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ABSTRACT. The importance of trust has long been emphasised by social
and political theorists from Locke and Tocqueville to Putnam and civil
society theorists. However, individual survey data casts substantial doubt
on this powerful tradition of thought. There is little evidence of (1) an
overlap between social and political trust, (2) a syndrome of trust and
membership of voluntary organizations, and (3) the existence of
trusting/distrusting dispositions among individuals. However, at the
aggregate national level there is evidence to support the theory, and the
author concludes that the classic theory is correct but needs modification
and qualification.

Keywords: Civil society • Democracy • Political capital • Social capital •
Trust

Introduction

There are fundamental difficulties at the heart of social capital theory, and its
close cousin the theory of civil society, that threaten to undermine both of them.
Briefly stated, they argue that a dense network of voluntary associations and
citizens organizations help to sustain civil society and community relations in a way
that generates trust and cooperation between citizens and a high level of civic
engagement and participation. Therefore they create the conditions for social
integration, public awareness and action, and democratic stability. However, survey
research fails to uphold some of the basic claims of these theories. In the first
place, there is very little evidence that membership of voluntary organizations has
much of a relationship with individual attitudes of trust. In the second place, the
evidence shows that social trust between citizens is not at all closely related to
political trust between citizens and political leaders. In the third place, survey
research suggests that different sorts of people express social and political trust,
for different reasons. It follows that social and political trust do not have common
origins in the same set of social conditions; they are different things with different
causes.

There *are* weak and patchy associations between social and political trust, and there *are* weak and patchy associations between membership of voluntary organizations and trust, but the relationships are not at all robust and certainly they are not observed across nations, nor are they substantial enough to support major theories relating trust to social capital, civil society, and democratic stability.

Nevertheless, it would be odd indeed if the social and political theory developed by so many eminent thinkers over centuries of intellectual development—from de Tocqueville, Mill, Simmel, Tönnies, and Durkheim, to Kornhauser, Parson, Coleman and Putnam—was completely wrong. The last section of this article will outline some of the ways in which social capital and civil society theory seem to be right. The argument is that the relationship between social and political trust and democracy is more complex and indirect than appears to be the case at first. Before elaborating on this, however, the article will explore the empirical association between social and political trust, and its relationship with membership of voluntary organizations.

Social Trust

According to theorists such as de Tocqueville, J.S. Mill, Durkheim, Simmel, Tönnies, and Kornhauser, many social benefits flow from membership of voluntary organizations in the community.[1] At the individual level, the argument goes, citizen involvement in the local community and its voluntary activities teaches the "habits of the heart" (Bellah et al., 1985) of social behaviour—trust, reciprocity, solidarity, and cooperation. Trust plays a central role, perhaps the main one, in this constellation of concepts, for as Simmel (1950: 326) writes, "trust is one of the most important synthetic forces within society."

The most recent variation on these themes is to be found in recent writings on social capital. It draws mainly from the social theory tradition of de Tocqueville and Mill and argues that trust has its origins in that broad, deep, and dense network of voluntary associations and intermediary organizations that comprise civil society. Trust is a—probably *the*—main component of social capital, and social capital is a necessary condition of social integration, economic efficiency, and democratic stability (Arrow, 1972: 357; Coleman, 1988: 306; Ostrom, 1990; Putnam, 1993, 1995, 2000; Fukuyama, 1995).

For present purposes, trust is defined here as the actor's belief that, at worst, others will not knowingly or willingly do him harm, and at best, that they will act in his interests. Hardin (1998: 12–15) defines trust as "encapsulated interest." Trust makes it possible to maintain peaceful and stable social relations that are the basis for collective behaviour and productive cooperation. Trust involves risks, it is true, (Luhmann, 1988) but it also helps to convert the Hobbesian state of nature from something that is nasty, brutish, and short, into something that is more pleasant, more efficient, and altogether more peaceful. Social life without trust would be intolerable and, most likely, quite impossible.

But if the need for trust in society is self-evident, its nature, origins and bearing upon social capital are puzzling and highly problematic. Four aspects of the problem are important here: the meaning of trust; the interpretation of survey questions about trust; the association between trust and voluntary organizations; and the different origins of social trust and political trust.

The Definition of Trust

Trust is not easily defined, as a recent spate of books and articles on the concept and its theory testify (Barber, 1983; Baier, 1986; Gambetta, 1988; Hardin, 1991, 1993, 1996; Misztal, 1996; Seligman, 1997; Braithwaite and Levi, 1998; Warren, 1999). To confuse matters further, it has a constellation of synonyms—mutuality, empathy, reciprocity, civility, respect, solidarity, empathy, toleration, and fraternity. However, it is not the purpose of this article to dispute the meaning of words. It may be that another word captures the significance of trust for social capital more satisfactorily, although it is unlikely that there is a trouble-free term amidst the constellation which serves the purpose very much better than the concept of trust. We should not be lured into the belief that other terms are necessarily better; were they to be put under the same scrutiny as trust over the last few years, they would most probably be found just as wanting. Trust is likely to be as good or bad a concept as any. Besides, for better or for worse, there is a standard question on social trust which is commonly used in cross-national surveys and hence we do have a good deal of information about levels and trends of trust in different countries, and about its association with a long list of social, economic, and political variables.

The Meaning and Interpretation of the Survey Questions

A second problem with trust concerns the way in which the standard survey question has generally been interpreted. The question ("Generally speaking would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?") is often assumed to tap the basic dispositions of individuals who reveal their fundamental psychological identity as trusters or distrusters in their responses. However, trust seems to be less of an expression of an internal and unvarying personality trait, than a response of individuals to the changing external world around them. Responses to the trust question tell us not about the disposition of people to be trusters or distrusters but about how they evaluate the trustworthiness of the world they live in.

There are two good reasons for opting for this interpretation of responses to trust questions. First, different forms of trust do not form a single, unified syndrome, as the social-psychological approach to trusting and misanthropic personalities suggests they should (Erikson, 1950; Rosenberg, 1956, 1957; Allport, 1961; Cattell, 1965). Survey research that asks questions about both social trust and political trust finds a weak or non-existent relationship between them (Kaase, 1999: 14; Newton, 1999a: 180). One can predict virtually nothing about a person's trust in other people from their trust in government; these are different forms of trust that are largely independent of each other. In other words, the evidence suggests that we should not treat trust as a generalized personality trait, but distinguish carefully between social trust and political trust, recognizing that they are neither different aspects of much the same thing, nor necessarily related to each other empirically.

Second, trust seems to be an expression of how people evaluate the world around them because trust statistics in any given society sometimes increase or decrease quite rapidly, and this seems to be a response to variations in the external world. As Hardin (1993) observes, trust involves the continual accumulation and updating of experience. There is evidence that people do accumulate and update

their experience, and that they accordingly give different responses to the survey questions. For example, social trust in Germany (the longest time series on trust we have for any country) increased steadily from 9 percent in 1948 to 45 percent in 1993 (Cusack, 1997), as the country moved from the Nazi-era of fear and paranoia into the postwar world of peace, prosperity and democracy. Another example is provided by Finland in the 1980s and 1990s, where (as we will see later) the social trust and political trust scores moved quite independently of each other.

Social Trust and Voluntary Organizations

The third puzzling and problematic aspect of social trust is its relationship to social groups in society, and to membership of voluntary organizations. Once again, survey research shows no more than a weak and intermittent association between membership of voluntary associations and a willingness to express trust. There is a statistical association between social trust and membership of voluntary associations in some western countries, but even where that exists, it is usually statistically weak and substantively small (Torcal and Montero, 1996: 181; van Deth, 1996; Dekker and van den Broek, 1996; Newton, 1999a: 173, 1999b:16, 2000). Membership of voluntary associations sometimes does a little for social trust, but usually does nothing for it.

Social and Political Trust Expressed by Different People for Different Reasons

Social trust does not correlate widely or strongly with the usual set of social, economic, and political variables (income, education, class, gender, age, race, left-right politics, employment status, membership of voluntary organizations), but there is a slight tendency for it to be found in some social types. It is more frequently expressed by the "winners" in society, rather than the "losers" — that is, it correlates positively, if weakly and patchily, with high income, high education, and high social status, and is more likely to be found in men and the middle-aged, and in those who say they are happy, satisfied with their jobs, and proud of their nation (Orren, 1997; Newton, 1999a: 173, 2000). It is not surprising that those who are doing well in society are more likely to express social trust than those doing less well, but even so the association is not at all strong.

Political trust, on the other hand, is not associated with the same set of variables as social trust. It is even more randomly distributed among social types, but not quite randomly. Whereas social trust is associated, if at all, with social variables measuring social and economic success, political trust is rather more strongly associated with a set of political variables measuring interest in politics, pride in the national political system, a belief in open government, a low priority given to social order and the left-right scale. Political trust is even less strongly associated with membership of voluntary organizations than social trust (Newton, 1999a, 2000).

The fact that social and political trust tend to be expressed by different kinds of people for different sorts of reasons is another argument against the social-psychological theory that trust is a basic and unified personality trait. The survey evidence suggests that social and political trust are not a single dimension, but quite different things with a different set of origins.

In sum, social trust is a puzzle; its relationship to society and voluntary associations, as well as its relationship to political trust and to government, is not at

all clear. To this extent some of the basic assumptions underlying the theoretical relationship of trust, social capital and civil society, on the one hand, and the classic issues of social integration and democratic stability, on the other, are questionable.

Political Trust

Political trust has the same theoretical relationship to political capital, as social trust has to social capital. The relationship is confused by the fact that just as there are many synonyms and different measures for social trust, so there are for political trust—civic-mindedness and participation, citizenship, political interest and involvement, a concern with the public interest/public good, political tolerance, the ability to compromise, and confidence in political institutions. In many ways the idea of political trust and political capital is a modern social science version of the classical concept of fraternity—together with liberty and equality, it is a necessary condition for democracy. However, like social trust and social capital, it probably makes little difference for empirical purposes which word or concept from the list just given is used as an indicator or measure of political capital. This study uses confidence in parliament as a measure of political trust, and as an indicator of political capital. This is partly for the pragmatic reason that there is good cross-national survey evidence about confidence in parliament, and partly for the theoretical reason that confidence in institutions is also about something deeper and more fundamental than trust in politicians or in particular governments. Parliament is the main representative institution of democratic governments, and sudden or consistent decline in confidence in it is a serious matter. There are also theoretical arguments for saying that confidence in institutions is the equivalent in modern large-scale society of inter-personal trust (Seligman, 1997).

Political trust and social trust are similar in some ways but different in others. Social or inter-personal trust can be based upon immediate, first hand experience of others, whereas political trust is most generally learned indirectly and at a distance, usually through the media. Nevertheless, just as social trust is said to be essential for civilized social life, so political trust is said to be essential for democratic and stable political life. For example, recent research shows that social and political trust significantly increases the chances of citizens paying their taxes. Hence, trust improves the practical possibilities of social cooperation, while at the same time reducing the risks of free-riding citizens and exploitive elites (Scholtz and Lubell, 1998: 398–417).

Like social trust, political trust seems to be a reflection of the external or objective conditions. It is not an expression of a basic feature of "trusting personalities," but an evaluation of the political world. This makes trust scores a litmus test of how well the political system is performing in the eyes of its citizens. Low trust suggests that something in the political system—politicians or institutions, or both—is thought to be functioning poorly. It may be that performance is poor, or that expectations are too high, but either way low trust tells us that something is wrong.

Some argue that a measure of political distrust or lack of confidence is healthy for political life, that too much trust of politicians betrays innocence, or unwise behaviour (Hardin, 1999). This may be so, but it is beside the point. It does, indeed, make sense not to trust untrustworthy politicians and flawed political

institutions, and in such circumstances lack of trust is hard-headed, sensible, and probably good for democracy. But at the same time, the point about democracy is to recruit political leaders who are honest and trustworthy, and, more importantly, to create a political system that ensures they behave in a trustworthy manner. Political trust is important because democracies are based on institutional mechanisms that are supposed to ensure that politicians behave in a trustworthy manner, or pay the political price.[2] Confidence in the institutions that are supposed to maintain trustworthy politicians is a crucial element in this mixture. But this does not get us far. If political trust and confidence in parliament are important, then it is necessary to know how and why they are generated and under what social and political circumstances they rise and fall. This brings us to the question of voluntary organizations and their role in civil society of helping to generate trust and sustain democracy.

The Role of Voluntary Organizations

Voluntary organizations are a special kind of social institution because they are neither family, nor work, nor state: we are born into families; we cannot avoid the state; and most of us have to work. Voluntary organizations, clubs, intermediary and secondary associations, and community groups, are the principal wholly voluntary and collaborative activities we are involved in. Membership is entirely up to individuals who engage in a set of cooperative activities to achieve their mutual goals, whatever these may be.

For this reason voluntary associations have played a special role in sociology, anthropology and political theory from de Tocqueville, Durkheim, Simmel, Tönnies, and J.S.Mill to Kornhauser, Almond and Verba, Geertz, and Putnam. At the individual level, voluntary associations are said to teach trust and social understanding because they allow a variety of people, sometimes with disparate backgrounds and different values, to work together. By bringing together a mix of social types and backgrounds they help people understand and empathize with others, and create the cross-pressures that are said to result in moderation and tolerance. They teach empathy, the art of compromise and cooperation, and the ability to rub along with different social types—they encourage the "habits of the heart" of civilized social relations. They breed and enforce reciprocity—it is difficult to behave badly in business if you know you will meet your victim at the golf club dance on Saturday.

On the societal level voluntary associations are said to create the cross-cutting ties and social networks that bind society together by its own internal conflicts. They create social bonds between like-minded people and can build bridges between different social groups wherever there is an overlap. They are the basis for the vast universe of pressure groups that aggregate and articulate opinions, act as intermediaries between citizens and elites, protecting the former from the behaviour of the manipulative and exploitive latter. They give citizens a sense of security that comes from community and belonging. They form the organizational basis of a democratic culture and its social networks of communication. In short, voluntary associations create the bonds of social solidarity that are the basis for civil society and democracy.

Although many theorists stress these features of associational life, the empirical evidence in support of their various claims is rather thin and weak. The assumption that social and political trust are close cousins that are born and bred

in the same way by voluntary activity is not supported by the evidence. Second, members of voluntary associations are not particularly likely to express attitudes of social trust, and barely more likely to express political trust than non-members. There is little difference in these respects between activists in organizations (some of whom spend a good deal of time working in them) and the much larger number of members, who give little time to them (Newton, 1999a: 173). There *is* an association between voluntary activity and social and political trust in some countries, but it is not consistent across nations, and not strong in any.

On reflection, it is difficult to see why voluntary associations should be so important for the developing of trusting attitudes, whatever their impact on society may be in other respects. First, most people do not spend a lot of time on organizational activities, compared with the time they spend in school, work, the family, or the neighbourhood. These are likely to be more important arenas for the generation of trust than voluntary organizations (Levi, 1996: 48). For example, education shows a very strong association with trust (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995: 514, Putnam 1995: 667).

In the second place, it is difficult to sort out the complicated cause-and-effect relations between membership of voluntary associations and trust (van Deth 1997: 11–15). It seems at least as likely that trusting people tend to join organizations as the other way round. The relationship is likely to be reciprocal, but the strongest path probably runs from trusting to joining associations (for a different view, see Putnam, 1993: 171–176, and 1995: 666). The argument for this supposition is as follows: we know that social winners tend to be trusting, and that joiners of voluntary organizations are often winners with comparatively high income, education, and social class. It seems more likely that the background and experience of being a social winner encourages both joining and trusting. It is less plausible to argue that people are trusting because they have learned this attitude in their voluntary organizations, although membership may reinforce pre-existing levels of trust.

In sum, the first sections of this article have shown, one, that social trust and political trust are not closely associated; two, that they, in turn, are associated with different configurations of social, economic, and political variables, although the associations in both cases are weak and patchy; and three, that neither social nor political trust (especially the latter) are strongly associated with membership of voluntary organizations. At this point the theory claiming that there is a close connection between social and political trust, and a close connection between both of these and voluntary organizations on the one hand, and democracy, on the other, seems highly questionable.

Aggregate Analysis

The story cannot be left here, however. If the standard measures of social and political trust should be interpreted as judgments about the external world in which people find themselves, then the analysis of trust should focus not on individuals but rather on the trustworthiness of society at large. Instead of seeing trust as a property of individuals, perhaps we should compare whole societies and their collective levels of trust (Newton and Norris, 2000). Besides, if social capital is anything, it is a societal not an individual property, and should be studied as a social or collective phenomenon, not at the individual level as if it were a property of isolated citizens. According to this view individuals do not "have" social capital,

but social systems as a whole generate it as a context in which individuals operate. Similarly, the concept of civil society refers to a social context in which there is a broad range, great diversity, and high density of social networks and formal and informal social organizations. It is a contextual property of societies in which individuals live, not a characteristic which individuals carry around with them.

The reasons for working at the aggregate or systemic level in the case of political trust are much the same. If confidence in political institutions is based upon evaluations of how the political system is working then it is likely to be affected by such things as inflation, unemployment, political corruption or incompetence, victory or defeat in war, economic growth, a rising or falling crime rate, and governments whose records inspire confidence, or the lack of it. These are indicators of government performance that affect everybody. They may not affect all citizens to the same extent, but they are likely to affect most of them to a greater or lesser extent; attitudes of political trust or distrust are distributed fairly randomly across society and expressed by a wide variety of social types. Hence, political trust does not generally correlate with the usual set of individual variables—age, income, education, class; the analysis of political trust should focus attention not on individuals, but on political systems as a whole. If this is correct then the absence of an association between social and political trust at the individual level is not of great importance for social capital theory. What matters is the relationship between social and political trust at the aggregate level— measured by averaging the social and political trust scores for whole nations.

Some evidence for these assertions is presented in Figure 1, which plots the relationship between the average social trust and confidence in parliament scores for forty-two nations. The social trust measure is the standard World Values Surveys question (1991–95) "Generally speaking would you say that most people can be trusted (scored 2), or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people (scored 1)?" The confidence in parliament question is also taken from the World Values Survey and asks "Please look at this card and tell me for each item listed, how much confidence you have in them, is it a great deal (scored 4), quite a lot (3), not very much (2), or none at all (1)?" The question is asked about parliament and a set of other major institutions. Figure 1 plots social trust against confidence in parliament (rather than political trust) because the confidence in parliament question is asked in many more countries, because parliament is the central representative institution of democracies, and because for theoretical reasons (Seligman, 1997) confidence in institutions is said to be more important for modern societies than measures of trust in individuals.

Figure 1 suggests that there is generally a positive association between social trust and political confidence, at least for thirty of the 42 nations included. This large group of nations shows a clear tendency for higher levels of social trust to be associated with higher levels of political confidence. However, the relationship between social trust and confidence in parliament is not particularly tight or close, and it is evident that there are a number of deviant cases.

The exceptions to the general rule are interesting and important. The first group of deviant cases has a high level of confidence in parliament relative to social trust. China, for example, is an outlier that stands apart for its exceptionally high levels of social trust and political confidence. It is not difficult to understand the social trust figure for China (Inglehart, 1999: 103) but it is difficult to believe the high figure for political confidence. It is likely to be a response to social pressures and political controls.
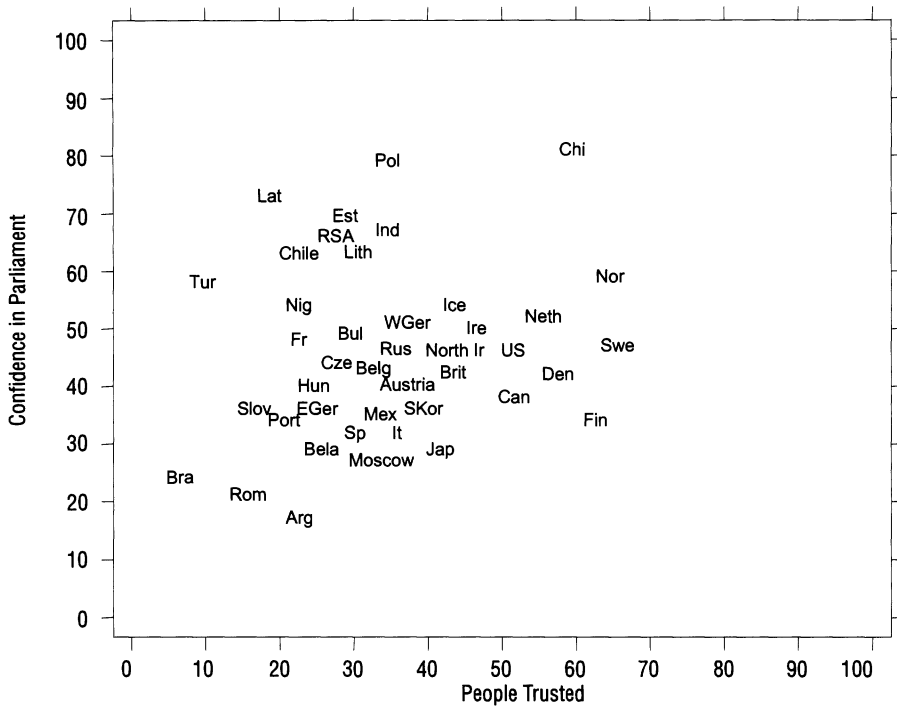
FIGURE 1. *Social Trust and Confidence in Parliament.*

Countries: Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, China, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, East Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Mexico, Moscow, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, N. Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, S. Africa, S. Korea, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, UK, USA, West Germany.
N = 42
Source: *World Values Surveys* (1991–95).

A second group of countries consisting of Poland, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Chile, and South Africa also have high levels of confidence in parliament relative to low levels of social trust. All are newly democratizing nations. In these cases, answers to questions about confidence in parliament may be an expression of faith in the principles and potentials of democracy as a form of government, rather than as an evaluation of how parliament is currently working in practice. In established democracies where parliaments have a long track record, citizens find it easier to distinguish between democracy in principle, and the operation of their own parliament in practice.

Two other revealing cases stand out—Finland and Japan—although in their case low levels of confidence in parliament are associated with high levels of social trust.

The Case of Finland

In the 1990s social trust in Finland was at the same very high level as in Sweden, Norway, and the Netherlands, but confidence in parliament was low and on a par

with Italy, Portugal, Mexico, Slovenia, and East Germany. Finland's recent political history is also special.

In 1980 social trust in Finland was at a very high level; by 1990 it was even higher: in the same period, confidence in parliament fell heavily from 65 percent in 1981 (second only to Norway) to 34 percent in 1991. Confidence in the police and civil service also declined steeply in this period.

The reason for such a steep decline in confidence in public institutions does not lie in crumbling social trust or decay of social capital. On the contrary, social trust was high and the country maintained its unusually vibrant associational life, as measured by the rate of formation of new associations, and by organizational membership. As Siisiäinen (1999: 139) states "The number of memberships in voluntary associations has not been declining in Finland in the 1990s; the 1990s saw the foundation of more than 2 000 new registered associations per year. So there is no general crisis of voluntary associations, or of social capital manifest in association membership or activism involving the use of associations to further political goals." The causes of Finland's decline of political confidence lies in the severe political problems caused by the collapse of its neighbour and crucial trading partner, the Soviet Union.

In 1990 Finland started a deep economic recession in which unemployment grew to an all time historical high, government deficits trebled, taxes increased, and services and wages were cut. Huge amounts of money fled the country, interest rates soared, and the value of the currency dropped steeply. Business bankruptcies multiplied. Open conflict developed between the government and the central bank. A general strike was threatened. A cabinet minister resigned in 1992—unusual in Finland—and another minister (Kauko Juhantalo) was found guilty of corruption and expelled from parliament—unprecedented in Finland. There was deep division about membership of the European Union.[3] Although social trust remained high, confidence in parliament, and other public institutions, collapsed. The causes of Finland's acute political problems were not social or related in any significant way to a decay of social capital or a decline of social trust. On the contrary Finland remained a well-founded civil society. The causes of the political problems lay in political events.

What this case study suggests, against the background of the other nations in Figure 1, is that the relationship between social and political capital is probably not symmetrical: healthy stocks of political capital cannot be built up in nations lacking social capital (Brazil, Romania, Argentina), but political capital can dwindle rapidly in countries, such as Finland, with well developed social capital. In the long run, the two are likely to adjust to one another in the sense that higher levels of social capital tend to be associated with higher levels of political capital. Finland's recovery of political confidence will be much assisted by the high level of social capital in the country, whereas a country with equally severe political problems and low stocks of social capital is likely to experience much greater problems in building political confidence.

The Case of Japan

Japan, like Finland, is a country where low and declining levels of confidence in government are accompanied by high and increasing levels of social capital (this section is based upon Pharr, 2000: 173–201). Levels of satisfaction with politics in Japan have generally been low by OECD standards since the 1970s, and they fell to

near-record low levels in the early 1990s. Over the same period, however, social capital in Japan increased by most measures; interest groups and voluntary associations proliferated between 1960 and 1990. What explains the decline of political trust and confidence is not social capital but rather the performance of politicians in office. Pharr (2000: 173) demonstrates that "in Japan, at least, officials' misconduct has been by far the single best predictor at any given point in time of citizen confidence in government over the past two decades."

Interpretation

The relationship between social trust and social capital (or civil society), on the one hand, and political trust and political capital, on the other, is not simple or straightforward. A relationship exists, as social capital and civil society theory predicts, but not at the individual level, and only in a complicated and indirect manner at the system level. Since social capital and civil society are essentially a social and collective property of social systems, not a characteristic feature that individuals carry around with them, the relationship is found at the aggregate level of society as a whole. Consequently, while little can be predicted about an individual's political trust or confidence in public institutions on the basis of his or her social trust, countries with relatively high levels of social trust tend to have relatively high levels of political confidence as well.

Why is this? First, it seems that social and political trust are rooted in experience of the social and political world in which people find themselves. Social trust is expressed by people who feel they are generally surrounded by trustworthy people, and political trust is expressed by people who feel that their political system and its politicians generally perform satisfactorily. Among the nations for which we have figures, the highest levels of social trust are found among the wealthiest—Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and Iceland. The lowest levels are found in Brazil, Turkey, Romania, and Slovenia.

By and large there is a general tendency for countries with higher levels of social trust to show higher levels of political confidence, and vice versa. But the association between social and political trust is not necessarily close, and there are some exceptions to the general rule.

The reason seems to be that the relationship between individual social trust and political trust is mediated by the effectiveness of social and political institutions. Individual social trust helps to build the cooperative social relations on which effective social and political organizations are built—a bottom-up process. Effective social and political organizations help to create effective and legitimate government, which then help to create the social conditions for high levels of social capital and a well-developed civil society—a top-down process. Similarly, individual political trust helps to build effective political institutions that enable governments to perform well, and to build up political capital as well as creating the conditions for a flourishing civil society—another bottom-up and top-down process. Hence, social capital and a developed civil society help to make good government possible, and good government helps to sustain social capital and the conditions of civil society.

But the relationship between social and political capital is not necessarily close or symmetrical—high levels of social trust are likely to be related to high levels of political trust, but not necessarily. It is difficult to imagine good government without a solid foundation of effective institutions, both public and private, for it is

virtually impossible to create good government out of the poorly developed civil societies of banana republics. To this extent, low levels of social capital and social trust are highly likely to be associated with equally low levels of political capital and political trust. Poorly developed civil societies are unlikely to sustain developed democracies. As social capital is created in civil society so it is easier to create political capital as well, but the link between the social and the political is not necessarily close in any given case, though it is generally found in most nations.

The connection between social and political capital may be broken, as it has been in Japan and Finland, by things like a chronic failure of coalition governments, a history of political corruption or incompetence, external shocks to the system, high inflation or unemployment, poor economic performance, or defeat in war. Such things can result in low political capital being accompanied by high social capital. But whereas nations with little social capital will find it difficult to build political capital, countries with well-developed social capital will find it easier to re-create high levels of political capital while their social capital remains high.

Finally, to return to the general theoretical identity of social and political capital, two points are worth making. First, social and political capital refer to the aggregate properties of societies and polities, not to their individual members. One can estimate the stock of social and political capital by averaging individual scores for a society as a whole, in the same way as GNP refers to whole nations or regions.

Second, although the concepts of social and political capital are equivalent in some ways, it seems sensible to keep the two apart for analytical purposes. They are not two sides of the same coin at the individual level, and the link between the two at the aggregate level is not simple, symmetrical, or direct. A good stock of social capital is prerequisite for an effective political system, which is then able to build up political capital, but high levels of social capital do not necessarily or inevitably generate high levels of political capital in any particular country at any point in time.

Notes

1. For a review of the literature on trust see Misztal, 1996, and for a review of the work on voluntary organizations see Smith and Freeman, 1972, and Pugliese, 1986.
2. John Locke, *Two Treatises on Government*, observes that "...The grounds for trusting rulers are to be found in the sanctions that punish breaches of trust," and James Madison (*The Federalist Papers*, No. 57) echoes the thought with the statement that "The aim of every political constitution is, or ought to be, first to obtain for rulers men who posses most wisdom to discern, and most virtue to pursue, the common good of society; and in the next place, to take the most effective precautions for keeping them virtuous whilst they continue to hold the public trust."
3. For details of the economic and political events in Finland in the 1980s and 1990s see Jan Sundberg's annual entry in *The Political Data Yearbook* of the *European Journal of Political Science*.

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