



Department of Psychology
The University of Hong Kong

香港大學心理學系

Departmental Seminar

The Impacts of Perceived Social Mobility on Dehumanization and Prosociality

12:30p.m. – 1:30p.m. | November 22, 2024 (Friday)

Rm 813, 8/F, The Jockey Club Tower | Centennial Campus | The University of Hong Kong



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Abstract

From the abolition of slavery and the overthrow of feudal monarchies to the establishment of democratic systems, humanity has strived to create a highly mobile society where everyone possesses ample equal opportunities to change social statuses through diligence and skills. Despite accumulated knowledge on perceived social mobility (PSM) consequences, its impact on personal and social perceptions and interpersonal behaviors remains underexplored. This limits a comprehensive understanding of PSM's consequences, as many interpersonal outcomes stemming from PSM may be rooted in its impact on personal and social perceptions. Based on this premise, I examined how PSM affects dehumanization and how this process further affects prosociality through fifteen studies.

Specifically, in the initial seven studies, I examined whether PSM decreases dehumanization and whether sense of control mediates this effect. A large-scale survey (Study 1), a fully controlled experiment (Study 2), and a field experiment combining text analysis methods (Study 3) collectively supported the notion that PSM reduces dehumanization. A correlational study (Study 4) and two experimental studies (Studies 5 and 6) further elucidated the mediating role of sense of control in the PSM-dehumanization relationship. Subsequently, a study using a 2 by 2 experimental design (Study 7) provided direct causal evidence for the mediating role of sense of control. The potential alternative mediating role of empathy was ruled out (Studies 5 and 6), further demonstrating the robustness of the proposed mediation model.

Building on this foundation, the subsequent seven studies (Studies 8–14) tested whether PSM promotes prosociality and whether dehumanization mediates this relationship. An archival data analysis (Study 8), a large-scale survey (Study 9), and a text analysis study (Study 10) converged in supporting the fact that PSM positively predicts prosociality. A correlational study (Study 11) and two experimental studies (Studies 12 and 13) further revealed the notion that PSM promotes prosociality and the mediating role of dehumanization in this relationship. Following this, a study employing a 2 by 2 experimental design (Study 14) provided direct causal evidence for the mediating effect of dehumanization. The potential alternative mediating role of belief in a just world was excluded (Studies 11 and 12), further reinforcing the robustness of dehumanization's mediating role.

In the final experimental study (Study 15), I investigated whether PSM enhances prosociality through the serial mediating roles of sense of control and dehumanization. The findings supported that PSM boosts individuals' sense of control, subsequently reducing their dehumanization tendencies, ultimately enhancing their prosociality. In summary, by exploring how PSM reduces individual dehumanization and fosters prosociality, this study addresses gaps in existing research on the effects of PSM on individuals' social perceptions and interpersonal behaviors. It highlights the benefits of cultivating a highly mobile society in fostering a harmonious social ambiance, specifically in promoting kind perceptions and interactions between individuals.

About the Speaker

Lipeng Yin is a final-year PhD candidate under the supervision of Prof. Zhansheng Chen. His research primarily focuses on areas such as social and health psychology, cyberpsychology, social media psychology, and adolescent health development.

Zoom Meeting (For participants who couldn't attend the Seminar in person)

<https://hku.zoom.us/j/6985555998?pwd=V05yTGJWNTIzazd2OFZ0Q3FRHVkdz09>

Meeting ID: 698 555 5998 | Password: Psyc

~All are Welcome~

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