Prominent Works on Political Discontent/Dissatisfaction

1) Discussions on "Critical Citizens"

– Critical citizens (Norris (1999))

- In the United States, public support for institutions (day-to-day operations of government) had dropped significantly from 1960s to 1990s. However, the support for the underlying constitutional framework – democracy – remained robust. The phenomenon is not just American, but a global trend.

- Declining confidence in government could be a sign of health as democracy needs critical citizens. But there is still a concern of the declining confidence in government: loss of confidence can harden into cynicism and hatred; over a long run, may weaken support for democracy as a form of governance. The mechanism is that the well performance of government requires trustful citizens who 1) have voluntary compliance with the law, 2) have willingness to pay taxes, and 3) are eager to enter government services. Without these, government performance worsens, and citizens will become more disaffected and distrustful – it is a cumulative downward spiral that could erode democratic support over a long run.

– Bertsou (2019) disagrees that political distrust is the "guardian of democracy." Political distrust observed in established democracies should not be conflated with the thought of vigilant citizenry in the liberal democratic traditions (Madison, Hume, etc.). The "liberal distrust" does benefit democracy, but its emphasis of the need of vigilance is onlyb to justify an institutional design controlling power abuse. She argues that after democracy is established, what is needed for the system to function healthily is political trust.

Then, she argues that conflating "political distrust" with the "lack of political trust" is problematic. She defines political distrust as a relational attitude that reflects perceptions of untrustworthiness specific to the political system in its entirety or its components. It entails three evaluative components: 1) judgements of government's capacity, 2) moral judgements, and 3) perceptions of incongruent interests between the citizen and the system or agents.

– Saikkonen and Christensen (2023), using a conjoint experiment conducted in Finland, find that citizens with higher levels of political trust and democratic satisfaction are more likely to condemn democratic transgressions by politicians. They thus conclude that citizens with high political satisfaction rather than the "critical citizens" (who are disaffected) are the true guardians of democracy.

– In general, studies, both theoretical and empirical, reject the need of "critical citizens" for a healthy functioning democracy (even Pippa himself is concerned with the hazard of disaffection to the democratic system). More pieces of empirical evidence (such as Marien and Hooghe (2011) and Dalton (2004) presented below) clearly show that distrustful and disaffected citizens compromise effective governance and collobration.

Prominent Works on Political Trust

1) Theoretical Works

- T. W. G. Van der Meer (2017) and T. W. Van der Meer and Zmerli (2017) have a good discussion of the conceptulization of "political trust," such as the subjects of political trust, and its distinction with related concepts, such as "political support," skepticism, etc. They argue that political trust is fundamentally relational and situational. "It is relational because it has a subject who trusts and an object that is trusted; we do not argue that person A trusts without reference to a trust object. Trust is situational since it is commonly given or withheld with reference to specific types of actions or environments. Trust is therefore expressed as 'A trusts B to do X' (Hardin, 2000, p. 26) or as 'a state of mind for individuals, but. . .also a characteristic of a polity' (Dalton, 2004, p. 162). Trust relationships are defined by the subject's degree of uncertainty or vulnerability regarding the object's future behaviour (Newton, 1999, p. 170; Van der Meer, 2016)." Furthermore, it provides a good general overview of the development of literature about political trust in many aspects. Lastly, this paper says

"systematic research on the consequences of political trust has remained remarkably scarce, as many scholars have acknowledged in recent years." and summarize a few recent findings (pg.8).

- Almond and Verba (1963) argue that the sense of trust in the political elite makes citizens willing to turn power over to them, and, the maintenance of elite power is essential in a democracy.

- Hetherington (1998) provides a comprehensive overview of the debates surrounding the political relevance of political trust. One classic approach views political trust as stemming from the assessment of incumbents and institutions, akin to specific support, and posits limited political relevance toward the regime. In contrast, the other classic approach regards political trust as akin to diffuse support. Therefore, while political trust may be influenced by the evaluation of regime performance, it can also significantly contribute to negative evaluations of the regime.Two mechanisms were discussed in this context:1) Diminishing trust in political institutions calls into question the legitimacy of democracy, which is founded on these institutions. 2) Distrust leads to disapproval, which in turn hinders leaders' ability to mobilize resources to address issues, resulting in fewer problems being solved. Consequently, distrust creates conditions conducive to further distrust.

- Martin (2010) provides a good summary of old debate over the political relevance of political trust. Arthur Miller (1974), Stokes (1962), and Almond and Verba (1963) proposed that the public's sentiments toward government, including political trust, play a crucial role in the stability of the regime overall. However, Citrin (1974) presents a contrasting viewpoint, arguing that low political trust primarily stems from dissatisfaction with incumbents and does not significantly impact diffuse support for democracy.

- Dawson and Krakoff (2024) provides a good summary of the critical citizen thesis that comparatively lower levels of political trust is not a threat to democracy but a sign of a health democracy. While "critical" or "assertive" citizens exercising their democratic right to publicly criticize and challenge political institutions may decrease trust in those institutions, these challenges are thought to be an important aspect of – and therefore not threaten – the democratic political system. So, low political trust is not a threat to the regime.

- Mishler and Rose (2005) suggests three mechanism in detail that how low institutional trust can threten the stability of democracy. 1) Institutional trust increases diffuse support for democracy or public support for democratic regime, 2) Higher institutional trust facilitates the public's acceptance of democratic values and ideals and its rejection of undemocratic alternatives and 3) Higher institutional trust promotes both the quality and quantity of political involvement.

- Kwak et al. (2020) argues that the difference between young people and old people's political trust is relevant for political changes because governing elites respond to the political values and attitudes of the both following the logic of generational succession. Therefore, the values and attitudes of the young are not crucial per se, but in how they relate to the values and attitudes of the older cohorts.

2) Empirical Works

- Marien and Hooghe (2011) examine the relation between trust in the institutions of the political system and law-abiding attitudes using the 1999–2001 European Values Study. In this study, "political trust" is operationalized as an index summing up trust in parliament, in the justice system, in the armed forces, and in the police. They find citizens with low levels of trust feel it more acceptable to break the law, such as commit tax fraud.

- Dalton (2004) reports that there is a rising trend of political distrust in advanced industrial democracies, which may erode the vitality of democracy and bring political change. Citizens who do not trust government and institutions appear to be less willing to comply with the law and the directives of government. Distrustful citizens also appear to be less involved in the traditional channels of representative democracy, such as voting and campaign activity, but are more likely to seek influence through protest and other direct forms of action.

- Hooghe and Marien (2013)'s study also confirms the relation between political trust and forms of political participation. Political trust is operationalized as trust in institutions. Using the 2006 European Social Survey, they find that political trust is positively associated with institutionalized participation, such as party membership or contacting officials, while negatively associated with non-institutionalized participation, such as signing a petition, boycotting products, joining a demonstration.

- Hetherington (2005) explores the consequences political trust on policy level, using the case of public

support for redistributive programs in the U.S. He finds that, as political trust declines, citizens tend to prefer smaller government, even though their values do not become less liberal. In a later study, Hetherington and Husser (2012) show the effect of political trusts dependent on political issue's salience and media coverage.

- Hetherington (1998) used Structural Equation Modeling with 1988 and 1996 NES, and political trust is measured by asking four questions about one's trust in the government in Washington. The result demonstrates that political trust is related to the diffuse and specific support. Specifically, trust's effect on feelings about the incumbent president, a measure of specific support, is even stronger than the reverse. However, it is not the case for feelings about Congress

- Martin (2010) utilizes data from the 2007 Australian Election Study (AES) to investigate political trust, measured through a question regarding trust in government. Employing Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) analysis, the findings indicate that greater trust in government correlates with more favorable attitudes toward democracy, although it does not impact anti-democratic sentiments. Furthermore, higher levels of trust are associated with an increased voting intention.

- Dawson and Krakoff (2024) empirically tests the critical citizen thesis by using WVS and EVS from 1981 to 2020. Political trust is measured by one's trust in six political institutions – the civil service, police, justice system/courts, parliament, government and political parties. The results provides a support for the critical citizens thesis that the level of democracy is negatively related to political trust.

- Mishler and Rose (2005) measures institutional trust by combining one's trust in the following institutions: "political parties," "the president of Russia," "the governor of this region," "Duma members," "the Duma representative of the single member district in which you live," "the Constitutional Court," "the police," "the Army," and "the Federal Security Service." The dataset is New Russia Barometer survey conducted in 2001 in Russia. By using the Structural Equation Modeling, the results show that trust in political institutions encourages citizen involvement in politics and enhances support for democratic ideals, but it does not influence citizens' support for the current regime or for plausible undemocratic alternatives. On the other hand, institutional trust and support for the new regime are both products of a common underlying dynamic—citizen assessments of political institutions' work in reducing corruption and providing reasonable economic stability and growth.

- Kwak et al. (2020) uses an data set that combines a country-year indicator of liberal democracy and aggregate measures of absolute and relative trust of the young in political institutions for more than 45 countries from 2009 to 2017. Political trust is measured by one's trust in parliament, legal system, and political parties. The result shows that the absolute measure of youth trust in political institutions has a noticeable effect on liberal democracy, meaning the lower trust in political institutions among young people, the larger the decrease in level of democracy Y in the future. Also, the relative measure of youth institutional trust has a substantial effect on changes in liberal democracy. The results from OLS regression analyses showed that the lower trust ratios of young people to older people in political institutions except legal system, the larger the decline in level of democracy in the future.

- Ruck et al. (2020) stands out for its extensive sample coverage, possibly the widest seen to date, although the methodology explanation remains somewhat limited. Institutional trust is assessed by measuring confidence levels in various entities including parliament, government, civil service, police, labor unions, major companies, the press, and the armed forces. Findings indicate that a previous change in democracy weakly predicts a subsequent increase in institutional confidence. However, this effect is less substantial and inconsistent compared to the effect running in the opposite direction. Put simply, the results suggest that prior changes in institutional trust have a stronger and more consistent impact on democracy than the reverse.

- A stream of studies has established that levels of political (dis)trust affect voters' electoral behaviors (Citrin 1974; Hetherington 1999; Bélanger and Nadeau 2005; Miller and Listhaug 1990). These studies suggest that political trust might affect political stability through the electoral system. – Miller and Listhaug (1990) find that, in countries with more rigid party systems (such as Sweden and the US), accumulating dissatisfaction is directed at the regime more generally because people fail to see any third party as a viable alternative. But, whereas there is a flexible party system (such as in Norway), anti-establishment parties could channel discontent back to the electoral channel, thus functioning as a safety valve to protect the legitimacy of democracy. In their study, political trust is measured by both trusts in the government and political leaders. – However, Hooghe and Dassonneville (2018) challenged

the finding. Using the Belgian Election Panel (2009–14), they find that voters who are becoming less trusting are more likely to vote for protest parties. And, having voted for a protest party further fuels more discontents, rather than stabilize them. Political trust is measured variously by trusts in political parties, in the fedearl and regional governments, and in politicians.

- Yap (2019) investigates how political trust functions as a buffer for emergent democracies. Using waves of the Asian Barometer Surveys, she finds that political trust help emergent democracies to consolidate, as political trust supersedes public economic expectations in support for political system. But for the support for the incumbent government, both political trust and public pressure for economic performance matter. It is noteworthy that political trust is operationalized as an additive index comprising political trust and political efficacy, as the author argues that by doing so political trust is based on the real experience with the political system.

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