

# Social and political trust

The origins of and the connection between generalised social trust and trust  
in political institutions in European democracies

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To Espen

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

Contemporary democracies are facing a challenge today. This challenge does not come from enemies within or outside the nation. Instead, the challenge comes from democracy's own citizens, who have grown distrustful of politicians, sceptical about the democratic institutions, and disillusioned about how the democratic process functions (Dalton 2007:1).

Dalton (2007:11) emphasises that if democracy relies on the participation of its citizens as the basis of legitimacy, and to make representative decisions, then decreasing involvement as a consequence of distrust can be harmful for the democratic process. Research on the state of trust in the world is vital, and questions like what can explain who trusts other people and democratic institutions are essential to ask. Rothstein and Stolle (2002:4) writes “(i)n fact, the question of why it is that citizens in some countries, regions, cities or villages are able to join together, trust each other and solve many (maybe most of) their collective action problems, while others cannot, turns out to be one of the most interesting puzzles in the social capital debate.”

The fall in political trust seems to be widespread; the first signs of growing distrust were visible in the United States, but now, people's distrust towards politicians, parties and political institutions are spreading across almost all advanced industrial democracies. The trend is not only visible in the old democracies; Listhaug (2003:22) points to the fact that almost every East European country has had troubles with the development of well-functioning political institutions, and that the first decade of democracy brought a sharp decline in trust in parliament in the new democracies.

I cite Mishler and Rose (2001:30) who studies political trust in the new democracies of Post-Communist Europe:

Trust is especially critical for new regimes in which it is also likely to be in short supply. This is particularly so for new regimes whose predecessors proved unworthy of trust, as in the case of most Post-Communist regimes in Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union.

The literature often separates the concepts of political and social trust. Newton (2001:201) writes that social and political trust does not have common origins in the same set of social conditions, but that they are different things with different causes. I will also separate between these types of trust in this master-thesis. To avoid confusion I will already at this point emphasise the multi-dimensionality of the term trust (Norris 1999a:1). One should not just talk about political trust, but always specify its object. To avoid slippery terms, it should always be clear what is analysed. Here my objects of study are trust in political institutions and generalised social trust.

Torcal and Montero (2006:336) points to the presence of an important and enduring number of “disaffected democrats” – people with support for democratic values on the one hand, and critical attitudes toward democratic practise (institutional disaffection) on the other hand. They (2006:336) write that “(w)e do not know much about who these citizens are and about their social profiles”. This is what I will investigate in this thesis. Among the questions I will seek to answer is; who trusts political institutions? Newton (1999) finds that social trust is related to social factors, while political trust is related to political ones; I ask what kinds of “political factors” are important. Can ascribed factors like age, domicile, gender or maybe achieved status variables explain trust towards people in general, or is it your evaluation of life and other attitudes that matters? Can any of the same patterns be found at the individual level as in an analysis of the aggregated level? What are the characteristics of countries that score high on measures of social trust? Another question that many have asked and tried to answer in different ways is: How is



political and social trust related, among persons, and as characteristics of countries? As always in social sciences, when it comes to answers, there are many of them, and although none are set answers certain patterns are found.

Something that can explain the steady growth in the contemporary interest for the concept “trust” is the difficult birth of the market-oriented democracies in the former communist countries in the east of Europe. This brought themes like political culture and civil society to the centre of attention, and shed light on the cultural and social preconditions for such institutions (Putnam and Goss 2002:3). A new focus on development as democracy grew; the same did the scholarly attention (Linde 2004:25).

This master-thesis will include the new democracies of Post-Communist Europe in addition to the old and established European democracies. In the analyses at the macro level, I will look specifically at differences between the older and newer democracies. When it comes to political trust, Linde and Ekman (2006:29) emphasises the importance of the legitimacy of government at the mass level when it comes to democratic consolidation. Mishler and Rose (2001:32) highlights that understanding how trust begins has significant implications for the consolidation of new democracies, and Norris (1999a:24) finds that institutional arrangements are significantly related to political trust – an important finding in democratisation processes. She writes “(i)f institutional designs can strengthen public support for the regime this may provide significant lessons for the process of democratisation” (1999b:235). This can also have consequences for constitutional debates. She claims that the challenge for later studies is to look at this phenomenon in relation to new democracies or states in democratisation processes. This master thesis will have the possibility to do this because the Post-Communist states in the east of Europe are included as well.

The rest of this chapter will focus on the relationship between the widely used term “social capital” and the two types of trust that is focused on here (1.1.1). This is

done because many academic works use the term social capital and put different meanings in it. While some write about social trust under the label “social capital”, what is most common is include both components of social capital; social trust and civic engagement in the term. I will therefore make my position clear already in the introduction. 1.2 will present the research questions and two models that show the disposition of the analysis, and in 1.3 some important differences and expectations of the older and the newer European democracies will be outlined.

### *1.1.1 Social trust and social capital<sup>1</sup>*

The term social capital was introduced by James Coleman<sup>2</sup> (1990) and originally it was used to describe the social norms and expectations that underwrite economic activity, but which could not be accounted for from a rigorously economic perspective. The term has expanded from this, and now it is seen as the networks, associations, and shared habits that enable individuals to act collectively (Warren 1999:8).

Tocqueville (1999) wrote about nineteenth century America and viewed what we now call “social capital” as being bred in various organisations and clubs, particularly in political associations. The democratic state was according to him built upon trust. Putnam (1993; 1995; 1996; 2000) has focused on the same themes in the contemporary world. His study of Italy received a lot of attention in 1993, and was a starting point for a great amount of social capital research. Delhey and Newton (2003:94) writes: “(...) social trust is a core component of social capital, and is normally used as a key indicator of it, sometimes as the best or only single

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<sup>1</sup> As the analysis in this thesis includes engagement in voluntary organisations as one explanatory variable for generalised trust, I will not use theories that emphasises the importance and effects of social capital where the definition of social capital includes both social trust and engagement in voluntary organisations. If such theories are used, it will be in order to shed light of this interpretation of the relationship between generalised social trust and engagement in voluntary organisations.

<sup>2</sup> Because of the limitations of this master-thesis I choose not to go deeper into Colemans theory of social capital. Nor do I include works of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, although he is a very important scholar on the field. Bourdieu clarified the term in contrast to cultural, economic and symbolic capital. Both Coleman and Bourdieu see social capital as foremost a personal good. Bourdieu related social capital to the individual’s position in society - a personal advantage derived from his/hers *habitus*, (similar to ‘human capital’). He does not see it as a societal good, which is highlighted and important in this master-thesis (Larsson 2007).

indicator.” Fukuyamas’ (1995:26) views social capital as a capability that arises from the existence of trust in a society or in small groups. Groups can be formed on the basis of self-interest or cultural mechanisms like religion or historical habits. But, the ones that have shown to be the most successful are those that are based on shared ethical values; moral consensus gives the group a basis of mutual trust (ibid).

There have been two large schools of thought in the field of social capital. One of them is community-oriented; and looks at the relationship between social structure and social background-variables. Putnam (1993, 2000) is a central representative of this school. This is a legitimisation of studying social trust on the individual level as will be done in chapter four. The other one is macro-oriented, and Stolle and Rothstein (2002) are among the scholars of this school which view institutional factors as most important, and here, cross-national differences is what matters. The analysis in chapter six will look at institutions among other macro-factors to explain differences in trust cross-nationally.

It is important to note that when so much is written about social capital, there have occurred several distinct interpretations of it: “It seems fair to say that if ever there has been an “essentially contested” concept in the social sciences, social capital would be a top candidate”, Rothstein and Stolle writes (2002:2). Putnam’s (2000:19) view of social capital is that civic engagement makes people more trusting, and that these two are closely intertwined. He states that while physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to individual skills, social capital refers to ties between individuals, social networks and norms of reciprocity and trust that arises from them. Other scholars, among these Uslaner (1999:145), view the causal direction to go from values to trust to joining voluntary organisations. He writes that it is arguable that voluntary organisations would create more social capital and trust.

Finally, I will point to the Hagen’s (2005:74) conclusion in relation to social trust and social capital. She did an in-depth study of social capital in Germany, and

found the two dimensions of social capital, the trust dimension and the engagement dimension to correlate differently with the dependent variable. She interprets this as implying that these do not measure the same underlying concept. This is interesting when one considers the common practise of combining these two dimensions in one social capital index. Also other scholars have questioned the close connection between the two dimensions of social capital (cf. Newton 1999; 2006; 2007; Norris and Newton 2000<sup>3</sup>). Even if the emphasis here is put on social trust, I will analyse the connection between the two dimensions; activity in voluntary organisations is one of the independent variables in the analysis.

## 1.2 Research questions and disposition of the master-thesis

Following the argumentation above, there are three main research questions in this master thesis:

- How do structural and attitudinal/lifestyle variables influence individuals' level of generalised social trust and level of trust in political institutions, and what are their relative weights?
- Which structural and institutional factors can explain the level of generalised social trust and institutional political trust on country level?
- What is the relationship between these two types of trust on individual and on country level?

This will be analysed quantitatively, with the use of data from the European Social survey (2007), from round three, collected in 2006/2007. 22 countries are included here<sup>4</sup>.

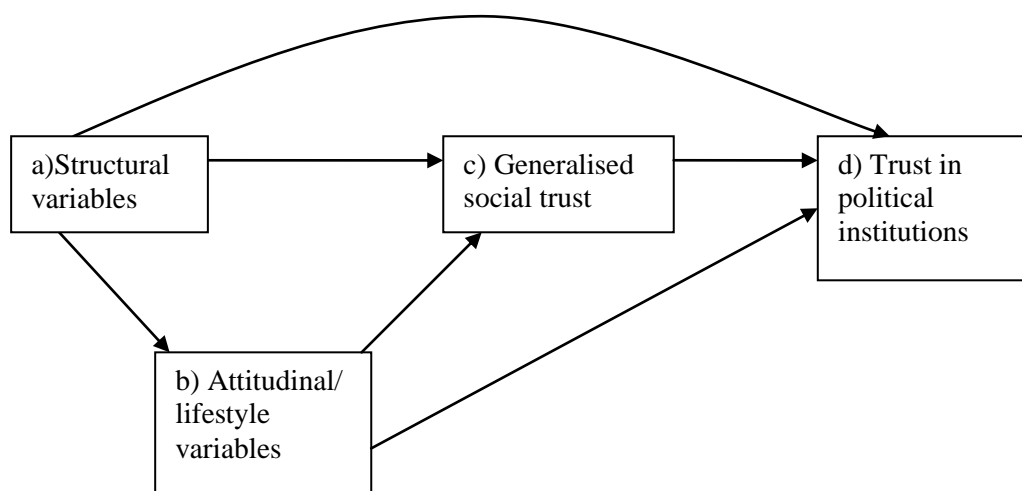
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<sup>3</sup> Norris and Newton (2000) question a close connection on the individual level, while they find it on an aggregated level.

<sup>4</sup> The countries are Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Netherland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and United Kingdom.

In order to analyse the origins of social and political trust, there is first a need to explore more deeply the meaning of trust. This will be done in chapter 2.2, before political and social trust will be discussed separately, including an explanation of why the focus in this master thesis is generalised social trust and political institutional trust (2.3-2.4). In 2.5 there will be a theoretical discussion about the relationship between social and political trust, which is also part of my research question. In chapter three I will discuss methodological challenges like how I can answer these questions in the best way, and problems with my choice of procedure and data material. Here the focus will be on the dependent variables; the two types of trust. The analyses will be presented from chapter four to seven; a deeper introduction of this follows below. Previous research that sheds light on the different parts of the analyses will be presented here, and from this I will generate hypotheses. Operationalisations of the independent variables will be done in separate chapters in chapter 4 and 6. Discussions of findings will be done after the different analyses, before I will close with a summary of important findings, and conclusions in chapter eight.

Figure 1.1. (below) shows a model of the individual level analyses. The causal model shows the expected relationship between the explanatory variables and the two types of trust. I expect the structural variables to be the prior variables, influencing both the attitudinal/lifestyle variables, and the two types of trust. Generalised social trust will function as the dependent variable in chapter 4 and 6 and as an independent variable in chapter 5 and 7.



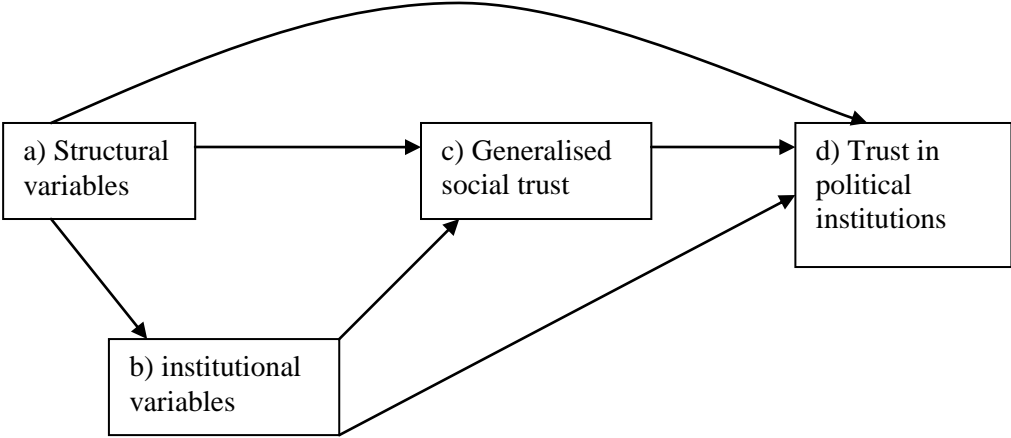
**Figure 1.1. Causal model of the analyses on the individual level**

The first analysis will explore generalised social trust and is presented in chapter four. Here the three first boxes in figure 1.1., a-c illustrates the analysis. Structural variables include both ascribed variables and achieved status variables. Ascribed variables are variables given by birth like gender and age and also “quasi-ascribed” variables like domicile along an urban/rural dimension and religious denomination. Achieved variables are laid later in life but they are still important for the social structure. They are called achieved status variables because they include the status enhancing variables of class and education. Attitudinal/lifestyle variables includes factors like having voted on the party in government, media use and life satisfaction. The group of variables are broadly named attitudinal/lifestyle variables because they include very different variables. In chapter five, all boxes in the model are used, and I will explore to what extent structural variables and the various intermediate variables, including the index of social trust, matters for level of trust in political institutions.

The same variables will be included in the analyses of both social and political trust, although some are expected to be stronger related to one type of trust than the other. One example is the expected effect of supporting one of the governing parties on trust in political institutions; this is not regarded as having effect on generalised social trust. The same variables are included in both analyses to be able

to validly include “generalised social trust” as one of the independent variables in second analysis.

Now turning to the aggregated level; figure 1.2. shows the causal model for these analyses:



**Figure 1.2. Causal model of the analyses on the aggregated level**

Like the causal model of the individual analyses, I will here start out with structural variables as the underlying variables. Here, I will do statistical analyses at a country level with the 22 countries as units. Cross-national variation in social trust will be explained by applying the structural and institutional variables. This is done in chapter six. The same will be done for political trust in chapter seven, but here the countries mean of social and political trust will be included among the independent variables.

### 1.3 Differences in levels of trust in old and new democracies

Whatever the status for the relationships between citizens and the state in established democracies, these relationships are in all respects more critical in the Post-Communist countries (Listhaug 2003:2).

This thesis will include both the old, established democracies in Western Europe, and the new, former communist countries in Eastern and Central Europe. I expect to find differences in the level of both kinds of trust between these groups of

countries. Linde (2004:141) notes that in established democracies, individuals often identify with and trust a certain political party. In Post-Communist countries however, this is not yet the case. There is also reason to believe that generalised social trust will be lower in these countries (Rose 1994).

Most of the theoretical basis of this thesis is, however, based on research from the established countries. Here there are long traditions of writing about the theme, and the theoretical and empirical basis is richer. Considering the analysis on the individual level, the indicators used are seen as universal and not only applicable in the countries where earlier research is undertaken. This master-thesis can therefore explore the validity of these theoretical assumptions in the whole of Europe – and this can be interesting in the light of the discussion of whether the Post-Communist countries have a development in the same direction as the West-European countries (Bakke 2006:220). This will be further explored in chapter 6 and 7.



## Chapter 2

# Generalised social trust and trust in political institutions – theoretical background

### 2.1 Introduction

The idea that trust is essential for social, economic and political life is a very old one going back to at least Confucius who suggested that trust, weapons and food are the essentials of government: food, because well-fed citizens are less likely to make trouble, trust because in the absence of food, citizens are likely to believe that their leaders are working on the problem, and weapons in case neither of the other two works (Newton 2007:342).

This citation shows how vital trust is for society as a whole. This chapter will explore the two types of trust in question (2.3 and 2.4) and the relationship between these in 2.5, but first some words about trust in general are worth mentioning.

### 2.2 The concept of trust

Several important aspects of the term trust are mentioned in chapter 1. But what exactly is the meaning of trust? Many have pointed to a problem with the concept: it is a slippery and fluffy term that is used both in regular small talk and in academic work. Some have suggested that there are so many problems with the term that one should drop it, and replace it with a better one. This would, according to Newton (2005:5) be like throwing the baby out with the bathwater. One can not suppose that another concept would be better before it has gone through the same thorough process as trust. Then the conclusion would probably be that the other concept was just as unsatisfactory. Trust per se has no clear essence; it varies in

both its forms and its causes. And there exists no general theory of trust, even though a lot is written about it (Delhey and Newton 2005: 312).

I therefore choose not to define trust *per se*, because I view any definition to exclude some of the concepts many meanings. In the remainder of the thesis, I will specify what type of trust that is the point of focus. I distinguish here between generalised social trust and trust in political institutions. As I will elaborate on, both these types of trust are general and diffuse in the sense that they are not directed towards particular actors. It is important to point out that these types of trust are distinct phenomenon; one is directed towards institutions, and another towards people, a woman may trust his fellow citizens for instance, but not her parliament (Newton 2007:345).

Developments in modern societies have made them increasingly more complex, differentiated and interdependent. This has created a paradoxical situation where these changes on the one hand can, and often do, increase life-choices because of pluralisation, mobility and efficiencies. On the other hand, however, with greater interdependence comes greater vulnerabilities of individuals. And the increased complexity makes it harder to monitor these vulnerabilities. The gap between individuals' cognitive resources and the abilities to predict and control what will emerge in their lives is remarkably larger. This gap is bridged when individuals by trusting others, institutions, and systems. Trust can reduce complexity for people while providing them with a sense of security because they can take for granted most of the relationships on which they depend (Warren 1999:3).

It is important to emphasise that trust is not a primitive term. It is in part made up by expectations and cognitive judgements of the motivations of others. These motivations could make them more or less trustworthy in particular contexts. Trust must be seen in relation to risk – if there is no risk that the one you trust would not do what you trust her to do, then it is pointless to say you trust someone (Hardin

2006:29). Fuzziness should be avoided, and to serve this intention there is a need to specify the object of trust; I start out with social trust.

## 2.3 Social trust

Putting faith in other people helps connect people to folks who are different from themselves. Thus, trusting people feel a common bond with others in the society and believe that discrimination against minorities and women is just not right. They feel moral obligations to help the less fortunate and thus are more likely than mistrusters to give to charity and to volunteer their time. Trusters also realize that it is important for society to be able to reach collective decisions, so they place a high value on compromise and legislative productivity, rather than ideological purity and stalemate (Uslaner 2000:570).

Uslaner here emphasises what many would agree with - social trust has a great value for individuals and society and this must be seen as a part of the explanation for the high scholarly interest in the term. A society that is able to foster and maintain a collective view of the “generalised other” as a person with good intentions, can achieve substantial benefits from norms of reciprocity and cooperation (Fukuyama 1995). Uslaner (2000:569) calls social trust the “chicken soup of social life” because it gives us all sorts of good things; a willingness to get involved in our communities, higher economic growth and also a more pleasant daily life.

Social trust can be defined as the belief that others will not willingly harm us, if they can avoid it, and look after our interests if that is possible (Newton 2007:342). This is consistent with a common sense of what trust is, at the same time as it is in line with the academic view of trust. Much of the political ideology in the 1980s saw freedom as important in the political discourse, while both equality and fraternity was put in the shadow. During the late 90s many reacted towards this view of the world. It was emphasised that without underlying values and social possibilities the society could barely function, and a new focus on values, trust, norms and reciprocity emerged (Newton 1999:169).

Most academic works separate between generalised and particularised social trust. The first is what will be explored in this master thesis. That is because generalised social trust is what is seen as beneficial for societies, and what is treated at length in the theoretical contributions. To understand what generalised trust is, it is important to contrast to particular trust, and both will be explored below.

### *2.3.1 Particularised social trust*

Particularised trust is based on first hand knowledge of individuals, and means trust in people who we are personally familiar with (Allum, Patulny and Sturgis 2007a:3). Putnam (2000:136) refers to this kind of trust as “thick trust”, and explains it as “(t)rust that is embedded in personal relations that are strong, frequent and nested in wider networks”.

This type of trust is often bound together with distrust of people outside of these groups. Modern, large-scale society does not lack thick or specific trust, but here it can have a dividing effect. One can think about the intensive trust among members of the Sicilian Mafia (Gambetta 2000). Strangers are judged as suspicious by particular trusters and not regarded as trustworthy. Uslaner’s (2000:573) example of particular trusters is religious fundamentalists who see nonbelievers as heathens. Their involvement is only in their own group. This kind of trust can aggravate conflicts among different groups, because of the belief that most people do not share similar values.

### *2.3.2 Generalised social trust*

While the effects of social trust on collective action are not always – or not even usually – large, they are consistent. No other variable affect as many types of collective action as generalized trust (Uslaner 1999:130)<sup>5</sup>.

What I am interested in here is not particular trust in societies where “everyone knows your name”; in modern urban and industrialised societies generalised social

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<sup>5</sup> Although the language used in this thesis is British English, some of the citations used are written in American English, and thereby there is inconsistency in the used of terms like generalized/generalised trust.

trust is much more important. They are to a large degree societies made of strangers. We can not base our trust in strangers on their trustworthiness, because there is simply no good way to know if they are trustworthy. One has to add a relation to some form of moral foundation or world-view (Uslaner 2000). Social trust can facilitate co-operative behaviour in the absence of information about the trustworthiness of the “generalised other” (Allum, Patulny and Sturgis 2007a:3).

Uslaner (2000:572) relates generalised trust to what he calls “moralistic trust”. This type of trust “assumes that we don’t risk so much when we put faith in people we don’t know, because people of different backgrounds still share the same underlying values.” He sees generalised trust not merely as a summary of experiences earlier in life, but as an underlying value of optimistic character – a world view (Uslaner 2000:573). In this thesis, Rothstein and Stolle’s (2002:2) definition of generalised social trust is used:

Generalized trust indicates the potential readiness of citizens to cooperate with each other and the abstract preparedness to engage in civic endeavours with each other. (...) These attitudes of trust are generalized when they go beyond specific personal settings in which the partner to be cooperated with is already known.

In the social sphere, generalised trust facilitates life in diverse societies and nurture acceptance of otherness (Rothstein and Stolle 2002:3). As the size and impersonality of our societies grows, theories of generalized trust are of increasing significance (Newton 2007:345).

## 2.4 Trust in political institutions

The trends in political trust shows clearly that trust is eroding. Dalton (2007:191) concludes that citizens in almost all advanced industrial democracies are increasingly sceptical of politicians, political parties, and political institutions.

To have high political trust means that the individual for the most part have positive expectations, and a sense of security that the political system or institutions mostly will act as expected. This implies an expectation that the decisions taken will

be positive for the individual – or at least not negative. Political trust belongs to the public social sphere, and here we find more unknowns and greater risks (Newton 1999:179).

Easton (1967) emphasizes that one should not mention the concept of trust as a single phenomenon, and his original thought of dividing it in three aspects have great influence theoretically. First he mentions support for the political community, defined as the system consisting of members seen as a group of people bound together by a political division of labour (Easton 1967:177). The second object of support is the regime, and in this connection he writes “the regime as sets of constraints on political interaction in all systems may be broken down into three components: values (goals and principles), norms, and structure of authority” (Easton 1967:193). His third category is support for authority; or the occupant of the authority roles making up the structures of authorities mention in relation with regime support (Easton 1967:213). Norris (1999a:10) has expanded this division, she separates between trust to the political community, regime principles, regime performance, regime institutions and political actors. This shows the importance of precision when dealing with expressions; it is not satisfactory to talk about mere “political trust”.

This master thesis will emphasize trust in political institutions which is the forth level in Norris terminology and also a part of Easton’s regime support. This is because Norris fourth level is considered to catch what Mishler and Rose (2000) call a realistic view of democracy. It includes attitudes towards the executive power, the legislative power, political parties, the legal system and the police, the state bureaucracy, political parties and the military (Listhaug and Wiberg 1995:306; Listhaug and Ringdal 2007:12; Norris 1999a:11). Studies of this form of institutional trust seeks to explore generalised trust towards institutions, which means support to the presidency rather than support to president George W. Bush, and support towards parties as such, not to particular parties. But one can point to the fact that the dividing line is unclear, at least in some instances. The reason that I

chose this forth level is also based on the thought that it is a bigger problem if the population does not trust the democratic institutions, the building blocks of democracy, than if they distrust political actors.

A low level of confidence in political institutions should, according to Listhaug and Wiberg (1995:299) be seen as a serious problem, but it does not necessarily mean that the legitimacy is threatened. The important point is that legitimacy is threatened only if the public loses trust and showed support for alternatives to existing institutions at the same time. This will not be studied here, but it can be mentioned that support for democracy as a norm is strong both in the new (Linde 2004:231) and the old (Pharr et. al. 2000b) democracies included here.

## 2.5 About the relationship between social and political trust

The association between social trust and institutional confidence clearly needs further explanation (Norris and Newton 2000:71).

Many scholars (Uslaner 1999; Putnam 1993; 2000; Rothstein and Stolle 2002; Newton 1999; 2006; 2007; Newton and Zmerli 2006; Mishler and Rose 2001) write about the relationship between social and political trust. The lines go drawn back to Tocqueville (1999) and Mill (1958). Tocqueville was according to Newton (2006:81) the one who picked out an explicit link between social trust and political life. He argued that trust is created in the dense networks of voluntary organisations, and that this provides the necessary foundations for democracy. People learn to compromise and cooperate in order to achieve goals for society as a whole (Tocqueville 1999). John Stuart Mill (1958) wrote about the engaged citizen as a person who is guided by other rules than his personal interest; he feels like a part of the public, and sees whatever is of benefit for the public as being of his own benefit.

Some of the recent theory claims that social and political trust is mutually interdependent, and Putnam's (2000) "bowling alone" thesis is the most well-known emphasising the relationship between social and political trust. He views the

increased levels of political dissatisfaction found in some western democracies to have their origins in the decline of social trust and social networks of modern society. This has, according to Newton and Zmerli (2006:3) strong prima facie plausibility, but lacks strong and sustained empirical support. While individual level research often finds little or no correlation between social trust and measures of political support, it is found more often in country level research. (Norris and Newton 2000:62). Newton (2001:201) looks at this weak empirical basis as a fundamental difficulty in the heart of social capital theory, because the argument is that voluntary associations help sustain civil society in a way that generates trust; a foundation of public awareness and action and democratic stability. This implies that one should find a close link between social and political trust.



## Chapter 3

### About the analyses - data, background and methodology

#### 3.1 Introduction

It turns out that for all the abstract theory about the deficiencies of the concept and its measurement, trust seems to be understood well enough by those who answer survey questions about it, and the attitudes of trust or distrust they express are quite closely aligned with the way they behave (Newton 2007:343).

This thesis investigates the origins of trust in political institutions in both individual and country level. Before this is done I will look at individual explanation variables of generalised social trust, using the same independent variables. If a causal effect of social trust on levels of political trust is found at both analyses, this will strengthen the findings considerably.

I do not view trust as context-specific to the degree that it is impossible to analyse it by including all countries in one analysis. I agree with McAllister (1999:189) who writes:

It is obviously impractical to analyse each country separately – and, in any event, we are more interested in identifying any underlying communalities that may exist between the countries rather than country-specific effects.

The question of causality is not assumed to be fully made clear in this thesis; the ability to do this is limited with cross-sectional data. Generalized trust can be a result of equality in society on the one hand or, alternatively, already existing levels of trust in society can be viewed as a prerequisite for the creation of an equal society (Larsson 2007:36). Another example is that one can assume that trusting people join voluntary organisations or that voluntary activities create trust (Uslaner 2000; Putnam 2000).

The first method of analysis employed here is factor analysis; this will be explained and carried out below (in 3.3 and 3.4). The analyses in chapter 4 to 7 will be sequential multiple regression analysis. The aim of regression analysis is most often to analyse whether and to what degree one or a set of variables causes another variable – the dependent variable. Thereby one has the possibility to give a quantification of the relationship between the variables, and control whether the relationship between Y and X could be spurious or confounding by controlling for prior variables (Skog 2006:214). By using a sequential regression analysis it is possible to control for prior and intermediate variables, something that fits the causal model in 1.3. This will be done in three steps in chapter four; first I will include only the ascribed variables in the regression (step 1). Step 2 will be to include the achieved status variables, and in the last instance, step 3 also the attitudinal variables are included. The analysis in chapter five has the same design but includes an additional sequence – the inclusion of the index of generalised individual trust (step 4).

Chapter 6 and 7 is macro-oriented. The fact that there are only 22 units in the analysis makes it difficult to draw any clear conclusions. However, if generalised social trust shows to have a positive effect on political trust also here, it will strengthen the conclusions drawn in this thesis. The mean score of social and political trust will be used as dependent variables, and the regression analyses are also here sequential, as the causal model indicates. An additional discussion of the methodological problems in these two analyses will be presented in chapter six, together with suggestions on how to deal with these in a good way. Before the regression analyses can be carried out, however, there are certain requirements for regression analysis that must be in place.

### *3.1.1 Assumptions in regression analysis*

Linear regression analysis can give meaningful results only if certain premises are met. This includes the existence of linearity, homoscedasticity and normal plotted

residuals together with the non-existence of collinearity or multicollinearity (Skog 2005). All of these premises are met to a satisfactory degree at the individual level. The premises for the analyses at the aggregated level also are satisfactory; some of the issues will however be explored further in chapter six, because there are more problems related to doing regression analysis with few units. Outliers will influence the results more when there are few units in the analysis, because their relative weight is much higher.

Another premise for regression analysis is that the variables included are at an interval or ratio level (Hellevik 2006:275). The dependent variables have eleven values, and considering that these are numbered from 0 to 10 makes them appear as fulfilling this requirement. They are meant to tap an underlying continuous scale. In addition, because these variables are additive indexes of the means of three/four variables, they actually have 31 and 41 values respectively. However, they are not *true* ratio variables. Variables at the ordinal level with several values are often seen as lying between interval and ordinal level. Because these variables appear to be continuous variables they can be included in the regression analysis without recoding them into dummy variables. The same is valid for some of the independent variables. This can give somewhat misleading results – variables that do not have the same distance between the values are used as continuous because this is a prerequisite for doing a linear regression analysis.

Although there are some problems with applying linear regression as the method of analysis, I judge the advantages many enough to go through with it. The premises for regression analysis are judged to be met to an acceptable degree, and the analysis can be carried out. Due to population differences in the countries included, the dataset is weighed by design- and population weight before the regression analyses are done. When it comes to the factor analyses two different weighting procedures are employed, but this will be elaborated on.

In the section that follows (3.2) I will present and discuss the data material and discuss the validity and reliability related to this. The operationalisation of the dependent variables is done in 3.3 and 3.4. Here, principal axis factor method is used to assess whether there is sufficient basis to construct an index. The country means for both dependent variables are also shown in these chapters.

### 3.2 Data – and validity/reliability

The data material in this thesis is based on the European Social Survey, round three (2006-2007)<sup>6</sup> (ESS 2007). This survey includes 25 countries. Three of these are not included in this analysis. Russia was not included because it was viewed as being too different from the other countries. It is also the only country considered “not free” by Freedom House (2008). Including Russia would make it difficult to use the phrase “European democracies”. Latvia and Romania are not included because of problems with weights. The 22 countries listed in table 3.1. are included.

**Table 3.1. Countries included in the analysis**

<b>Established democracies</b>	<b>New Democracies</b>
Austria , Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, United Kingdom	Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine

The data used for the macro level analyses is taken from the home page of Pippa Norris except from the dependent variables - the means of the index of social trust and trust in political institutions in every country. The data from Norris home page is suitable for cross-national comparisons, and include information on the social, economic and political characteristics of 191 countries (Norris 2008a).

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<sup>6</sup> The European Social Survey project is funded jointly by the European Commission the European Science Foundation and academic funding bodies in each of the participating countries. It has two main sections, each consisting of approximately 120 items. The ESS is a biennial survey covering over 30 nations. The first round was in 2002/2003, the second in 2004/2005 and the third in 2006/2007 (ESS 2008a).

Turning to the individual level; the data includes 37077 units, which gives a strong empirical basis for the analysis. Only Slovakia, Poland and Portugal reached the ESS target which was to have a response rate of 70 % or more. In the other countries the response rate varies between 69 % and 46 % (Symons et. al. 2008:16).

Zmerli and Newton (2006:14) stresses that their results when using ESS round 1 are products of more valid and reliable measures. Hence, they do find stronger and more robust correlations between generalized trust and trust in political institutions than by using other data sources. They hold ESS as the best survey for exploring these associations. Newton (2005:14) writes in relation to the fact that the ESS results show highly significant associations between generalized social trust and confidence in political institutions that this is:

wholly at odds with the considerable weight of previous research, they are robust, consistent across all countries in the analysis and there are good reasons why they might be more accurate and satisfactory than earlier work.

This is, in his view (ibid) because the ESS are based on more sensible and reliable measures of social trust, and introduced the first principal component of the three-item Rosenberg social trust scale, and the first principle component of a set of eight public institutions.

In the survey the respondents are given cards to answer the seven questions concerning trust. These have eleven-point rating scales, where the respondents are to place their views. According to Newton and Zmerli (2006:6), much of the earlier research on trust, including the World Values Survey and the Eurobarometer surveys, respondents answer questions of social trust in a dichotomised way (yes/no). The questions used by the World Values and the Eurobarometer surveys use a four-point scale for measuring political trust. Cummins and Gullone (2000) emphasise the benefits of using ten-point scales and Alvin and Krosnick (1991) find that attitude questions with more response options tend to have higher reliabilities.

The seven questions employed in the dependent variable all have alternatives to answer in the same direction, from low (0) trust to high trust (10). This may lead to a kind of framing effect – the inclination to either only agree or only disagree across many questions. A way of dealing with this is using questions that go in different directions – where saying yes means being placed in opposite sides of the scale in every case. This is not done here, but the questions are balanced, something that should increase the validity of the results. Using the battery of several questions of trust is also qualitatively better than using only one item to measure it. When only one question is used to measure a respondents standing on a given subject, there can be random errors that reduces the reliability, and it can give a completely wrong impression (Hellevik 2006:309), and thereby the use of an index as a dependent variable raises the reliability and thereby the validity of the results.

When it comes to the external validity – the possibility to generalise –it can be said that generalisation to other cases is regarded as possible at the individual level. This is because if the results are in line with theoretical basis and significant, one should assume that the patterns found are common for all humans, and not restricted to the countries included. I assume, however, that it is only possible to generalise to people in to other relatively developed societies. Issues like trust in government and the legal system presupposes a developed system, and the questions about media and economic situation are aimed at modern societies. It can also be mentioned that the data material is relatively contemporary, and this can strengthen the possibility to generalise in time – to the situation today. On the aggregated level, I do not assume that it is possible to generalise to other countries than the ones included. There are few units in the analysis, and the results should be interpreted with caution.

### 3.3. Operationalisation of “generalised social trust” and country means

Generalised social trust and trust in political institutions, like other attitudes, are latent phenomenon. It is as mentioned above advisable to measure it by the use of indexes. In the ESS, there are three measures created specifically to measure degree of generalised social trust, and these are used in this thesis;

- *Using this card, generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people? Please tell me on a score of 0 to 10, where 0 means you can't be too careful and 10 means that most people can be trusted.(ppltrst)*
- *Using this card, do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?(pplfair)*
- *Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves?(pplhlp)*

*Values: 0 = no trust at all, 10 = complete trust. (ESS 2008b)*

A factor analysis must be done before these items can be combined to an index of generalised social trust. This type of analysis is used to estimate whether a set of indicators represents the operationalisation of an abstract concept to a satisfactory degree (Christophersen 2006:229). Factor analyses can be used to assess the degree of common variance among the indicators of the two types of trust and, as a result, the possibility to create indexes of these indicators. When the number of variables to be considered in multivariate analysis increases, there is a corresponding need for increased knowledge of the structure and interrelationships of these variables writes Hair et al (1998:87, 88). It is suitable to apply factor analysis when examining patterns of complex relationships. Two factor analyses are done here to increase the quality of the results. The first analysis is done by using design and population weights. The second one is done by weighting the countries in a manner that gives them equal weight, in other words the same N. If these two analyses show the same

result, the conclusions drawn are strengthened. Here, I present the results from both of these simultaneously.

The type of factor analysis done is principal axis factoring. The first thing that should be checked is skewness and kurtosis. Here, they are regarded as satisfactory (within the limit of  $\pm 1$ ). Factor analysis implies correlation between the indicators, and here the bivariate correlations are strong, close to  $\pm 0.500$ . KMO (the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) shows to what degree the indicators correlation matrix makes factor analysis legitimate, and with values of 0.681 and 0.77, the demand is met.

The three indicators here make a formative model of measurement. It is the indicators that define the concept of generalised social trust. Based on the Kaiser criteria, which means that only factors with eigenvalues of 1 or more are regarded as valid factors, the indicators form one factor. Here the only factor with eigenvalue above one is factor 1 with eigenvalue 1.95 in analysis 1 and 2.074 in analysis 2. One factor can be specified. The demand of more than 50 % common variance is nearly met (47.6 %) in analysis 1 and met in analysis 2 (53.99 %).

The factor loadings are presented in table 3.1. Factor loadings are the correlations between the original variables and the factors. To what degree these are significant, depends on the size of the sample (Hair 1998: 111). Hair states that factor loadings over  $\pm 0.30$  are satisfactory for big samples. The factor loading has to be over 0.70 to be able to represent 50 % of the variance, and four of them are, while two is close to be.

**Table 3.2. Factor loadings, social trust**

<b>Indicators of generalised social trust</b>	<b>Factor loadings, analysis 1</b>	<b>Factor loadings, analysis 2</b>
<b>Ppltrst</b>	<b>0.709</b>	<b>0.755</b>
<b>Pplfair</b>	<b>0.724</b>	<b>0.776</b>
<b>Pplhlp</b>	<b>0.634</b>	<b>0.669</b>



Cronbach's alpha measures internal consistence in a homogenous set of indicators, and is thereby a form for reliability test. This should be checked before creating the generalised social trust index. Unstandardized Cronbachs Alpha is here 0.730 and 0.777 which means that respectively 73 % and 77.7 % of the variance of the set of indicators is reliable variance. Based on both the factor analyses and the reliability test there is sufficient basis to create the index. This indicates a single strong underlying dimension as also found by Newton and Zmerli (2006:6). The index created is an un-weighted additive index, created by summarising the values on the three indicators, and dividing this on three. In other words, the value on the index will be a mean of the values on the three indicators, on a scale from 0 to 10<sup>7</sup>.

Figure 3.1. shows the country means of the generalised social trust index. Here, Denmark has the highest average – 6.83, followed by Norway (6.64), Finland (6.44) Sweden (6.31). This is to a large degree “Nordic exceptionalism” to use the words of Delhey and Newton (2005). On the other end of the scale lies Bulgaria with 3.66, and Poland and Ukraine, both with 4.13.

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<sup>7</sup> To include units without valid values on a majority of the indicators is not recommended. One can draw a line at 40 %; accepting units with more missing values than this should be founded on reasoned arguments. (Christophersen 2006:249-252). Respondents with missing on more than 1 of these indicators are therefore not included in the analysis. This is 125 respondents which constitutes 0.3 of the sample.

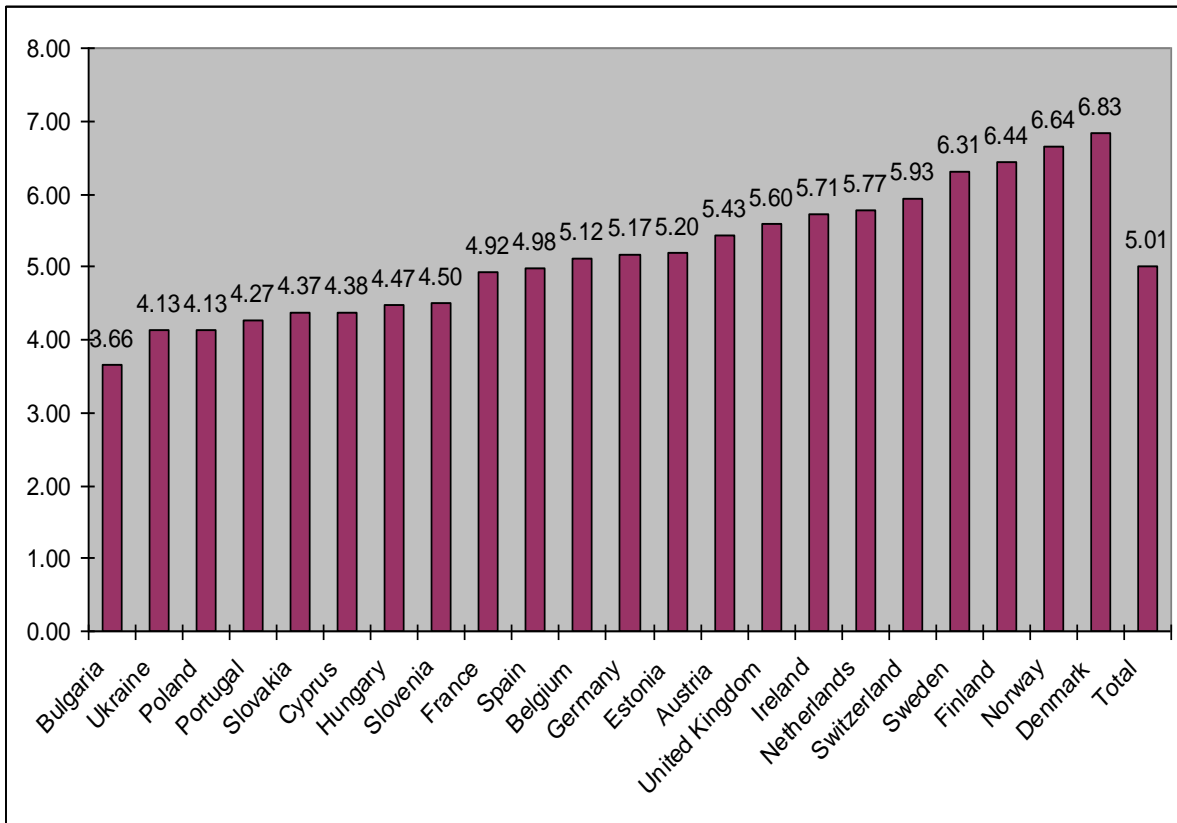


Figure 3.1. Country means, index of generalised social trust

### 3.4 Operationalisation of “trust in political institutions” and country means

Trust in political institutions is operationalised by following Norris’ (1999a) division discussed in chapter 2.3, and building on the terminology of Listhaug and Ringdal (2007:12) the index is called “trust in political institutions”. Included here is trust in parliament, the legal system, the police and political parties. Not all the institutions that Norris mentions are available in the ESS survey, hence both trust in the state bureaucracy and the military are excluded. Questions about trust towards politicians, the European parliament and the United Nations are also asked in the ESS, but these were not included. They are not seen as belonging to the fourth level in Norris terminology; trust in politicians is trust in political actors. The *national* political system is the object of study in this thesis, and as a result the

European parliament and UN can not be included. The remaining four variables are judged to give the acceptable breadth needed to call the index this name.

The following questions are used to measure trust in political institutions:

*Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust. Firstly...*

- *[country]'s parliament? (trstprl)*
- *the legal system?(trstlgl)*
- *the police? (trstplc)*
- *political parties? (trstprt)*

*Values: 0 = no trust at all, 10 = complete trust (ESS 2008b).*

Like when analysing social trust, I start the analysis by assessing skewness and kurtosis and both are satisfactory. The factor analyses show that by using the Kaiser criteria, one factor can be specified – the eigenvalues are 2.69 and 2.8, respectively. At least 50 % of the variance of the set of indicators should be common variance to have satisfactory concept validity. Here, with 56.7 % and 60.34 %, this demand is met.

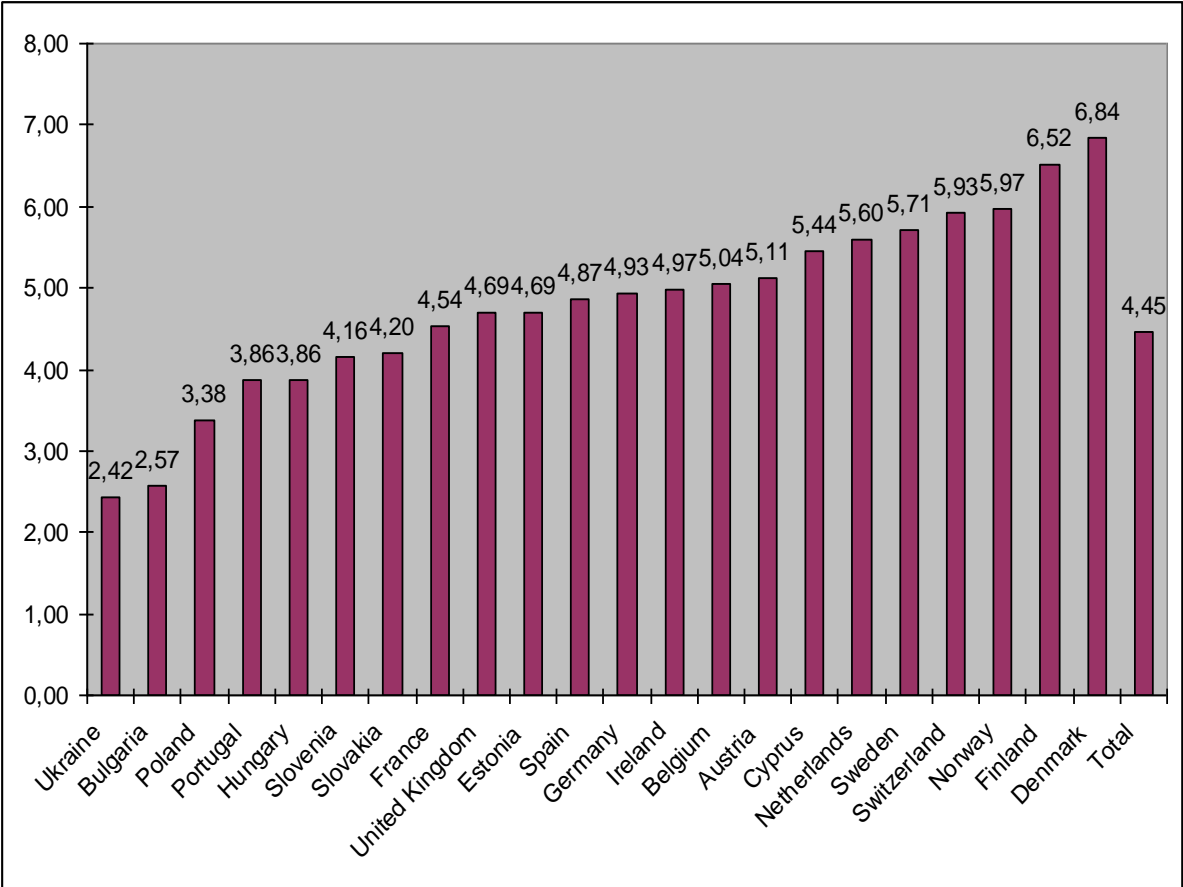
The KMO in the two analyses are 0.751 and 0.77 and the indicators correlation matrix makes factor analysis legitimate. Factor loadings are shown in table 3.2. This means the correlation of each variable and the factor. These are all significant loadings, and we see that trust in the legal system and the parliament has somewhat stronger loadings than trust in the police and in the political parties:

**Table 3. 3. Factor loadings, indicators of trust in political institutions.**

<b>Indicators of trust in political institutions</b>	<b>Factor loadings, analysis 1</b>	<b>Factor loadings, analysis 2</b>
<b>Trust legal system</b>	<b>0.811</b>	<b>0.829</b>
<b>Trust parliament</b>	<b>0.801</b>	<b>0.824</b>
<b>Trust political parties</b>	<b>0.710</b>	<b>0.738</b>
<b>Trust police</b>	<b>0.683</b>	<b>0.709</b>

Also here the reliability test, Cronbachs Alpha, shows satisfactory results (0.837 and 0.857). The results from the factor analysis of trust in these political institutions confirm earlier findings (Dalton 2007:59; Zmerli and Newton 2006:7).

This provides sufficient basis for creating an index. The index created is an un-weighted additive index, created by summarising the values on the four indicators. The index will be a mean of the values on the four indicators, on a scale from 0 to 10<sup>8</sup>. Figure 3.2. below shows the mean for the different countries. Denmark is again at the top (6.84) followed by Finland (6.52), and Norway and Switzerland. The lowest mean has Ukraine (2.42), and Bulgaria (2.57). We also notice that the Post-Communist countries are located in the lower half; with Estonia ranking highest, although with a mean of 4.69 also Estonian people have more distrust than trust in their political institutions.



**Figure 3.2. Country means, index of trust in political institutions**

<sup>8</sup> Respondents with missing on more than 1 of these indicators are therefore not included in the analysis. This is 858 respondents which constitutes 2.3 % of the sample.

## Chapter 4

### Individual differences in generalised social trust

#### 4.1 Introduction

Many social capital scholars emphasise that there is a relation between generalised social trust and different measures of “success”. This has drawn sustained interest from commentators and researchers in social sciences in the past years - with good reason, according to Allum, Patulny and Sturgis (2007a:4):

If trust is key to the attainment of health, wealth and happiness, it goes without saying that we should devote serious attention to understanding how it might be nurtured, developed, and maintained. The case for deepening our understanding of the genesis of trust is all the more compelling in the context of its apparent precipitate decline in advanced western democracies during the latter part of the twentieth century ...

Among individual theories of social trust, there are two important schools (Delhey and Newton 2003:94). The first emphasise trust as a core personality trait; and here trust is seen as something that is learned in early childhood and lasts that way except for eventual changes due to traumatic experiences later in life (cf. Allport 1961). Eric Uslaner (2000:4) has argued in the same vein that trust is learned from our parents “who impart to us a sense of optimism and a belief that we are the masters of our own fate. Most of us don't change from mistrusters to trusters (or the other way around) that easily”. According to this theory people have trusting or distrusting personalities and are thereby viewed as trusting or distrusting across the board.

The thought that *to trust* is a general orientation toward society as a whole can be questioned. It is more probable that people separate between different objects of trust; empirical evidence shows that it is not the case that different types of trust are derived from one particular condition. In addition, levels of trust can rise and

fall very quickly, and seem to be correlated with the changing social and political circumstances. It is also shown that levels of political and social trust can change quickly, and seemingly independent of each other in a single country (Newton 2006:85).

Because of this, I will focus on the theoretical view of the second school. This view is called the *social success and well-being theory* and it stresses adult life experiences. Delhey and Newton (2003:96) writes “[T]hose who have been treated kindly and generously by life are more likely to trust than those who suffer from poverty, unemployment, discrimination, exploitation and social exclusion”. It concentrates on individual variables, but not social-psychological ones. Central here is that all trust carries risk, but that to trust is more risky for those who have few resources. According to Banfield (1958:110) poor people cannot afford to lose even a little of what they have if their trust is betrayed, the rich on the other hand stand to lose comparatively less, and may gain comparatively more from trusting behaviour. Allum, Patulny and Sturgis (2007a:12) writes that human and economic capital are viewed as enablers of trust. Assets can increase security when conducting social and economic transaction. This means that the risk of trusting can be judged to be too big for people who have fewer assets – they have more to lose if their trust is betrayed (Banfield 1958:110). Both Whiteley (1999) and Newton (1999) emphasise and find in their analysis that the “winners” in society express social trust to a greater degree than others. Putnam’s (2000:138) argument is in line with this:

In virtually all societies “have nots” are less trusting than “haves”, probably because haves are treated by others with more honesty and respect. (...) It is reasonable to assume that in each case these patterns reflect actual experience rather than different psychic predispositions to distrust. When such people tell pollsters that most people can’t be trusted, they are not hallucinating – they are merely reporting their experience.

The social success and well being-theory can be tested by analysing the relationship between social trust and a set of individual variables that measure success and satisfaction with life, like class, income, education, happiness or job satisfaction.

One or a combination of these factors is related to social trust in 15 of 20 western advanced democracies in an analysis done by Newton (2006:86). People in the social majority and males are also associated with high social trust (Newton 1999:181).

Several of the hypotheses in 4.2 are deduced from the theoretical perspective of the social success and well-being theory. They are derived from theory and/or earlier findings from cross-national research. The operationalisations of the independent variables will be discussed in chapter 4.3; this is followed by analysis and discussions in 4.4 while main findings will be highlighted in 4.5.

## 4.2 Hypotheses

The hypotheses in this chapter will follow each other in the order of appearance in the analysis, and they are included in an assumed chronological order. The ascribed variables are included first, then the achieved status variables, and finally the attitudinal/lifestyle variables. The order of the attitudinal/lifestyle variables is based on expected importance based on theory, and similar variables are presented successively (e.g. life satisfaction and economic satisfaction). To systemise, the key words are presented in italics the first time they are mentioned.

### *4.2.1 Hypothesis including ascribed independent variables*

*Age* is an important social background variable to include when studying trust. Here, Inglehart (1997; 1999) can be mentioned. His analysis of post-materialist values is rooted in the idea that during pre-adult years, basic values are developed. Whiteley (1999:37) relates this to trust, and writes that different age cohorts will have different levels of social trust because of other social and political surroundings in the formative years, although he does not declare any direction here. Putnam's description of generations and social trust reveals a picture of younger people's decline in social trust as steeper than older peoples. He (2000:141) indicates a generational effect "In short, at century's end, a generation with a trust

quotient of nearly 80 percent was being readily replaced by one with a trust quotient of barely half that". He explains the social distrust not by character flaws, but by the notion that it should be seen as a mirror held up to social society of the last decades. Patterson (1999) emphasises that generalised social trust appears to increase over the life course, in other words that this is a life-cycle effect. By using cross-sectional data, it is not possible to separate between life-cycle and generational effects. However, since both approaches suggest that younger people will have lower trust than older people, H1 is formulated in the following way:

**H1: Older people will have higher levels of generalised social trust than younger people.**

When it comes to the effect of *gender* on social trust, there is no clear answer to what direction the effect should be supposed to have. Allum, Patulny and Sturgis (2007b:8) write: "Gender is a curiously under-researched variable in relation to trust and social capital. Women have historically made large contributions to the creation of formal and informal social capital". Randall's (1987) hypothesis is that men and women have considerably different experiences during their early socialisation. This can influence their trust in other people. There can be reasons to believe that women are less successful socially because of gender discrimination. Another explanation of why to expect lower trust among women is related to the vulnerability arising from the responsibility for dependent children, and that they are more likely to be distrustful and cautious (Delhey and Newton 2003:9).

Applying the social success and well being theory, I draw on Newton's (1999:181) judgement that "being male" is among the factors that makes people hold a high position in society, and thereby theoretically having higher social trust. Based on the theory, I assume men to have higher social trust than women. In addition, I expect the portion of the causal effect that is indirect to be substantial. This is because if what matters for social trust is to feel happy and successful, then it is not being male per se that is important, but achievements in life. And unfortunately,



the gender divisions in the countries studied are still too great to assume that achievements like higher education, economic status and social class will be equal for men and women.

**H2a: Generalised social trust is expected to be slightly higher among males.**

**H2b: A large portion of the causal effect of gender will be indirect via the achieved status variables and the attitudinal/lifestyle variables.**

*Urban/rural residence* is also found to be important in the creation of social trust. Putnam (2000) argues that nearly every type of altruism, voluntarism, community projects and philanthropy are more common in small towns or more rural areas. Cities are more affected by crime, employees in shops are less willing even to return overpayments than their rural colleagues, and it is shown that the inhabitants in bigger cities are less likely to assist a “wrong number” phone caller than people living in smaller towns. The reason for this is not paranoia rising from living in big cities – it is a realistic judgement based on own experience and social norms in their neighbourhood Putnam (2000:138)<sup>9</sup>.

In smaller towns or villages, there is a greater feeling that “everyone knows everyone”, and this can have a disciplinary effect. Considering this in the light of what is stated above about adult life experiences as important to trust – the following hypothesis are formulated:

**H3: Urban-rural residence is an important predictor for level of generalised social trust. People living in rural areas have higher degree of trust than people living in more urban areas.**

Many researchers of social capital consider *religion* as important for social capital. “Religiosity rivals education as a powerful correlate of most forms of civic engagement. In fact, religiously involved people seem simply to know more people” writes Putnam (2000:67). He studies USA and writes that religious

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<sup>9</sup> His analysis is based on the United States.

worshippers and people who claim that religion is very important to them are much more likely than other people to visit friends and entertain at home and diverse groups. Nearly 40 percent of volunteering is based in religious organisations in the USA (Uslaner 2000:587). Religious fundamentalists on the other hand are substantially less likely to say that they trust other people than other believers. They are assumed to have higher particularised trust (Uslaner 1999:126). Even though degree of fundamentalism is not checked here, this is important to have in mind. One cannot assume that all religious people attend churches<sup>10</sup>, but one can assume that they are more likely to do so than non-believers. Churches provide opportunities for social support and interaction, they can be viewed as socialisation agents as they bring people together and inculcate shared values and norms writes Kunioka and Woller (1999:585). They continue: “Churches form an important part of the network of social relationships that make up the civic community”.

In contrast to these perceived positive effects of religion, Larson (2007:27) emphasise that religiosity has a cohesive effect on most religious actors and in most communities; it separates believers from non-believers, binding believers together and excluding infidels. Because in-group cohesion often causes distrust of strangers there are commonly negative aspects of religious group cohesion.

These two views are contrasting, and considering that Larson’s (2007:56) analysis suggest that religiosity has no or a very limited effect on generalised trust, opposed to the negative effect he proposed, I will rely on the theoretical views of Uslaner and Putnam, while keeping in mind the possibilities of negative effect of religion.

Weber (in Delhey and Newton 2005) focused on Protestant ethics as vital in the replacement of personal to impersonal trust during the modernisation. This because of its focus on equality, and the religious and economic importance put on trust. When doing a study at the aggregated level, Inglehart (1999:92) finds Protestant countries to rank lower on generalised trust than Catholic countries.

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<sup>10</sup> The term churches are used here about all religious institutions of whatever faith.

This is seen to reflect the principle that horizontal, locally-controlled organisations like those found in protestant countries are conducive to interpersonal trust. The Roman Catholic Church is the prototype of the opposite. Thereby, it is interesting to examine whether the same is found on an individual level. All religious beliefs that include a certain amount of respondents will be included. Since no Islam or Jewish or any other kind of religious countries are included in the analyses, the people who belong to Islam or other non-Christian religions can be assumed to be immigrants or belonging to minority groups, and thereby they are assumed to have lower trust, according to Newton (1999:181).

**H4a: Religious people will have higher social trust than non-believers.**

**H4b: Protestant people will have to higher social trust.**

**H4c: Minority groups (measured by Islam or other non-Christian religious beliefs) and Eastern Orthodox will have lower social trust than other religious people.**

#### *4.2.2 Hypothesis including achieved status variables*

*Education* is the most consistent and powerful predictor of generalised trust in the literature, and this is valid cross-nationally (Allum, Patulny and Sturgis 2007b:8). Putnam (1996:4) gives emphasis to the same with the following logic:

So, well-educated people are much more likely to be joiners and trusters, partly because they are better off economically, but mostly because of the skills, resources, and inclinations that were imparted to them at home and in school.

Hence, contact with educational environments somehow appears to provide a spectrum of liberal-humanist values which give emphasis to social and political tolerance, individual efficacy and civic engagement (Inglehart 1997). There is a need to take account of educational differences in the analysis of other factors to be sure that we do not falsely mix their effects with the consequences of education (Putnam 1996:6).

By applying the social success and well-being theory, education is important as a status enhancing factor. One can also assume that higher education is more common among people who answer more positively on attitudinal measures of “successfulness” e.g. happiness or life satisfaction (Allum, Patulny and Sturgis 2007b:19) and positive evaluation of own economy. This also goes for joining voluntary organisations (Putnam 1996:5; 2000:191). When including the attitudinal/lifestyle variables in step 3, I expect a large amount of the causal effect of education to work via these. Therefore, a sub hypothesis is included for education.

**H5a: People with higher education have higher social trust.**

**H5b: The portion of the causal effect of education that is indirect is predicted to be substantial.**

When it comes to *social class* Newton (1999:181) writes that “losers” in society, among them people belonging to the working class, and those with low socio-economic status “take a dimmer view of the worlds and its inhabitants”. Class is not easily operationalised, and it can be a challenging task in a cross-national perspective. Here, Erikson and Goldthorpe’s (EG) (1992) class scheme is used as a basis, and I will go further into detail with this in chapter 4.3. Important when formulating a hypothesis is what kind of terminology is used. Applied here is a version of the EG class schema where the 11 categories are collapsed to six. The four first categories listed can be presented in a hierarchy of employers/employees, starting from the top; *service class*<sup>11</sup>, *routine non-manual employees*<sup>12</sup>, *skilled workers*<sup>13</sup> and *unskilled workers*<sup>14</sup>. The two others shows harder to include in a hierarchy, both

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<sup>11</sup> This includes professionals, administrator and managers. Also higher-grade technicians belong here together with supervisors of non manual workers.

<sup>12</sup> This includes routine non manual employees in administration and commerce, sales personnel, and other rank-and-file service workers

<sup>13</sup> This includes lower grade technicians, supervisors of manual workers and skilled manual workers

<sup>14</sup> This includes semi- and unskilled manual workers, agricultural labourers and other workers in the primary sector

are self-employed workers; *self employed in the primary sector*<sup>15</sup> and *petty bourgeoisie*<sup>16</sup>. (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992:42,43).

People belonging to one of the first four classes mentioned can be expected to have higher levels of social trust with rising social class position. It is more problematic with the other two classes, but I expect them to have the similar trust levels as service class, because of their relatively privileged position in society. In the same manner as for education, I expect that the causal effect will work through the attitudinal/lifestyle variables.

**H6a: For the first four class categories (unskilled workers – service class) generalised social trust is expected to follow the hierarchy – with people with higher social class having higher trust. The two other categories (self-employed in the primary sector and petty bourgeoisie) are expected to have the same effect as service class, or slightly below this.**

**H6b: The respondent’s social class is likely to be strongly correlated with the attitudinal/lifestyle variables, and therefore the portion of the causal effect that works via these variables will be substantial.**

#### 4.2.3 Hypothesis including attitudinal/ lifestyle variables

Voluntary associations and the social networks of civil society that we have been calling “social capital” contribute to democracy in two different ways: they have “external” effects on the larger polity, and they have “internal” effects on the participants themselves (Putnam 2000:338).

Many of the classical theorists within political theory, sociology and anthropology focused on the importance of *voluntary organisations* as “schools of democracy”, and as something that would increase the level of trust. And this seems to have face validity; you do not want to cheat in business with someone you will meet behind the waffle iron in the local football club on Sunday. This suggests that trust appears

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<sup>15</sup> This includes farmers and small-holders who are self-employed workers in primary production

<sup>16</sup> This includes small proprietors and artisans with and without employees.

‘from the bottom up’ (Allum, Patulny and Sturgis 2007b:3). But even though this makes sense theoretically, it has not shown clear and sustained results empirically (Newton and Zmerli 2006). Newton writes (2006:92) that individual level research shows that being engaged in voluntary organisations only to a small degree is related to social trust and almost not related to political trust at all. He continues (2006:93):

The most likely story seems to be that while voluntary activity may strengthen and reinforce trust, it is more likely that those with high class, income, and education, who are also likely to find society trustworthy and to express life satisfaction and happiness, are more likely to be active in voluntary groups.

Newton’s statement indicates spuriousness and this will be tested here. Another point that can diminish the weight one should put on voluntary activity is that people do spend more of their available time with people during education, family-time, in the workplace and other institutions than they do in voluntary organisations. These arenas could be just as important in creating trust. Uslaner (1999:145) writes that it is arguable that voluntary organisations would create more social capital and trust.

Putnam’s (1993; 2000) contribution to the debate sketches another picture of the situation. He writes that (1993:171) “cooperation itself breeds trust”, and focuses on how networks make norms of reciprocity arise. Reciprocity is divided in a “balanced” part and a “generalised” part. Generalised reciprocity is of interest here, since it refers to a continuing relationship of exchange that is at any time imbalanced (meaning that a favour done today must not necessarily be returned immediately). It holds the mutual expectation that a benefit given now should be returned in the future which raises the levels of trust.

Newton and Zmerli (2006) writes that with the better quality data provided by the ESS, perhaps a correlation between activity in voluntary organisations and generalised social trust is more likely to be found, as suggested by the classical theorists. Hypothesis 7a is formulated in line with the views of Putnam (1993;

2000) and the classical theorists. Because of Newton's contribution to the debate, an additional hypothesis about spuriousness is included.

**H7a: Higher activity in voluntary organisations will lead to higher social trust.**

**H7b: A large portion of this co variation is likely to be spurious.**

Inglehart (1990:43) writes about *life satisfaction* that "Overall life satisfaction is part of a broad syndrome of attitudes reflecting whether one has a relatively positive or negative attitude toward the world in which one lives". He continues with a statement that interpersonal trust and life satisfaction tend to go together in a cultural cluster.

Whiteley (1999), studying 45 countries by using WVS data, finds life satisfaction to have the strongest effect on social trust. Respondents who reports satisfaction with their lives are more trusting than the less satisfied. I will include life satisfaction as another measure of being a "have" as opposed to a "have not". Class can not alone describe a person's degree of "successfulness"; a subjective evaluation of satisfaction with own life strengthens the possibility to measure this. It can also serve as a measurement of "happiness", found by some, among them Newton 2006:91, to be related to social trust. Subjective measures of success and well being, like life satisfaction, do better than objective ones, like standard of living and occupation (Delhey and Newton 2003:20). Therefore, this effect is expected to be relatively strong.

**H8: People with high life satisfaction will have higher generalised social trust.**

The social success and well-being theory puts a high weight on socio-economic placement to explain the level of trust. The economic part of this is not yet covered, and this can be measured by income levels, or by other measures like *subjective evaluation of own economy*.

McAllisters (1999:200) cross-national analysis of institutional trust shows that subjective evaluation of own economy, has a stronger positive effect on levels of political trust than the more objective measure of household income. I assume this relationship to be found between subjective evaluation of own economy and generalised social trust as well. Because of this, subjective economic evaluation is preferred over income<sup>17</sup>. This choice is also based on the fact that class is included and that it can be seen as a crude but objective measure of placement on the income ladder.

**H9: People who evaluate own economy in a positive manner is more likely to have higher generalised social trust.**

Many suppose that *media use*, and particular TV media should be blamed for what Norris (2000:231) calls “civic malaise”. The connection to trust is emphasised by Putnam (1995:679) who points to a large body of literature suggesting “(...) that heavy watchers of TV are unusually sceptical about the benevolence of other people - overestimating crime rates, for example”. It is assumed that the amount of time in front of the TV has weakened the public sphere; privatized it and made it poorer (Norris 2000:232). This can be linked to the theory of the “mean world” syndrome (Gerbner et.al. 2002:52), which means that long-term exposure to television with frequent violence tend to cultivate the image of a mean and dangerous world. They write (2002:52):

The repetitive “lessons” we learn from television, beginning with infancy, are likely to become the basis of a broader worldview, making television a significant source of general values, ideologies, and perspectives as well as specific assumptions, beliefs and images.

Groups of heavier viewers, compared to lighter viewers, more often gives answers that shows a worldview of reality as a place where greater protection is needed, that most people cannot be trusted and that most people are just looking out for themselves (Gerbner et. al 1980).

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<sup>17</sup> And in addition this is based on the problems associated with comparing income levels cross-nationally.



Norris (2000:235) tests these theoretical propositions and finds that the more TV watching the respondents reported the less likely they were to have high levels of generalised social trust. Maybe it is what people watch that makes them distrustful, or it could be that people who does not trust others more probably sits at home and watches television. I presuppose that TV-watching does make people less trusting. I focus on TV watching other than news and current affairs, because of the assumption that watching serious media does not have these negative effects. (see Holmberg 1999).

**H10: More hours of TV watching (except from news/current affairs) is expected to lead to more generalised distrust.**

Newton (1999) does not find that *political factors* have significant effects on social trust, and even the social individual factors have weak explanatory power. Two political factors are included in the analysis, as explained in chapter 3.1, but they are not expected to have strong effects on generalised social trust. The next step now will be a description of how the variables included in these hypotheses are measured.

### 4.3 Operationalisation of independent variables

The independent variables follow from the hypothesis, and my own judgement of the best way to measure this within the frames of the questions included in the ESS. The operationalisations of the independent variables are presented in Table 4.1.<sup>18</sup> Some of them do not need in-depth description. Others do, however, and this follows below.

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<sup>18</sup> See appendix for question wording

**Table 4.1. Operationalisation of independent variables, individual level analyses**

<b>Independent variables</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std.dev.</b>
Age	Continuous	46.62	18.20
Gender	0= Male, 1=Female	0.53	0.533
Urban-Rural dimension	1= A big city 2= Suburbs or outskirts of big city 3= Town or small city 4= Country village 5= Farm or home in the countryside	2.99	1.115
Religious confession(dummy variable, reference category: “no religious denomination”)	Roman Catholic	0.364	0.481
	Protestant	0.137	0.343
	Eastern Orthodox	0.066	0.249
	Other Christian denomination	0.028	0.165
	Islam	0.018	0.133
	Other non-Christian religions No religious denomination	0.007 0.379	0.086 0.485
Education <sup>19</sup>	0=Not completed primary education – 6= Second stage of tertiary	3.04	1.509
Social class (dummy variable, reference category: “others”)	Unskilled workers	0.204	0.403
	Skilled workers	0.121	0.326
	Routine non-manual workers	0.185	0.389
	Service class	0.303	0.460
	Self employed in the primary sector	0.023	0.15
	Petty bourgeoisie Others (never been employed)	0.059 0.105	0.236 0.306
Activity in voluntary organisations (In the past 12 months, how often did you get involved in work for voluntary or charitable organisations?) <sup>20</sup>	1= Never 2=Less often 3= At least once every six months 4=At least once every three months 5= At least once a month 6=At least once a week	2.058	1.688
Life satisfaction “how satisfied are you with life as a whole”	0= Extremely dissatisfied – 10= Extremely satisfied	6.65	2.41
Subjective evaluation of own economy (Which of the descriptions on this card comes closest to how you feel about your household's income nowadays?) <sup>21</sup>	1 = Finding it very difficult on present income 2 = Finding it difficult on present income 3 = Coping on present income 4 = Living comfortably on present income	2.933	0.859
Total TV-watching on a weekday, not including politics and “current affairs” <sup>22</sup>	0= No time at all 1= Less than 0,5 hour 2= 0,5 hour to 1 hour 3= More than 1 hour, up to 1,5 hours 4= More than 1,5 hours, up to 2 hours 5= More than 2 hours, up to 2,5 hours 6= More than 2,5 hours, up to 3 hours 7= More than 3 hours	2.43	1.83
Political interest <sup>23</sup>	1= Not at all interested – 4= Very interested	2.395	0.906
Voted on government party (parties) Dummy variable: ref. cat “others”	Yes	0.299	0.458
	No	0.318	0.465
	Others (did not vote, not eligible to vote, no answer)	0.383	0.486

<sup>19</sup> The 63 respondents from Cyprus did not have valid values on this variable, and they were therefore excluded from the analysis at the individual level.

<sup>20</sup> The original variable is used here, but the values are reversed to better fit the analysis

<sup>21</sup> The original variable is used here, but the values are reversed to better fit the analysis

<sup>22</sup> This is a constructed variable of the total time people watch TV, but *not* news or current affairs.

<sup>23</sup> The original variable is used here, but the values are reversed to better fit the analysis

Education is measured by a common scale for all countries in the ESS. Every country has own and more context specific scales in the data set. These are more problematic to use in comparative matters. Some information may be lost however, by using this more simple scale.

Social class is not easily operationalised. “Basic questions such as who are workers and/or belong to the middle-class today are by no means self-evident. Neither is it self-evident among social scientists what is the primary source of class relations (...)” writes Leiulfsrud et. al. (2005:1). But, they write that even if this is associated with challenges, class is still an important research area, and there is no doubt that social class still matters. I chose to focus on occupation as an indicator of social class. This is done by the broadly used Erikson and Goldthorpe (EG) class schema. It differentiates between different work relations. In the ESS, occupation is an open-ended question, and is coded after the interview. The list includes 100 categories of occupations and this was reduced to 11. This was done by an operationalisation of the EG class scheme based on an SPSS-program of Harry Ganzeboom, although with a number of small adjustments made by Leiulfsrud et.al (2005:8) to facilitate analysis for the ESS. The eleven classes in the scheme developed by Erikson, Goldthorpe and Portocarero were reduced to six<sup>24</sup>, in line with Knutsen’s (2006:14) practice, but with somewhat different terminology. The principles of the differentiation in the EG schema have been derived from classical sources, in particular Marx and Weber. The basic distinction is within the category of employees (Knutsen 2006: 14). The four first categories listed can be presented in a hierarchy starting from the bottom<sup>25</sup>: unskilled workers, skilled workers, routine non-manual workers and service class. The two others, self-employed in the primary sector and petty bourgeoisie are more distinct, and harder to place in relation to the others (Erikson and Goldthorpe 1992:42, 43).

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<sup>24</sup> Here, their seven class version is used, but agricultural workers labourers are coded as unskilled workers.

<sup>25</sup> What occupational groups are included in the different classes is presented in a footnote on page 42 and will not be repeated here.

The most of the self-employed in business are, according to Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992:40) typically the owners of stores, hotels, restaurants, small factories or other building or transportation firms. These are included in among the petty bourgeoisie. A small portion of these are large employers with many employees, and these are included in the service class, although they may be seen as very different from the others included in this group. They are considered more similar to the salaried managers found in the service class because of their heavy involvement in managerial and entrepreneurial activities.

Respondents are divided in classes if they have reported to be in paid work the last seven days (or away temporarily), unemployed and retired people are included by asking about their last job. People who never had a paid job, but lives in a household with one who does or did, is coded by this occupation (ESS 2008b). The reference category “others” includes people who never had a job, and who lives alone or in a household where no one is employed (for instance students who never have been employed). Also people who attend compulsory military service are included in the reference category.

When it comes to measuring media-use, I computed a variable here by subtracting the total time watching TV news from the total amount of TV watching<sup>26</sup>. This makes the variable indicate the time the respondent watch “unserious” television. Norris (2000) does not separate between types of TV-programs. Holmberg (1999) does, and draws a dividing line between “use of serious media” on the one hand and unserious media on the other. This, however, is done by using data from one country (Sweden), something that makes it possible to divide in a good manner between programs. Analysing a comparative dataset, one can ask if “politics and current affairs” is too wide to be labelled “serious media”. However, I judge it to be satisfactory.

The degree of identification with the party or parties in government is measured by

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<sup>26</sup> Respondents (0.8 % of the total N) who got a negative value here, was coded as 0 because having negative values here indicates misunderstanding of the question.

having voted on the ruling party or parties in the last national election. In cases of semi-presidential systems, I checked for situations of co-habitation<sup>27</sup>, but there were no such cases; the party of the president and the government was the same. In some cases, an election was held in the same period as the interviews were made. Here, I looked at when and whether the party voted on had actually formed a government, and then I had to make the coding of respondents from the same country different before and after the new government was formed.

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<sup>27</sup> This situation arises when the presidency and the legislature are controlled by different parties.

## 4.4 Analysis and discussion

The regression analysis is presented in table 4.2. The first step includes the ascribed variables, step two achieved variables, and step three includes all variables.

**Table 4.2. Sequential regression analysis with generalised social trust as dependent variable. N: 34955**

Independent Variables	Correlation Pearsons r	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
		Beta	B	Beta	B	Beta	B
<u>Ascribed variables</u>							
Age <sup>28</sup>	0.003	0.006	0.001	0.038	0.004**	0.046	0.005**
Gender	0.006	0.014	0.050**	0.001	0.003**	0.018	0.065**
Urban/Rural	-0.010	-0.003	-0.005	0.022	0.037**	0.011	0.018*
<u>Religious confession<sup>29</sup></u>							
<i>Roman Catholic</i>	-0.102**	-0.106	-0.409**	-0.089	-0.343**	-0.102	-0.392**
<i>Protestant</i>	0.145**	0.097	0.522**	0.089	0.476**	0.049	0.263**
<i>Eastern Orthodox</i>	-0.121**	-0.139	-1.057**	-0.136	-1.035**	-0.048	-0.369**
<i>Other Christian</i>	0.025**	0.011	0.123*	0.011	0.126*	-0.005	-0.056
<i>Islam</i>	-0.015**	-0.023	-0.325**	-0.013	-0.183*	-0.004	-0.060
<i>Other non Chr.</i>	0.000	-0.005	-0.106	-0.008	-0.166	-0.012	-0.269*
<u>Achieved variables</u>							
Education	0.144**			0.094	0.116**	0.051	0.063**
<u>Social class<sup>30</sup></u>							
<i>Unskilled wk</i>	-0.126**			-0.117	-0.542**	-0.075	-0.347**
<i>Skilled wk</i>	-0.060**			-0.070	-0.400**	-0.056	-0.323**
<i>Routine n-m w</i>	0.024**			-0.029	-0.137**	-0.035	-0.165**
<i>Service class</i>	0.141**			0.001	0.005	-0.040	-0.161**
<i>S.empl. pr. sect.</i>	-0.019**			-0.027	-0.327**	-0.026	-0.315**
<i>P. bourgeoisie</i>	-0.006			-0.033	-0.260**	-0.048	-0.378**
<u>Attitudinal/lifestyle var.</u>							
Voluntary org.	0.160**					0.066	0.073**
Life satisfaction	0.336**					0.257	0.200**
Ec. satisfaction.	0.274**					0.097	0.214**
TV-watching	-0.056**					-0.003	-0.003
Political intr.	0.126**					0.044	0.090**
<u>Government party<sup>31</sup></u>							
<i>Yes</i>	0.040**					0.026	0.105**
<i>No</i>	0.046**					0.054	0.213**
R <sup>2</sup>			0.043		0.072		0.168

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

<sup>28</sup> Delhey and Newton (2003:100) state that it is possible that social trust follows a U-curve, with “the young (never trust anyone over 30) and the old and vulnerable having higher levels of distrust”. This was explored; age squared has been applied, in addition to dummy variables with three categories. I found that younger people were not significantly less trusting than middle-aged, but that older people were more trusting than others. Based on the main theoretical contributions on this field, age as a continuous variable is used.

<sup>29</sup> Non-believers is the reference category

<sup>30</sup> Others is the reference category (see Table 4.1.)

<sup>31</sup> Others is the reference category (see Table 4.1.)

In Table 4.2.,  $R^2$  goes from being 0.072 to 0.168 when including the attitudinal/lifestyle variables in step 3. This shows us that the models including only ascribed and achieved variables does not explain changes in generalised social trust in a good manner. This will be reflected in the amount of attention given to these variables when commenting on the main findings. In step 3, the independent variables can explain 16.8 % of the variance of generalised social trust and it is clear that as expected, many other factors are important in influencing people's amount of trust in the "generalised other".

Now turning to the hypothesis; I will comment differences in the strengths of the independent variables' effects in the basis of the different Beta coefficients<sup>32</sup>, except from the effect of social class, religious confession and party choice (the three dummy variables) where I will use the non-standardized b coefficient to comment differences between classes. Persons R, the bivariate relation will also be commented in some cases.

The total causal effect of age is not significant, and H1 is not confirmed. When controlling for social composition, like the fact that older people have lower education than the younger, then age has a small (0.038) direct causal effect on trust. The direct effect (0.046) is also significant.

Turning to H2a, we see that the total causal effect (beta 1) of gender is significant, but, opposite of the expectation women have higher social trust and the hypothesis is opposed. The effect is very weak (0.014), and previous research does not find strong and consistent effects of gender on social trust - neither Whiteley (1999:41) nor Delhey and Newton (2003:110) find this. This finding indicates that there is some truth in Allum, Patulny and Sturgis' (2007b:8) view that gender is an under-researched variable in relation to trust, and that women have been important contributors to the creation of formal and informal social capital. It must, however,

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<sup>32</sup> Standardised regression coefficient, lies as a main rule between -1 and 1. This is used to neutralise differences in scale.

be underlined that all coefficients for gender are very small. The indirect effect of gender is -0.004 while the direct effect of gender is 0.018. In H2b it was expected that a substantial portion of the causal effect of gender would be indirect via the ascribed status variables and the attitudinal/lifestyle variables, but with an indirect effect of less than one fourth of the direct effect, this is not confirmed.

When it comes to H3, which postulates that people living in the rural areas will have higher social trust than people in more urban areas, we see that it is not confirmed. Both Pearsons R and the total causal effect indicate an opposite relationship than expected, but the total causal effect is not significant.

The three hypothesis concerning religion (H4a-c) shows differing results. H4a expects religious people to have higher trust than non-believers, and this is not confirmed. The total causal effects show positive effects of only Protestants and other Christian believers, while people with other religions have lower trust than people with no religious denomination. It can be assumed that higher effects of religion is found in analyses of people in only one country, because some of the countries included will be more secularised than others, and therefore religious measures like these can be misleading, in that they actually reflect societal aspects rather than personal. Alternatively, one can rely on Larsson's (2007) assumption that religion creates less generalised social trust, and interpret the variables as a confirmation of this.

H4b is confirmed: people with a protestant religious belief have significantly higher social trust than other religious people; this is the strongest positive effect in step 1. H4c expected people of Muslim faith or other non-Christian beliefs to have lower trust than people belonging to other religions because of their minority status, and this hypothesis is not confirmed. While these two categories have significantly lower trust than people with no religious denomination and Protestants<sup>33</sup>, their effect is significantly less negative than that of being an Eastern Orthodox believer.

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<sup>33</sup> The confidence interval of the un-standardised coefficients is calculated, and the differences between these are compared to observe whether the differences between the effects are significant.



Because the vast majority of Eastern Orthodox people are to be found in Post-Communist countries and these countries shows to have low social trust in chapter 3, the low levels of trust found among Eastern Orthodox people are not surprising. Belonging to Islam or other non-Christian religions does not have a significantly different effect from that of being among the Roman Catholics or other Christian believers.

H5a is confirmed; people with higher education have higher generalised social trust. Both the bivariate correlation and the total causal effect ( $\beta_2 = 0.094$ ) indicate this. The indirect effect via the lifestyle/attitudinal variables of 0.043, nearly half the total causal effect confirms H5b. Putnam's assumption that well-educated people are much more likely to be joiners and trusters is important in explaining this, together with the fact that attitudinal variables also have causal effects on social trust.

H6a predicts that people having high social class will have higher social trust. The bivariate correlations indicate this – the relationship is positive for service class and increasingly more negative for the four others, with unskilled workers having the strongest negative effects, the b-coefficient is -0.542. When it comes to the total causal effect (in step 2) this picture can also be seen. Here, service class is the only class category that has a small positive effect, although this is not significantly different from the reference category. The difference in the effects between unskilled and skilled workers, however, shows not significant, while the differences between skilled workers and routine non manuals are significant.

Petty bourgeoisie and self-employed in the primary sector were expected to have a similar effect as the service class; but the results of the analysis shows a completely different picture. The effect of being among the petty bourgeoisie or self-employed in the primary sector is negative compared to the reference category, and the effect of these two classes are significantly different from the effect of belonging to the service class. The difference between the effect of being self-employed in the

primary sector and belonging to the petty bourgeoisie is not significant. The direct effects of class (beta 3) shows that all categories trust “the generalised other” to a significantly lower level than people in the reference category. H6b is partly confirmed, as we see that some of the indirect effects are substantial, while others are weaker.

The theoretical assumption made by many classical theorists, and developed by Putnam (1993; 2000) among others, that membership in voluntary organizations breeds trust is confirmed. Although the effect, 0.066 is weak, it is significant, and H7a is confirmed. We also see that the bivariate correlation is fairly strong, 0.160. The spurious component is 0.094, and therefore H7b is clearly confirmed. This confirms Newton’s (2006) assumption that much of the perceived effect of being active in voluntary organisations is spurious. The fact that the total causal effect of being active in voluntary organisations is positive and significant contradicts some of the critical voices mentioned above.

The hypothesis involving the second attitudinal/lifestyle variable, life satisfaction (H8), predicts that being satisfied with life will have a positive effect, something that is clearly confirmed. This is the strongest bivariate correlation in the analysis, and also has the highest beta coefficient of the independent variables (0.257). This confirms Whiteley’s findings from his cross-national analysis, where he finds life satisfaction to be the strongest predictor of generalised social trust, by using World Values Survey. H9 concerns subjective evaluation of own economy and it is assumed that a high value here increases the level of generalised social trust. This is confirmed in the analysis, and high satisfaction has a significant, positive effect of 0.097. That H8 and H9 are confirmed is in line with the assumptions of the social success and well being theory.

The last hypothesis, H10, concerns media use and is measured by total amount of daily TV watching (except news and current affairs). The hypothesis that heavy TV

watching is expected to lead to more generalised distrust is not confirmed, although the bivariate correlation here indicates a relationship in the direction predicted.

Newton's (1999) conclusion that political factors does not relate to social trust can not be drawn here. Political interest has a positive effect of 0.044 on generalised social trust, and maybe this can be interpreted as meaning that a positive and civic minded attitude can explain levels of social trust. We also see that people who voted does trust the generalised other significantly more than people who of different reasons did not vote. People who voted on the party or parties in government have somewhat higher social trust (the b-coefficient is 0.105) than people who did not vote. This effect is weaker than the effect of having voted on another party (b-coefficient: 0.213). The differences between these effects are significant.

#### 4.5 Main findings

Something that is striking when looking at the results of the first analysis is that many of the factors of the "success and well-being theory" are central explanation factors; being highly educated, satisfied with own life and economy is important in creating social trust. This confirms both Putnam and Newton's conclusions that societies' "have nots" trust less than "haves". Maybe one can assume, like Putnam (2000:138) does, that people who score high on these variables are treated by others with more honesty and respect.

Another interesting finding is clearly that being active in voluntary organisations *does* have a significant, positive impact on social trust, even when controlled for these other variables. This is contradictory to many earlier findings (Newton 1999, Wollebæk and Selle 2002). In chapter 3, I mentioned that Zmerli and Newton (2006:14) stresses that their results when using ESS round 1 are products of more valid and reliable measures than many other data sources. To repeat, they write:

Perhaps there is also a correlation between these variables [among them generalised social trust] and activity in voluntary organisations, as suggested by a long and distinguished line of theory from de Tocqueville onwards but not strongly confirmed by survey results?

Looking at the results from this analysis, the answer is yes.

The positive and significant effects of the political variables included in the analysis may be interpreted that engaged people who participates in political matters and an “outward looking” attitude in life, also has higher levels of social trust. These effects are stronger than many of the other effects in this analysis, something that makes this an interesting relationship to look at in further research.

## Chapter 5

### Who trusts political institutions?

#### 5.1 Introduction

The public's growing scepticism towards politicians, political parties, parliaments, and other democratic institutions raises the question of whether advanced industrial democracies are facing a crisis of political support. The implications of these trends partially depend on what produced these shifts in public sentiments (Dalton 2007: 57).

Dalton's citations here shows the importance of exploring what can explain political trust at the individual level, and seen in relation to social trust, different schools have different answers to how this can be done. Two of particular importance can be mentioned; these were presented in the introduction of chapter four and will therefore only repeated shortly here, with emphasis on what they imply for trust in political institutions. First, the "trusting personality school" argues that trust has its origins in the psychological and social characteristics of individuals and views trusting persons as optimistic and people with a feeling of control over own life (cf. Uslaner 1999; 2000). Newton (2005:13) emphasise that "until recently social psychologists have been mainly interested in social trust and have had little to say about political trust, but their theories do have some implications for politics". Among these implications is that trust is seen as a core personality characteristic, and therefore social and political trust must necessarily go together. This will be explored in this chapter.

The other, more sociological, school of thought sees political trust as a product of individual characteristics and political experience (Newton 2005:15). Most of the independent variables included here is included based on this view; both ascribed ones like gender and education and achieved ones like life satisfaction and support for political parties. This view is similar to the social success and well being theory in that emphasis is laid on personal experience. The analysis is done in four steps;

and the generalised trust index will be included in the last step. The variables are the same, but many of the hypotheses are different, and it is interesting to look at differences between the analyses. According to Newton (2006:98) political trust and social trust often relates to different variables. Social trust is connected to social variables, while political trust seems to be related to political factors.

This chapter is organised in the same way as chapter 4, with hypothesis being deduced from both theory and earlier research. Chapter 4 presented the operationalisations of the independent variables. The analysis and results are presented and discussed in 5.3, while main findings will be emphasised in 5.4.

## 5.2 Hypotheses

### *5.2.1 Hypothesis including ascribed variables*

Looking at the second school of thought, *age* can be expected to be important in creating trust in political institutions. Inglehart (1990; 1997) points to a generational effect - the young generation show lower levels of political trust. Youth shows greater concern for new quality of life issues, and this can put them in conflict with the dominant political parties. Younger people can also be expected to prefer more involvement in decisions affecting themselves, something that heightens the potential for being critical of the institutions of representative government. Mishler and Rose (2001:50) finds older citizens to exhibit significantly higher trust in political institutions than younger generations, and that is what is expected here. As mentioned in chapter 4, life cycle versus generational effect can not be easily tested by cross-sectional data.

**H1: Older people have higher trust in political institutions than younger people.**

*Gender* has a significant effect on trust in Listhaug and Ringdal's (2007:22) study; men show slightly lower levels of political trust than women. With the use of the WVS, Norris and Newton (2000:64) find that women have more trust in political

institutions. Mishler and Rose (1997) do the same finding in Post-Communist countries, and building on this I formulate the hypothesis. As in the analysis of social trust, the indirect effect of gender via the ascribed status variables is expected to be negative. Building on the arguments from chapter four, about gender and position in society, an additional hypothesis is stated.

**H2a: Women will have higher trust in political institutions than men.**

**H2b: The portion of the causal effect of gender that is indirect is expected to be substantial.**

When it comes to *urban/rural* residence, this variable is mainly thought to be important for generalised social trust. However, one can assume that people living in more rural areas will have lower trust, because of the feeling of being far from the power. It is also possible that especially in the Post-Communist countries, people living on the countryside have lower trust in political institutions based on the “better before” view, since during the communist rule, the financial subsidies to the agricultural sector was substantive. Based on this I expect that the effect of urban/rural residence is small.

**H3: People living in rural areas will have lower levels of trust than people in more urban areas.**

One can assume that the positive outcomes of *Protestantism* mentioned in relation to generalised social trust also will be valid for trust in political institutions. And as Newton (2007:355) points to, Protestantism is closely linked with capitalism and income equality, and wealthy nations are often more democratic. This can provide an indirect link between Protestantism and trust in political institutions that will be of interest to explore further. Inglehart (1990:50) finds patterns in the degree of political discussion between different countries which shows that there is a high correlation between having a protestant political culture and high levels of political discussion. Since political interest is probably a reason for wanting to discuss

politics in the first place, and this expected to lead to higher political trust, we can draw the lines from this finding to the current analysis.

Mishler and Rose (1999) who use church attendance as an indicator of civic community concludes that the influence of church attendance on trust in political institutions is likely to remain small but stable in the foreseeable future. Like in the last chapter I can assume that people who view themselves as religious attend ceremonies in church more often than other people, and therefore I expect religious people to have higher social trust than other people.

**H4a: Protestants will have higher political trust than other religious groups**

**H4b: Religious people are expected to have higher levels of trust in political institutions than non-believers.**

#### *5.2.2 Hypothesis including achieved variables*

Dalton (2007: 87) writes that in the USA, better *educated* people are more cynical about their government despite their privileged social position. This is according to him (ibid: 90) ironic, considering that the better educated benefit more from society, and should have better life-chances, and thereby be more supportive of the existing political order. However, Dalton measures this by whether respondents “trust the government to do right”, and therefore I judge this to be something different than what is measured in this thesis; deeper and more long-lived support for institutions. Hence, I rely on Listhaug and Ringdal (2007:22) who find institutional trust to increase with higher *education* but that this effect is rather weak. Newton (2006:90, 91) explores trust in parliament cross-nationally, and here, education has a significant positive effect. This is what I base my hypothesis on, aware of the inherent contradiction in this relationship. As for social trust, the additional hypothesis expects a significant indirect effect of education via the attitudinal/lifestyle variables.



**H5a: The better educated people have more trust in political institutions than less educated people.**

**H5b: The indirect effect via the attitudinal/lifestyle variables and the social trust variable is expected to be substantial.**

When it comes to *social class* and trust in political institutions no extensive basis of empirical evidence is found. However, people in higher social classes can be assumed to have more positive experiences with the political system; the same argumentation used by Dalton can be used because his findings include higher-status groups, and social class can be used as an indicator of status. Therefore, the two hypotheses are formulated like this:

**H6a: For the first four class categories (unskilled workers – service class) generalised social trust is expected to follow the hierarchy – with people with higher trust in political institutions. The two other categories (self-employed in the primary sector and petty bourgeoisie) are expected to have the same effect as service class, or slightly below this.**

**H6b: The respondent's social class is likely to be strongly correlated with the attitudinal/lifestyle variables, and therefore the portion of the causal effect that works via these variables will be substantial.**

### *5.2.3 Hypothesis including attitudinal/ lifestyle variables*

Tocqueville (1999) argued that *involvement in voluntary organisations* teaches the “habits of the heart” of trust – reciprocity, solidarity and cooperation. All three virtues are necessary foundations for democracy. Trust is according to Tocqueville created in dense networks of voluntary organisations and clubs, because people are brought together and thought how to compromise and co-operate in order to reach common goals. In the same vein, John Stuart Mill (1958) argued that participation in civic life teaches people the skills and attitudes necessary for democracy. He was interested in the contrast between engaged citizens and others, and wrote that

people who participated in public life were guided by other rules than private favouritism. Being engaged made, according to him, people feel like part of the public and to start thinking of the public benefit as his own good. Putnam (2000:338), standing on the shoulders of Mill and Tocqueville, writes that voluntary associations are places where social and civic skills are learned, that they are “schools for democracy”. In relation to trust in political institutions, he clearly states that volunteering is associated with engagement in politics, and that political cynics are less likely than other people to volunteer.

It seems to have face validity that people who have learned about democracy also should have higher trust in political institutions. Yet, Newton (2006:82) writes:

(...) there are serious empirical difficulties with the de Tocqueville/social capital theory of trust and with the claims that it is rooted and nurtured in memberships of voluntary organisations. (...) [M]embership of voluntary organisations seems to have a rather weak association with social trust and barely any relationship with political trust.

This is partly based on his findings in his analysis which shows that at the individual level, voluntary organisations is weakly related to political trust (measured by trust in parliament) in only one of the countries analysed, and no association is shown in other countries. Zmerli and Newton (2006:15) suggest that maybe the link between activity in voluntary organisations and political trust can be found by the use of ESS data. As in the previous chapter, an additional hypothesis is included because many of the other variables included are seen as important for volunteering in the first place.

**H7a: Higher activity in voluntary organisations leads to higher trust in political institutions.**

**H7b: A large portion this co variation is likely to be spurious.**

Recent economic success may enhance support for the individuals in office. But if, in the long run, people feel that *life* has been good under the current regime, it gives rise to feelings of diffuse support for that regime. Thus, feelings of overall subjective well-being play a key role in the growth of legitimacy (Inglehart 1999:105).

Inglehart adds that *satisfaction with one's own life* is one of the best available indicators of subjective well-being, and that is what will be used here. Listhaug and Ringdal (2007) also use this indicator, and they find that being satisfied with life has a weak positive effect on what they call “trust in the electoral system” which includes parliament and in political parties.

**H8: Being satisfied with own life leads to higher trust in political institutions.**

When it comes to *subjective evaluation of own economy*, one can point to Dalton's (2007:63) comment that basically “(d)emocratic politics is first of all a social contract whereby government performs certain functions in exchange for popular support”. Hence, popular support can be measured in many ways, but the narrowest definition of it focuses on economic performance. And as Dalton (2007:63) writes, the strongest evidence of the economic performance theory might be found in individual level relationships. Based on McAllister (1999), this subjective measure is expected to be more important for the level of trust than social class.

**H9: Higher economic satisfaction leads to higher political institutional trust.**

The video malaise theory is mentioned in chapter 4 in relation to *media use*, and the implications of this are also important for political trust. One of its most important claims is that watching television reduces confidence in governing institutions and support for the political system in established democracies. Norris (2000:232) writes: “Tabloidization has resulted in a relentless pursuit of sensational, superficial, and populist political reporting as network news attempts to maintain eroding

ratings”. And although it is not a new phenomenon, reporting scandals seem more pervasive than before.

The mobilization perspective suggests that today’s mass media has a positive role; modernization has increased the availability of specialised news media, giving rich information to citizens in advanced democracies. Today, getting information about current affairs is easier than before, and with higher educated citizens the ability to use this information is increased. This development has maybe, however, given an electorate that is more critical toward authorities than before (Norris 2000:233) As in the analysis in chapter 4, I focus on TV watching other than news and current affairs. Based on the theoretical assumptions of the video malaise literature, H7 is formulated like this.

**H10: Heavy TV watching leads to slightly lower trust in political institutions.**

Many terms that can be viewed as similar to or related to political trust, among these civic-mindedness and participation, citizenship, political interest and involvement (Newton 2006:86). Here, I will look deeper into the effect of *political interest* on trust in political institutions. Newton (1999; 2006; and Norris and Newton 2000) finds that political trust is most closely associated with a range of political variables. Among these is interest in politics, or an inclination to talk about politics. Moving up on the political interest scale increases the level of trust in political institutions in his analysis. Political interest is not a frequently included indicator in analysis of trust, and therefore the strength of the effect is difficult to predict, but equally interesting to analyse here.

**H11: People with high political interest are probably more trusting of political institutions.**

Whether people *voted on government party or not* is what makes them “winners or losers” in the terminology used by Anderson et. al. (2005:7), who explains:

Studying winners and losers thus provides theoretical leverage for understanding the behaviours and attitudes of individuals, but also provides insight into the resilience and fragility of the political system as a whole.

To focus on winning and losing in elections is vital; democracy is fundamentally based on the idea that the political process should be routinely responsive to what the citizens want, and that elections should determine who gets to rule. Wins and losses are collectively determined, but it is at the same time individually experienced. What is also central, Anderson et al (2005:3) argue, is that “the experience of winning and losing and becoming part of the majority and minority leads people to adopt a lens through which they view political life”. Thus, it is interesting to see how the experience of watching the political world through the lenses of winners and losers influences the trust in political institutions.

Anderson et. al.'s (2005) analysis reveals that having voted on the party or parties in government translates into more positive attitudes towards the government. In contrast, people who do not support the party or parties in government tend to exhibit more negative attitudes towards the political system. This and the theoretical foundation provide the basis for formulating the following hypothesis.

**Hypothesis 12: People who voted on the party/parties in government are more likely to trust political institutions than other people.**

There is no close or consistent association between social and political trust (...) The links where they exist, tend to be weak and contingent. Assumptions that social and political trust go together, move in harmony, or are somehow causally related do not seem justified (Newton 1999:185).

This statement by Newton will be scrutinised here; the analysis will include the index of *generalised social trust*. The results of the analysis on this issue provide part of the answer to the third research question in this thesis; what is the relationship between generalised social trust and institutional political trust on an individual level? As discussed in the theory, this can be related to classical theorists. The answer most probably given by them would be that voluntary activity breeds social

trust, which is vital to political trust. More contemporary is Putnam's (2000) "bowling alone" thesis which also emphasise the relationship between social and political trust. He emphasises that the increased levels of political dissatisfaction found in some western democracies have their origins in the decline of social trust and social networks of modern society. However, as Newton and Zmerli writes, individual level research often finds little or no correlation between social trust and measures of political support; this is more often found in country level research. Norris and Newton (2000) reports fairly weak relationships for all nations in the WVS, while Dalton (2007:70) finds stronger relationships between social and political trust.

In several of his articles, Newton (1999; 2006; 2007) is sceptical about the thought that there is a strong and positive impact of social trust on political trust – this is often based on his empirical findings of little or weak associations. By using data from the ESS, however, I expect to find a positive relationship. When studying Post-Communist countries, Linde (2004:154) finds that "simply put, people trusting other people also tend to view political institutions as more trustworthy than people who display low interpersonal trust." He shows that interpersonal trust is a relatively strong predictor of trust in political institutions in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe. In contrast, Mishler and Rose (2001:54) conclude that interpersonal trust does not spill up to create institutional trust in the Post-Communist studied. The evidence is mixed, but based on the weight of the theoretical assumptions, H13 is formulated:

**H13: People having high general social trust are more likely to express trust in political institutions.**

### 5.3 Analysis and discussion

Table 5.1. presents the results from the regression analysis with trust in political institutions as the dependent variable. It is organised in the same way as the table in chapter 4; the first step includes the ascribed variables and step two achieved variables. Step three includes the attitudinal/lifestyle variables, while step four includes all independent variables, also the index of generalised social trust.

**Table 5.1. Sequential regression analysis with trust in political institutions as the dependent variable N: 34303**

Individual variables	Corr. Pear R	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3		Step 4	
		Beta	B	Beta	B	Beta	B	Beta	B
<u>Ascribed var.</u>									
Age	0.000	-0.001	0.000	0.018	0.002**	0.013	0.001**	-0.001	0.000
Gender	-0.016**	-0.001	-0.002	-0.011	-0.042	0.017	0.069**	0.012	0.048*
Urban/Rural	-0.042**	-0.038	-0.070**	-0.020	-0.037**	-0.028	-0.050**	-0.031	-0.056**
<u>Religious conf.<sup>34</sup></u>									
<i>Roman Catholic</i>	-0.014**	-0.011	-0.046	0.001	0.002	-0.013	-0.055*	0.018	0.078**
<i>Protestant</i>	0.166**	0.141	0.826**	0.135	0.789**	0.089	0.520**	0.074	0.430**
<i>Eastern Orthodox</i>	-0.240**	-0.223	-1.871**	-0.217	-1.823**	-0.118	-0.993**	-0.103	-0.869**
<i>Other Christian</i>	0.008	0.006	0.071	0.006	0.076	-0.008	-0.096	-0.006	-0.077
<i>Islam</i>	0.036**	0.033	0.513**	0.041	0.641**	0.049	0.768**	0.05	0.791**
<i>Other non Christ..</i>	0.008	0.009	0.220	0.007	0.168	0.001	0.029	0.005	0.124
<u>Education</u>									
Education	0.089**			0.050	0.067**	-0.009	-0.012	-0.025	-0.034**
<u>Social class<sup>35</sup></u>									
<i>Unskilled wk</i>	-0.114**			-0.105	-0.531**	-0.056	-0.286**	-0.034	-0.171**
<i>Skilled workers</i>	-0.059**			-0.068	-0.422**	-0.05	-0.313**	-0.032	-0.201**
<i>Routine n-m wk</i>	0.005			-0.037	-0.191**	-0.042	-0.216**	-0.031	-0.163**
<i>Service class</i>	0.137**			0.025	0.109*	-0.018	-0.081*	-0.006	-0.028
<i>S.e. pr. sector</i>	-0.014**			-0.008	-0.110	-0.006	-0.085	0.001	0.009
<i>Pe. bourgeoisie</i>	0.002			-0.041	-0.344*	-0.056	-0.476**	-0.041	-0.349**
<u>Attitudinal/lifestyle variables</u>									
Voluntary org	0.161**					0.052	0.062**	0.031	0.370**
Life satisfaction	0.362**					0.230	0.196**	0.15	0.128**
Ec. satisfaction.	0.334**					0.144	0.347**	0.113	0.271**
TV-watching	-0.049**					0.012	0.013*	0.013	0.015**
Political intr.	0.162**					0.105	0.236**	0.092	0.207**
<u>Govt. party<sup>36</sup></u>									
<i>Yes</i>	0.107**					0.062	0.273**	0.053	0.233**
<i>No</i>	-0.030**					0.011	0.047	-0.06	-0.270
<u>Gen. social trust</u>	0.432**							0.311	0.340**
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>			0.080		0.102		0.212		0.293

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

<sup>34</sup> The reference category is “no religious denomination”.

<sup>35</sup> Others is the reference category (see table 4.1.)

<sup>36</sup> Others is the reference category (see table 4.1.)

Adjusted  $R^2$  is not very strong (.08 and .102) in step 1 and 2, something that is in line with Linde's (2004:153) analysis of trust in political institutions in Central and Eastern Europe; the structural variables he included was rather weakly associated with trust in political institutions. However, the adjusted  $R^2$  is raised in step 3, and again to a relatively strong level in step 4 (0.293). The inclusion of the index of generalised social trust raises the level of the model's explanation power. This means that the attitudinal/lifestyle variables and the index of generalised social trust has the highest relevance when it comes to explaining social trust, and this will be mirrored when commenting on the hypothesis and main findings.

When it comes to the hypothesis, H1 states that older people have higher trust in political institutions than younger people. This is not confirmed; the total causal effect shows no significant connection. The fact that the direct effect of age is weak and insignificant is not surprising considering the finding in the last chapter that age matters for social trust. It is also in line with earlier findings; Dalton (2007:76) finds no relationship between age and trust in political institutions in his multivariate analysis, and neither do Mishler and Rose (1997) in Post-Communist countries.

When it comes to gender, the causal effect is not significant and H2a is not confirmed. H2b states that the indirect effect of gender is likely to be considerable. With an indirect effect of -0.013 this is confirmed. Urban/Rural residence has the effect that was expected, and H3 is confirmed, although the effect is weak (beta 1 = -0.038). People living in bigger cities trust political institutions more than people in more rural areas.

Turning to the effect of religion, H4a is clearly confirmed. Having a Protestant religious faith has a positive effect on trust in political institutions that is higher than other religions. H4b expects religious people to have higher levels of trust in political institutions than non-believers. This is only true for people with a Protestant confession and Muslims. Belonging to other religious groups either has a



negative effect or shows not significantly different from being a non-believer, and H4b is therefore not confirmed. Again it must be reminded that close to all the Eastern Orthodox people are expected to live in the Post-Communist countries. These countries showed in chapter three to have lower levels of trust in political institutions than others.

H5a is confirmed. The total causal effect is 0.05, and the higher educated people have higher trust in political institutions. However, the direct effect of education has the opposite direction when controlled for the attitudinal and lifestyle variables, and also when controlling for generalised social trust. The background for H4a showed some ambiguity, because one could assume that better educated people benefit more from society, and therefore should be more supportive of the institutions, at the same time as some find higher educated people to be more cynical (Dalton 2007:87). This ambiguity is visible in this analysis, because both the bivariate correlation and the total causal effect show that the higher educated score higher on the index of trust, while the direct effects show the opposite. H5b is confirmed, the indirect effect of education is greater than the direct effect.

Class is relevant in explaining individual levels of trust in political institutions, the total causal effect, beta 2, of class shows that within the four class categories that can be put in a hierarchy, political trust is higher among people in higher classes. The differences in effect are significant, except for the difference between skilled and unskilled workers. The two other classes were expected to have an effect similar to that of the service class, but this expectation is not met. We see that the direct effect of belonging to the petty bourgeoisie is the most negative of the direct effects of class the analysis ( $b = -0.349$ ). Together this means that H6a is only partially confirmed. H6b assumed that much of the effect of social class would be indirect, and this is true for most of the variables though not all, and also H6b is only partially confirmed.

Turning to the attitudinal/lifestyle variables; H7a states that people who are more involved in voluntary activities have a higher degree of trust in political institutions, and this is confirmed although the effect is weak (0.052). This is an interesting finding, which gives a confirmative answer to Zmerli and Newton's (2006) question about whether this would be found in research using the ESS. There is not much change from step 3 to step 4, but the small change here is as expected considering the results in the last chapter showing that voluntary activity matters for generalised social trust. Turning to H7b, the bivariate correlation between trust in political institutions and activity in voluntary institutions is 0.161, and thereby the spurious component is 0.109 and the hypothesis is confirmed.

We see that life satisfaction here has the highest value on Pearsons R of all the variables included in step 3. The same was found in the analysis of social trust. Like Inglehart suggests, it seems that people who feel that life is good under the current regime (we can think of regime here as a form of government, not the current government) feel higher support. The Beta 3 coefficient 0.23 for the total causal effect of life satisfaction is a relatively strong positive effect, and the strongest effect in the analysis. H8 is clearly confirmed.

H9 concerns economic satisfaction, and the expectation was that this would lead to higher trust in political institutions. McAllister (1999:200) writes that this is more important for levels of trust than the more objective measure of household income. Income is not included, but social class can be seen as a crude but objective measure of placement on the economic ladder. And, as expected, the beta coefficient of economic satisfaction (0.144) is higher than any of the beta coefficients for social class. We also see that the total causal effect of economic satisfaction is the second largest effect after life satisfaction in step three.

What can be seen in relation to the video malaise literatures claims that watching television reduces confidence in governing institutions? Even if the bivariate correlation indicates this, the analysis shows no support for this claim, in the same

manner as Norris' (2002:239) analysis shows that watching TV is not consistently associated with confidence in governmental institutions like parliament, the legal system, and parties. Here, more hours of watching TV (other than news and current affairs) actually has a small positive effect on trust in political institutions, and H10 is not confirmed. This is an interesting finding because it contradicts earlier theory. Why this is important is hard to interpret, and it must also be highlighted that this is the weakest Beta coefficient in the analysis. It can mean that it is not only important to be updated on political and current affairs, but that other TV programs also give rise to feelings of political trust. Alternatively it can mean that heavy TV watchers are less critical and thereby less distrustful. It is no doubt that watching TV steals time from other, maybe more enriching activities. This would be in line with the thought that highly educated people have grown more cynical of political institutions. One can think of what Putnam (1996:19) writes:

Television is (...) the only leisure activity that seems to inhibit participation outside the home. TV watching comes at the expense of nearly every social activity outside the home, especially social gatherings and informal conversations. TV viewers are homebodies.

When it comes to the political variables, we see that both hypotheses are confirmed. However, these are not the strongest effects in the analysis, as could be expected by reading Newton (1999; 2006). H11 is confirmed, people with higher political interest have higher trust in political institutions, as expected. The total causal effect is 0.105, an effect with moderate strength.

H12 is also confirmed. The b-coefficient of 0.273 for having voted on the party/parties in government is positive and much stronger than the effect of having voted on another party, 0.047. This is in line with earlier findings (Newton 1999:181). It also means that people who did not vote trust political institutions less than people who did, which is interesting, although the difference in effect is only significant for having voted on a "winning" party.

H13 states that people with high generalised social trust probably will have higher levels of trust in political institutions and is strongly confirmed. The total causal effect is 0.311<sup>37</sup>. This contradicts much of the individual level research that often finds little or no correlation between social trust and measures of political support (Newton and Zmerli 2006; Newton 1999; 2005; 2006; Norris and Newton 2000; Mishler and Rose 2001). Linde (2004:154) finds that interpersonal trust is a relatively strong predictor of trust in political institutions in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe. Maybe the inclusion of the Post-Communist countries here can explain why this connection is this strong. Another possible explanation that is supported by Newton and Zmerli (2006) is that the ESS has higher quality data, and is thereby the best survey for exploring issues like these.

The fact that so much of the other variables' effect works via social trust is interesting, and we see that all the attitudinal/lifestyle variables have positive indirect effects<sup>38</sup> on political trust via social trust is very interesting. Also for the ascribed and the achieved variables this is found, but whether the indirect effect is positive or negative varies.

## 5.4 Main findings

The main finding from the analysis of what can explain trust in political institutions on the individual level is that generalised social trust is an important answer to this question. This effect is the strongest in the analysis, and contradicts much of the earlier research. In addition, it is very interesting that this substantial portion of the other independent variables' indirect effect on political trust goes via generalised social trust. This strengthens the assumptions of scholars who expect a relation between social and political trust.

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<sup>37</sup> Norris and Newton (2000) find a positive correlation between social trust and confidence in the police, and between social trust and trust in the legal system. They write that "(W)hen people trust each other, they also tend to have faith in the authorities who enforce the law." In this thesis a combined index is used to measure trust in political institutions, and these indicators shows in the factor analysis to constitute a strong, underlying dimension. Also Newton and Zmerli (2006) include the police and the legal system among the political institutions in their analysis of the trust in these institutions versus social trust.

<sup>38</sup> Except for "not voted on government party", which also has indirect effect, but in negative direction.

It is also found that subjective feeling of well-being, both economically and in life more generally is important explanation factors. Expect for the strong effect of social trust, these two indicators has the strongest effect on trust in political institutions. This is interesting, and one can connect it to Inglehart and his focus on the value of *feeling* that life is good under the current regime. The meaning of the term “current regime” will be different in the new and old democracies. Most people in the old democracies have never experiences life under any other regimes than democratic regimes. Acknowledging the great variations within countries labelled democratic regimes, they are much more similar than is the difference between the contemporary East- or Central-European regime and the earlier communist regime. Maybe inclusion of these countries raises the importance of the feeling of well-being in the current regime. Newton (2006) did only include established democracies when he concluded that political factors were more important than social ones for explaining social trust, People who feel economically disadvantaged and unsatisfied with their conditions in life hold the government responsible for that. However, this analysis shows weak effects of “supporting the current regime” – measured by whether the respondent had voted on it or not. This can weaken this argument. This can also mean that people separate between the current authorities in the regime and the institutions per se.

The link between voluntary engagement and political trust is found here, even when controlling for many other variables, and this supports the reasoning by Tocqueville (1999) and later Putnam (1993; 2000), while it can be contrasted to some of the conclusions drawn by Newton (1999; 2001; 2007).

## Chapter 6

# Explaining differences in levels of generalised social trust between countries

### 6.1 Introduction

In the social sphere, generalized trust facilitates life in diverse societies, fosters acts of tolerance, and acceptance of otherness (Rothstein and Stolle 2002:3).

Trust makes for a vibrant society in several ways. (...) It leads people to take active roles in their community, to behave morally, and to compromise. People who trust others aren't quite so ready to dismiss ideas they disagree with. When they can't get what they want, they are willing to listen to the other side (Uslaner 1999:122).

This chapter and the next will answer the research questions that revolve around the aggregate level, namely; what institutional arrangements can explain the level of institutional political trust on country level and what can explain differences in social trust between countries? Chapter seven will also explore the relationship between generalised social trust and trust in political institutions at the aggregate level.

Starting with social trust; it is clear that it would be favourable for society as a whole if individual attitudes like those Uslaner (1999) points to in the quote above are widespread. One approach to studying social trust emphasises that if social and political trust is seen as judgements of the external world, and not as individualistic personality traits; then the analysis of trust should focus on society as a whole (Pharr et al 2000a: 26). Thus it is important also in this thesis to include the aggregate level of analysis.

Although the consequences for societies of having high or low trust is discussed at great length in the literature, the *sources* of generalised social trust at the macro-level often remain unexplored (Rothstein and Stolle 2002:3). We have looked at individual sources, but what can be said about explanation factors at the macro

level? This is highlighted in 6.2, where hypothesis are deduced on the basis of theory and earlier research. Operationalisations are made in chapter 6.3, before the analysis and discussion in 6.4. Some methodological reflections should be commented on before starting on the analyses at the macro level in this chapter and the next, and these will be examined in 6.1.1.

### *6.1.1 Methodological reflections about the analyses at the macro level*

Few degrees of freedom<sup>39</sup> (because of the small number of units) can be a problem in the multivariate analysis. With only 22 units in the analysis, the results must be interpreted with great caution. The results can be seen as signs of what factors are of importance, but they will by no means provide any clear evidence. The units in this and the following chapter do not represent a sample as the respondents in the individual analyses do; the analyses include all units in the universe (the 22 countries). I will not seek to generalise to other countries, because of the small number of units. Further, significance testing is not in the question to the same degree as in the previous chapters and levels of significance will therefore not have the same importance in this and the following chapter. Because there is less reason to operate with strict significant levels, also effects that show significant at the 0.1 level are marked in table 6.2. and 7.1.

The minimum level of units that is acceptable to analyse is hard to determine – because this is dependent of both the research questions and the type of statistical method used. For regression analysis it is advisable to include at least 15 units for each independent variable (Christoffersen 2007). The analysis here is not within this limit, because of the inclusion of more independent variables than what is advised. This follows from the research questions, and the model in chapter 1.2.

There are some problems with multicollinearity, sometimes to an extreme degree, because several of the variables in question shows strongly correlated. This was also a problem in Delhey and Newton's (2005) analysis of 60 countries. They chose to

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<sup>39</sup> When we look at a result from a sample with the size N, then degrees of freedom (df) is N-1

present correlations between social trust and several of the independent variables, and the same will be done here. Based on the theory, many independent variables could have been included in the analysis, but because of the small degrees of freedom, only a few can be included in the analysis. In the same manner as Delhey and Newton's analysis (2005), it will proceed in two stages. On the basis of both theory and bivariate correlations with the dependent variables (and not too strong correlations with the ascribed variables), some variables are chosen to be included in the multivariate analysis. To avoid the problems associated with too many variables and too few units (Lijphart 1971:685) to some degree, I will use indexes or variables that can function as indicators of larger phenomenon (e.g. proportional electoral systems as an indicator of consensus democracy).

## 6.2 Hypothesis

The two ascribed variables are chosen for analysis, something that will be explained below. Concerning achieved variables, there is more controversy, and here an additional bivariate analysis is done as mentioned to make it possible to make a choice of variables to include in the analysis (in 6.2.2 and 6.2.3). Using the term "achieved" may seem a bit confusing, but the thought is that these variables follow the ascribed variables both in time and causal direction. After the choice of variables is done, there will only be a short review of the assumptions on which the hypothesis is deduced because this has been mentioned in 6.2.1.

### *6.2.1. Hypothesis including ascribed variables*

Something that separates the analysis in this master thesis from many other studies is that the inclusion of *new European democracies*, and therefore the validity of the theoretical assumptions included can be explored in Europe as a whole. Some works have of course included both East- and Western Europe, among them Delhey and Newton (2005) who included 17 countries from Eastern Europe. Their data material was from 1990, ten years after the end of communism. Mishler and Rose (1999) looked at trust in these countries five years after the fall. Here, I



explore data from fifteen years after the fall of communism. As mentioned in the introduction, this is interesting in the light of the discussion of whether the Post-Communist countries have a development in the same direction as the West-European countries (Bakke 2006:220).

Writing about Post-Communist countries, Rose (1994:29) puts it this way: “East Europeans know those whom they trust, and trust those whom they know. Their customary practice is to make inquiries among friends or friends-of-friends in order to find out whether strangers can be trusted”. Primary groups therefore became a replacement for civil society instead of an integral part of it (Rose 1994:22). Mishler and Rose (2001:39) adds that life in a communist regime forced citizens to rely to an unusual extent on interpersonal relationships to provide for their needs. This kind of culture is not beneficial for generalised social trust. It promotes the other, exclusionary kind of social trust; particularised trust. Although these lines were written some years ago, life under the communist regime is still a part of many people’s personal experience, and one would therefore assume generalised social trust to be lower in the east than the west.

We saw in chapter three that the Post-Communist countries were placed in the lower end of the figure that showed the levels of generalised social trust. It is interesting to see whether this relationship is due to the communist past per se, or if it can be explained by the levels of some of the achieved variables. I will therefore include a variable that separates between the Post-Communist countries and the rest. Based on these assumptions, H1 is formulated like this:

**H1: Post-Communist countries will have lower social trust than other European countries.**

The second factor that will be focused on is within the broad field of *culture*. This approach views social trust to be based on religious beliefs and traditions (Inglehart 1999:94). Weber focused on Protestant ethics as vital in the replacement of personal to impersonal trust during the modernisation. This because of its focus on

equality, and the religious and economic importance put on trust. I would like to highlight what Delhey and Newton (2005:320) does:

The argument is not that Protestant theology or beliefs necessarily encompass countries that are labelled Protestant, but that a protestant cultural imprint has shaped a wide range of present-day features from economic development, forms of government, and social institutions, to attitudes towards citizenship, equality and corruption.

Explaining why Catholic countries rank lower on interpersonal trust than Protestant ones, Inglehart (1999:92) writes that this reflects the principle that horizontal, locally-controlled organisations tend to be conducive to interpersonal trust. Protestant churches are often like this smaller and more decentralized, while the Roman Catholic Church is the prototype of the opposite (ibid.). This is of much less importance today, but historically churches shaped their societies to a large degree. One can assume that this is still of significance for societies today. Building on this theoretical and empirical basis, H2 is formulated in the following way:

**H2: A tradition of protestant culture is expected to lead to higher levels of generalised social trust.**

### *6.2.2 Achieved variables*

I will now present previous theory and empirical findings that indicates that certain variables will correlate highly with social and/or political trust, before the analysis of the bivariate correlations. Several variables appear as “candidates” to be included in the multivariate analysis, but as already mentioned, their correlation with the dependent variables, but also with each other must be checked. The choice of achieved variables will thereby be somewhat pragmatic, but founded on theoretical assumptions. Also correlations with political trust are assessed in the choice of variables. The presentation of the bivariate correlations between social trust and political trust in and more independent variables than those included in the multivariate analyses makes it possible to utilise the information better. The

hypotheses will be deduced based on which variables are assumed to have *causal* effect on the two types of trust, not only a correlation with them, in 6.2.3.

What can be assumed to be central in explaining individuals' levels of social trust? Delhey and Newton (2003:97) writes that whatever the distribution of trust scores of individuals within societies, richer and/or more democratic nations shows higher levels of trust than poorer and less democratic ones. Starting with democracy; degree of democracy and social and political rights is of high importance in creating trust (Norris 1999b). However, when looking at Freedom House rating of the countries, only Ukraine received less than top score and consequently level of democracy is not added as an explanatory variable. Turning to economic explanations; Banfield (1958) points to the close link between risk and trust, and the wealthier the society and the more it meets the basic needs of the citizens, the more risks are taken by the people because of their trusting attitudes. Acting in an untrustworthy manner seems thereby less necessary and less rewarding. Countries' wealth is often measured by GDP pr capita and this will be included in the bivariate analysis.

One can also apply human development as the indicator here. This can be measured by the use the UN Human development Index (HDI). It is a combined index that measures the average achievements in a country according to health, knowledge and standard of living. This is measured by life expectancy at birth, adult literacy, enrolment in primary, secondary and tertiary level education, and GDP per capita in PPP US\$ (HDR report 2007). Therefore, it is much broader than GDP pr capita, and considering that few independent factors can be included here, a composite measure like this is useful<sup>40</sup>.

Universalistic welfare states are also assumed to lead to higher social trust (Rothstein and Stolle 2002). Data on this that covered the Post-Communist

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<sup>40</sup> The HDI, however, has also received criticism. Angelsen and Wunder (2006) points to Ravallion (1997) and argue that the choice of the specific HDI indicators and the weighting among these three, income, education and health, remains arbitrary.

countries showed hard to find, and thereby “the degree of welfare state” is measured by the percent of the public spending that goes to health and education. Another very central economic factor that will be explored here is corruption. Rothstein and Stolle (2002:14) write that the link between social capital and trust can be viewed in the following way: “a dysfunctioning, corrupt, biased or unfair administrative system does not allow any kind of trust to rise, and particularly prevents the development of trust between people”.

Delhey and Newton (2005:312) points to the fact that the greater the perceived similarity of other people, the more they will be trusted. And the greater the dissimilarity, the more distrust will be present. Economic inequality is one measure of division and cleavages in a country found to be strongly correlated with social trust (Delhey and Newton 2005:316). Uslaner and Brown (2005) find that in the USA greater economic inequality means less generalised social trust, and a measure of economic inequality will be included in the bivariate analysis.

Turning to institutional explanation factors; Rothstein and Stolle (2002:27) write that both social capital theory and the new institutionalism have been on the rise, but that few works have tried to connect these schools of thought. This thesis will do this connection. Delhey and Newton (2005:313) analyse the effect of institutions when explaining generalised social trust. If social trust is seen as a collective property, one assumes that it is influenced by government institutions. Government institutions is a very broad term, so what exactly should be focused on here? Because the same variables will be included for both political and institutional trust, I will use theory from Pippa Norris (1999) and Arend Lijphart (1999) to explain also generalised social trust. Norris (1999b:220) emphasises that few studies have seen systematically on the relationship between constitutional arrangements and trust in the political system. She compares political trust in 25 major democracies, globally distributed, and includes the most important institutional variables, including the relationship between executive and legislative power, party systems, electoral laws, and federal versus unitary states. This master

thesis is limited to countries in Europe as units of analysis and relies on a different data material. Inclusion of all the institutions Norris includes would not appear meaningful in a European perspective, because many of them show little variation.

The choice here is to include the type of electoral system. This is one of the central mechanisms in Lijphart's (1999) analysis of the differences between majoritarian and consensus democracy. Being a proponent of consensus democracy, Lijphart (1999:277) shows that

[c]onsensus democracies demonstrate these kindler and gentler qualities in the following ways: they are more likely to be welfare states; they have a better record with regard to the protection of the environment; they put fewer people in prison and are less likely to use the death penalty; and the consensus democracies in the developed world are more generous with their economic assistance to developing countries.

Douglas Rae (1967) emphasise that all electoral systems yield disproportional results, and can contribute to parliamentary majorities for parties that did not receive a majority support from the voters. But important in this relation is that these tendencies tend to be much stronger in majority systems than in proportional representation (PR) systems. Lijphart (1999:303) writes that type of electoral system is of particular importance as impetus toward consensus democracy. Also Norris (2005:10) chooses type of electoral system as an indicator of consensus democracy because "they represent perhaps the most powerful instrument which underpins consensus democracies, with far-reaching consequences for party systems, the composition of legislatures, and the durability of democratic arrangements."

It was argued in chapter four that the impact of media on social trust can be expected to be substantial. Norris (2002:3) finds that there is a positive relationship between social capital and access to media (both newspapers and television), in contrast to the expectations of the media-malaise literature presented in chapter four. It is of interest to check this relationship also on the aggregated level. However, not only TV should be included here, partly because all these countries have a relatively high per cent of households with TV. Also other types of media,

for instance news papers and use of internet is interesting to examine. The bivariate analysis includes all three.

In table 6.1. (below) indicators of all the broad fields of explanations of trust mentioned above is included. The table presents the bivariate correlations between the different indicators and social and political trust. The two ascribed variables are already chosen for inclusion, but is presented here with the other variables that are assumed to be correlated with the two types of trust. I have looked at correlations with both social and political and presented the variables with their mean, minimum and maximum levels and the year of measurement. The correlations with trust in political institutions will be commented in the next chapter.

**Table 6.1. Bivariate correlations with generalised social trust and trust in political institutions<sup>41</sup>**

Variable	Unit	N	Year	Min	Max	Mean	Correlation with gen. social trust	Corr. with pol.trust
<i>Cultural/national variables</i>								
Religious tradition <sup>42</sup>	1= Protestantism 0= else	22		0	1	0.364	0.644(**)	0.774**
Macro-region	1= Post Comm. 0= else	22		0	1	0.681	0.727(**)	0.656**
<i>Human and economic development</i>								
National wealth	GPD pr capita	21	2006	1040	40947	19943.62	0.856**	0.897**
Human development	HDI Scale 0-1	22	2005	0.788	0.968	0.917	0.906**	0.769**
Welfare	Govt. spending on health and education (% of GDP)	19	2001	7.43	15,50	11.078	0.712**	0.742**
Economic inequality	GINI index Scale 0-100 (absolute inequality)	21	2004	24.40	38.50	30.33	-0.249	-0.237
Corruption	Kaufmann corruption index	22	2006	-0.67	2.57	1.319	0.906**	0.902**
<i>Good governance indicators</i>								
Consensus <sup>43</sup> democracy	Measured by PR electoral systems (1= Pr, 0.5 combined, 0= else)	22	2005	0	1	0.841	0.240	0.104
<i>Media indicators</i>								
TV watchers	% of households with TV, 4 year average	22	2000-2004	90	99.83	95.854	0.215	0.208
Internet users	Internet users per 1000 people	22	2005	96.87	763.5	446.099	0.751**	0.720**
Newspaper readers	Total average circulation of daily newspapers per 1000 inhabitants	19	2004	78.98	516.0	257.27	0.791**	0.878**

We see that both ascribed variables have high correlations with both social and political trust. Among the variables included under the heading of Human and economic development corruption shows the highest correlates with social and political trust. However, corruption will not be included in the analysis because of to high correlation between this and being among the Post-Communist countries (0.813). The high correlation between corruption and trust is, though, in line with Rothstein and Stolle's (2002) results. Economic inequality measured by the GINI

<sup>41</sup> All independent variables are from Norris home page (2008a)

<sup>42</sup> Norris (2008a) builds this on information from CIA world fact book (CIA 2008). This is a dummy variable; Protestantism is coded 1, and countries with other religious traditions (mostly Catholic but also Eastern Orthodox) are coded 0. The religious mixed countries are a problem to code satisfactory; here Germany is coded not protestant, Netherlands and Switzerland is coded protestant, while Estonia is coded protestant.

<sup>43</sup> Countries that have PR electoral systems were given the value 1, while countries that have a mixed/combined electoral system were given the value 0,5 in line with Norris' own (1999b:232) analysis.

index has a low and insignificant correlation with social trust; this is an unexpected finding that contradicts much earlier research (Uslaner and Brown 2005; Delhey and Newton 2005). This will not be included in the analysis. Another very high correlation is between HDI and social trust (0.906), and this variable will be chosen to be included in the multivariate analysis. Because of this, and the fact that HDI is an index, something that is advisable to use when one only has the possibility to include few variables, HDI is preferred over GDP per capita in the multivariate analysis.

When it comes to type of electoral system; this shows no significant correlation to neither social nor political trust. The theoretical reasons for including it as a measure of consensus democracy, especially when it comes to trust in political institutions, weighs in the decision and PR electoral systems is included as an indicator of consensus democracy.

There is a very high correlation between media, both internet use and newspaper circulation, and the two types of trust. We see that the correlation between newspaper reading and political trust is 0.878, which is very high, and this is what is chosen for analysis. The per cent of households with TV is very high in all countries, something that can give an explanation to why this is not significantly correlated with trust.

### *6.2.3. Hypothesis about the causal effect of achieved variables*

Using the *HDI* makes it possible to look at several policy output factors simultaneously. As already mentioned health and education is integrated in addition to GDP. Diverse societies' ability to sustain these common benefits is often seen as a primary indicator for social and economic well-being as well as being vital to economic growth and having a knowledgeable electorate (McAllister 1999:196):

**H3: Countries with higher human development will have higher levels of social trust.**



We see that *welfare states* correlate highly with both social and political trust, and this will be included in the analysis. Government spending on health and education is a summarized variable made up two measures (from World bank and UNDP) on the amount of government spending used on health and education respectively.

**H4: Countries with a higher degree of welfare measured by public spending on health and education will have higher social trust.**

Norris (2008b) considers *power-sharing electoral systems* especially important for accommodating diverse groups and reducing community tensions. These beneficial outcomes can be expected to be related to level of generalised social trust. Considering both Norris (1999b) and Rothstein and Stolle's (2002:7) judgement that there exist few works that look at the workings of institutions and the relationship with trust, it is not a surprise that academic articles that look deeper into this appear hard to find. However, building on Lijpharts perceived positive outcomes of consensus democracy; I expect PR electoral systems to be related to high social trust.

**H5: Having a PR electoral system leads to higher levels of generalised social trust than having majoritarian or mixed electoral systems.**

Putnam (1995:678) writes that the basic contrast between TV viewing and *newspaper reading* is the following; TV viewing is associated with low social capital, while newspaper reading is associated with high social capital. What he calls "pure readers" – that is people who watch less TV than average, and read more newspapers than average, are 55 % more trusting than pure viewers. Because television is more superficial than most newspaper reports; the assumptions of the video malaise theory are not entirely to the point here and H6 is formulated in the following manner:

**H6: Countries with higher levels of circulation of newspapers will have lower social trust**

### 6.3 Analysis and discussion

Two ascribed structural variables will be included in all the steps of the analysis, while the “achieved” variables will be introduced in turn in different steps. The reason that these variables are included in the basic model (Model 1) and in all the following levels is that they are seen as exogenous variables that precede other variables historically. They are not influenced by the other variables included later. As an example, the communist history may have led to lower possibilities for achieving as high human development as other countries without this history. When doing a regression analysis that includes this few units, it is also important to check for outliers. No bivariate or multivariate outliers outside 3 standard deviations are found in the analysis and there are no problems with extreme multicollinearity<sup>44</sup> in any of the models.

**Table 6. 2. Regression analysis at the macro level with generalised social trust as dependent variable. N: 22<sup>45</sup> (Beta coefficients)**

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
<u>Structural variables:</u>					
Post-Communist/not	0.582***	0.135	0.535***	0.597***	0.521***
Protestantism	0.462***	0.385***	0.478***	0.439***	0.277
<u>Achieved variables:</u>					
HDI2005		0.558***			
Public spend. health/educ.			0.117		
Election PR				0.225*	
Newspaper reading					0.265
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.692	0.773	0.774	0.733	0.757

We see in table 6.2. that the adjusted R<sup>2</sup> in model 1 is 0.692; and this model explains social trust in a good manner. The models 2-5 all have somewhat stronger explanation power. Relationships tend to be stronger at macro level, and therefore the explanation power here than is higher than in the individual analyses.

H1 is confirmed in model 1, when controlled only for religious tradition the direct effect of being among the Post-Communist countries is the strongest of the two

<sup>44</sup> The tolerance levels are higher than 0.20 and the VIF values lower than 5.

<sup>45</sup> N is only 19 in model 3 and 5, see table 6.1.

for explaining levels of trust. In model 2, the amount of the effect of belonging to the Post-Communist countries that goes via the HDI is substantial: 0.477. We see that the low level of social trust in the Post-Communist countries is explained by HDI. When controlling for public spending on health and education, electoral system and newspaper circulation, there is no large indirect effect of being a Post-Communist country.

We see also that a protestant tradition leads to social trust; the total causal effect is strong. The beta coefficient in model 1 is 0.462. H2 is thereby confirmed, something that adds to Delhey and Newton's (2005) findings. The direct effect of being a Protestant country is strong and consistent in all models except for model 5; here the effect is not significant. The correlation between being a Protestant country and high prevalence of newspaper readers is high, Pearson's R is 0.768, but as mentioned there is no extreme multicollinearity. The fact that the effect of Protestantism is this robust can mean that cultural and historical factors like religious tradition are more important for generalised social trust than many of the achieved variables. Maybe this is a sign that social trust is related to some form of moral foundation or world-view, like Uslaner (2000) suggests.

H3 is strongly confirmed, states with higher human development have significantly higher social trust. The total causal effect 0.558 is very strong, and clearly the strongest effect of the achieved variables in the analysis. This confirms earlier findings; both Inglehart (1999) and Putnam (2000: 319-25) finds a positive association between wealth, education and trust. Education is according to Allum, Patulny and Sturgis (2007b:8) seen as the most consistent and powerful predictor of generalised trust in the literature, and this is valid cross-nationally. HDI can be assumed to have this high effect because it adds education and health to the effect of mere economic wealth.

The effect of welfare, here measured by amount of public spending devoted to health and education, is not significant, and H4 is not confirmed. The correlation

of this variable and social trust is high, 0.712, but after controlling for east-west differences and Protestantism, the causal effect is not significant. This is interesting, and one can ask if the effect would have been stronger if what was measured was the welfare states' degree of universality.

Consensus democracy measured by PR electoral system does have a relatively strong significant effect of 0.225, and H5 is confirmed. The fact that having a PR electoral system has a positive effect is interesting because the positive impact of electoral institutions has mostly been related to political trust in the literature. Here, it has a moderate positive effect on generalised social trust, and one can suppose that the “kindler-gentler” attributes of consensus systems actually are beneficial for social trust at an aggregated level.

The total amount of newspaper circulation does not have a significant effect on social trust. H6 is thereby not confirmed. We also see that in Model 5, the effect of Protestantism is not significant, and as mentioned the correlations between these are fairly high.

## 6.4 Main findings

Protestantism has a strong and robust effect on social trust. The direct effect of being a Protestant country is strong and consistent in all models except for model 5, where it is controlled for the amount of newspaper circulation in the country.

When controlled for human development, there is no significant effect of being a Post-Communist country – and therefore nothing in these countries that is not measured by the HDI is contributing to lower social trust. All in all, this finding is interesting, and can maybe be seen as a sign that the preconditions for social trust between these macro regions are smaller than many assumes.

The fact that having a PR electoral system has a positive effect is also an interesting and unexpected finding. One can suppose that the “kindler-gentler” attributes of

consensus systems actually are beneficial for social trust. This can be an interesting subject to look into in future studies of generalised social trust.

What shows to be more important than institutions, however, is human development. HDI is the most important predictor of social trust among the achieved variables. Considering all the benefits societies gets from the “chicken-soup” of social life to use Uslaners (2000) metaphor; the broader lesson of this can be that more emphasis should be put on basic human development.

## Chapter 7

### Trust in political institutions – explaining differences between countries

#### 7.1 Introduction

It would be odd, indeed, if the classic theory originated by de Tocqueville had barely more than a grain of truth in it. Apart from its *prima facie* plausibility, it is an old and venerable theory, and a great many of the most distinguished names of social and political theory have subscribed to it in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Newton 2006:93).

Here, the classical theory refers to Tocqueville's assumption of close connectedness between social and political trust. This theory is mentioned before, but then in relation to individual associations. Another approach to test this theory is to look at the relationship at the aggregated level; this will be done here. In case I find the same results – that higher social trust leads to higher political trust – it will strengthen the conclusions drawn in chapter five. Before including social trust in model 6, I will analyse other factors that can explain levels of political trust. The same macro explanation factors that could explain social trust can be emphasised as important for the growth in political disaffection according to Norris (1999a); government performance explanations, cultural explanations and institutional explanations. In chapter six, we saw that the choice of independent variables was founded on theory and correlations of political trust *and* social trust.

Newton (2006:94) writes that if confidence in political institutions is founded on evaluations of how the political system is working, it should be influenced by things like inflation, governments records and so on; things that affects everybody. If the view that social and political trust is societal phenomenon is correct, then what should matter for the evaluation of the relationship between them are the results on the aggregate level.

Hypotheses are deduced below (7.2) and the analysis and discussion is presented in chapter 7.3. Operationalisations are done in chapter 6, and the same independent variables are included here, in line with model 1.2 in chapter 1.

## 7.2 Hypothesis

### *7.2.1. Hypothesis including ascribed variables*

As in the previous chapter, differences in political trust between *Post-Communist countries and other countries* will be explored. Not too many academic works have focused on the mass level here; Linde (2004:17) writes that books about Post-Communist countries usually focus on political institutions, elite politics or structural factors. This master-thesis can provide a mass-level, attitudinal perspective on democratic consolidation; something that according to Linde (2004:17) is a much needed approach. Linz and Stephan (1996 in Linde 2004:19) stresses the importance of popular support for the democratic political systems, and that democracy needs to be consolidated also at the mass level. These democracies are approximately twenty years old, and the development of the relationship between the citizens and the state must be continuously traced and described.

Listhaug (2003:2) writes that whatever the status for the relationships between citizens and the state in established democracies is, these relationships are in all respects more critical in the Post-Communist countries. Even though the Post-Communist countries have developed new institutions that differ substantially from those in place before they became democratic, the new institutions vary in the extent to which their performance warrants the citizens' trust. Not even the most democratic of these institutions cannot be assumed to match the performance of institutions in established democracies (Mishler and Rose 2001:39).

Listhaug (2003: 23) studied the state of political trust in Post-Communist countries and writes; "In this paper we demonstrate that the first decade of democracy brought a sharp decline in confidence in parliament in the new democracies". I do not, however, analyse development over time, but we saw in chapter three that Post-Communist countries were placed in the lower end of the scale in figure 3.2. which shows country means for trust in political institutions. Ukraine and Bulgaria here showed to have the lowest mean score, with 2.42 and 2.57 respectively, while the Nordic countries ranked highest, Denmark's score was close to seven (6.84). Now, it is interesting to check whether this gap is due to the Post-Communist past, and what the result shows about the effect after controlling for economic, cultural and institutional factors.

**H1: Trust in political institutions will be lower in Post-Communist states than in other states.**

When it comes to *Protestantism* and political trust; one can assume that many of the positive outcomes mentioned in chapter 6 in relation to Protestantism also will be important for trust in political institutions. And as Newton (2007:355) points to, Protestantism is closely linked with capitalism and income equality, and wealthy nations are often more democratic. This can provide an indirect link between Protestantism and trust in political institutions that will be of interest to explore further. Inglehart (1990:49) give emphasis to Weber's Protestant ethic; Weber argued that the rise of capitalism and the rapid economic development in the west was possible because of a set of cultural changes associated with the emergence of Calvinist Protestantism. Inglehart (1990:50) finds patterns in the degree of political discussion between countries and these shows that there is a high correlation between having a protestant political culture and high levels of political discussion.

**H2: Countries with a protestant tradition will have higher trust in political institutions.**



### 7.2.2. Hypothesis including achieved variables

Turning to the countries' *level of development*; how is trust in political institutions connected to government's performance? The research shows that if performance is narrowly defined, e.g. only per capita GDP, the model does not make a good fit<sup>46</sup>. Countries can experience growth both in economy and political distrust at the same time (Norris 1999b:218).

McAllister (1999:189) points to evidence that shows that voters believe that a central responsibility of government is to have high economic performance. Other important policy outputs also include health and education. Diverse societies' ability to sustain these common benefits is often seen as a primary indicator for social and economic well-being as well as being vital to economic growth and having a knowledgeable electorate (McAllister 1999:196). Using the HDI measure makes it possible to look at several policy output factors simultaneously; in addition to economic conditions, health and education is also integrated. In table 6.1. we saw that the bivariate correlation between social trust and human development was the highest in the analysis, 0.906, and the effect of human development is expected to be large. Listhaug and Ringdal (2007:26) find that HDI is positively related to trust in political institutions, and that is what I expect to find here as well:

**H3: Higher human development will lead to higher levels of trust in political institutions in the countries included in the analysis.**

While the effect of having a universal *welfare state* is found to have an effect on social trust (Rothstein and Stolle 2002), one can also assume that this matters for political trust. High social spending on the health and education should be viewed in a positive manner by the electorate, because this raises the feeling of "getting something back" from the state. On the other hand, one can assume that it has a negative effect on trust in political institutions because people feel they pay too

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<sup>46</sup> Miller and Listhaug (1999:216) suggest that it is necessary to expand the term *performance* so that it also includes the citizens' experience of the degree of justice in the politics, and their expectations toward the government. This is, however, hard to do with the comparative data that exists today.

much tax. However, I assume the first to be closest to the truth, also because of the positive correlation with political trust in table 6.1. (0.742) and H4 is formulated in the following way:

**H4: Higher amount on public spending on health and education leads to higher trust in political institutions.**

A neglected, yet plausible class of theories when it comes to the explanation of trends in trust is according to Norris (1999b:218) institutional theories. Here, citizens' attitudes are sought understood within their broader constitutional context. This means going back to the idea that originally comes from David Easton; diffuse institutional support relates to our accumulated experience. Diffuse support is the generalised perception that the political system is inherently good, even apart from its current output (Easton 1967).

Some citizens win and others lose; Norris' argument is that the pattern of winners and losers are structured by the constitutional arrangements. Over time, one can expect this to be reflected in the diffuse support towards the political process. Norris writes (1999b:219)

At the simplest level, if we feel that the rules of the game allow the party we endorse to be elected to power, we are more likely to feel that representative institutions are responsive to our needs and that we can trust the political system.

Considering that institutions are fairly stable, it is best to use cross-national analysis that maximises the variance of structural arrangements (Norris 1999b). Having a *PR electoral system* is important for affecting systems in direction of consensus democracy. The correlation between political trust and type of electoral system is small and far from significant. Norris (1999b:233) finds, contrary to what she expected, that institutional confidence was greater in countries with majoritarian rather than proportional electoral systems. However, I will rely on her theoretical expectations and therefore I expect countries with a PR electoral system to be have a population with higher trust.

**H5: Consensus democracy, measured by PR electoral systems will lead to higher trust in political institutions.**

*Media use* is also important for political trust. Norris (2000:232) writes that the increasing tabloidization has resulted in a relentless pursuit of sensational, superficial, and populist political reporting. Reporting scandals seem more pervasive than before, and here the newspapers are no exception. Here, I do not separate between serious and unserious newspapers. Holmberg (1999) finds that the use of serious media leads to higher political trust. Television is more superficial than most newspaper reports, and therefore the assumptions of the video malaise theory should not be seen as totally to the point here. Therefore, and because the correlation between political trust and newspaper circulation is as high as 0.878, I assume countries with higher rates of newspaper readers to have higher levels of political trust.

**H6: Countries with higher circulation of daily newspapers will have higher levels of trust in political institutions.**

Countries with high levels of *social trust* probably have both social institutions and infrastructure that makes it possible to sustain an advanced democracy. Many of the most established democracies are marked by a syndrome of:

mutually inter-dependent characteristics including high generalized social trust, confidence in democratic institutions, satisfaction with democracy, a well-founded civil society, comparatively high levels of civic engagement and cooperation, low levels of corruption and tax evasion, and a regard for property rights and civil liberties (Newton 2005:29).

On the other hand, high social trust does not automatically lead to high levels of political confidence. There is evidence that the link between them can be broken, and Finland is one of the examples of this; here, social trust was high and stable, while political confidence was sinking sharply. Social trust is usually a foundation for political trust, but that the reverse is not necessarily true (Newton 2006:99).

This is important to have in mind. In line with both theory and earlier findings, H7 is formulated like this:

**H7: At the aggregated level, high social trust is expected to lead to high trust in political institutions.**

### 7.3 Analysis and discussion

As in the previous chapter, ascribed variables will be included in all the steps of the analysis, while the “achieved” variables will be introduced in turn in model 2 to 6. The last independent variable included is generalised social trust. No bivariate or multivariate outliers outside 3 standard deviations are found in the analysis and there are no problems with extreme multicollinearity<sup>47</sup> in any of the models.

**Table 7.1. Regression analysis at the macro level with trust in political institutions as the dependent variable N: 22<sup>48</sup> (Beta coefficients)**

<b>Independent variables</b>	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>	<b>Model 6</b>
<u>Ascribed variables</u>						
Post-Communist/not	0.458***	0.052	0.348**	0.463***	0.431***	0.139
Protestantism	0.63***	0.56***	0.57***	0.623***	0.301**	0.377***
<u>Achieved variables</u>						
HDI2005		0.507***				
Public spend health/ed.			0.217			
Election PR				0.07		
Newspaper reading					0.387***	
<u>Social trust</u>						
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.766	0.834	0.0802	0.759	0.876	0.851

\*\*\* Coefficients significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed test)

\*\*Coefficient is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed test)

\* Coefficient is significant at the 0.1 level (2-tailed test)

Table 7.1. shows that the independent variables in these models explain changes in political trust very well; R<sup>2</sup> is 0.766 in the model including the ascribed variables, which means that 76.6 % of the changes in the dependent variable can be explained by the ascribed variables. Model 5 has the highest explanation power.

<sup>47</sup> The tolerance levels are higher than 0.20 and the VIF values lower than 5.

<sup>48</sup> N is only 19 in model 3 and 5, see table 6.1.

H1 is confirmed in model 1, with the strong effect 0.458. Except from model 2 and model 6 the direct effect of being among the Post-Communist countries is strong and significant. As in the previous chapter, the effect of post communist countries goes as a whole via HDI, and here also via social trust. The indirect effect (0.402) of the Post-Communist countries is close to the total causal effect.

Protestantism actually has the strongest total causal effect in the analysis (Beta 1=0.63) on political trust, and H2 is clearly confirmed. The effect of Protestantism is more robust than the effect of post-communism and consistent in all the models. Its effect is partly going via newspaper reading and social trust, but about half of the effect is direct when controlling for one of these variables at a time. The fact that the effect was this strong was not expected. The Nordic countries are among the relatively few Protestant countries, and these score high on measures of political trust as seen in figure 3.2. and also found by among others Listhaug and Ringdal (2007). It can mean that this effect maybe solely is due to the Nordic countries.

H3 is clearly confirmed. The total causal effect in model 2 is 0.507. The level of human development is important for trust in political institutions. The direct effect is not significant, however. The effect of HDI was the strongest effect in the analysis in chapter 6, and as we see also in this analysis, social trust has an impact on trust in political institutions of the variables included in the previous chapter (only social trust has a stronger effect).

Welfare states, measured by public spending on health and education, have a positive, but not significant effect, and H4 must be rejected. This finding was not expected, considering the correlation between these two countries was 0.742. Another unexpected finding is that consensus democracy, measured by PR electoral system was not found to have a significant effect on political trust, and thereby H5 is not confirmed. However, this is in line with Norris (1999) findings. It is possible that majoritarian democracies govern more effectively and provide clear

alternatives for the voters and that this counterbalances the expected effects on trust in political institutions because of broader representation. We also see that H6 is confirmed here. Having a high circulation of daily newspapers has a strong, positive effect on trust in political institutions, as expected.

And finally, it is possible to give a clear and positive answer also at the aggregated level: social trust has a strong and significant effect on trust in political institutions, and H7 is confirmed. Since social trust is not mentioned as an independent variable in table 6.1., an additional bivariate analysis shows that the correlation between social and political trust is 0.892. The scatter plot of the relationship between these two types of trust also shows a clear connection in the countries included (see appendix). Turning to the results from the regression analysis, we see that the effect 0.548 is very strong, something that confirms the findings done by Zmerli and Newton (2006:15) among others that high social trust is beneficial for levels of political trust.

## 7.4 Main findings

The most important finding in this chapter is that generalised social trust also on the aggregated level has a large and positive effect on trust in political institutions. The effect of social trust is the strongest of the achieved variables. This tends to strengthen the conclusions drawn in chapter 5. A positive effect of generalised social trust on trust in political institutions is demonstrated in this master thesis. Another main finding from this analysis is that the effect of Protestantism is very robust. It is partially going via newspaper reading and social trust, but about half of the effect is still significant and direct after controlling for these.

The finding that HDI has such a large explanation power, and that close to all the total causal effect of belonging among the Post-Communist countries is indirect via HDI is interesting. Trust in political institutions is a necessity in democracies (at least a certain level of trust) and it is raised with higher human development. In wealthier countries with a relatively higher percentage of healthy, educated

individuals, feelings are naturally fostered that life is good, a factor reinforcing the tendency for these societies to produce individuals who have an implicit trust in their political institutions.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusions

This thesis started with the warning from Dalton (2007) that the contemporary democracies are facing a challenge, not from enemies but from democracy's own, distrustful citizens. The obvious question is then what can explain levels of trust in political institutions. Generalised social trust is assumed to have beneficial consequences for both individuals and society, indeed Uslaner (2000:569) even calls it "the chicken soup of social life" because it brings us all sorts of good things. But does it lead to high political trust? Previous research gives a fuzzy and ambiguous answer. I have investigated the effect of social trust as a factor among others that serve to explain trust in political institutions. Before this I looked at individual explanation variables of generalised social trust, using the same independent variables. The various indicators used here to catch the two types of trust showed strong underlying dimensions.

The first research question asked in this thesis was; how do structural and attitudinal/lifestyle variables influence individuals' level of generalised social trust and level of trust in political institutions, and what is their relative weight? We saw that the origins of social trust mostly could be found among measures of success – being highly educated and satisfied with own life and economy shows important for explaining levels of trust. Also being a Protestant, as opposed to belonging to other religions or having no religious denomination has a positive effect on social trust. As was pointed out in the introduction of this thesis, the relationship between the two aspects of social capital (trust and civic engagement) has not been made clear in spite of, or maybe because of, the vast amount of research. My results show that activity in voluntary organisations actually has a positive effect on social trust, but not to the degree assumed by some social capital scholars. Nevertheless, as already noted in the beginning of this thesis, this cross-sectional analysis is limited



in its ability to address issues in a causal order, and unobserved factors could show the effects found here to be spurious.

Also when it comes to political trust, satisfaction with own life and own economy is important explanation factors. I suppose that the fact that the Post-Communist countries are included here raises the importance of feeling that life is good under the current regime. This is because considerable parts of the people who live in these countries are assumed to contrast their experience of life today to their life under the communist regime. Another interesting finding is that political factors do contribute to the levels of political trust, but they have among the weakest effects of the attitudinal/lifestyle variables. It is not confirmed here that political trust is explained by political factors while social trust is explained by social ones, as assumed by Newton (1999). Both kinds of explanation variables shows important for both kinds of trust, which also can be seen as a sign of a closer association between the two types of trust than many other empirical works show.

The second research question concerns country level and ask which structural and institutional factors can explain the level of generalised social trust and institutional political trust. Being a protestant country has a robust positive effect on both social and political trust, in line with the findings of Delhey and Newton (2005). We see that a large portion of this effect goes via the amount of newspaper readers in the countries. The analyses also show that belonging among the Post-Communist countries leads to lower levels of trust in the societies. This effect, however, goes via the index of human development to both types of trust. There are no signs that there is any characteristic in the Post-Communist countries *not* measured by the Human Development Index that contributes to the lower levels of social and political trust in these countries. HDI has the strongest explanation power of all the achieved variables in the analysis, and the broader lesson of this is that in order to raise the levels of trust in societies, emphasis should be put on basic human development.

Finally, a central theme has been the relationship between the two types of trust. The most interesting result was that generalised social trust showed to be a strong and significant explanation factor of political trust in the analyses on both levels. It is not obvious that this would be found, because many scholars, among them Newton and Norris (2000) and Mishler and Rose (2001), questions a close connection between these two types of trust, especially on the individual level.

The analysis here showed that generalised social trust is clearly the strongest effect in the analyses. The only effect that is stronger is the direct effect of Protestantism on political trust, before controlling for social trust. This is interesting, and maybe some of the explanation of this is the better quality data provided by the ESS, as suggested by Zmerli and Newton. After doing the same finding by using data from the first round of ESS, they conclude (2006:15)

The theoretical implications of this study are wide ranging. If indeed there are significant associations at the individual level between social trust, political confidence and satisfaction with democracy, then a range of questions of social capital must be re-opened. (...) (t)his raises the matter of the origins of these attitudes and the extent to which they overlap each other.

After exploring the origins of trust, one can wonder if there really is need to worry about the levels of political trust in society, and thereby what can explain this? Some would answer no because critical citizens is a sign of a healthy democracy, the challenge is rather to figure out why the level where exceptionally high in the 1950s and 60s. One can also object that a new form of participation – a rise in certain kinds of grass-root organisations is one example – has supplemented earlier forms of participation. In addition, the task of governing is not necessary to give the citizens what they want – but what they need. In this line of reasoning levels of trust does not matter, as long as it doesn't fall so low that the citizens don't support the government enough to comply with the law and pay taxes (Pharr et. al. 2000a:19).

It is nevertheless my opinion that there actually is reason to worry, or at least question the fact that the citizens generally are critical, and often very critical. Norris (1999a:25) states that the consequences of declining trust depends on which of her five levels of trust there has been a decline in. Distrust of specific politicians is not very important; “the rascals” can be thrown out in the next election. What is worse is distrust towards the institutions of the political system. Taking this seriously also concerns respect for the citizens’ evaluations of the political system. Democracy is based on the people’s acceptance in the political decision-making process writes Dalton (2007:11). Other works (Linde and Ekman 2003:53; Dalton 2007:47) shows that there is widespread support for the principles of democracy and the democratic ideals in most of the countries included, and this is important to have in mind when evaluating the meaning of low trust in the political institutions. Linde and Ekman (2003:53) write about the development in the Post-Communist regimes:

Taken together, all of this points (sic) to the emergence of “critical citizens” or “dissatisfied democrats”, i.e. citizens who are convinced democrats but nevertheless are dissatisfied with the actual realisation of democracy at this point in time. In other words, the kind of citizens that live in the old EU member states.

Having started with a quote from Russell J. Dalton(2007:208), I will also conclude with one that relates to the meaning of lower political trust “(...) the challenges democracy now face also represent choices on how these citizens, political elites, and their systems will respond. The strength of democracy should be its power to adapt and grow”.

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## APPENDIX

Question wordings from the European social survey, round 3, 2006-2007, The questions were asked in the original language in all countries included, but they are here presented in English.

Independent variables, in order of appearance:

Question F5, Card 47

Which phrase on this card best describes the area where you live?

- 1= A big city
- 2= The suburbs or outskirts of a big city
- 3= A town or a small city
- 4= A country village
- 5= A farm or home in the countryside

Question C17

Do you consider yourself as belonging to any particular religion or denomination?

- 1= Yes
- 2= No

Question C18

Which one?

- 1= Roman Catholic
- 2= Protestant
- 3= Eastern Orthodox
- 4= Other Christian denomination
- 5= Jewish
- 6= Islam
- 7= Eastern religions
- 8= Other non-Christian religions
- 66= not applicable  
(filter, if coded 1 on c17)

Question F6, Card 48

What is the highest level of education you have achieved?

- 0= Not completed primary education
- 1= Primary or first stage of basic
- 2= Lower secondary or second stage of basic
- 3= Upper secondary
- 4= Post secondary, non-tertiary
- 5= First stage of tertiary
- 6= Second stage of tertiary

Question F 22 -24

F22 What is/was the name or title of your main job?

F23 In your main job, what kind of work do/did you do most of the time?

F24 What training or qualifications are/were needed for the job?

(open ended question)

Question E1, Card 32

In the past 12 months, how often did you get involved in work for voluntary or charitable organisations?

- 1= At least once a week
- 2= At least once a month
- 3= At least once every three months
- 4= At least once every six months

- 5= Less often
- 6= Never

Question B24, Card 10

All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays? Please answer using this card, where 0 means extremely dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied.

- 00= Extremely dissatisfied
- 10= Extremely satisfied

Question F33, Card 54

Which of the descriptions on this card comes closest to how you feel about your household's income nowadays?

- 1= Living comfortably on present income
- 2= Coping on present income
- 3= Finding it difficult on present income
- 4= Finding it very difficult on present income

Question A1

On an average weekday, how much time, in total, do you spend watching television?

- 0= No time at all
- 1= Less than 0,5 hour
- 2= 0,5 hour to 1 hour
- 3= More than 1 hour, up to 1,5 hours
- 4= More than 1,5 hours, up to 2 hours
- 5= More than 2 hours, up to 2,5 hours
- 6= More than 2,5 hours, up to 3 hours
- 7= More than 3 hours

Question B11

Some people don't vote nowadays for one reason or another. Did you vote in the last [country] national election in [month/year]?

- 1= Yes
- 2= No
- 3= Not eligible to vote

Question B12

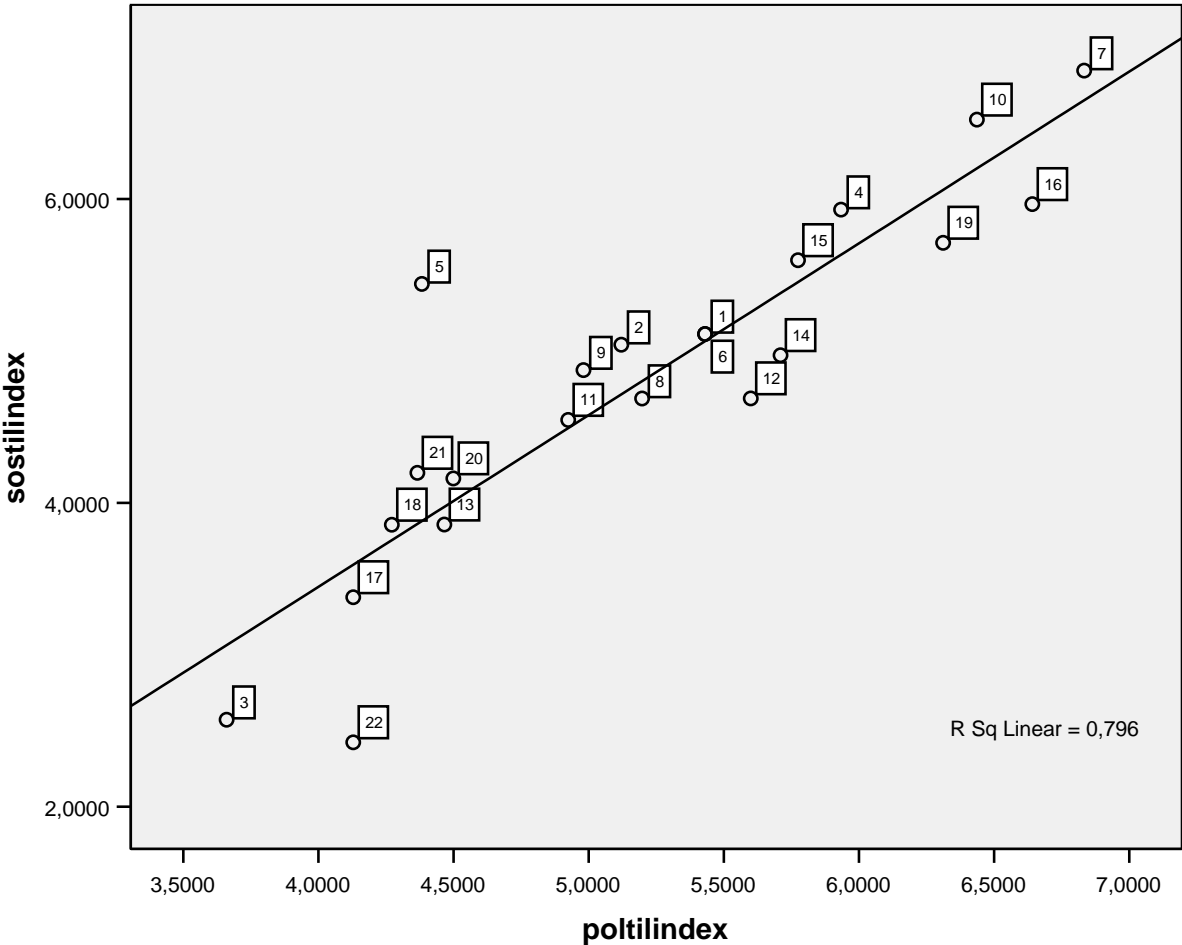
Which party did you vote for in that election?  
(Country specific values, filter: if code 1 at B11)

Question B1

How interested would you say you are in politics – are you...

- 1= Very interested
- 2= Quite interested
- 3= Hardly interested
- 4= Not at all interested

Scatterplot of the relationship between social and political variables at the aggregated level:



- 1 - Austria
- 2 - Belgium
- 3 - Bulgaria
- 4 - Switzerland
- 5 - Cyprus
- 6 - Germany
- 7 - Denmark
- 8 - Estonia
- 9 - Spain
- 10 - Finland
- 11 - France
- 12 - United Kingdom
- 13 - Hungary
- 14 - Ireland
- 15 - Netherlands
- 16 - Norway
- 17 - Poland
- 18 - Portugal
- 19 - Sweden
- 20 - Slovenia
- 21 - Slovakia
- 22 - Ukraine