

Social Trust and Democratic Politics
Report to the National Election Studies Board
Based on the 2000 NES Special Topic Pilot Study

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Rationale

The argument that democracy depends vitally on ordinary citizens taking an active part in civic life is not exactly new. More than 150 years ago, as part of his penetrating look at American life, Tocqueville prescribed civic engagement as the proper remedy for democratic ills. In recent years Tocqueville's argument has been revived, thanks primarily to the provocative work of Robert Putnam (1993, 1995a, 1995b, 2000). Like Tocqueville, Putnam contends that social trust and civic engagement are essential to the effective workings of democratic societies. Putnam then goes on to demonstrate that in the United States, both trust and engagement are in sharp and alarming decline.

Putnam's thesis has created a huge stir; naturally, not everyone is convinced that he is right (e.g., Ladd 1996; Levi 1996; Valley 1996). But if Putnam has failed to deliver the final word on social trust and civic engagement, he has succeeded magnificently in reinvigorating investigation into ancient and important questions of democratic politics. With this in mind, the goals of our project are to clarify the meaning of trust, to develop new measures corresponding to trust, properly conceived, and then to examine the consequences of such trust for democratic politics in the contemporary US.

Several intriguing theoretical speculations on the subject of trust have recently appeared. From a rational choice perspective, for example, Russell Hardin (1998) takes social trust to be "encapsulated interest". In this analysis, trust is based in particular knowledge, specific beliefs. The trust one person has for another is typically encapsulated in the first person's beliefs about the second person's interest in fulfilling that trust. Notice that under this account, it is hard to see why anyone would subscribe to (or reject) trust as a general matter. Such theoretical treatments are fascinating (also see Coleman 1990; Fukuyama 1995; Levi 1998; and Putnam 1993), but as yet, they have not been accompanied by equally illuminating and serious investigations into the measurement of trust.

With this in mind (and mindful as well of the modest budget we had available for the 2000 NES), we submitted a proposal to the Russell Sage Foundation to develop instrumentation on trust. We argued for the importance of new measures for two varieties of trust in particular, each theoretically significant in its own right, each deeply implicated in the promise of American democratic life. The first is social trust, the trust Americans invest in each other, which has been the subject of substantial speculation and analysis. The second variety of trust, equally important but largely overlooked, is the trust Americans place – or fail to place – in electoral institutions.

As you know, Russell Sage funded our proposal. Working with Wendy Rahn, we set about creating new measures of social and electoral trust. Eventually we included them in a national survey conducted by the Social & Economic Sciences Research Center at Washington State University. This report reviews the results of our analysis of social trust; Wendy and Tom Rudolph are doing the same on electoral trust, in a separate report. We close with recommendations for the fall 2000 NES.

Design

Respondents to the 2000 NES Special Topic Pilot Study were first interviewed as part of the 1998 NES. In an effort to realize a representative Pilot sample, 1998 respondents (with telephones) were first stratified by their scores on a political information index (from very low to very high, five categories in all). Respondents with low information scores were selected at a slightly higher than sample rate and those with high scores were selected at a slightly lower than sample rate. This produced a list of 791 potential respondents, all of whom were sent a letter (on NES letterhead) conveying the news that they would soon be contacted about our study and urging their

participation. In order to increase the number of completed interviews, an additional 231 respondent names and telephone numbers were added to the sample towards the end of the interviewing period. The 2000 Pilot Study was carried out between April 3rd and May 15th by the Social & Economic Sciences Research Center at Washington State University. All interviews were taken over the telephone, using the CATI system Info Zero Un, averaging just under 13 minutes. In the end, 424 respondents were interviewed.¹

Some basic characteristics of the 2000 Pilot sample are presented in Table 1, alongside the comparable descriptive statistics for the parent 1998 NES sample. In general, the 2000 Pilot Study sample appears to be roughly representative of the general American population. It is true that the 2000 sample is biased in consistent ways compared to the 1998 NES sample: the 2000 respondents are a bit more likely to be white, female, elderly, retired, and better educated than the 1998 NES respondents, but these differences are quite small. Notice, too, that Pilot Study respondents are completely indistinguishable from the parent sample in their partisan attachments. All in all, the 2000 Pilot sample seems adequate to the task at hand.

Table 1
Sample Characteristics of the 2000 NES Pilot Study and the 1998 NES

	1998 NES	2000 NES Pilot
Race		
White	88.1%	90.3%
Black	11.9	9.7
Sex		
Male	44.9	38.4
Female	55.1	61.6
Education		
Less than or equal to 8 th grade	4.6	3.8
9 th –11 th grade	8.6	7.3
High School	30.1	31.8
High School and Beyond	19.8	16.5
Junior College	8.7	8.3
College Degree	16.6	19.1
Advanced Degree	11.1	13.2
Family Income		
Less than 11K	17.1	13.5
11-20K	13.9	14.0
20-40K	24.4	26.8
40-60K	19.5	20.4
60-75K	8.3	7.9
75K and above	16.7	17.4

¹ The response rate for the 2000 Pilot, given by $[\text{number of completed interviews}/(\text{number of completed interviews} + \text{number of refusals} + \text{number unable to interview, unable to reach})] = 424/1005 = 42.2$. The cooperation rate, given by $[\text{number of completed interviews}/(\text{number of completed interviews} + \text{number of refusals})] = 424/554 = 76.5$.

Table 1
(Continued)

Employment Status		
Working now	58.0	55.6
Temporarily laid off	1.3	1.9
Unemployed	2.7	1.7
Retired	14.7	23.9
Disabled	3.9	3.5
Homemaker	11.1	8.7
Student	8.3	4.7
Age		
Less than 25	13.4	8.0
25-35	17.1	13.7
35-45	24.4	24.5
45-55	17.3	16.3
55-65	11.9	16.7
Greater than 65	15.4	19.8
Region		
North East	16.5	18.4
North Central	26.2	33.7
South	36.6	33.5
West	20.6	14.4
Party Identification		
Strong Democrat	19.0	20.5
Weak Democrat	19.0	19.3
Leaning Democrat	14.4	13.3
Independent	9.9	9.9
Leaning Republican	10.4	10.1
Weak Republican	15.5	14.7
Strong Republican	10.7	12.0

Meaning and Measurement of Social Trust

We began our project with the assumption that trust is *not* general, that it is specific to particular domains. As a point of departure this seemed sensible on methodological grounds, since with instrumentation on trust in specific domains we can actually test whether our assumption is correct. But we started with the assumption of domain-specific trust at least in part because of a convergence in empirical results that we noticed across the social sciences. Regarding such central concepts as personality (e.g., Mischel 1968), ideology (Converse 1964), intelligence (Gardner 1983), and culture (DiMaggio 1997), results favor specificity and contingency over generality and universality: for example, not *general* intelligence, but multiple, largely independent, *modular* intelligences. We expected the same to hold for trust. Thus the trust people invest in family members is not likely to be the same as the trust they place in people at work, nor should that trust bear much resemblance necessarily to the trust they confer on political institutions. As experience varies across domains, and as the standards that people bring to various domains also varies, trust

itself will vary. Following the spirit of Walzer's (1983) analysis of equality, we expected to discover not one, single, generalized trust, but spheres of specific trust.

We suspect that trust is domain-specific, but the measures of social trust that dominate the empirical literature are based upon an entirely different assumption: namely, that people have in mind stable views about the trustworthiness of human nature in general (e.g., Rotter 1971; Rosenberg 1956, 1957; Wrightsman 1974). In Rotter's (1971) influential formulation, for example, interpersonal trust is a highly generalized expectation, a kind of comprehensive summation of past experience. Based on their encounters with different people, in different settings, under different circumstances, individuals gradually develop an expectation of what others, in general, on average, are like. A similar assumption underlies the widely used misanthropy scale developed by Morris Rosenberg (1956, 1957). Rosenberg was interested in the association, if any, between general political orientations and views on human nature, and so he composed survey items that raised questions about whether "most people" can be trusted, whether "most people" are out to take advantage, whether "most people" care only for themselves, and so on. This particular – and in our view, perhaps misguided – operationalization of social trust has turned out to be tremendously influential. Rosenberg's questions (or their close approximations) were picked up by both the General Social Survey and the National Election Study, and are prominently featured in the renaissance of scholarly research on social capital (e.g., Brehm & Rahn 1997; Putnam 1995a, 1995b, 2000; Rahn, Brehm & Carlson 2000).

Three of the standard general social trust questions were included in the 2000 Pilot Study. The exact wording and distribution for each, presented in Table 2, display an American public that on the whole seems quite trusting. More than one half (52.6%) of the 2000 Pilot Study sample say that most people can be trusted; nearly 7 in 10 (68.9%) that most people try to be fair; and even a bit more (72.6%) that most people try to be helpful. By comparison, the distrusting alternatives – that you can't be too careful in dealing with people, that most people will try to take advantage if they get the chance, or that most people are looking out just for themselves – are a good bit less popular. So Americans seem on balance rather trusting, though perhaps not as trusting as they once were (Putnam 1995b, 2000; for an argument to the contrary, see Smith 1997).²

² Compared to other national estimates of general social trust (e.g., Putnam 2000), these figures are high. Our Pilot Sample respondents are as trusting in the year 2000 as Americans were way back in the early 1960s, Putnam's golden era of trust, before the fall. Why might that be? One possibility points to context. We chose the general social trust questions to lead off the Pilot Study survey, concerned that their generality made them prime candidates for context effects. They were the very first questions, but they were not the very first thing respondents heard. What respondents heard first was this: that participation in the study was purely voluntary; that the study has been approved by the University of Michigan; that all the information respondents provide will be kept strictly confidential; and that should the respondent be troubled by any question, the interviewer would be happy to skip over it and go on to the next. This introduction to the study script is a model of reasonableness; it reads like a recipe to establish trust, which indeed is its intent. Having been primed in this way, and having agreed to participate in the study, respondents may very well find themselves thinking rather better about the trustworthiness of others than they otherwise would be.

Table 2
Measures of General 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?

Most people can be trusted	52.6%
Or you can't be too careful	43.9
Don't know, refused	3.5

Do you think most people would try to TAKE ADVANTAGE of you if they got the chance or would they TRY TO BE FAIR?

Take advantage	26.9
Or try to be fair	68.9
Don't know, refused	4.2

Would you say that most of the time people TRY TO BE HELPFUL, or that they are JUST LOOKING OUT FOR THEMSELVES?

Try to be helpful	72.6
Or just looking out for themselves	24.3
Don't know, refused	3.1

These conventional social trust questions led off the survey. We did this deliberately, on the idea that the generality of the conventional questions made them strong candidates for priming and context effects (Smith 1997). More precisely, we should say that two of the three questions led off the survey, with the third (randomly selected) appearing at very nearly the end of the interview. And when one of the conventional social trust questions appeared late, it also appeared in an unconventional format, paired up with the “think aloud” procedure developed by Newell and Simon (1972; Ericsson & Simon 1993) in their work on human problem solving. We will summarize these results in a later report. The question for now is whether thinking about social trust in general late in the survey alters respondents' views. We thought it might, that in particular coercing respondents to contemplate the trustworthiness of their neighbors and co-workers as we do through the course of the interview (details provided below) might well lead them to a sunnier view on “human nature” than they would otherwise express. As things turn out, the evidence runs in this direction but not very impressively. Asked late, respondents were trivially more likely to say that most people can be trusted (55.1% versus 54.2%; $F_{1,407} = 0.03$, ns), trivially more likely to say that most people try to be fair (72.8% versus 71.6%; $F_{1,404} = 0.06$, ns); and a bit more likely to say that most people try to be helpful (80.7% versus 72.0%; $F_{1,405} = 3.79$, $p < .10$).³ In short, whether respondents answered the standard social trust questions early in the survey posed in the conventional way or at the tag end of the survey in an unconventional way – thinking aloud as they formulate their answers – made little difference to the shape of their answers.

³ All these comparisons are with don't know responses deleted.

By design, the standard social trust questions are utterly general. By referring to “most people”, the questions ignore the kind of specificity that we suspect might actually characterize social trust. The questions do not refer to any particular people (neighbors, coworkers, strangers on the street). Nor do they do specify what it is that is to be entrusted (secrets, material possessions, one’s own physical safety). As Almond and Verba put it, the standard questions require “sweeping judgments of human nature” (1963, p. 267).

What do people have in mind when they say that people in general can (or cannot) be trusted? It could be that the standard social trust questions call to mind some generic and abstract representation of human nature. Perhaps, but there are good reasons from current theorizing in psychology to think that people in fact don’t do this. Rather, when faced with such abstract propositions as whether most people can be trusted, they engage in what Robert Abelson (1976) once called “sweeping concretization”. Daniel Kahneman makes a similar point in his recent claim that people reason by exemplar: judgments on abstract propositions are made not with some generic representation in mind but rather a small number of concrete and specific illustrations. That is, “general statements often evoke representations of particular cases, which are relatively concrete and specific.” Moreover, “emotions tend to be attached more readily to particular representations than to abstract ideas” (Kahneman & Ritov 1998 p. 10). Kahneman and Ritov argue that reasoning by exemplar has considerable generality and that it is unlikely to be suppressed by “procedural fiddling” (1998 p. 16). The standard social trust questions would seem to be excellent candidates for this mode of reasoning: presented as breathtakingly general statements, they perhaps actually invoke particular schematic exemplars.⁴

On the idea that people come to their views on the trustworthiness of others by contemplating particular and concrete examples, we developed new questions that take such particularity and concreteness explicitly into account. In the 2000 Pilot, we asked Americans not – or not only – about people in general, but about specific kinds of people.

Of course, the possibilities here are nearly endless. We could ask about kinds of people defined by place: neighborhood, workplace, town or city, region, nation. Or we could ask about kinds of people defined by identity: gender, class & occupation, race, ethnicity, and religion. After some work – on our part and on the part of graduate students in a research design course at Michigan – it became clear that place would be more tractable than identity.

Fine, but *which* places? Our answer came from theories of participation and democracy (and not from standard accounts of social trust itself). These literatures suggested the shared places in which to investigate social trust. Specifically, they offered us sites for political mobilization and places where indigenous institutions have been turned to political ends. And they suggested (at least to us) that trust in particular people in specific sites could be more important than any sort of general social trust. We turned our attention specifically to *neighborhoods* and to *workplaces*.

⁴ In their famous study of the cultural presuppositions of democracy, Almond and Verba (1963) present a bit of evidence consistent with this conjecture (see pages 271-272). We find some direct support for this as well, in pre-test “think aloud” data collected by SESRC in January. In this small (n=112) national telephone study, respondents quite often came to a view on the trustworthiness of others by thinking about a few potent and emotionally charged examples. People talked about their experiences at work, accidents they suffered or came upon, about being ripped off or assaulted. Clearly other things were going on as well, however. Some people cited doctrine (the writings of C. S. Lewis or the Bible). Others seemed to project their understanding of themselves onto others. In effect, they treated themselves, the one person they know the best, as the exemplary model for human nature in general. Still others seemed to be doing a kind of running tally, trying to average across experiences and domains, much as the conventional and general questions presume.

Moreover, we chose to define trust in these particular sites in terms of a set of *practices* and *dispositions*. In our formulation, people earn our trust when they keep their promises and respect others; when they are honest and courteous. On the other side, people deserve our distrust when they look out only for themselves and try to take advantage of others; when they are irresponsible and uncooperative. The specific questions we asked about neighborhood trust are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Measures of Trust in Neighbors

I'm going to ask you a few questions about the people you regularly see in your neighborhood.

In general, with these people in mind, would you say that they keep their promises all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, hardly ever, or never?

All of the time	16.5
Most of the time	59.9
Some of the time	14.2
Hardly ever	1.4
Or never	0.5
Don't know, refused	7.5

Still thinking about those people you see regularly in your neighborhood, would you say that they are JUST LOOKING OUT FOR THEMSELVES all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, hardly ever, or never?

All of the time	2.8
Most of the time	22.6
Some of the time	49.3
Hardly ever	18.4
Or never	2.6
Don't know, refused	4.2

Would you say those people you see regularly in your neighborhood TRY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OTHERS all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, hardly ever, or never?

All of the time	0.7
Most of the time	2.4
Some of the time	22.6
Hardly ever	52.4
Or never	17.5
Don't know, refused	4.5

Table 3
(Continued)

(Again, thinking about those people you see in your neighborhood)
Would you say they TREAT OTHERS WITH RESPECT all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, hardly ever, or never?

All of the time	16.5
Most of the time	64.4
Some of the time	13.7
Hardly ever	2.8
Or never	0.5
Don't know, refused	2.1

Now, I'm going to read some descriptions. Please tell me how well the following words or phrases describe the people in your neighborhood.

The first phrase is HONEST. Would you say that HONEST describes the people in your neighborhood extremely well, quite well, not too well, or not well at all?

Extremely well	21.9
Quite well	64.4
Not too well	8.3
Or not well at all	1.2
Don't know, refused	4.2

The next phrase is IRRESPONSIBLE. Would you say that IRRESPONSIBLE describes the people in your neighborhood extremely well, quite well, not too well, or not well at all?

Extremely well	3.3
Quite well	18.2
Not too well	30.9
Or not well at all	42.7
Don't know, refused	5.0

The next phrase is COURTEOUS (polite, considerate). Would you say that COURTEOUS describes the people in your neighborhood extremely well, quite well, not too well, or not well at all?

Extremely well	25.7
Quite well	60.4
Not too well	10.8
Or not well at all	1.9
Don't know, refused	1.2

Table 3
(Continued)

The next phrase is UNCOOPERATIVE. Would you say that UNCOOPERATIVE describes the people in your neighborhood extremely well, quite well, not too well, or not well at all?

Extremely well	5.4
Quite well	16.3
Not too well	36.1
Or not well at all	36.3
Don't know, refused	5.9

As Table 3 reveals, Americans generally find their neighbors to be a trustworthy lot. That is, neighbors seem on average trustworthy in practice and in character. For balance, we asked about equal numbers of good practices and dispositions and bad practices and dispositions, and it appears as if the latter elicit more variation in response than do the former. When asked about the *presence* of trustworthiness among their neighbors – do they keep their promises, do they treat others with respect, are they honest, are they courteous – respondents predominantly say yes. They say that most or all of the time neighbors keep their promises, that honest describes people in their neighborhood quite well or extremely well, and so on. When asked about the *absence* of trustworthiness among their neighbors – are they mostly just looking out for themselves, do they try to take advantage of others, are they irresponsible, are they uncooperative – respondents predominantly say no, but not quite so whole-heartedly as they affirmed the presence of trustworthy practices and dispositions. So quite a few say that “some” of their neighbors try to take advantage of others (22.6%) or that uncooperative describes their neighbors “quite well” (16.3%).

These same patterns hold for workplace trust, as shown in Table 4. These questions of course were asked only of those with full-time jobs – some 56% of the full sample. On the whole, Americans think quite highly of their co-workers – though not quite as highly as they do their neighbors. With all items coded 0-1, the mean for an overall trust in neighbors scale = .73, while the mean for an overall trust in co-workers scale = .66 (the difference between the two is statistically significant by t-test: $t = 5.18, p < .01$). And as was true in the case of neighborhood trust, questions about bad practices and dispositions elicit more variation in response than do questions about good practices and dispositions.⁵

⁵ Whether or not respondents work outside the home is unrelated to their views on general social trust or on trust in neighbors.

Table 4
Measures of Trust in Co-workers

I'm going to ask you a few questions about the people you regularly see at work.

In general, with these people in mind, would you say that they keep their promises all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, hardly ever, or never?

All of the time	11.9
Most of the time	62.6
Some of the time	19.1
Hardly ever	4.3
Or never	0.9
Don't know, refused	1.3

Still thinking about those people you see regularly at work, would you say that they are JUST LOOKING OUT FOR THEMSELVES all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, hardly ever, or never?

All of the time	6.0
Most of the time	26.4
Some of the time	43.4
Hardly ever	20.0
Or never	3.4
Don't know, refused	0.9

Would you say those people you see regularly at work TRY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OTHERS all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, hardly ever, or never?

All of the time	0.9
Most of the time	6.0
Some of the time	39.1
Hardly ever	44.3
Or never	8.9
Don't know, refused	0.9

**Table 4
(Continued)**

(Again, thinking about those people you see regularly at work)
Would you say that they TREAT OTHERS WITH RESPECT all of the time, most of the time, some of the time, hardly ever, or never?

All of the time	12.8
Most of the time	58.7
Some of the time	25.1
Hardly ever	3.0
Or never	0.4
Don't know, refused	0.0

Now, I'm going to read some descriptions. Please tell me how well the following words or phrases describe the people you work with. The first phrase is HONEST. Would you say that HONEST describes the people you work with extremely well, quite well, not too well, or not well at all?

Extremely well	26.0
Quite well	58.3
Not too well	11.9
Or not well at all	3.0
Don't know, refused	0.9

The next phrase is IRRESPONSIBLE. Would you say that IRRESPONSIBLE describes the people you work with extremely well, quite well, not too well, or not well at all?

Extremely well	5.1
Quite well	16.6
Not too well	35.3
Or not well at all	42.1
Don't know, refused	0.9

The next phrase is COURTEOUS (polite, considerate). Would you say that COURTEOUS describes the people you work with extremely well, quite well, not too well, or not well at all?

Extremely well	23.8
Quite well	60.4
Not too well	11.5
Or not well at all	3.4
Don't know, refused	0.9

Table 4
(Continued)

The next phrase is UNCOOPERATIVE. Would you say that UNCOOPERATIVE describes the people you work with extremely well, quite well, not too well, or not well at all?

Extremely well	6.4
Quite well	20.4
Not too well	31.5
Or not well at all	40.4
Don't know, refused	1.3

Comparing Tables 4 and 3, it is apparent that Pilot Study respondents are less likely to say don't know when asked about trust at work compared to trust in the neighborhood. Indeed, don't know responses to the trust at work questions are practically invisible (ranging from 0.0 to 1.3%). In contrast, don't know responses to the trust in the neighborhood questions average about 4 percent (ranging from 1.2 to 7.5%).

Who are these people? By and large, our efforts to predict who would fall out of the neighborhood trust scale were unsuccessful. Failing to give an answer about the trustworthy practices and dispositions of neighbors generally had little to do with respondents' social background or with the characteristics of their communities or with how long they had lived in their neighborhoods. The only robust result we managed to turn up had to do with age: older Americans were consistently and considerably more likely to say that they didn't know about the trustworthiness of their neighbors.

One big question for us is whether, as we have been presuming all along, there are really three kinds of trust. To begin to find out, we first computed correlations between all the trust indicators. These correlations, which are summarized in Table 5, show considerable evidence of domain specificity. In general, correlations within the three domains of trust – general, neighborhood, and work – are substantial. Cronbach's *alpha*, also presented in Table 5, summarizes this point neatly. In the meantime, correlations across domains are on the whole modest.⁶

Table 5
Associations between Indicators of Trust
(Median Pearson r)

	General	Neighborhood	Work	<i>Alpha</i>
General	.40			.65
Neighborhood	.15	.25		.73
Work	.20	.10	.37	.82

⁶ That views about the trustworthiness of co-workers are more internally consistent than are views about the trustworthiness of neighbors is not an artifact of sample differences: the internal consistency of views about the trustworthiness of neighbors among those who work is about the same as it is among those who do not (Cronbach's *alpha* = .70 in the former case and .76 in the latter).

To push the question of the structure of trust further, we turned to confirmatory factor analysis, based on maximum likelihood estimation routines developed by Joreskog (1969). For convenience, we coded all the trust measures to a zero-one interval, with 1.0 representing the most trusting alternative and 0.0 representing the least. In all cases we ran the factor analysis on the variance-covariance matrix among all 19 indicators (3 general trust, 8 neighborhood trust, and 8 workplace trust).

We first estimated a simple 1-factor model, one that assumed a single latent factor. Under this specification, there is only one kind of trust. Americans believe, or not, in the general trustworthiness of people: people in general, people at work, and people in the neighborhood. This model fits the variance-covariance matrix poorly (Chi-square with 152 degrees of freedom = 638.15, goodness of fit index = .700, root mean squared residual = .021)

Next we estimated a 3-factor model. This model presumes that people have distinct but correlated views on trust; in particular, that they distinguish among the trustworthiness of people in general, people at work, and people in the neighborhood. This model fits the data much better, as can be seen in Table 6. Table 6 also shows that the estimated correlations between the 3 latent variables – between general trust, trust in neighbors, and trust in co-workers – are modest, ranging from .268 to .458. In short, we seem to have in hand three varieties of trust, not one.

Table 6
Three Varieties of Social Trust
(Confirmatory Factor Analysis)

	<u>General Trust</u>	<u>Neighborhood Trust</u>	<u>Workplace Trust</u>
Most can be trusted	1.285 (.224)		
Most are fair	1.000		
Most are helpful	1.047 (.187)		
Neighbors keep promises		.877 (.119)	
Neighbors look out for themselves		.538 (.132)	
Neighbors take advantage		1.000	
Neighbors treat others with respect		1.023 (.127)	
Neighbors honest		1.029 (.141)	
Neighbors irresponsible		.837 (.189)	
Neighbors courteous		1.126 (.156)	
Neighbors uncooperative		.667 (.191)	
Co-workers keep promises			.848 (.090)
Co-workers look out for themselves			.989 (.114)
Co-workers take advantage			1.000
Co-workers treat others with respect			.908 (.088)
Co-workers honest			1.224 (.116)
Co-workers irresponsible			.961 (.147)
Co-workers courteous			.924 (.117)
Co-workers uncooperative			.971 (.156)

Chi-square with 149 degrees of freedom = 300.77

Goodness of fit = .865

Root mean square residual = .007

	Factor Correlations	
	General	Neighborhood
Neighborhood	.414	
Workplace	.458	.268

If the views that people take on general trust, neighborhood trust, and workplace trust are distinctive, then they should show systematically different relationships to other characteristics. To explore this we examined the background correlates of trust. Are the three kinds of trust distributed differently through American society?

For the purpose of this analysis (and for all the analysis that follows), we created three trust scales, one for general trust, one for neighborhood trust, and one for workplace trust. We coded all trust items and therefore all trust scales onto the zero-one interval, with 1.0 representing the most trusting alternative and 0.0 representing the least.⁷ Then we simply calculated the relationship

⁷We should say a word about how we treated missing data in our analyses. We lose only a handful of people to missing data on the questions on workplace trust. However, we lose more than a handful of cases on general trust, neighborhood trust, and income. Because our sample is a small one, losing these cases could have disastrous effects on our analyses. We opted, then, to incorporate cases with missing data on these three

between each variety of trust and a standard set of social background characteristics, with the results reported in Table 7.

Table 7
The Relationship between Three Varieties of Social Trust
and Social Background Characteristics
(means)

	<u>General Trust</u>	<u>Neighborhood Trust</u>	<u>Workplace Trust</u>
Race			
White	.67	.69	.67
Black	.46	.66	.56
Sex			
Male	.66	.68	.65
Female	.64	.69	.67
Education			
Less than or equal to 8 th grade	.46	.63	.66
9 th –11 th grade	.55	.69	.70
High School	.53	.66	.63
High School and Beyond	.71	.67	.62
Junior College	.70	.69	.69
College Degree	.74	.72	.67
Advanced Degree	.79	.74	.73
Family Income			
Less than 11K	.54	.65	.60
11-20K	.54	.66	.60
20-40K	.63	.69	.68
40-60K	.68	.69	.68
60-75K	.72	.72	.68
75K and above	.77	.72	.74

variables. How did we do that? We followed a different path for each of the three ways cases could go missing. To sort out what to do with cases that went missing on general trust, we noticed that one strong predictor of going missing on the general trust questions in 2000 was a distrusting response to these questions in 1998. If a respondent went missing on the general trust variable in 2000, we gave her a 0 on that variable. On the neighborhood trust variable, we lost 68 cases because respondents were missing on one or a few of the neighborhood trust variables. However, there were two neighborhood trust variables that almost all respondents answered – whether their neighbors treat people with respect and whether their neighbors are courteous. When respondents went missing on neighborhood trust, we used values on those two variables – when respondents answered both of them – to measure neighborhood trust. The resulting variable had exactly the same mean as the variable that pitched out respondents missing on any of these neighborhood trust variables. Finally, if the respondent went missing on the family income variable, we filled the variable at \$40,000. With a larger sample, we could use more elaborate missing-data routines. In the end, our efforts didn't make much difference one way or the other. When there are differences worth noting, we note them. The analyses we report here – unless we say otherwise – use these missing-data corrections.

**Table 7
(Continued)**

Age			
Less than 25	.53	.63	.63
25-35	.52	.66	.65
35-45	.69	.67	.67
45-55	.67	.73	.65
55-65	.69	.71	.64
Greater than 65	.69	.71	.70
Region			
North East	.60	.66	.66
North Central	.72	.71	.66
South	.57	.67	.64
West	.70	.69	.72

General Trust, Neighborhood Trust, and Workplace Trust all coded on 0-1 interval, with 1.0 representing the most trusting response.

Table 7 shows that with respect to general trust, the 2000 Pilot data re-produce the standard results from the literature (e.g., Almond & Verba 1963; Brehm & Rahn 1997; Patterson 1999). That is, we find huge race and class differences, with whites much more trusting than blacks and the well educated and well off much more trusting than the poorly educated and poor. We also detect generational differences, with younger cohorts somewhat less trusting than their elders, and negligible differences on gender. We also find, on general trust, sizable differences associated with region, with Middle-Westerners more trusting than those who live in the Northeast or South.⁸

Table 7 also shows that when we turn from general trust to trust in the neighborhood or trust at work, the large differences associated with race and class contract noticeably; sometimes they disappear altogether. So, blacks and whites differ enormously on the trustworthiness of people in general, but not on the trustworthiness of people in their neighborhood or at work. Likewise for education and income and generation and region.⁹ We take this as more evidence that general social trust and specific social trust are not the same thing.

They *are* related, of course, and our final analysis in this section takes up in a more detailed way the nature of the relationship between general trust and domain-specific trust. We are interested in whether general social trust could be regarded, at least in part, as an amalgamation of trust in particular domains – here, work and the neighborhood. To find out we ran a set of sparse regression models, estimating the impact of neighborhood and workplace trust on general social trust, controlling generally on the effects due to age, race, education, income, and gender.

⁸ These relationships are essentially the same whether they are estimated based on the entire sample or based only on those respondents who are working.

⁹ We also examined the political correlates of trust. In general, the correlations between political views (equal opportunity, moral conservatism, distaste for Clinton, views on impeachment, racial resentment, political trust, and party identification) and trust tend to be weak, however trust is measured. Of all these relationships perhaps the most interesting is between social trust and trust in government. The latter is measured by the standard four questions, all appearing on the 1998 NES. A simple scale of trust in government correlates positively but weakly to all measures of social trust: general (Pearson $r = .14$), work (.08), and neighborhood (.15). In short, social trust and political trust seem quite independent.

These regression results are reported in Table 8. The first column of the table gives the effect of neighborhood trust on general trust for the full sample, and the second gives the effect of both neighborhood and workplace trust on general trust, for those who work. The findings suggest that both trust in neighbors and trust in co-workers contribute to general trust. If anything, trust at work appears to be more important than trust in the neighborhood, but we wouldn't want to push this inference very far. If we repeat the analysis in Table 8, taking up each of the three indicators of general trust separately in turn, trust in co-workers dominates trust in neighbors in only one case (people can be trusted versus you can't be too careful in dealing with people). And if we run the analysis summarized in Table 8 using a different and more restrictive missing data procedure, neighborhood trust and workplace trust contribute in substantial and equal ways to general trust.

Table 8
Predicting General Social Trust from Neighborhood and Workplace Trust
(ordinary least squares regression)

	<u>General Trust</u>	
	(1)	(2)
Trust in neighbors	.483 (.126)	.216 (.185)
Trust in co-workers	—	.575 (.152)
Age	.207 (.070)	.033 (.146)
Race	-.168 (.055)	-.118 (.076)
Education	.278 (.063)	.318 (.087)
Family Income	.146 (.060)	.043 (.090)
Sex	-.021 (.033)	-.028 (.046)
Constant	.014 (.092)	-.055 (.148)
R-squared	.182	.198
Standard error of regression	.329	.327
N	408	220

We ran several additional specifications of this regression analysis, adding in interaction terms to see if the effect of site-specific trust on general trust would be increased with length of time at the site. Our efforts met with no success on neighborhood trust: whether Pilot Study respondents had lived many years in their community or only a few made no difference to the importance of the trust they placed in neighbors for their views on social trust in general. But we did find the expected result with workplace trust: the longer Pilot Study respondents had worked at their current job, the greater was the weight given to workplace trust in their views on general social trust.¹⁰

¹⁰ In this specification, the effect of workplace trust, given by the unstandardized least squares coefficient, = .337 (.205) and the interaction between workplace trust and years on the job = .034 (.019). In effect, the impact of workplace trust on general trust doubles among those with 10 years on the same job.

Measurement of Participation

To assess the utility of the new and old measures of social trust, we needed to be able to estimate the relationship between trust and political participation. To do that, we needed a better way to measure the distinctions in the literature than NES has now. So we turned to analyze the Verba, Schlozman, & Brady national study (hereafter, VSB), the '92 and '96 NES, and the Roper questions from Brady and Putnam.

We wanted our participation measures to capture several of the relevant distinctions in the literature. First, we wanted to be able to see purely local activity; we do that with a question on working together with others in your community (a standard question, which we adapt a bit) and a question on attending meetings on community or school affairs (an adaptation of the Roper item on this topic). Second, we wanted some purchase on the distinction between ad hoc and federated activity. In this battery, working together with your neighbors is our clearest measure of ad hoc activity; we included, as well, a measure of working with your co-workers to try to capture this distinction more fully. Third, we wanted electoral activity and non-electoral activity; the 1998 election participation items capture electoral activity; we added adaptations of VSB screener questions¹¹ to round out our look at the common ways people participate in American political life. We ask about contacting officials, involvement in political organizations, working together with people from the community, and attending meetings on community or school affairs. Finally, we wanted to be able to sort out checkbook participants from those who give time to politics. With the participation battery in the Pilot and in the 1998 NES, we can look at checkbook participants by focusing on two variables: giving money to campaigns and on affiliation with organizations to which the respondent gave no time. And we can look at participants who give time, and thus have the potential to interact with others, by examining campaign work and campaign meeting attendance, working together with others in the community, attending community or school meetings, and giving time to organizations. We include the participation questions from the Pilot and from the 1998 NES in Table 9. And we report their distributions in Table 10.

Table 9 The Participation Questions

From the Pilot

QP2. During the past twelve months, have you telephoned, written a letter to, or visited a government official about a public issue?

QP3. During the past twelve months, did you attend a meeting about an issue facing your community or schools?

QP4 I am going to read you a list of organizations that some people belong to. (PAUSE) There are labor unions, associations of people who do the same kinds of work, fraternal groups such as Lions or Kiwanis, hobby clubs or sports teams, groups working on political issues, community or school groups, and so on. Not including membership in a local church or synagogue, (PAUSE) are you a member of any organizations?

¹¹ The VSB screener was the brief 15,000-respondent telephone interview VSB conducted in 1989, prior to their longer, more elaborate in-person interview with 2,517 respondents. After analyzing the more elaborate instrumentation in their follow-up survey and comparing it with the results from the streamlined instrumentation in their screener interview, we opted to pattern many of our questions on their screener instrument. These questions appeared to provide a lot of information efficiently.

**Table 9
(Continued)**

QP4A How many organizations are you currently a member of?

IF ONE ORGANIZATION:

QP4AA. If you average across the past twelve months, about how many hours per week did you spend doing things with or for your organization?

QP4AB. Does the organization to which you belong ever try to influence what schools or government does?

IF MORE THAN ONE ORGANIZATION:

QP4BA. If you average across the past twelve months, about how many hours per week did you spend doing things with or for your organizations?

QP4BB. Do any of the organizations to which you belong ever try to influence what schools or government does?

QP1 During the past 12 months, have you worked with other people to deal with some issue facing your community?

QW4 Aside from your regular duties at work, in the past twelve months, have you worked with others from your workplace to deal with some common issue or problem?

From the 1998 NES

In 1996 Bill Clinton ran on the Democratic ticket against Bob Dole for the Republicans, and Ross Perot as an independent candidate.

Do you remember for sure whether or not you voted in that election?

In talking to people about elections, we often find that a lot of people were not able to vote because they weren't registered, they were sick, or they just didn't have time.

How about you--did you vote in the elections this November?

Did you go to any political meetings, rallies, speeches, dinners, or things like that in support of a particular candidate?

Did you do any (other) work for one of the parties or candidates?

During an election year people are often asked to make a contribution to support campaigns.

Did you give money to an INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATE running for public office?

Did you give money to a POLITICAL PARTY during this election year?

Did you give any money to ANY OTHER GROUP that supported or opposed candidates?

.....

Table 10
The Responses

From the 2000 Social Trust Pilot

Work together with others in your community	36%
Attend a meeting on community or school Issues	37%
Contacted an official	22%
Member of an organization	44%
Member of an organization that tries to influence Schools or government	25%
Active member of an organization, that is, not a Checkbook participant	34%
Work together with others in your workplace	33%

From the 1998 NES, for the 2000 respondents

Attended a meeting or gave time to a campaign	5%
Contributed money to a campaign	12%
Voted in 1996	78%
Voted in 1998	62%



In their broad outlines, and where we could make clean comparisons, the Pilot questions yielded responses similar to those Verba, Schlozman, and Brady captured with their phone interview for their follow-up respondents 11 years ago. In our study, 30% work on local problems; in the Verba, Schlozman, Brady study, 36% said they did. Other comparisons are similar: contacting, 22% v. 26%; organization member, 44% v. 49%; political organization member, 25% v. 30%. Our numbers are lower, significantly so. But there are eleven years between our two studies, and the general pattern of results is remarkably similar.¹²

One thing to notice, as well. Americans are significantly more likely to be caught up actively in politics – to give their time and their money to politics – in these non-electoral ways than all of the electoral activities NES usually focuses on. Without these variables, we miss much of the involvement of citizens in governance.

¹² We wondered whether the local meetings question and the question on local informal participation captured identical information. They don't. While there is overlap, there are significant numbers of respondents who do one and not the other. 97 did both. 58 just went to local meetings. And 54 just engaged in informal efforts with others in their community.

Table 11
Participation Scales

Reliabilities

	Alpha
The full participation scale	0.67
Local participation	0.60
Electoral participation	0.67
Non-electoral participation	0.54
Spontaneous activity	0.57 (among those with jobs)
Informal local	
Informal from work	
Civic time	0.66
Informal local	
Local meetings	
Active involvement in organizations	

.....

In Table 11, we report reliabilities of some of the additive scales one might want to make from these questions. These scales cover many of the lively distinctions in the literature on social capital. There are other ways to use the variables that don't require scales – to examine, for example, time to organizations, organizational involvement itself, political organizational involvement, and checkbook activity.

For comparison, the participation scales used by Verba, Schlozman, and Brady have reliability coefficients of 0.62 for their screener questions on their follow-up respondents and .60 for their follow-up questions. The scales in this pilot study, then, hold their own compared to the standard in the literature.

We'll use three dependent variables most often in this report:

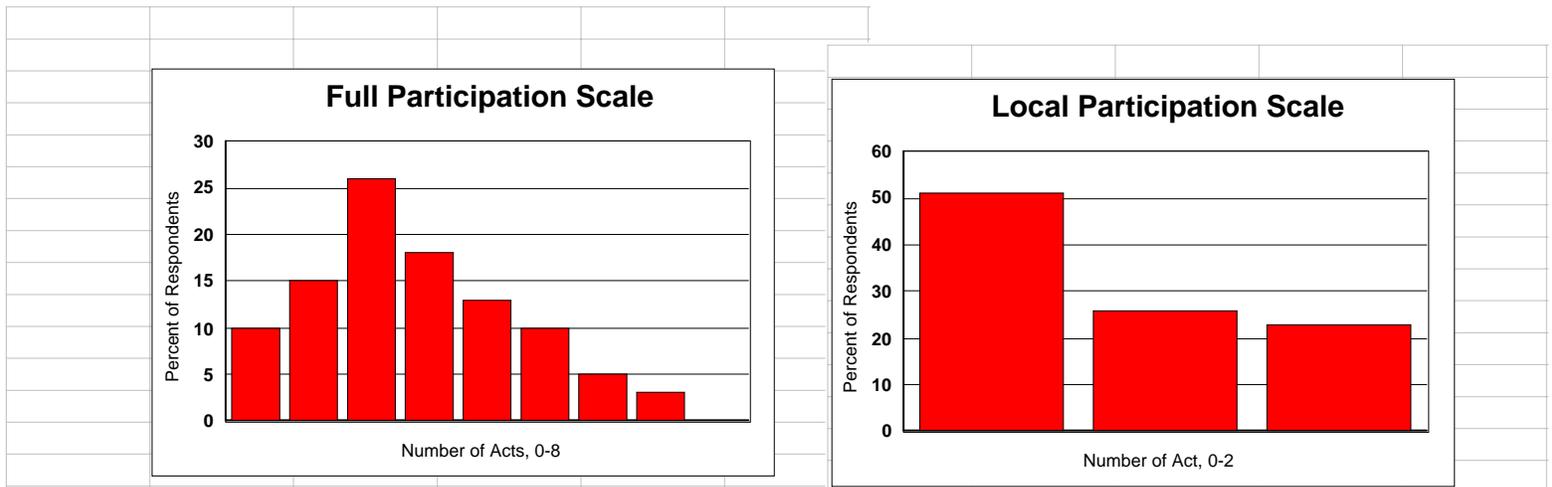
*the full participation scale, which is the number of the following activities in which the respondent says she's engaged: vote in 1996, vote in 1998, campaign time (meetings & rallies or campaign work), campaign money (a contribution to a candidate, a party, or other group supporting or opposing candidates), contact, informal local, local meetings, and political organization membership;

*the local participation scale, which is a count of informal local activity and local meeting attendance; and

*organizational membership (whether or not the respondent is a member of any organization).¹³

¹³ We ran the analyses with the other possible dependent variables as well. We focus on these variables because they are the most tightly tied to the theoretical motivation for the study.

Figure 1
The two participation scales



In Figure 1, we graph the two participation scales. (Note that only 0.20 % of the respondents in the sample participated in 8 political acts, so the last bar on the histogram is invisible, or it is to us.)

The distribution of the participation scale from the Verba, Schlozman, Brady screener questions is quite similar to the one we report here. In their data, 18% said they participated in one way; 31%, 2 ; 21%, 3; 14%, 4; 9%, 5; 4%, 6; 2%, 7; and 0.5%, 8.

Social Trust and Political Participation

We turn, now, to consider the role of social trust in fostering political and civic activity. We use two dependent variables that are exclusively about politics: the full participation scale and our scale of local participation. We use one dependent variable that focuses on Tocquevillian civic life more broadly: organizational membership.

We ask, first, whether the standard measures of social trust matter for political participation in the ways the literature assumes. Literature on the empirical connections between these two things – trust and activity – is surprisingly rare. That’s, in part, because data containing broad measures of civic activism tend not to be data containing good measures of trust. Brehm and Rahn (1997) provide one of the very few exceptions (Putnam 2000, footnote 14, p. 466). So, to be able to assess the role trust in neighbors and trust in co-workers might play in civic activity, we have to start by looking at the relationship between general trust and participation, local participation, and organizational membership. We do that in Table 12.

In our models, we control for a range of sensible alternative possibilities: age, race, education, efficacy, income, gender, religious attendance, working full-time, and political information. And we estimate the equations twice, once for the full sample, and once for people with full-time jobs. Why? We have a measure of trust in co-workers only for the latter group, for people with full-time jobs. We can assess the role of this sort of trust, then, only among full-time workers. But full-time workers are a special group, and we want to be able to look at the role of trust in neighbors and trust in general among everyone in our sample.

Table 12
Does general trust predict political participation?

Dependent Variable	Coefficient and Standard Error on General Trust	
	Full Sample	People with Full-time Jobs
Participation	0.32 (0.22)	0.28 (0.28)
Local participation	0.03 (0.11)	-0.01 (0.15)
Organizational activity	0.26 (0.07)*	0.32 (0.09)*

Controlling for age, race, education, efficacy, income, gender, religious attendance, working, and political information.



General trust – saying that people are fair, trustworthy, and helpful – predicts organizational activity.¹⁴ But it doesn’t do anything for the kind of involvement in communities that seems to be the focus of a lot of attention. And it has a weak, but not all that systematic, influence on political participation in general. We would really like to know if this is true with a larger sample.¹⁵

In Table 13, we explore whether neighborhood- and work-based trust predict participation in the same way that general trust does. We are interested in both the pattern of systematic coefficients and the size of those coefficients in comparison with the results in Table 12. Does site-based trust work as well as general trust to encourage organizational involvement? Does it have the same relationship to participation as does general trust – that is, a weak or non-existent relationship? And are the coefficients of the same magnitude as the coefficients on general trust? Because they are related explicitly to two standard sites of mobilization (Rosenstone and Hansen 1993), are the site-based measures especially powerful predictors of political activity?

¹⁴ For ease of presentation, we estimated the organizational affiliation question with an ordinary least squares regression. Given the distribution of organizational participation, that’s fine.

¹⁵ In the 2000 data, almost all of the work that the general trust measure is doing is because of one of the three variables – whether people would take advantage or try to be fair. In the 1998 data, where there are only two of the three general trust measures, the work is done by whether the respondent says she can trust people and not by whether she thinks people would try to be fair. Because of this difference in results between the two times we asked the question, we focus here on the full scale for general trust and not on the three components of general trust.

Table 13
Do neighborhood-based and work-based trust predict participation?

Dependent Variable	Coefficient and Standard Error on Site-Based Trust	
	Full Sample	People with Full-time Jobs
Participation		
Neighborhood	0.36 (0.56)	-0.19 (0.81)
Work		-0.18 (0.65)
Local participation		
Neighborhood	-0.27 (0.30)	-0.52 (0.43)
Work		0.28 (0.35)
Organizational Activity		
Neighborhood	0.25 (0.18)	0.49 (0.27)*
Work		0.27 (0.22)

Controlling for age, race, education, efficacy, income, gender, religious attendance, working, and political information.



There's a difference between neighborhood- and work-based trust in the answers to these questions. Take work first. Work-based trust may matter a tiny bit for organizational involvement, and we might see that more clearly with a larger sample. But, in general, it just doesn't have a big impact, and it doesn't have even the modest influence general trust seems to have. Neighborhood trust is different. Especially for organizational activity, the pattern of relationships and the magnitude of the coefficients are similar to those for general trust. And, among employed respondents, neighborhood trust seems to play a strong role in encouraging organizational membership.¹⁶

Does that mean that, for the purposes of these analyses, general trust is just neighborhood trust in disguise? That is, does the explanatory power of trust in neighbors come from the same place as the explanatory power of general trust? Table 14 provides strong hints that the answer is no. Neighborhood- and work-based trust, when they work to predict political activity, work orthogonally to, independently of, general trust. The coefficients on general trust – in the face of neighborhood and work-based trust – don't budge. Neither does the coefficient on neighborhood trust (among workers) for organizational activity. One explanation for the empirical connection between general trust and political and civic activity, then, is **not** that it smooths mobilization and recruitment in these important sites. While people's responses to questions about the general trust they place in others are clearly informed by their views about their neighbors and coworkers, these general and site-specific measures do different, and independent, work in predicting civic activity. With a larger sample, with a more extensive mobilization battery in hand, and with the network battery in hand, one would have a chance to say more about why and for whom these two variables run independently in analyses of political and civic participation.

¹⁶ Interestingly, when we break the sample into new residents and older residents, neighborhood trust does seem to matter for local participation, but it suppresses rather than encourages involvement. Those new residents who trust their neighbors don't have much need of local participation, these results suggest.

Table 14
Does site-based trust cut into the predictive power of general trust?

Dependent Variable	Coefficient and Standard Error on Trust	
	Full Sample	People with Full-time Jobs
Participation		
General trust	0.37 (0.22)*	0.38 (0.29)
Neighborhood	0.18 (0.57)	-0.27 (0.81)
Work		-0.39 (0.67)
Local participation		
General trust	0.08 (0.12)	0.01 (0.16)
Neighborhood	-0.30 (0.30)	-0.53 (0.43)
Work		0.28 (0.36)
Organizational Activity		
General trust	0.26 (0.07)*	0.30 (0.10)*
Neighborhood	0.12 (0.18)	0.43 (0.27)
Work		0.10 (0.22)

Controlling for age, race, education, efficacy, income, gender, religious attendance, working, and political information.



Of course, there's tremendous heterogeneity in our data in the amount of time the respondents have been working or living in the same place. This heterogeneity could be masking or suppressing the importance of site-specific trust for political or civic activity. We checked this possibility in a series of estimations leading up to the results we report in Table 15.¹⁷

¹⁷ Note that this is the final model. We estimated preliminary models which included the other possible components of the interactions – time on the job, years in the community, the interaction between time on the job and work-based trust. These preliminary models justify this interactive model. And the variables we cut – variables that seem to be plausible alternative explanations for the results in this table – didn't change the results we report here and didn't have systematic relationships with our three dependent variables. With a small case base, the results are a lot clearer without the clutter of these other variables. The model for the full sample includes an interaction between being in the workforce full-time and neighborhood trust because the earlier models suggested that neighborhood trust mattered more for those with full-time jobs than for other respondents.

Table 15
Does the impact of site-based trust depend on how long the respondent has been in this workplace or in this community?
Building on the lessons of the earlier models.

Dependent Variable	Coefficient and Standard Error on Trust	
	Full Sample	People with Full-time Jobs
Participation	Nope	Nope
Local Participation	Nope	Nope
Organizational Activities		
General Trust	0.27 (0.07)*	0.30 (0.10)*
Neighborhood Trust	-0.33 (0.25)	0.30 (0.27)
Working* Neighborhood Trust	0.69 (0.34)*	
Years in community* Neighborhood Trust	0.38 (0.14)*	0.51 (0.25)*
Work Trust		0.12 (0.22)

Controlling for age, race, education, efficacy, income, gender, religious attendance, working, and political information.



What do we find? Neighborhood trust matters still, and we can say, now, a bit more about the groups for whom it matters and about how its effects vary among our respondents.¹⁸ What's more, neighborhood trust continues to matter for one kind of activity – organizational involvement – and not for political participation in general or for participation in local politics. In results we don't report here, the effect of workplace trust simply did not depend on time on the job. A second result is that people who've lived in a community longer seem to be able to draw more effectively on trust in their neighbors than people who are new in town. Mobility seems pretty bad for the translation of trust into activity. A third is that people who work full-time are especially able to convert trust in neighbors into organizational activity. With a larger sample, one could untangle the potentially quite interesting relationships here separately for women and men.¹⁹

¹⁸ We considered, too, the possibility that the size and type of the place where the respondent lives might affect the way neighborhood trust encourages or discourages participation. In these data, the size and type of place seemed not to matter once we controlled for the other variables in our model.

¹⁹ We actually started to do that with these data, and what we found is intriguing but incomplete. With respect to organizational involvement (and using the model from Table 15), the impact of neighborhood trust depends on years in the community for men **and** women, but the impact of neighborhood trust for those with full-time jobs holds only (and quite strongly) for men and not at all for women. By contrast, the weak relationship we see in these data between general trust and overall participation is an average of the non-existent relationship for men and a substantial relationship for women.

Next, we look at another form of stratification – at education. Do the benefits of social trust accrue to those with a lot of education, as well as those with little education? Here, because of our sample size, we limit our examination to the model we just reported in the first column of Table 15 (and, because our sample would be too small to be informative, we omit the models for full-time workers). And we divide the sample nearly in half. One could imagine a range of reasons why trust could work differently for those with a lot or a little education. Education could engage people with the political system and, thus, give social trust a chance to work. Alternatively, those with little education could rely especially heavily on social trust – as a kind of compensatory resource for civic life. And those with a lot of education could have plenty of ways to make their way to political and civic life without relying much on social trust.

The results in Table 16 suggest that social trust may play a special role among those without other resources – or without the all-important resource of education. Of course, that’s enabling and depressing all at the same time. When those with lower levels of education have social trust, they can participate in the social and political life of the nation. When they don’t have social trust – in general or in their neighbors – they’re especially disadvantaged. And, as you’ll remember from Table 7, those with little education are especially likely not to trust others – in their neighborhood or elsewhere. The well-educated – who, by contrast, are a trusting lot – seem somewhat less affected, somewhat less encouraged or discouraged to participate by their levels of trust. It would be nice to have a larger sample to push harder on this result.

Table 16
Does the power of trust to predict participation depend on education?

	People with ... Low education	High education
Participation		
General trust	0.69 (0.27)*	0.04 (0.37)
Neighborhood trust	-0.09 (0.84)	0.45 (1.50)
Working*	0.32 (1.31)	-0.55 (1.83)
Neighborhood trust		
Years in community*	-0.12 (0.54)	0.91 (0.72)
Neighborhood trust		
Local participation		
General trust	0.16 (0.15)	-0.11 (0.19)
Neighborhood trust	-0.62 (0.47)	-0.15 (0.79)
Working*	0.47 (0.73)	-0.13 (0.96)
Neighborhood trust		
Years in community*	-0.15 (0.30)	0.49 (0.37)
Neighborhood trust		
Organizational Activity		
General trust	0.39 (0.10)*	0.19 (0.11)*
Neighborhood trust	-0.36 (0.31)	-0.16 (0.45)
Working*	0.58 (0.49)	0.58 (0.55)
Neighborhood trust		
Years in community*	0.36 (0.20)*	0.32 (0.21)
Neighborhood trust		



Finally, and though we have only cross-sectional data to explore this possibility, to what extent does trust account for age-based differences in political and civic activity, controlling for the usual suspects? Do the coefficients on age, where age is broken into decades to see the place of the long-civic generation in our analyses, change – and weaken – in the face of social trust? Table 17 gives us one answer to this question. There, we report the coefficients on age from models that, in the first column, don't consider trust, and, in the second column, do consider trust. Our question is whether the coefficients change or become less systematic across these two columns. While ours is a weak test of the possibility that differential trust accounts for different levels of participation across generations – long panel data would allow one to pull life-cycle and generation apart in ways that a cross-sectional model simply cannot – if there's no movement at all from the first column to the second, we would find that informative.

Table 17
Does taking this model of trust – the one in Table 15 -- into account explain age-based differences in activity?

Dependent Variable	Coefficient and Standard Error on Age (The comparison group is the group over 65.)	
	Without trust	With trust
Participation		
<25	-0.26 (0.31)	-0.17 (0.33)
25-35	0.07 (0.28)	0.18 (0.30)
35-45	0.37 (0.25)	0.37 (0.27)
45-55	0.19 (0.27)	0.14 (0.29)
55-65	0.17 (0.24)	0.15 (0.25)
Local Participation		
<25	0.42 (0.16)*	0.42 (0.18)*
25-35	0.36 (0.15)*	0.36 (0.16)*
35-45	0.34 (0.13)*	0.32 (0.14)*
45-55	0.15 (0.14)	0.12 (0.15)
55-65	0.15 (0.13)	0.13 (0.13)
Organizational Activity		
<25	-0.13 (0.10)	-0.03 (0.10)
25-35	-0.09 (0.09)	0.03 (0.10)
35-45	0.01 (0.08)	0.06 (0.08)
45-55	-0.11 (0.09)	-0.08 (0.09)
55-65	-0.03 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.08)
Electoral Activity		
<25	-0.78 (0.16)*	-0.71 (0.17)*
25-35	-0.39 (0.15)*	-0.32 (0.16)*
35-45	-0.15 (0.13)	-0.12 (0.14)
45-55	-0.04 (0.14)	-0.04 (0.15)
55-65	-0.07 (0.13)	-0.06 (0.13)

Controlling for race, education, efficacy, income, gender, religious attendance, working, and political information. In the first column we don't control for trust. In the second, we do, in precisely the same way we controlled for trust in Table 16.



In Table 17, we take a look at this possibility. The coefficients simply do not move – even a little bit – as we go from one column to the next. Again, that's quite interesting, and we'd very much like to know if this is true in a larger sample.

Recommendations

Social trust is a central topic in the social sciences today. The signs are all around us. Empirical work is proceeding at a feverish clip. Fascinating theoretical speculations fill the journals. There is backing and forthing about whether social trust is in decline in the US, and if so, what such a decline means for American civic and political life. There is all this and more, but what is missing is serious attention to issues of measurement. Rather like the weather, one finds occasional complaining about standard measures of social trust, but no one seems to do anything about it.

This is where we have tried to make a contribution. Concerned that the standard social trust questions ask people to offer alarmingly abstract judgments, we have developed new measures of social trust, rooted in particular sites. Our work is informed both by psychological conjectures and results on reasoning and political conjectures and results on participation. We produced measures of trustworthy practices and dispositions, not about people in general but about particular people – neighbors and co-workers – and tried them out in a small national survey. Our results seem promising and in places tantalizing. Our new measures are highly reliable. They are related but distinct from each other and from general social trust as well. They are not so susceptible to the huge race and class differences that characterize standard measures of social trust. And they show interesting patterns with participation in political life. In particular, neighborhood and workplace trust appear to represent paths to participation that are independent of the path from social trust in general.

Running on small samples, some of our results are not as clear or certain as we would like. But we have found enough that is promising to recommend to the Board that we carry these measures on the fall 2000 NES. Not all of the new indicators, of course. We began this project with the expectation that the Pilot Study would give us the information needed to make sensible choices about *which* of the measures of trust to carry forward, and we believe that it has. We also believe we haven't yet extracted all the information we need to make a fully detailed recommendation. What we can say now is this: because both the workplace and neighborhood trust scales are highly reliable, and because both show intriguing relationships with general social trust and with various forms of participation, we recommend that the 2000 NES carry both scales, each reduced to 4 items. Which 4 we cannot say at the moment. We need a bit more time than we have at the moment to carry out the requisite analysis, calculating the loss in reliability and the loss in predictive power that comes from winnowing the original 8-item scales to various versions of 4-item scales. We hope and expect to recommend a *balanced* set of 4: that is, equal numbers of positive and negative items, equal numbers of both trustworthy dispositions and practices. We are also recommending retention of the 3 general social trust questions. Our intention all along has been not to replace but to supplement the standard measure of general social trust. We want NES to be able to speak directly to the burgeoning literature on trust; to do that we need to include standard measures. Finally, to clarify the meaning of trust – general trust, neighborhood trust, workplace trust – and to enhance our understanding of political participation, we recommend cutting the measure of informal participation growing out of the workplace and streamlining the question on how much time to organizations to ask whether the respondent gave time to organizations. We recommend that NES carry the small battery of 4 measures of non-electoral participation – informal local participation, attendance at local meetings, organizational involvement (along with whether the organization is a political one and whether the respondent gives time to organizations), and contacting.

Our recommendations pertain of course only to the 2000 NES. We make no presumption about the fate of trust questions beyond 2000. That will hinge, as always, on what use analysts will make of these questions and on the strength of competing claims. But as for 2000, we are reasonably confident that we have developed the tools to enable the analysis of new and exciting questions

about civic and political life, ones that are at the forefront of our discipline. And so we (just) should do it.

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