

Democratic Governance, Government Performance, and Trust in Government:
China and South Korea

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Abstract

This study analyzes how citizens' satisfaction with democratic governance values and perceived government performance affect public trust in government in China and South Korea. Another contribution of this study to the field of public administration is to test the impact of empowered citizens, trust in people, social networks, and individual demographic variables on trust in government. This study finds that the level of satisfaction with democratic governance values and the government's performance in dealing with political corruption, the economy, and human rights are all significantly associated with trust in government in China. Government performance when dealing with political corruption and the economy is significantly associated with trust in government in South Korea as well. Citizens' commitment to participate in elections is positively associated with trust in government in South Korea. Government officials' attention to citizen input is significantly associated with trust in local government in both countries. Trust in people in general was significantly associated with trust in government in China only. Interestingly, citizens' external social networks in other countries were negatively associated with trust in central government in China.

Introduction

Scholars have been concerned about declining public trust in government in Europe and North America (Crozier et al., 1975; Hetherington, 1999; Norris 1999; Ruscio, 1996; Thomas, 1998). But why does trust in government matter in public administration?¹ Newton and Norris (2000) note that the level of trust in government can be viewed as the central indicator of the public's underlying feeling about its policies. Some scholars suggest that trust in government represents an evaluation of the government performance, indicating whether performance accords with normative expectations held by the public (Miller and Listhaug, 1990; Levi and Stoker 2000). Public trust in government also enhances the legitimacy and the effectiveness of democratic government (Braithwaite and Levi, 1998; and Hetherington, 1998). Furthermore, scholars address that trust in government encourages compliance with laws and regulations (Ayres and Braithwaite, 1992; Levi, 1997, and Tyler, 1998). Several studies found that declining trust in government is linked to declining political participation through voting (Craig 1996; Hetherington, 1999; Norris 1999).

The causes and effects of decreased trust in government are complex. Several scholars in developed countries emphasize the impact of citizen perceptions of the economic and political performance on trust in government (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, 2001, 2002; Mishler & Rose, 2001; Donovan and Bowler 2004; Orren 1997). Institutional context or culture and citizen-state relationships may also be important factors determining the level of trust in government

¹ Trust at individual level is defined as “to have confidence in somebody; to believe that somebody is good, sincere, and honest; and to believe that something is true or correct or that you can rely on it” (Oxford University, 2005, 1645). McAllister (1995, 25) also defines interpersonal trust as “the extent to which a person is confident in, and willing to act on the basis of, the words, actions, and decisions of another”.

(Bouckaert, Van de Walle, and Kampen, 2005; Christensen and Lægheid, 2005). Because of the complexity, Christensen and Lægheid (2005) emphasize the need for a more comparative approach among different countries to understand the variations in trust in government.

While there is a growing body of literature on trust in public institutions and democratic governance, limited attention has been paid to international comparative studies on the impact of democratic governance values and government performance on trust in government in Asia. In addition, limited research has been conducted how citizen empowerment and trust in people affect trust in government in Asian countries. Public administration in Asia faces continuous challenges of government reforms to respond to the demands of decentralization, economic development, globalization, and citizen participation for strengthening democratic and transparent governance (Cheung and Scott, 2003; Cheung, 2005). These challenges demand more effective governance that enables successful public policy implementation through building networks among national and local governments, corporations, non-governmental organizations, and citizens. In order to resolve the challenges of public policy and governance, government needs close collaboration with citizens and the private sector. It is, therefore, increasingly important to research citizens' trust in government and to understand how citizen expectations change and how government responds to them.

The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationship between perceived government performance and public trust in government in China and South Korea. The study also analyzes how citizen satisfaction with democratic governance values, including freedom of association, freedom of speech, the right to be informed about government, and the right to criticize the government, affect trust in government in China and South Korea. Another contribution of this

study to the field of public administration and governance is to test the impact of citizen empowerment on trust in government. Finally, the paper explores how trust in other people, external social networks, and several individual demographic factors affect trust in government.

The analysis is based on the Asia Barometer Survey of 2003 collected in urban cities in China and South Korea. China and South Korea have a long history of a hierarchical administration structure regarding control and power in central-local relations. In recent years, however, decentralization has become inevitable in the Asian regions (Aziz and Arnold, 1996; United Nations Governance Centre [UNGC], 2006). Given the increased role of local government in China and South Korea, it is important examining factors affecting trust in local government as well as central government. The main research questions covered in this study are as follows:

- What is the relation between citizen satisfaction with democratic governance values and trust in government?
- How does perceived government performance on specific public policy affect trust in government?
- How does citizen empowerment affect trust in government?
- What is the relation between trust in people and trust in government?
- What is the relation between citizens' external social networks in other countries and trust in government?
- What are the demographic characteristics that affect trust in government?
- Are there any similarities and differences in factors affecting trust in government between China and South Korea?

Trust in Government: China and South Korea

Scholars and practitioners agree that citizens expect an increased role for government and higher levels of service delivery within the context of globalization, economic development, decentralization, information technology, and the empowering of civil society in Asia (United Nations Governance Centre [UNGC], 2006). According to a recent report by the UNGC (2006),

the strategy for building government capacity to respond to the demands of economic development and democratic governance should be carefully coordinated to fit into the existing socio-economic, cultural, and historical conditions within the country.

Understanding the factors affecting trust in government could contribute to maintaining trust in government in some countries and to restoring trust in government in others. For example, a survey conducted by the Edelman Trust Barometer in 2006 shows that the Chinese government remains highly trusted and is the most trusted of those surveyed; whereas, the South Korean government became less trusted and is least trusted in Northeast Asia (Edelman, 2007). The survey also found that across the globe trust in business is higher than in government or media (Edelman, 2007).

China: Studies report high levels of trust in government and other political institutions in China (Nathan, 2003; Wang, 2005). According to a survey conducted on a national representative sample of China in 1993 (Nathan, 2003), high proportions of citizens agree or strongly agree with statements such as “You can generally trust the people who run our government to do what is right”; “You can generally trust decisions made by the central government”; or “The government can be trusted to do what is right without our having to constantly check on them”. In a more recent survey, which was conducted in rural China between 1999-2001, 81 percent of the respondents expressed “relatively high” or “very high” levels of trust in the central government (Li, 2004). In addition, according to the World Values Surveys, conducted in China 2001 on a national representative sample of 1,500 adults, political trust in China was very high: 97 percent of the respondents said they had “A great deal of confidence” or “Quite a lot of confidence” in the national government, while 95 percent said this about the parliament (National People’s Congress),

and 92 percent said this about the Communist Party. The Chinese public shows one of the highest levels of confidence among the 27 countries examined in the World Values Surveys (Wang, 2005).

Although the Governance Assessment by the World Bank (2007) shows low scores in China, including voice and accountability, political stability, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption, the official discourse always maintains that the Chinese people are building a democratic society through continuous political reform. Such reforms aim at the expansion of political participation of the people and the improvement of the government's ability to provide good governance for the people (Wang, 2005; World Bank, 2006). Since the economic reform movement began in 1978, the Chinese government and society have undergone continuous changes in terms of economic development, regulation policy, social development, privatization, civil service reform, and decentralization (Burns, 2003; Wang, 2006; Kim, 2002). Furthermore, Chinese economic institutional reforms have brought significant problems of corruption in various fields, including financial industries, building industries, state-owned enterprises, cadre personnel, and law enforcements (Transparency International [TI], 2006a). A report on National Integrity System in China notes that there are more than 60,000 cases of corruption placed on file for investigation every year in China (TI, 2006a)

China has been more open to the global community since the country joined in World Trade Organization in 2001, and the country is enjoys the fastest rate of growth in the world today. Through decentralization reforms, some local governments have been empowered to open to the outside world to attract Foreign Direct Investments, and regional coalitions have been promoted in the area of Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Macao, and Hong Kong SAR to coordinate regional economic development. In terms of political reforms, in 1982 the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress recognized the grassroots self-government organizations in the rural areas and

allowed direct elections for neighborhood committees in the towns and villagers (Qu Tao, 1997). According to White (1993), through continuous economic and political reforms, China made a transition from a centralized economic plan and political structure toward to more decentralized economic plan under market-based mechanisms. White (1993, 198) also notes that “In mainland China, economic reform led to a redistribution of economic power between the state and individuals”.

South Korea: A recent study on social capital and the public trust in social and political institutions in South Korea (Korea Development Institute [KDI], 2006) indicated that the public trusted Congress the least, followed by political party, central government, and local government. Several international and national surveys data from 1981 to 2001 also document decreased trust in government in South Korea (KDI, 2006). Furthermore, the number of voters who participated in presidential, parliamentary, and local elections has gradually decreased (Kim, 2005).

While the South Korean government has made a great deal of progress on government effectiveness through reforms and innovations (World Bank, 2006), South Korea faces the ongoing challenges of decentralization and of improving transparency. One of many benefits resulting from the development of a democratic political system in South Korea is the reinstitution of local governments to expand local autonomy and democratic structures. In 1988, the National Assembly broke with the political tradition of centralized authority by passing the South Korean Self-Governance Act, which encouraged local governance and decentralization (Kim, 2002; Lee, 2002). Elections for local legislative council seats began in 1991; elections for city mayors and provincial governors began in 1995. Prior to 1995, mayors, provincial governors, and other local officials were all appointed by the central government, as were top-level bureaucrats. Under this system, local administrators consistently failed to act in the best interest of local residents.

Accordingly, the Self-Governance statute established in South Korea has provided a challenging opportunity for building local governance while promoting responsiveness, transparency, and accountability to local residents (Kim, 2002). On the other hand, there are increased numbers of non-government organizations over the past decade (Kim, 2005). In 2005, South Korea has more than 20,000 non-government organizations (Transparency International [TI], 2006b).

According to the Corruption Perceptions Index based on surveys conducted in 2006 (Transparency International, 2007), however, South Korea was ranked at 42 among 133 countries. How effectively central and local governments in South Korea deal with corruption could be a critical factor that affects not only their efforts to build democratic governance but also to restore the public's trust in government.

Global Competitiveness: According to a recent report on the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI) in 2006 and 2005 comparisons (World Economic Forum [WEF], 2006), the Competitiveness rankings have fallen in China, from 48 to 54, and in South Korea, from 19 to 24, among 125 countries participated in the study. The report analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of the GCI scores in both countries. South Korea shows a number of weaknesses in the area of institution, both public and private institutions, including transparency and openness, the impartiality of public sector officials in their dealings with the business community and levels of corruption (WEF, 2006). While China shows very high GDP growth rates and large volumes of Foreign Direct Investment in recent years, the report addresses the weaknesses of the quality of the institutional environment of both public and private institutions in China (WEF, 2006). For example, the weaknesses are analyzed in the areas of auditing and accounting standards, government regulation, the protection of property rights, growing income disparities, and the independence of the judiciary.

While China and South Korea have different contexts, including political systems, economic development, democratization, geography, population, history and culture, several challenges are shared by both countries: a long history of centralized government, transitioning local government systems, democratic civil society, building government capacity, control of corruption, and decreased Global Competitiveness Indicators (World Economic Forum, 2006).

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Democratic Governance Values

Since the 1990s, developing and developed countries have emphasized building democratic governance at the national and local levels to connect government reforms and economic growth to social development and civil society (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2006). The process of building democratic governance emphasizes the values of the rule of law, decentralization, accountability, transparency, integrity, and citizen participation. Many developing countries face not only the challenges of economic development and government capacity building, but also must deal with building the relationship between state and civil society (UNDP, 2006). Particularly, both national and local governments in developing countries also struggle with redefining the structure of decentralization in terms of political power, authority, resources, and service integration. Although democratic governance and its values have been discussed in many studies, there are few empirical studies on the relationship between satisfaction with democratic governance values and trust in government in Asia.

Espinal, et al. (2006) note that there is not a clear relationship between democratic values and trust in democratic political institutions. Focused on industrialized democracies, scholars also find that those with the greatest commitment to democratic values have been least trusting of

political institutions (Dalton, 2000; Inglehart, 1999). Warren (1999) argues that democratic systems institutionalize distrust or skepticism by providing many opportunities for citizens to monitor the activities of people and institutions they supposedly trust. In addition, Van de Walle (2004) notes that the conditions needed for creating trust are not necessary to the same as those required for good governance. Trust covers general and systemic factors, such as the legitimacy accorded to the political-administrative system, but also more specific experiences with the government and its services and the dynamic interaction between the two (Bouckaert and Van de Walle (2001). Norris (1999a) and Klingemann (1999) consider satisfaction with democracy as an indicator of citizens' evaluation of regime performance, which may or may not be interpreted as satisfaction with the incumbent government. Christensen and Læg Reid (2005) find the positive relationship between citizens' satisfaction with the way democracy functions in Norway and their trust in public institutions and public administration overall. However, the research on the relationship between satisfaction with democratic governance values and trust in government is limited, and the relationship could vary by country.

What is the relation between citizen satisfaction with democratic governance values and trust in central and local governments? Are there any similarities and differences in the relation between China and South Korea? The democratic governance values included in the study are the right to vote, the right to participate in any kind of organization, the right to gather and demonstrate, the right to be informed about the work and functions of government, freedom of speech, and the right to criticize the government. This study explores the relationship between satisfaction with democratic governance values and trust in central and local government.

H1: The degree of satisfaction with democratic governance is positively associated with the public's trust in both central (1a) and local (1b) governments.

Government Performance

Several studies suggest that citizens' evaluation of government performance is highly associated with trust in government (March, 1988; North, 1990; Mishler and Rose, 2001; Lawrence, 1997; Newton, 1999; Orren, 1997). For example, Orren (1997) indicates that distrust is a result of a gap between expected performance and actual performance. Many of the performance indicators used in studies on trust measure perceptions of performance (Van de Walle, 2004) rather than performance output or outcome measurement. Studies find that the political performance of governments on issues such as security and policy responsiveness are associated with enhanced trust (Lipset & Schneider, 1987; Mishler & Rose, 1997, 2001; Turner & Martz, 1997). Miller and Listhaug (1999) argue that the evaluations of political performance are as important as those of economic performance. Political corruption is another factor affecting the degree of public trust in government (Miller and Listhaug, 1999; Otake, 2000; Pharr, 2000). O'Connell, et al. (1986) emphasize that the public's doubts about the integrity, ethics, and effectiveness of government officials begin with distrust of government.

This study analyzes how perceived central government performance on several public policy issues is related to trust in central and local governments in China and South Korea. The level of perceived central government performance may affect public trust in local governments, especially in the nations with a long history of hierarchical relationships between central and local government (e.g., China and South Korea).

H2: The level of perceived central government performance is positively associated with trust in central government (2a) and local government (2b).

Empowered Citizen

Two aspects of empowered citizens are included in the study: citizen commitment to voting and opportunities for citizen input. One of the most important rights citizens have is the right to vote. Voting is the basis of a representative democracy. By voting, citizens have a voice in government by selecting government officials who will represent them in the government. Citizens who are engaged in the political system generally have a higher level of trust in most governmental institutions than people who are less engaged (Christensen and Lægreid, 2005). How does the level of citizen commitment to the right to vote affect trust in government? Individual citizens' norms and the value placed on the citizens' right to vote may affect public trust in government. The study explores the following question:

Q1: How does citizens' commitment to voting in elections affect trust in central (1a) and local (1b) governments?

Another interest of this study is to explore the relationship between the degree of government officials' attention to citizen input and citizens' trust in government. Two forms of trust have been defined by McAllister (1995): cognition-based trust and affect-based trust. While the cognition-based trust draws on beliefs about another's abilities, the affect-based trust is founded on social-psychological bonds between parties. According to these definitions, the sense of respect a citizen feels through government officials' attention to their input may increase their affect-based trust in government. For example, scholars emphasize that citizen participation in government performance evaluation is an important strategy for improving trust in government (Yang & Holzer 2006; Wang 2001). Based on a survey of chief administrative officers in U.S. cities with populations greater than 50,000, Wang (2001) finds that public managers perceive positive impacts of citizen participation on public trust in administration in terms of administrative competency,

honesty, and fairness. Another study by Ho and Coates (2004) demonstrates that initiatives promoting citizen-driven performance measurement improve trust in government. The following hypothesis will be tested in the study:

H3: The degree of government officials' attention to citizen input is positively associated with the public's trust in central (3a) and local (3b) governments.

Trust in People

How does the degree of trust in people in general affect the level of trust in government? Scholars emphasize the impact of cultural norms and interpersonal trust on institutional trust (Mishler & Rose, 2001). From a cultural perspective, institutional trust is an extension of interpersonal trust, learned early in life and, much later, projected onto political institutions, thereby conditioning institutional performance capabilities (Inglehart, 1997; Jackman & Miller, 1996; Levi, 1996). This study explores the relationship between the level of trust in people and trust in government. It attempts to determine whether there is a difference in this regard between China and South Korea.

H4: The degree of trust in people is positively associated with trust in central (4a) and local governments (4b).

External Social Networks

While this study proposes a positive relation between trust in others and trust in government, social networks could also affect trust in public institutions. Based on "social network" concept began in sociology in the 1960's, Granovetter (1973) proposed that the network of "weak ties" is the key to the spread of social change. The social network theory indicates that a

weak tie, as a connection between groups that don't ordinarily interact, plays an important role in getting valuable information (Granovetter, 1973). Weak ties could be the most effective people through which to access new ideas and contacts. According to Granovetter (1973), weak ties with low redundant information could facilitate innovation and creative ideas. Meanwhile, the social network theory notes strong ties as people we know very well. Strong ties share similar ideas formed from a similar set of values and experiences.

It is reasonable to assume that citizens with external networks (or weak ties) in other countries may have new information about political systems, government functions, civil society, and citizenship in different countries. Citizens' external social networks in other countries may affect trust in government. Specially, in an authoritarian political system with limited media freedom, the external networks may influence on citizens' perspectives on government and democracy. The level of the external social networks of citizens is measured in terms of communicating with people in other countries via the Internet and e-mail. This paper explores the following question:

Q2: What is the relation between citizens' external social networks in other countries and trust in government?

Demographic Factors

Several studies find that the impacts of demographic variables on trust in institutions are weak or nonexistent (Citrin & Muste, 1999; Mishler & Rose, 1999, 2001; Turner & Martz, 1997). While one study shows that women support public institutions more than men do (Lægreid, 1993), another finds that older people generally have more trust in governmental institutions than younger people in Norway (Christensen and Lægreid, 2005). Information regarding the impact of

demographic factors on trust in government can be used to analyze long-term trends in confidence (Christensen and Lægheid, 2005). For example, Bouckaert and Van de Walle (2001) note that the higher a person's level of education is, the more he or she will trust the government. It means that educated people have more knowledge on the complexity of the politics and public administration, which facilitates their trust in government institutions (Christensen and Lægheid, 2005). Citizens also get information about politics and government from media and the Internet.

This study further explores how the level of education, frequency of purchasing news papers, and getting information of politics and economy from the Internet affect trust in government. Two other demographic factors included in the study are gender and age. As the numbers of female workforce have been increased in both private and public organizations in Asia, it is worthy to analyze how gender affects trust in government. As there is continuous change in economic growth and social development, different generations may have different level of trust in government.

Research Methods

Data Collection

This study based on the Asia Barometer Survey 2003 (Inoguchi, Basanez, Tanaka and Dadabaev, 2005) collected in China and South Korea. The survey targeted all adults aged 20-59 in several metropolitan cities in each country. The completed sample size is 800 for each country, and a multi-stage-stratified random sampling method was applied. The survey was conducted in face-to-face interviews from June to September 2003. The Chinese Academy of Social Science Research Center conducted the survey in China, and the field work was conducted from June 2 to June 21, 2003. Sampling methodology was as follows: 1) 100 samples are respectively allocated

to 8 metropolises: Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chongqing, Xian, Nanjing, Dalian and Tsingtao; 2) 10 survey points are randomly chosen from census enumeration districts in each city through probability proportional to size sampling; 3) 10 individuals are systematically chosen at equal intervals (interval=5) from the resident registration ledger at each survey point (Inoguchi, Basanez, Tanaka and Dadabaev, 2005).

In Korea, fieldwork was undertaken by Company Taylor Nelson Sofres Korea from June 3 to June 21, 2003. Sampling methodology was as follows: 1) based on the population determined by the latest census, 800 samples were allocated to seven metropolitan cities and five provinces—that is, Seoul, Busan, Daegu, Incheon, Daejeon, Kwangju, Ulsan, Kyonggi, Kwanwon, Choongchung, Junra, and Kyongsang; 2) from each metropolitan city or province, two to four municipalities were selected randomly as primary sampling units based on the population of the metropolitan city or province; 3) the sampling size was allocated to the primary sampling units in proportion to the population; 4) households were selected systematically from randomly chosen sampling points within the municipalities; and 5) individuals were extracted from each household with the Kish method, taking sex and age into consideration (Inoguchi, Basanez, Tanaka and Dadabaev, 2005).

Measurements

The dependent variable of trust in government is measured by the following question: “Please indicate to what extent you trust the following institutions (the central government, the local government) to operate in the best interests of society on a scale from 1(trust a lot) to 4 (don’t trust at all)”. Citizen satisfaction with democratic governance values are measured by the following items on scale from 1(very satisfied) to 4 (very dissatisfied): “How satisfied are you with the current scope of the following rights in [China, South Korea]”: the right to vote, the right to participate in any kind of organization, the right to gather and demonstrate, the right to be

informed about the work and functions of government, freedom of speech, and the right to criticize the government. The Cronbach's alpha for these items was 0.85 (China) and 0.69 (South Korea). Regarding government performance, the respondents were asked to rate how well the central government is dealing with the following issues on scale from 1 (very well) to 4 (not well at all): the economy, political corruption, human rights, unemployment, crime, the quality of public services, immigration, and environmental problems (see Appendix).

To measure citizen empowerment, the respondents are asked to what degree they agreed with the following statements on a scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree): 1) "Since so many people vote in elections, it really doesn't matter whether I vote or not"; 2) "Government officials pay little attention to what citizens like me think". Respondents were also asked to respond to the following question: "Generally, do you think people can be trusted *or* do you think that you can't be too careful in dealing with people (that it pays to be wary of people)?" The variable of the external social network is measured by the following question: "I often communicate with people in other countries via the Internet and e-mail".

Regarding demographic variables the following questions were asked to the respondents: 1) "Please indicate how frequently, if at all, you purchase newspapers"; 2) "From which kind of media do you get information about the following subjects?" Gender, age, and the highest level of education completed are also included.

Findings

Descriptive Analysis and Correlations

Demographics for the 1,600 survey respondents from both countries are shown in Table 1. The respondents' education levels show that a higher percentage of the Korean participants

completed a high school education and the same is true for college education. The majority of respondents (67% in China versus 61% in South Korea) purchase newspapers everyday or almost everyday. In terms of age, the age group of 30 to 49 had the highest percentage of the participants in both countries. Also, just under the 15 % of the respondents in both countries reported using the Internet for getting information on politics and the economy (Table 1).

Table 1. Survey Participants in Urban Cities

		China (N= 800) %	South Korea (N= 800) %
Education	Elementary School/ Junior high school/middle school	30.1	7.3
	High school	28	53.5
	High school level vocational-technical school	10.9	.4
	Professional school/technical school	19.1	15.9
	University/graduate school	11.8	22.3
Sex	Female	50.9	49.1
	Male	49.1	50.9
Age	20-29	22.5	28.1
	30-49	57.9	56.3
	50-59	19.6	15.6
Purchase of newspapers	Everyday/almost everyday	67.3	61.4
Internet use for politics and economy		13.6	14.6

Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients for the study variables are presented in Table 2. The majority of the zero-order correlations were statistically significant at $p < 0.01$. For China, all of the measures appeared to be relatively distinct; the largest correlation between independent variables (between government performance in dealing with the economy and in dealing with human rights) was 0.52. For South Korea, the largest correlation between

independent variables (between government performance in dealing political corruption and in dealing with the economy) was 0.51 (Table 3). The scores of citizen empowerment items showed higher standard deviations compared to the other independent variables.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Correlations (China)

	Mean (s.d.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1.Trust in national government	1.67 (.68)	1														
2.Trust in local government	2.00 (.72)	.56**	1													
3.. Democratic governance	2.41 (.59)	.35**	.40**	1												
4.. Quality of public service	2.32 (.68)	.22**	.22**	.35**	1											
5. Political corruption	2.89 (.77)	.36**	.38**	.40**	.26**	1										
6. The economy	2.35 (.67)	.33**	.31**	.34**	.22**	.40**	1									
7. Human rights	2.46 (.75)	.36**	.39**	.48**	.35**	.52**	.39**	1								
8. Unemployment	2.86 (.73)	.23**	.24**	.30**	.28**	.40**	.37**	.39**	1							
9. Immigration	2.28 (.64)	.18**	.20**	.30**	.38**	.29**	.26**	.31**	.28**	1						
10.Crime	2.47 (.76)	.19**	.25**	.27**	.35**	.36**	.22**	.33**	.40**	.25**	1					
11.Envoironment problems	2.37 (.73)	.18**	.17**	.27**	.44**	.28**	.19**	.23**	.19**	.23**	.22**	1				
12. Commitment to vote	2.85 (1.01)	-.07*	-.05	-.10**	-.02	-.04	-.07	-.07*	-.08*	-.03	-.10**	.06	1			
13.Citizne input	2.50 (1.04)	-.19**	-.20**	-.30**	-.16**	-.25**	-.18**	-.25**	-.24**	-.10**	-.21**	-.14**	.38**	1		
14. Trust in people	.54 (.50)	.18**	.15**	.08*	.03	.06	.10**	.09**	.10**	.01	.07*	-.06	-.09*	-.07*	1	
15. External social networks	.10 (.29)	.12**	.04	.11**	.03	.02	-.02	.04	-.06	.03	-.06	.03	.02	.03	-.08*	1

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

This study found that participants in China show a higher level of trust in central as well as local governments compared to the level of trust on government expressed by participants in South Korea (Table 4). Like the past surveys on trust in government in China, this study found a high level of trust in government in China. Interestingly, the degree of trust in central government was

higher than the mean score of trust in local government in China. Meanwhile, compared to China, there were low scores for trust in government at both the central and local level in South Korea.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities, and Correlations (South Korea)

	Mean (s.d.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1.Trust in national government	2.94 (.67)	1														
2.Trust in local government	2.90 (.66)	.65**	1													
3.. Democratic governance	2.39 (.41)	.10**	.08*	1												
4.. Quality of public service	2.68 (.69)	.21**	.20**	.06	1											
5. Political corruption	3.37 (.64)	.31**	.26**	.14**	.25**	1										
6. The economy	3.17 (.63)	.41**	.29**	.12**	.30**	.51**	1									
7. Human rights	2.82 (.68)	.26**	.25**	.14**	.37**	.35**	.38**	1								
8. Unemployment	3.35 (.57)	.28**	.24**	.14**	.27**	.35**	.45**	.37**	1							
9. Immigration	2.86 (.63)	.16**	.14**	.04	.40**	.20**	.19**	.31**	.26**	1						
10.Crime	3.08 (.71)	.21**	.22**	.12**	.37**	.26**	.30**	.34**	.37**	.29**	1					
11.Environment problems	3.01 (.68)	.20**	.19**	.08*	.38**	.25**	.31**	.31**	.35**	.23**	.28**	1				
12. Commitment to vote	3.15 (1.1)	-.10**	-.12**	.07*	-.07*	.05	-.06	-.06	-.00	.02	-.02	-.07*	1			
13.Citizen input	1.86 (.75)	-.08*	-.14**	-.02	-.08*	-.16**	-.15	-.09*	-.11**	-.07	-.06	-.12**	.08*	1		
14. Trust in people	.45 (.50)	.02	.04	.03	-.05	-.03	-.02	-.04	-.03	-.00	.03	.01	.07*	-.02	1	
15. External social networks	.05 (.20)	-.02	.00	-.02	.09*	-.02	.00	.06	-.03	.00	.04	.00	-.07*	-.01	-.00	1

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 4. Trust in Government

	China (792) Mean (s.d.)	South Korea (792) Mean (s.d.)
How much you trust Central Government	1.67 (.68)	2.94 (.67)
How much you trust Your Local Government	2.00 (.72)	2.90 (.66)
Most People Can Be Trusted	369 (46.1%)	409 (51.1%)
Can't Be Too Careful In Dealing With People	428 (53.3%)	335 (41.9%)

(1: Trust a lot; 2: Trust to a degree; 3: Don't really trust; 4: Don't trust at all)

Table 5 shows that among the eight cities that participated in the survey in China, participants in Nanjing show the highest score on trust in central government, and participants in Guangzhou shows the lowest level of trust in central government. Among the eight cities, participants in Shanghai have the highest score of trust in local government, and participants in Dalina expressed the lowest level of trust in their local government.

Table 5. By Cities in China

Urban Cities	Trust in Central Government	Trust in Local Government
Nanjing	1.53	2.02
Tsingtao	1.56	1.90
Shanghai	1.59	1.88
Dalina	1.64	2.18
Chongqing	1.65	1.95
Xian	1.72	1.99
Beijing	1.79	2.09
Guangzhou	1.92	2.01

(1: Trust a lot; 2: Trust to a degree; 3: Don't really trust; 4: Don't trust at all)

Overall, the participants in both countries expressed their satisfaction with democratic governance values. Korean participants in the survey expressed a higher level of satisfaction with the right to vote compared to Chinese participants. However, the satisfaction score for the right to

vote ranked highest for both countries compared to the satisfaction scores for the other democratic governance values. Interestingly, both countries' citizens were least satisfied with the scope of the right to be informed about government.

Table 6. Satisfaction with Democratic Values

How satisfied are you with the current scope of the following rights?	China Mean (s.d.)	South Korea Mean (s.d.)
The Right to Vote	2.19 (.85)	1.94 (.55)
The right to participate in any kind of organization	2.26 (.70)	2.33 (.61)
The right to gather and demonstrate	2.59 (.78)	2.56 (.69)
The right to be informed about government	2.67 (.81)	2.68 (.69)
Freedom of speech	2.30 (.77)	2.39 (.69)
The right to criticize the government	2.47 (.80)	2.53 (.71)

(1: very satisfied; 2: somewhat satisfied; 3 somewhat dissatisfied; 4: very dissatisfied)

Regarding government performance, participants in China perceived the highest evaluation on the issues of immigration. The highest evaluation score given by the Korean participants was for the quality of public services. Interestingly, the government's ability to deal with political corruption was the lowest evaluation score for both countries. Overall, the Chinese participants were more satisfied with their government's handling of policy issues compared to the participants in South Korea (Table 7). In terms of being empowered citizens, the Korean participants expressed a higher level of commitment to voting compared to the level expressed by the Chinese participants. However, the participants of both countries assigned low scores to government officials' attention to what citizens like them think, with Korean participants assigning lower scores to this item than Chinese participants (Table 8).

Table 7. Perceived Government Performance

How well do you think the government is dealing with the following issues?	China	South Korea
The quality of public services	2.32 (.68)	2.68 (.69)
The economy	2.35 (.68)	3.17 (.63)
Political corruption	2.89 (.78)	3.37 (.65)
Human Rights	2.46 (.75)	2.82 (.68)
Unemployment	2.86 (.73)	3.35 (.58)
Crime	2.47 (.76)	3.08 (.72)
Immigration	2.28 (.65)	2.86 (.63)
Environmental problems	2.37 (.73)	3.01 (.68)

(1: very well; 2: fairly well; 3: not so well; 4: not well at all)

Table 8. Citizen Empowerment

How much do you agree or disagree with each statement?	China Mean (s.d.)	South Korea Mean (s.d.)
Since So Many People Vote In Elections, It Really Doesn't Matter Whether I Vote or Not	2.85 (1.01)	3.15 (1.16)
Government Officials Pay Little Attention To What Citizens Like Me Think	2.50 (1.03)	1.86 (.75)

(1: strongly agree; 2: agree; 3: neither agree nor disagree; 4: disagree; 5: strongly disagree)

Multiple Regression Analysis

Four different regression models were analyzed to consider two important issues: 1) a comparison of trust in central government to local government; and 2) the comparative analysis of the impact of democratic governance and perceived government performance. Results from

ordinary least squares (OLS) multiple regression analyses appear in Table 9 (China) and Table 10 (South Korea). The equation of each model achieves statistical significance at the .001 level.

China: The results of multiple regression analyses show that the levels of citizens' satisfaction with democratic governance values and the central government's performance in dealing with political corruption, the economy, and human rights are all significantly associated with trust in both central and local governments in China. The degree of government officials' attention to citizen input is positively associated with trust in both central and local governments in Model 1 and 3. The degree of citizens' commitment to participating in elections is not significantly associated with trust in either central or local government. This study also finds that citizens' trust in people overall is significantly associated with trust in central and local governments. Regarding social networks, people who report often communications with people in other countries were more likely to express a lower level of trust in central government (Model 1 & 2).

Among demographic variables, older Chinese people showed a higher level of trust in government compared to younger people. The frequency of the purchase of newspapers is positively associated with trust in both national and local governments. Interestingly, people who use the Internet for politics and economy news were more likely to express a high level of trust in local government (Model 3 & 4). Among the independent variables, perceived government performance in dealing with the economy and trust in people overall best explain the variation in trust in the national government. However, satisfaction with democratic governance values and government performance in dealing with political corruption best explain the variation in trust in the local government.

Table 9. Results of Regression Analysis (China)

	<i>China</i>			
	Central		Local	
	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Beta</i>
Democratic governance	.26***	.10**	.34***	.17***
Quality of public service		.05		.06
Political corruption		.14**		.19***
The economy		.16***		.09*
Human rights		.10*		.13**
Unemployment		-.00		-.01
Immigration		-.01		-.01
Crime		.02		.03
Environmental problems		.04		-.01
Commitment to vote	.01	-.02	.04	.01
Citizen input	-.13**	-.07+	-.12**	-0.5
Trust in people	.16***	.15***	.11**	.09**
External social networks	.09**	.09**	.01	.02
Sex	.06	.04	-.00	-.70
Age	-.09**	-.06 +	-.11**	-.10**
Education	.00	.02	-.01	-.01
Purchase of newspapers	0.8*	.06+	.07*	.07*
Internet (news for politics and economy)	.00	.02	-.06+	-.08*
<i>R</i> ²	.189	.275	.204	.300
<i>Adjusted R</i> ²	.178	.255	.194	.281
<i>F</i>	17.009***	13.769***	18.662***	15.533***

N= 800; † $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

South Korea: The results of regression models on South Korea show that satisfaction with democratic values is significantly associated with trust in government without performance variables. However, when the performance variables are included in the regression model, the relation was not significant. Meanwhile, the national government's performance in dealing with

political corruption, the economy, and crime are significantly associated with trust in both national and local governments. Citizens who report a high level of commitment to participate in elections are more likely to express trust in both national and local governments. Furthermore, the degree of government officials' attention to citizen input is positively associated with trust in local government only when the performance variables were not included in the regression model. Interestingly, according to the results of regression model Model 4, younger people express a higher level of trust in local government compared to older people. Those who use the Internet to get information on politics and economy express a higher level of trust in central government only in Model 1. External social networks in other countries were not significantly associated with trust in government.

Table 10. Results of Regression Analysis (South Korea)

	<i>Korea</i>			
	Central		Local	
	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>	<i>Model 3</i>	<i>Model 4</i>
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>Beta</i>
Democratic governance	.11**	.04	.09*	.04
Quality of public service		.01		.01
Political corruption		.14**		.14**
The economy		.24***		.12*
Human rights		.01		.04
Unemployment		.03		.06
Immigration		.03		.02
Crime		.07+		.07
Environmental problems		.04		.05
Commitment to vote	-.12**	-.07+	-.14***	-.11**
Citizen input	-.05	.02	-.13***	-.05
Trust in people	.02	-.11	.04	.01
External social networks	-.03	-.02	.02	.01
Sex	.01	.02	-.01	.02
Age	-.00	-.00	.05	.07+
Education	-.00	-.02	.03	.05
Purchase of newspapers	.06+	.10*	.11**	.14**
Internet (news for politics and economy)	-.07*	-.04	-.01	.00
R^2	.045	.228	.061	.183
<i>Adjusted R</i> ²	.031	.202	.047	.158
<i>F</i>	3.208**	8.983***	4.419***	7.303***

N= 800; † $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

Implications and Conclusion

In conclusion, this study extends our understanding of how citizen satisfaction with democratic governance values, perceived government performance, empowered citizenship, external social networks, and demographic factors affect trust in national and local governments in China and South Korea. Through the comparative study we can not only improve our understanding and knowledge on trust in government in both countries, but also learn from each other how government can improve trust in government. This study supports past research results

on trust in government in China and South Korea. Urban citizens in China are more likely to express a high level of trust in both national and local governments compared to urban citizens in South Korea. For China, public trust in local government is lower than their trust in national government. It indicates that local government leaders in China should pay more attention to citizens in terms of communicating public policy issues and government performance. Regarding satisfaction with democratic governance values, citizens in both countries expressed the highest satisfaction with the right to vote and expressed the lowest satisfaction with the right to be informed about government. This finding implies that national and local governments in China and South Korea should assess current policy on government information sharing and develop more effective methods to inform citizens about government.

The results from regression analyses confirm that if government deals with political corruption well, public trust in government could be improved. Interestingly, the government's ability to deal with political corruption was the lowest evaluation score expressed by the participants from both countries. While both countries have paid attention to institutionalizing laws and policy to prevent corruption (TI, 2006a; TI 2006b), the results of this study show that citizens are not satisfied with the government performance on dealing with corruption. More attention should be paid to developing and assessing management capacity for dealing with corruption at both national and local governments. Furthermore, the national and local governments could emphasize intergovernmental coordination in terms of implementing laws and policy against corruption. Finally, government can create more opportunities for collaborations with citizens, non-government organizations, and international organizations to enhance the value of transparency in civil society.

This study found that government performance in dealing with the economy matters when seeking to improve citizens' trust in government for both countries. Another interesting finding of the study is that citizens in China, who often communicate with people in other countries, were more likely to express a lower level of trust in central government. This finding implies that citizens with external social networks in other countries may have different expectations regarding government functions and democracy in China. Citizens with external social networks could be evolved as critical citizens who could expect government innovations to enhance democratic governance. For China, the results of the regression analyses show that more efforts to build democratic governance and protect human rights should be emphasized along with economic development policy to improve trust in national and local governments.

According to the survey results in South Korea, citizens' commitment to participate in elections was positively associated with trust in government. It implies that civil society should keep cultivating the value and the responsibility of citizenship to participate in the political process. The results of this study also highlight the importance of developing more opportunities for citizen input in government decision-making processes.

It is also important to pay attention to effective communication between citizens and government when large-scale reforms of administration are initiated in order to facilitate citizens' expectations under the reforms (OECD, 2001). Yang and Holzer (2006) emphasize the importance of vigorously measuring government performance and communicating the results to citizens to restore public trust. In terms of evaluating government performance, Yang and Holzer (2006) argue that more attention has to be paid to evaluating networks of public policy decision-making and implementation (e.g., economic and social development) to assess the interaction among the institutional systems, government agencies, and the environment.

More attention should be paid to evaluating the policy and system of citizen participation at the local and national level and developing more flexible and effective methods for improving citizen participation. Another important issue is how citizens' knowledge about government and society could affect their trust in government. This study suggests the importance of sharing government information and policy issues with citizens through adopting diverse and efficient media tools to improve public trust in both national and local governments.

Important limitations to this research should be noted. First, the study was based on the data collected in urban cities only. In order to get a comprehensive picture of understanding trust in government, more research on rural communities is necessary. Second, the measures used here were perceptual rather than objective; a more complete analysis would require additional data on government performance and longitudinal studies of the patterns of trust in national and local government. Third, the study found that the degree of trust in local government varies among eight urban cities in China. A comparative study on these cities would be beneficial to understand the variation from city to city.

Appendix: Survey Items

- *Trust in government*: “Please indicate to what extent you trust the following institutions to operate in the best interests of society. If you don’t know what to reply or have no particular opinion, please say so”. (*Scale*: Trust a lot, Trust to a degree Don’t really trust; Don’t trust at all; Don’t know)
- *Satisfaction with democratic governance values*: How satisfied are you with the current scope of the following rights in [China, South Korea]? The right to vote; The right to participate in any kind of organization; The right to gather and demonstrate; The right to be informed about the work and functions of government; Freedom of speech; The right to criticize the government (*Scale*: Very satisfied, Somewhat satisfied, Somewhat dissatisfied, Very dissatisfied, Don’t know)
- *Government performance*: I would like to ask you some questions about the central government. How well do you think the [Chinese/South Korean] government is dealing with the following issues? The economy; Political corruption; Human rights; Unemployment; Crime; The quality of public services; Immigration; Environmental problems (*Scale*: Very well, Fairly well, Not so well, Not well at all, Don’t know).
- *Empowerment*: I am going to read out some statements about society and politics. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement:
Since so many people vote in elections, it really doesn’t matter whether I vote or not;
Government officials pay little attention to what citizens like me think. (*Scale*: Strongly agree, Agree, Neither agree nor disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree, Don’t know)
- *Trust in people*: Generally, do you think people can be trusted or do you think that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people (that it pays to be wary of people)? (*Scale*: dummy variable)
- *External social networks*: “Does the following statement apply to you? I often communicate with people in other countries via the Internet and e-mail”.
- *Newspapers*: Please indicate how frequently, if at all, you purchase newspapers; (*Scale*: everyday/almost everyday; every other day, 2-3 times a week, once a week, 2-3 times a month; about once a month; less often than once a month, don’t buy; don’t know)
- *Internet*: From which kind of media do you get information about the following subjects? Please select all media that apply for each subject; Politics and the economy (*Scale*: dummy variable)
- Please indicate your gender. Gender (male, female)
- What is your age?
- What is the highest level of education you have completed? (*Scale*: No formal education; Elementary school/junior high school/middle school; High school, High-school-level, vocational-technical school; Professional school/technical School; University/graduate school)

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