0.177)	0.132 (0.213)	0.138 (0.091)	0.007 (0.013)	
Village-owned enterprises (0-1)	0.375* (0.202)	-0.190 (0.277)	-0.05 (0.333)	0.026 (0.142)	0.012 (0.020)	
Income per capita, 2004 ( $\times 10^3$ )	0.216** (0.074)	0.107 (0.102)	-0.124 (0.123)	-0.087 (0.052)	0.002 (0.007)	
<i>Solidary groups<sup>a</sup></i>						
Loose lineage networks (0-1)	-0.536 (1.648)	-0.450 (0.699)	-0.223 (0.256)	-0.610 (0.652)	-0.19 (0.423)	
Formal lineage networks (0-1)	0.240 (0.269)	-0.086 (0.369)	-0.201 (0.193)	0.048 (0.264)	-0.201 (0.193)	
Village Population (log)	-0.224* (0.129)	0.327* (0.177)	-0.72** (0.213)	-0.620*** (0.090)	0.012 (0.013)	
Number of natural village	-0.223 (0.256)	-0.610* (0.352)	-0.19 (0.423)	-0.080 (0.180)	0.013 (0.025)	
Village terrain ( $\times 10^3$ )	-1.220 (0.998)	-2.07 (1.369)	-0.536 (1.648)	-0.450 (0.699)	-0.07 (0.10)	
<i>Regions of China<sup>b</sup></i>						
North-eastern	-2.014** (0.796)	1.257 (1.093)	1.397 (1.315)	0.391 (0.559)	-0.036 (0.080)	

Table 26. Continued

	Irrigation & Agriculture	Roads & Bridges	Schools	Clinics & Hospitals	Electricity Coverage	$H_0: B=0,$ P-value
North-coastal	-1.666** (0.764)	1.844* (1.048)	0.312 (1.261)	0.602 (0.536)	0.021 (0.076)	
East-coastal	-0.936 (0.762)	2.047* (1.046)	1.265 (1.259)	0.436 (0.535)	-0.002 (0.076)	
South-coastal	-1.058 (0.778)	2.482** (1.067)	1.390 (1.285)	1.027* (0.546)	-0.074 (0.078)	
Yellow-river	-1.683** (0.767)	1.301 (1.053)	0.471 (1.267)	0.678 (0.538)	-0.005 (0.077)	
Yangzi-river	-1.128 (0.762)	2.343** (1.046)	0.537 (1.259)	0.449 (0.535)	0.006 (0.076)	
South-western	-1.332* (0.772)	1.664 (1.059)	0.859 (1.274)	0.683 (0.541)	-0.040 (0.077)	
Constant	3.188* (1.380)	-4.844* (1.893)	6.061*** (2.279)	0.005*** (0.001)	0.886*** (0.138)	

Note: N= 408. Figures in cells are seemingly unrelated regression coefficients. In parentheses are standard errors. \*  $p = 0.10$ , \*\*  $p = 0.05$ , \*\*\*  $p = 0.01$ . The hypothesis that the coefficient estimates on each term is equal to zero across the seven in the table is tested using SUR in the final column. McElroy R-square = .21.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Villages without any lineage networks is used as the control group.

<sup>b</sup> "Northwestern China" is used as the control group.

<sup>67</sup> Marjorie B. McElroy, "Goodness of Fit for Seemingly Unrelated Regressions: Glahn's  $R_{yx}^2$  and Hooper's  $R^2$ ," *Journal of Econometrics* 6, no. 3 (1977).



Second, the results from our SUR analysis show that generalized trust is not significantly associated with village public goods provision. Across five categories of public goods provision, the measure of generalized trust yields no substantial impact and has mixed signs. In addition, the uncertainty levels of estimated effects of generalized trust are considerably high. Finally, we cannot reject the null hypothesis that the coefficient of generalized trust is equal to zero jointly across the five categories of public goods provision, since the p-value is as high as 0.37. These results suggest that the level of generalized trust in a village does not influence quality of public goods provision.

In sum, these two major findings presented above directly contradict social capital thesis that only generalized trust is the necessary condition for better public goods provision. Our findings suggest that while particularized trust significantly, positively influences public goods provision, generalized trust does not.

Furthermore, as a control variable, the presence of lineage groups, with or without ancestral halls, has no substantial impact on village public goods provision. Not only the signs of estimated effects of the two kinds of lineage groups are mixed, but the estimated effects of two types of lineage groups are not statistically significant (with only one exception of lineages without ancestral halls on electricity coverage). Moreover, null joint hypotheses that the coefficients of the two kinds of lineage groups across five categories of public goods are zero cannot be rejected given their remarkable large p-values: 0.637 for lineages with ancestral halls and 0.332 for lineages without. These findings call into questions solidary group thesis that “the right kind of social groups” is the key determinant of public goods provision.<sup>68</sup> Instead, these findings reconfirm our

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<sup>68</sup> Tsai, “Solidary Group,” 370; Idem, *Accountability with Democracy*.

theoretical positions that rather than solidary group, it is the levels of particularized trust significantly correlated with public goods provision.

Third, the results from this SUR analysis show that the per capita income still has a significant, positive impact on public goods provision. The estimated effects of villagers' income and village-owned enterprises are positive in three categories of public goods provisions (i.e., irrigation, transportation, and electricity coverage for villagers' income, and irrigation, clinics and hospitals, and electricity coverage for village-owned enterprises), and statistically significant for investment in irrigation. For villagers, as North noted, economic development will inevitably increase their demands for better public goods provisions. For the VC, economic growth also means more resources available.<sup>69</sup>

Forth, contrary to many earlier studies, the results from this SUR analysis do not support that VC election can significantly improve public goods provision at local level. Not only the signs of estimated effects of VC election are largely negative, but most of the estimated effects of VC election are not statistically significant (with one exception of clinics and hospitals, but the sign is also negative). These findings suggest that in terms of public goods provision there is no significant differences between villages with or without VC election. Yet how can we explain the discrepancy between earlier studies on VC elections and the results in this study? I do not have a full answer to this question due the lack of empirical data our survey. Nonetheless, I believe there are at least two factors that have contributed to this discrepancy. In the first place, most of earlier studies are not based on nation-wide survey data. Our sample, on the other hand, is designed to

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<sup>69</sup> Douglas C. North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

be representative of all mainland China. As a consequence, our sample consists of more local variations of both independent variables and dependent variables. The differences between our findings and earlier studies could be derived partially from the underlying socioeconomic and socio-demographic differences between different samples.

Last but not least, the results in Table 3 confirm our expectation about the sheer regional differences in public goods provision. Specifically, east-coastal, south-coastal, and Yangzi-river China significantly outperformed the other regions, particularly with respect to the investment in roads and bridges. On the other hand, north-eastern, Yellow-river, and southern-western China invested considerably less in rural public goods, especially in the domain of irrigation and agriculture.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Do particularized trust and generalized trust affect public goods provision in rural China? If so, how? These are the two critical questions I have intended to answer in this chapter. So as to answer these questions, I have first examined two popular theses on the relationship between social trust and public goods provision at local level. After specifying their relative weaknesses, I have introduced a third approach to analyzing the relationship, and empirically examined it against the 2005 rural China survey. In this final section, I will revisit the major findings and explore their implications.

With respect to our first question of whether social trust affects rural public goods provision in China, the empirical findings presented in this chapter clearly demonstrate that the level of social trust in a villager does affect its provision of public goods and services. Moving to the second question, the analysis also pointed out that particularized

trust and generalized trust is variably associated with rural public goods provision in China. That is, villages with higher level particularized trust were more likely to have adequate public goods provisions, whereas villages' generalized trust could not exert substantial influence on the quality of public goods provision.

These findings have two important, general implications for the sociopolitical outcomes associated with social trust. First, in non-democratic settings, since ordinary people cannot rely on formal institutions to achieve better governance, dense trust relations seem to be the option they have. In other words, the role of social trust is of even great importance in non-democracies for well-being of ordinary people.

Second, the empirical findings also suggest that the roles of different types of social trust in local governance are far more complicated than we early thought. Specifically, strong in-group trust is not necessarily associated with hatreds or conflicts. With common interests at stake, particularized trust might be conducive to local governance by establishing effective informal monitoring and enforcement. By contrast, the role of generalized trust seems to be overstated, particularly with regard to local governance.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Social trust is of the utmost importance to virtually all aspects of society, ranging from economic development to political governance. Unfortunately, in contemporary political science, the studies of social trust are skewed towards the relationship between democracy and social trust. As a consequence, our knowledge of social trust in non-democracies is regrettably underdeveloped and simplistic.

By introducing a flexible relational conceptualization of social trust, I attempt to systematically and empirically explore the magnitude, the origins, and the impacts of social trust in non-democratic settings, using the data from the nation-wide 2005 China General Social Survey. Specifically, I try to answer the following four critical questions: (1) Whom do ordinary Chinese rural residents trust, and to what extent? (2) What is the relationship between the different forms of trust? (3) Who is most likely to trust their fellow villagers and strangers in contemporary rural China, and what are village contexts that correlate these two types of trust? (4) What are the impacts of the different types of social trust on rural public goods provision? Since the results presented in this dissertation are drawn from a representative national sample, it is reasonable to assume that these findings can be generalized to the entire Chinese rural population. Furthermore, these findings can also offer us a needed baseline against which findings from future studies in urban China or the other parts of the world can be compared.

In this concluding chapter, I will first summarize the empirical findings discussed in the previous chapters. Subsequently, key political and theoretical implications of the

findings will be addressed. Finally, I will briefly discuss the limitation of this study and possible directions for future studies.

## SUMMARY OF MAJOR EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

My exploration of social trust in rural China starts with the measurement issues. Owing to its inherent vagueness, the current “canonical question” of trust—i.e., “most people can be trusted”—appears to be problematic as a means of measuring one’s trust in different groups of people. In order to accurately gauge the stocks of social trust in contemporary rural China, I introduce a new set of trust measurements based on the relational categories of the trustees. By specifying such relational categories as relatives, neighbors/non-neighbors, and villagers with same surname/with different surnames, we can reliably determine whom ordinary Chinese rural residents generally trust and the extent of these different types of trust. On the basis of this set of measurements, I reach two important findings.

First, although earlier interpretative works have suggested six possible relational categories—i.e., relatives, neighbors, no-neighbors, villagers of the same surname, villagers of different surnames, and strangers—of social trust in rural China, the analysis has revealed that the *only* and *most* important qualitative difference was the one between particularized trust and generalized trust. Specifically, there was no substantial difference in the levels of trust with respect to the various members of the village community. However, there is clear line between people’s trust in strangers and other types of social trust. These findings confirm our expectation in Chapter I that particularized trust and generalized trust are the two most important components of social

trust. Moreover, it indicates that particularized trust in rural China is not as “particularistic” as many have proposed. In fact, particularized trust in rural China extends well beyond relatives or members of lineages, encompassing all the fellow villagers.

Second, as regards the stocks of the two types of social trust, the scores of particularized trust and generalized trust indexes suggest that our respondents in rural China tend to place great trust in people they personally know (well above the midpoint of the scale measuring), whereas their trust in strangers was very low. This finding can help us to disentangle the contradiction between China specialists and general comparativists on the magnitudes of social trust in China. One plausible explanation is that whereas Chinese specialists are talking about generalized trust, the general comparativists, using the problematic “most-people” question, are actually measuring particularized trust.

After examining the magnitudes of social trust, I explore, in Chapter III, the relationship between particularized trust and generalized trust. The results of bivariate analyses demonstrate that there is only moderate correlation between the two types of trust. In other words, in the minds of ordinary Chinese rural residents, trust in surrounding people and trust in strangers are not closely intertwined. In addition, the findings also indicate that in rural China intensive particularized trust is not a hindrance to the development of generalized trust. On the contrary, it seems that particularized trust might foster the creation of generalized trust, although this positive interconnection is not robust. Furthermore, this kind of weak but positive relationship between particularized

trust and generalized trust is prevalent across various socioeconomic categories and localities with different sociogeographic profiles.

To answer the question of who is most likely to trust, and what are the village contexts that correlate to the two types of trust, I have examined the roles of five categories of factors at both the individual level and the village level—sociodemographic attributes, subjective orientations, informal social interactions, sociogeographic attributes, and village heterogeneity— with respect to their effect on particularized trust and generalized trust. First, as for the impacts of these five categories of factors on particularized trust, the empirical findings suggest that, with the exception of village heterogeneity, all the categories robustly affect the extent of particularized trust. Specifically, in terms of the effects of sociodemographic attributes, I find that those who are older and unmarried are more likely to trust surrounding people. As for the impacts of subjective orientations, the findings suggest that those who are more satisfied with their lives, report a strong sense of income and opportunity equality, and express robust norms of civility had stronger bonds of particularized trust. With regard to the effects of informal social interaction, the data reveal that those who are more intimate with relatives, familiar with neighbors, and more active in informal cooperation are more likely to trust their fellow villagers. As for determinants at the village level, I have found that those who live in administrative villages with fewer natural villages were more likely to develop strong particularized trust.

Second, as for the effects of these five categories of factors on the extent of villagers' trust in strangers, the results suggest that individual subjective orientations and the village's sociogeographic attributes appeared to be important in predicting the



Chinese rural residents' levels of generalized trust. Specifically, the empirical evidence from this nation-wide survey shows that those who report strong norms of civility are less likely to trust strangers. As for the impacts of village contexts, I find that villagers who live in administrative villages with more natural villages are less likely to develop generalized trust. Overall, these findings suggest that generalized trust is more norms-driven; intensive informal social exchange among acquaintances might not necessarily hinder the development of generalized trust.

In order to explore the effects of social trust upon public goods provision in rural China, I have investigated the differing impacts of particularized trust and generalized trust on five kinds of the most common and important public goods: (1) irrigation, (2) roads and bridge, (3) schools, (4) clinics and hospitals, and (5) electricity coverage. The empirical findings suggest that villages with higher levels of average particularized trust are more likely to have higher levels of expense on irrigation systems, more clinics and hospitals, and higher rates of electricity coverage; the average level of generalized trust was not significantly correlated with any of the above-mentioned five public goods. In other words, in villages where residents trust each other more, there is a higher level of public goods provision, whereas villager's trust in strangers does not affect to the extent of the public goods provision.

In summary, the empirical findings from this dissertation have presented us a multifaceted image of social trust in contemporary rural China. What does this multifaceted picture imply for rural governance in China as well as for China's state-society relationship in general? Moreover, what do the findings in this dissertation imply

for comparative studies of social trust? In the following part of this chapter, I will address these two important questions.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR RURAL GOVERNANCE AND STATE-SOCIETY RELATIONSHIP IN CHINA

The empirical findings presented in this dissertation have important implications with respect to the achievement of better local governance in China. Although most scholars have postulated that it is hard for communities to maintain good governance without a large reservoir of generalized trust, the results from this dissertation suggest that it is strong particularized trust among villagers that leads to better public goods provision in contemporary rural China. This provides us with a mixed picture of the state-society relationship in China, as well as CCP's rule in the long run. On the one hand, the current Party-state can draw substantial legitimacy from good rural governance supported by strong norms of particularized trust. On the other hand, intense particularized trust among villagers may also undermine the Party-state's capabilities regarding the extraction of resources and the implementation of unpopular public policies in rural China.

### *A. Particularized Trust Rural Governance*

This study suggests the prevalent concepts of the "good" generalized trust and "bad" particularized trust tend to be stylized and simplistic. The analysis shows that the relationship between particularized trust and rural governance is very complex, and that it cannot be qualified with a simple term, such as "negative." Specifically, the empirical

findings in this research imply that particularized trust can also bring about such desirable sociopolitical outcomes as better local governance. First, it is evident that the strong norms of particularized trust can effectively cultivate solidarity not only among ordinary rural residents, but also between villagers and local public officials. Intense particularized trust, in general, appears to be accompanied by effective peer monitoring and informal sanctions or punishment. Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that particularized trust is more effective in structuring individuals' behaviors than generalized trust. When motivated by common interests like public goods provision, people of strong particularized trust are more likely to engage in long-term informal cooperation.

Second, the data from this nation-wide survey reveal that particularized trust appears to be even more important than formal institutions as a determinant of public goods provision in contemporary rural China. As documented in Chapter V, particularized trust is strongly and positively correlated with rural public goods provision, whereas the introduction of village committee (VC) elections had virtually no impact. These findings imply that in countries like China, where formal democratic institutions are ineffective or simply nonexistent, particularized trust, by enabling informal monitoring and sanctions, tends to be the only available option for ordinary citizens to achieve such desirable sociopolitical outcomes as public goods provision.

Third, our finding on the positive relationship between particularized trust and public goods provision also implies that the popular perception that particularized trust breeds inter-group hostility and conflict is overstated. Specifically, there is no simple linear positive correlation between the two. On the contrary strong norms of

particularized trust may help to effectively reduce inter-group conflicts. As James Fearon and David Laitin point out, owing to the costs of conflicts and the benefits of cooperation, “decentralized, nonstate institutional mechanisms [backed by strong particularized trust] may often arise to mitigate problems of opportunism in interactions between individuals from different ethnic groups.”<sup>1</sup>

### *B. Particularized Trust and State-Society Relationship in China*

The predominant role played by particularized trust in public goods provision as well as in the structuring of ordinary rural residents’ behaviors implies a changed state-society relationship in China, which in turn has important implications with respect to the strength and weakness of CCP rule.

Our findings on the critical role of particularized trust in public goods provision implies that in contemporary China ordinary villagers rely not on the state, but on their fellow villagers to achieve certain desirable sociopolitical outcomes. In other words, with considerable room to undertake their own initiatives, ordinary Chinese villagers are more autonomous in taking various socioeconomic actions and organizing socially as they see fit. Taking one step further, it is reasonable to infer that given their strong bonds of

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<sup>1</sup> James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Explaining Interethnic Cooperation,” *The American Political Science Review* 90, no. 4 (1996), 715; Robert H. Bates, “Capital, Kinship, and Conflict: The Structuring Influence of Capital in Kinship Societies,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 24, no. 2 (1990). In addition, Avner Greif also finds that in medieval Italy, clan groups based strong particularized trust could engage in intensive cooperation with each other, which in turn led to the very institutional success in cities like Genoa, see Avner Greif, “Political Organizations, Social Structure, and Institutional Success: Reflection from Genoa and Venice During the Commercial Revolution,” *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 151, no. 4 (1995); Idem, *Institutions and the Path to the Modern Economy: Lessons from Medieval Trade* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

particularized trust, and of course trust-based networks,<sup>2</sup> ordinary Chinese villagers have become more empowered and autonomous, particularly compared to the period of Mao's rule, when the ordinary Chinese rural residents were atomized.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, the abolishment of the commune system and the introduction of the household responsibility system in the era of post-Mao reform significantly reduced the state's direct control over individuals' lives, especially with regard to the rural residents. The rural family began to reassert itself as the fundamental unit of economic production. Economically empowered rural residents also tried to rebuild trust networks such as kinship groups and religious sects in order to safeguard their economic gains against such predatory practices of the state as excessive taxes and fees.<sup>4</sup> Although there are no baseline statistics from late 1970s to testify the rapid growth of trust networks, anecdotal research does confirm such a trend. For instance, Vivien Shue observed only sporadic trust-based informal groups were created "to fill the need for new forms of local protection [against the state]" in the 1980s,<sup>5</sup> whereas two decades later a variety of trust-based networks routinely interfere with the operation of local government.<sup>6</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>2</sup> Concerning trust networks, I prefer the definition offered by Charles Tilly: "Trust networks, to put it more formally, contain *ramified interpersonal connections, consisting mainly of strong ties, within which people set valued, consequential, long-term resources and enterprises at risk to the malfeasance, mistakes, or failure of others.*" See, Charles Tilly, *Democracy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 81; Idem, *Trust and Rule* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Vivien Shue, *Reach of the State: Sketches of the Chinese Body Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); Idem, "State Power and Social Organization in China," in *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World*, ed. Joel S. Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivien Shue (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Thomas B. Gold, "The Resurgence of Civil Society in China," *Journal of Democracy* 1, no. 1 (1990).

<sup>4</sup> For example, see Shue, *Reach of the State*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Ben Hillman, "The Rise of the Community in Rural China: Village Politics, Cultural Identity and Religious Revival in a Hui Hamlet," *The China Journal* 51, no. Jan. (2004); Isabelle Thireau and Linsha Hua, "Power Beyond Instituted Power: Forms of Mediated Spaces in the Chinese Countryside," in *Politics in China: Moving Frontiers*, ed. Françoise Mengin and Jean-Louis Rocca (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Lily L. Tsai, *Accountability without Democracy: Solidary Groups and Public Goods Provision in Rural China* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

we can construct a somewhat speculative picture of the state-society relationship in rural China: The balance between the two has been increasingly tilted toward the society.

This changed state-society relationship in rural China represents a mixed message with respect to CCP rule in the long run. On the one hand, the party-state may still enjoy the political legitimacy derived from improved rural governance at least in the short run. As discussed in Chapter V, strong norms of particularized trust can improve the overall performance of rural governance. As long as basic public goods and services are properly provided, Chinese residents will not be strongly motivated to challenge the authorities, and will therefore acquiesce to Party rule.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand, with increased local autonomy buttressed by high levels of particularized trust circulating among villagers and local officials, the CCP's control and penetration of rural China will be significantly undermined, making implementation of unpopular state policies like the one-child policy increasingly difficult. Local officials, embedded in close-knit trust networks, may not act in accordance with party decrees but in accordance with the local interests. As Thomas Gold once observed, "[The CCP] actually comprises people from a wide variety of backgrounds. ... Most of them, moreover, do not work in party organizations, but in social units. In some cases their views may reflect the interests of their social unit, and they may resist policies that seem

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<sup>7</sup> For a general discussion on mass support under one-party, see Beatriz Magaloni and Ruth Kricheli, "Political Order and One-Party Rule," *Annual Review of Political Science* 13, no. (2010), 128-30. For mass support in China, see, for example, Jie Chen, *Popular Political Support in Urban China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Idem, "Popular Support for Village Self-Government in China: Intensity and Sources," *Asian Survey* 45, no. 6 (2005); Jie Chen and others, "Assessing Political Support in China: Citizens' Evaluations of Governmental Effectiveness and Legitimacy," *Journal of Contemporary China* 6, no. 16 (1997); Jie Chen, Yang Zhong, and Jan William Hillard, "The Level and Sources of Popular Support for China's Current Political Regime," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 30, no. 1 (1997).

to threaten it.”<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, recent studies reveal that trust-based networks serve as an important vehicle for the mobilization of villagers to challenge the unpopular policies of the upper-level governments.<sup>9</sup> As noted by Carsten Vala and Kevin O’Brien, in contemporary rural China, social bonds and feelings of trust “are a crucial ‘pull factor’ that connect recruits with a chance to participate [in public protests].”<sup>10</sup>

As demonstrated above, an examination of social trust in rural China leaves us the realization that the relationship between social trust and rural governance is far more complex than political scientists had postulated, and this examination has led us to reflect more deeply on the changing state-society relationship in rural China. This examination also returns us to a reconsideration of the contemporary studies of social trust.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF SOCIAL TRUST

Besides examining our empirical concerns about social trust in rural China, this dissertation sheds light on an important goal: the improved understanding of social trust in non-democracies. In this final section, I will discuss this dissertation’s implications for comparative studies of social trust, particularly as found in non-democracies.

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<sup>8</sup> See, Gold, “The Resurgence of Civil Society in China,” 20. For more discussions on the rise of localism in China, see, for example, Ignatius Wibowo, “Rural Party Rectification in China in the 1990s: Rectification or Reification?,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 7, no. 19 (1998); David Zweig, *Freeing China’s Farmers: Rural Restructuring in the Reform Era* (Armonk N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Kevin J. O’Brien, “Rightful Resistance,” *World Politics* 49, no. 1 (1996); Kevin J. O’Brien and Lianjiang Li, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Sidney Tarrow, “Prologue: The New Contentious Politics in China: Poor and Blank or Rich and Complex?,” ed. Kevin J. O’Brien (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> See, Carsten T. Vala and Kevin J. O’Brien, “Recruitment to Protestant House Churches,” in *Popular Protest in China*, ed. Kevin J. O’Brien (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 108.

### *A. A More Flexible Approach*

As discussed at the very beginning of this dissertation, the democratic theory of social trust, with its focus on civic participation and association, consensual politics, and political trust, is quite helpful in explaining the roles of social trust in democratic settings. However, when we turn to non-democracies, this democratic theory appears to be stylized and simplistic. Indeed, in non-democratic settings, the role of social trust and its relationship to various socioeconomic and sociopolitical outcomes are far more dynamic and complex than democratic theory has suggested, which forces us to find a new framework for our investigations.

In this dissertation, I have proposed a more flexible relational framework, allowing us to incorporate insights from middle-range theories and other disciplines. By emphasizing the relational nature of social trust, I have been able to bridge the divide between culture-driven trust and rationality-driven trust, as well as the one between individual trust and collective trust. Moreover, guided by this framework, I have been able to incorporate and empirically test various middle-range theories about the relationship between different types of trust, the sources of social trust, and the consequences of social trust.

Although far from being highly integrative, the relational approach proposed in this dissertation provides a useful framework for the empirical and systematic examination of various aspects of social trust. Like many other concepts in political science, social trust is an “essentially contested concept,”<sup>11</sup> “whose utility to social science,” as noted by Michael Woolcock, “rests less on its capacity to forge an inherently

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<sup>11</sup> See, G. W. B. Gallie, “Essentially Contested Concepts,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56, no. (1955).



elusive scholarly or policy consensus on complex issues than its capacity to facilitate constructive dialogue about agreements and disagreements between groups who would otherwise rarely (if ever) interact.”<sup>12</sup>

### *B. Social Trust: Conceptualization and Measurement*

Although the recent surge of inquiry into social trust has generated many theoretical, empirical, and experimental findings, social trust remains as one of the most controversial and confused concept in political science and social science at large. Scholars of social trust still cannot agree upon either what the term “social trust” designates, or the proper categorization of different types of social trust. This chaotic conceptualization and categorization of social trust severely thwarts the development of studies in social trust. After reviewing empirical and experimental studies in social trust, Russell Hardin concludes that,

there is relatively little to learn about trust from these two massive research programs. Without retuning their protocols to address standard conceptions of trust, they cannot contribute much to understanding trust as we generally know it, and they cannot play a very constructive role in explaining social behavior, institutions, or social and political change.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, without a stable definition of social trust and a shared understanding of categories, empirical and experimental studies can only lead to inconsistent and even contradictory findings.

This study, by proposing a relational understanding of social trust, presents a possible solution. This relational approach argues that trust is deeply embedded in ongoing social relations, and that we can define and distinguish different types of social

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<sup>12</sup> Michael Woolcock, “The Rise and Routinization of Social Capital, 1988-2008,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 13, no. (2010), 470.

<sup>13</sup> See, Russell Hardin, *Trust* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2006), 74.

trust by specifying the relational categories of the trustees. As demonstrated in Chapter II, this relational approach is theoretically attractive, and it can also help us to increase the validity of the measurements of social trust.

Moreover, the relation-based measurements of social trust adopted in this study have important implications for cross-national empirical studies of social trust. Most of this kind of studies nowadays rely on a simple and vague trust measurement—i.e., “Do you think most people can be trusted.” Owing to the inherent vagueness of this measurement, people of different cultural backgrounds may interpret this in extremely different ways, and hence their answers are hardly comparable. It seems to be extremely hard, if not impossible, to accurately estimate the magnitude, the origins, and the consequences of social trust using data collected on the basis of this question. Given this, it is not surprising that many empirical findings based on this question are inconsistent and even contradictory.<sup>14</sup> The relation-based measurements proposed herein can easily avoid this problem, and therefore should be the preferred choice in the future empirical studies, particularly cross-national studies, of social trust.

## FUTURE STUDIES

Before concluding this study, I would like to briefly discuss topics concerning social trust in non-democratic countries that future researchers might explore.

First, future studies might be devoted to the ways in which trust networks might affect various socioeconomic and sociopolitical outcomes. As established in this dissertation, trust is relational concept, deeply embedded in various trust networks.

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<sup>14</sup> Peter Nannestad, “What Have We Learned About Generalized Trust, If Anything?,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 11, no. (2008), 431.

Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the way in which people are connected (i.e., trust networks) can, along with people's subjective trust, strongly influence individuals' economic and political behaviors.<sup>15</sup> However, empirical studies on trust networks are scarce. Admittedly, compared to subjective trust, it is much more difficult to operationalize and analyze trust networks. The question that future studies would be asking is, how can we empirically explore the roles of trust networks in determining people's economic and political activities?

Second, further studies are needed in order to explore the roles of social trust in more "contentious" politics in non-democracies. As the empirical analysis of this study implies, social trust might help ordinary Chinese villagers to overcome collective action problem associated with public goods provision. To take this one step further, future researchers of social trust in non-democratic countries might ask: Can social trust help to solve collective action problems other than public goods provision, such as public protests? The future studies on this question will not only advance our understanding of the nature of social trust, but also help us understand the roles of social trust in the process of democratization.

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<sup>15</sup> For a recent discussion on the studies of trust networks, see David A. Siegel, "Social Networks and Collective Action," *American Journal of Political Science* 53, no. 1 (2009).

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