

Chapter 1: Social Capital – A New Research Agenda?
Toward an Attitudinal Approach

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1.1 Introduction

Have Americans and citizens of other democracies lost their trust in each other? If so, what are the sources of this unfortunate development and what are the consequences? Why can citizens in some regions or villages join together and solve their collective action problems while others cannot? What is the secret behind steady economic development?

In the 1990s, affirmative and probing studies and polemical essays attempted to answer these difficult questions, drawing attention to resources that derive from the society itself, namely social capital. Ever since the publication of Robert D. Putnam's landmark book, *Making Democracy Work* (1993), scholars have been concerned with this key societal resource that seems to oil the wheels of the market economy and democratic politics. The existence and maintenance of societal trust and networks in communities seem to lower the amount of drug use, criminal activity, teenage pregnancies, and delinquency; to increase the success of schools and their pupils; to enhance economic development; and to make government more effective (Case and Katz, 1991; Fukuyama, 1995; Granovetter, 1985; Hagan, Merkens and Boehnke, 1995; Jencks and Peterson, 1991; Kawachi, Kennedy, Lochner and Prothrow-Stith, 1997; Knack and Keefer, 1997; La Porta et al., 2000; Putnam, 1993; and others). In short, social capital is a societal resource that links citizens to each other and enables them to pursue their common objectives more effectively.

Putnam struck a sensitive nerve when he applied his argument to the United States, and demonstrated in "Bowling Alone" (1995a) that social capital has been in steady decline over the last decades. His description of falling membership in voluntary associations, declining volunteerism, political apathy, and rising political and social distrust seemed to confirm the civic disarray that people had experienced in recent decades in the West. Scholars have debated, contested, and reexamined Putnam's alarming interpretations and warnings. In his new book, Putnam will present evidence that in the United States all sorts of social interactions have declined over recent decades.¹ Generally, his work—even though highly praised—has been criticized for being too negative, societal-reductionist, normative, and circular. (see critiques in Berman, 1997; Foley and Edwards, 1997, 1998; Greeley, 1997; Jackman and Miller, 1998; Ladd, 1996; Leman, 1996; Levi, 1996; Pollitt, 1996; Portes, 1998; Portes and Landolt, 1996; Skocpol, 1996; Smith, 1997; Tarrow, 1996).

In the paper I will show that most of these criticisms can be resolved with a new systematic theoretical framework within which to study social capital. This framework builds on the logic of social capital developed by Putnam, which defines social capital as the institutionalization of generalized attitudes such as trust and norms of reciprocity. I identify three important areas in social capital research that lack sufficient theorizing and empirical research: (1) the causes of the institutionalization of generalized trust, or lack thereof; (2) the building and testing of a micro-theory of social capital that elucidates the relationship between associational membership and generalized trust; and (3) the consequences of the institutionalization of generalized trust. In all three areas, I argue, we need to go beyond establishing correlations between social capital and its causes or consequences; instead, we must develop and test the causal mechanisms behind these relationships. The systematic study of these three proposed research areas will greatly enhance the utility of the social capital concept in political culture research.

¹ These new findings have been mentioned at the 1998/1999 APSA conferences, and will be presented in full in Putnam (forthcoming).

The remainder of this paper assesses the current state of social capital research, more than half a decade after the revival of the social capital debate. What exactly do we know about the effects of social capital? Have we agreed on its conceptualization and measurements? Have we begun to disentangle the numerous causal relationships that are involved in this complex resource? In sum, can the concept of social capital enable progress in political culture research?

The paper has three goals. First, the roots of the social capital concept will be examined and its potential strengths demonstrated since its formulation by Robert Putnam. His theory will be compared with other approaches, and its current weaknesses, which result from a lack of empirical research, will be elaborated. Second, it will become evident that the social capital school poses some of the most interesting questions in social science research, but that we do not know enough about social capital to answer all of these questions. Therefore, this paper proposes a social capital research agenda that results from a plausible set of theoretical claims that inform the concept of social capital. Finally, initial empirical findings in the three important areas of social capital will be outlined in order to highlight which questions remain unanswered by the research to date.

1.2 The Logic and Measurements of Social Capital

David Laitin called *Making Democracy Work* a “stunning breakthrough in Political Culture research” (Laitin, 1995). There are at least four reasons why I agree with him. One has to do with its research design, the second with its development of indicators and the possibility of using political culture as an independent variable, the third with its use of multiple methodologies, and the fourth with its attempt to unite different approaches in political science traditionally opposed to each other.² In this section I will focus on the social capital logic that results from Putnam’s work.

Social capital characterizes a set of widely held expectations that other citizens will reciprocate. In other words, when social capital exists in a group, village, region, or nation, self-interested participants will want to cooperate because the institutionalized expectations point to the fact that this is the most beneficial thing to do. The reason is that cooperation, trust, and reciprocity have become generalized and widely held norms that guide decisions connected to everyday life.

If members of a group or citizens in a village, region, or nation have accumulated social capital in terms of social interaction, shared norms, and trust, these resources will enable them to resolve their conflicts more easily and more peacefully. The resources can be used for all sorts of collective societal issues, such as neighborhood projects, volunteering, as well as other transactions involving strangers. On the other hand, in regions or cities where people are predominantly distrustful in general terms—according to the logic—citizens generally will have more difficulties working cooperatively toward social solutions. This trend influences such phenomena as regional economic development, crime prevention, and the performance of regional institutions. This distrust is not necessarily directed toward specific groups, or toward specific politicians—for these localized types of distrust can be healthy—but is rather the opposite of generalized trust, manifesting itself in distrust of other people as a whole. In such regions or nations, generalized trust is not institutionalized; in fact, institutional norms might be explicitly directed against trust or reciprocity. Such systems instill the belief that distrust, caution, and defection pay off most.

² See more on Putnam’s argument and contribution to social capital and political culture research in Stolle (2000a, 2000b).

Given this logic of social capital, generalized trust seems to be one highly plausible indicator of social capital because it suggests to what extent these institutional values are spread throughout the population. It taps the potential willingness of citizens to cooperate with each other and to engage in civic endeavors collectively. Wherever it can bridge societal cleavages and even include groups of citizens that might not have the same resources to trust, it can function as a lubricant for wider societal projects. In this generalized sense, social capital is a resource that benefits all individuals in a given society, independent of whether they all contribute to its production or not.

However, there are many other useful indicators of social capital, not least among them behavioral indices. For example, we would certainly like to measure directly how widely the norm of watching the neighbors' children is put into action in a given neighborhood. Such behavioral indicators—even though costly and time-consuming to obtain—would certainly serve as better social capital measurements than values and attitudes. This is because generalized trust and values of cooperation only depict the potential or readiness of citizens to engage in collective endeavors, although there usually is a strong relationship between the willingness and action (see Orbell and Dawes, 1991; Rotter, 1971, Uslander, forthcoming).

It is this broad institutionalization of cooperative values and attitudes as a societal pattern that Putnam seeks to demonstrate in describing and measuring social capital in Italy and in the United States. The growth of newspaper readership, the prevalence of membership in voluntary associations, and participation in referendum and preference voting are meant to capture whether such values of cooperation and reciprocity are dispersed among the populations within the twenty Italian regions. Most likely, direct indicators of trust and reciprocity were not readily available in the Italian regional context, so Putnam chose proxies for his components of social capital—trust, norms of reciprocity, and networks of civic engagements. In Putnam's work on the United States, his indicators of social capital become even more widely encompassing, to include cultural or attitudinal components, such as trust, and also structural components, such as various types of social interactions.

Two issues remain unresolved in the context of the widening scope of social capital indicators. First, there is an increased danger that social capital becomes an all-inclusive concept, which might confuse cause and effect. This criticism points out that aspects of civic engagement that are partially captured with participation variables such as referendum voting should be considered consequences of social capital (Paxton, 1999; Portes, 1998).³ Even though the use of proxies seems a legitimate tool in social science research, the assumption that social capital is indeed related to various forms of political engagements needs to be tested more thoroughly; this point will be developed more below.

Second, it is true that Putnam's work thus far has measured social capital mostly in terms of its structural aspects, and, in the case of his research on the United States up to this point (2000) this measurement covers various types of social interactions and associational membership. Whereas again, this choice seems understandable from a data-availability point of view, it opens up a whole new research area that calls out for more systematic treatment, namely

³ Portes (1998) argues more specifically that there is too much overlap and too little distinction between the dependent variable (institutional performance) and the one to explain the variance (social capital). Certain aspects of social capital are too closely defined to resemble elements of good governance. Even though I am cautious about distinguishing social capital's measurements from its effects, overall this criticism does not seem warranted, as singing and birdwatching (social capital) appear to be sufficiently different from the measurement of successful regional budget plans and quick responsiveness in answering citizens' letters (government performance).

the examination of the relationship between structural and cultural indicators of social capital. If we are interested in forms of social capital that benefit the broader society, rather than just a small segment of the population, then the question arises whether or not all types of social interactions have these effects. The use of generalized trust, as I have suggested, necessitates the test of whether and which types of social interactions cause the development of social capital. This must be done before we use structural and cultural indicators of social capital interchangeably. The development of a micro-theory of social capital is essential to this task.

In sum, the logic of social capital put forth in Putnam's work suggests that widely held and institutionalized norms of generalized trust are the most important dimensions of social capital. Defining social capital as generalized trust has consequences for its measurement. We cannot use structural (networks, associations) and cultural aspects (trust, reciprocity) interchangeably, but must rather examine the causal relationship between the two registers and build a micro-theory of social capital (see also section 1.6). Before developing further implications from the social capital logic that stresses generalized trust, it is necessary to turn to other formulations of the concept of social capital. Those scholars who disagree with the focus on generalized trust as the main dimension of social capital define it mainly as networks between people. Network approaches represent the theoretical roots of the concept of social capital.

1.3 Network versus Attitudinal Approaches to Social Capital: The Roots of the Concept

The fact that network-oriented and attitudinal approaches to social capital are so closely intertwined has caused much confusion in the literature on the subject. It is the purpose of this section to juxtapose these two approaches and identify their similarities and differences. I argue that even though there is no strong conceptual difference between these approaches, what varies are the different types of phenomena to be explained. However, as I maintain throughout this paper, I favor the use of generalized trust as the main dimension and measurement of social capital because it is better able to capture the generalized aspects of social capital that benefit the wider society.

The focus on generalized attitudes of trust and norms of reciprocity stands somewhat in contrast to but is still not completely different from social capital accounts developed by James S. Coleman, one of the sociologists who influenced the creation of the term. Critics of Putnam's use of social capital have noted this point. They suggest that generalized attitudes and norms that inhere in individuals are context-dependent and cannot be captured adequately with survey questions (Foley and Edwards, 1999; Hardin, forthcoming). They argue for a context-dependent understanding of how social capital works and for a better awareness of the unequal distribution of and varying access to social capital (Lin, forthcoming). Most of these scholars prefer a network-oriented approach to social capital, which evaluates all types of social interactions and bonds that affect societal outcomes.

The definition of a network is wide open, and includes measurements such as relations in the family, achievement scores in schools (Hagan, Merkens and Boehnke, 1995), the number of children in the household, and informal interactions (Wilson and Musick, 1997). Both approaches to social capital research certainly have a lot in common, for instance the strong focus on social networks for the provision of public goods. The difference between network-oriented approaches and attitudinal approaches to social capital is that the former does not invite a narrow definition of aspects of political cultures. Surely, most social interactions will have all kinds of positive and

negative effects for individuals and groups that have access to them, and it is important to understand the effects of and access restrictions to these networks. Yet the question the attitudinal approach poses goes a step further than this in attempting to discern which aspects of networks are connected to the development of generalized norms of reciprocity and trust, and therefore which produce benefits for the wider society, not just for the group members themselves. Therefore, the attitudinal approach does not focus on all types of social interactions and all types of social bonds, but rather, just on those that might be beneficial for the wider society.⁴ Social scientists, who follow the attitudinal social capital approach, rely more on Putnam's formulation of the concept, while those who follow the network approach rely on Coleman's ideas.

With the concept of social capital, James Coleman wanted to introduce "social structure" into the rational choice paradigm, rejecting the "extreme individualistic premises that often accompany it" (Coleman, 1988: s95). For him, social capital inheres "in the structure of relations between persons and among persons, and is lodged neither in individuals nor in physical implements of production." However, he conceives of these social-structural resources as a capital asset for the individual (Coleman, 1990: 302ff.). Coleman states that social capital can occur in different entities, all of which have two elements in common: "they all consist of some aspect of social structures and they facilitate certain actions of actors" (Coleman, 1988: s98ff.). One of the examples he uses to illustrate "relational structures" that generate social capital depicts a woman with six children who moved with her husband from suburban Detroit to Jerusalem because she felt that she could not have her children play outside in Detroit. She felt that it was safer in Jerusalem to let children play without direct parental supervision. The differences in the two locations in Coleman's view are connected to differences in social capital. In Jerusalem, the norms that unattended children will be looked after by other adults represent social capital that is available to families in Jerusalem, but not in sub-urban Detroit.

In this example, Coleman focuses on norms as the resources for social capital; however, in his writings he established various aspects of social relations that constitute social resources to be used. He mentions:

1. obligations and expectations;
2. information channels (such as networks or friends that provide certain useful insights);
3. norms and effective sanctions (for example norms of high achievement, sanctions against crime in a neighborhood);
4. authority relations (social capital is concentrated in one person which prevents the free rider problem);
5. social organizations and their side products (one organization, such as the PTA, that is a resource for those who initiated it, and that can also provide aid for other purposes).

The main difference between Coleman's and Putnam's accounts of social capital is that Coleman developed a much wider and less focused understanding of social capital, as the points in the list above demonstrate. Putnam's narrowness and selection of certain aspects of social relations that matter, namely generalized institutionalized values of trust and norms of reciprocity, make his formulation of the concept more measurable, testable, and easier to operationalize.

⁴ A similar distinction has been drawn by Pamela Paxton, who characterizes the forms of social capital with benefits for the wider society as those with a high within-group *and* high between-group trust and association level (see Paxton, 1999: fig. 3). In her view as well, there are various forms of social capital with both cultural and structural aspects. Also, some forms of social capital might benefit a smaller group of the population, yet could work to the detriment of the wider society.

Coleman's conceptualization of social capital, on the other hand, must be understood in its context and specific situation, which makes it harder to generalize and to utilize in empirical investigations. There is no theory or causal claim behind Coleman's formulation, and to him social capital consists of whatever informal mechanisms facilitate productive social interactions (see also Knight, forthcoming).

One other issue has been debated as an important conceptual difference between Coleman's and Putnam's view of social capital, namely the fact that Coleman stresses it as a resource that is available to individuals, even though collectives also can be the beneficiaries, whereas Putnam mainly points to social capital as a collective resource (Lin, forthcoming; Paxton, 1999; Portes, 1998). I argue that the divergence is not necessarily conceptual or definitional, but the difference is in the focus on dependent variables that matter. In empirical investigations, Coleman looks at the individual performance of schoolchildren, for example, and how social capital in the family and in schools can be a contributing factor to that performance. No wonder Coleman stresses social capital as a resource that is available to the individual, in this case to schoolchildren, and identifies the creation of relationships in families and schools. For example, Glenn Loury, who according to Coleman has been noted as one of the early creators of the social capital concept, also views it as an individual resource. He argues that social capital should be integrated as a standard variable in the explanation of income and human capital differences (Loury, 1977). Mark Granovetter also writes about the importance of personal networks and informational channels for one's success in the job market (Granovetter, 1973). Pierre Bourdieu, whose account of social capital is acknowledged but not further developed by Coleman, describes social capital as one of three forms of capital—economic, cultural and social—that is mainly individually owned. Social capital can be “possessed by a given agent,” Bourdieu writes. It is the “sum of the resources ... that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition” (Bourdieu, 1992: 119). Similarly, Lin (1990) and De Graf and Flap (1988) show that informal social resources are utilized to accomplish occupational mobility in the United States, and to a degree also in Germany and the Netherlands. All of these authors want to explain mostly individual advantages that result from direct or indirect participation in certain types of networks. Individual advantages might not in all cases lead to collective advantages and benefits (on this see also Paxton, 1999: 96ff.).

Putnam also pays attention to networks, except that he chooses a regional-level phenomenon, namely regional governmental performance, as his dependent variable, and social capital at the (collective) regional level as one of the main explanatory variables. The difference clearly is in the choice of phenomena to be explained and the focus on individual networks versus the spread of generalized attitudes and norms, not so much in the conceptualization of the concept. Still, following Putnam's logic, and what is emphasized throughout this paper, it is much less the relationship one has with *one* specific neighbor of a town, who would watch out for one's children on their playground, that constitutes social capital to a set of parents, as Foley and Edwards seem to suggest (1999). This relationship is individually provided or negotiated, and does not have to be the product of generalized norms.

But the main focus in an attitudinal approach to social capital is on the *wide distribution*, and the knowledge of this distribution, of cooperative values and norms. These widely distributed norms could, for example, also relate to watching the neighbor's children—that is what constitutes social capital of a town, city, region, or larger unit. These resources benefit the collective and the wider society. Without the distribution of such values, we would not be able to

find people watching out for the neighbor's children in general. But generalized norms and attitudes can still be estimated and measured at the individual level. In sum, the attitudinal approach to social capital stresses collective phenomena, because it is concerned with the wide distribution and institutionalization of norms and values. Network-oriented approaches to social capital focus more on individual outcomes that result from participation in networks.

However, the similarities between Putnam's and Coleman's accounts are also obvious. Putnam mainly concentrates on selected aspects of social relations that Coleman mentions, most importantly expectations and obligations. To Coleman, expectations and obligations depend on two elements: "trustworthiness of the social environment" which indicates the actual security that obligations will be repaid, and "the actual extent of obligations held" (Coleman, 1990: 306ff.). According to Coleman, social structures differ along both of these dimensions, and actors within the same structure differ in the second. In this account, individuals with more outstanding obligations have more social capital on which to draw. Theoretically, Putnam focuses exactly on these two attributes of the "social structure" that build parts of the social capital resource of a collective. Empirically, he locates and attempts to measure these attributes at the regional level in Italy. He also integrates norms into his definition of social capital, but strictly limits his interest to norms of reciprocity that are also captured by "outstanding obligations being held." Even though both authors focus on similar values and norms that are the resources of social capital, in Coleman's account, norms and values of trust can be very specific and context-dependent, as well as directed at specific situations and persons, whereas in Putnam's account they are generalized.

In sum, both Coleman's and Putnam's formulations of the social capital theory focus on networks and norms, and therefore they share conceptual roots. There is no conceptual difference between the two social capital approaches, but the distinction is mainly in the choice of the types of phenomena that are explained. Network approaches predominantly choose phenomena that are located at the individual level, whereas attitudinal approaches—because of the importance of generalized attitudes and norms—choose predominantly at the collective level. I argue that the logic put forth by Putnam urges us to understand social capital as the institutionalization of generalized values, and it is this dimension of social capital on which we should focus our attention.

1.4 The Implications of the Logic of Social Capital Theory

We have now seen how the concept of social capital has been shaped and influenced by, and how it can be distinguished from, other accounts. What research agenda can be developed from the basic logic of social capital theory described above? And, given this research agenda, which new insights have we uncovered so far?

The research agenda, which I develop based on the current logic of social capital as the institutionalization of generalized trust, urges social scientists to look at the phenomenon of social capital from various angles. Only when we have a precise understanding of when certain aspects of social capital matter, and when we realize where social capital comes from, can we also draw conclusions about its rise and decline--it is this topic that has dominated the recent social capital debate. It does not make sense to make inferences from trends in associational memberships and other types of social interaction regarding the state of social capital, if we do not even know which types of social interactions or which types of institutions really contribute to the creation of social capital. Therefore, we must untangle these relationships before we engage in arguments for or against social capital's decline (however, see debates in Hall, 1999;

Kohut, 1997; Ladd, 1996; Leman, 1996; Pollitt, 1996; Putnam, 1995a; Rothstein, forthcoming; Wuthnow, 1997b).

Figure 1 develops three main research areas of social capital research that should emerge from the presented logic. Some of these areas have been pursued already; others need to be developed in order to turn the concept of social capital into a more powerful theoretical framework. I will introduce them briefly here, and will expand upon them later in this paper. The most important research question that results from the above conceptualization of social capital is: (1) Under what circumstances do these norms and attitudes of reciprocity, trust, and cooperation become generalized and therefore institutionalized in our societies? In other words, how is social capital facilitated and generated, and how can its production be disturbed or interrupted? The two additional questions that arise are: (2) We can distinguish between different components and measurements of social capital, some of which are cultural and some of which are structural. How are these components of social capital related sequentially? Particularly, what types and which aspects of social interactions are most conducive to the institutionalization of these generalized values and norms of reciprocity and trust? (3) Finally, what are the consequences of such an institutionalization and generalization, or of the lack thereof?

[Figure 1 about here]

In short, the agenda I propose suggests three main areas of social capital research: (1) the causes of social capital, (2) the causal relationship between structural and cultural components of social capital (micro-theory), and (3) the consequences of social capital. As the following discussion demonstrates, if widely followed, the research agenda in social capital research would advance the building of a social capital theory in important ways, because its goal is to overcome the current weaknesses that the concept of social capital suffers. In particular, research within the suggested framework would overcome the current lack of insights into and tests of the causal relationships between various components of social capital, and into other sources of its production. In addition, the agenda urges us to develop plausible causal mechanisms for the relationships between social capital and other societal effects or outcomes. The following three sections develop in greater detail why and how these three main research areas have been and should be the focus of the social capital school.

1.5 The Sources of Social Capital

How are the norms of reciprocity and values of trust generalized and institutionalized, and what is different in groups, regions, and nations where this is not the case? This is the most under-researched area in social capital studies, supporting only a few hypotheses, all of which need more development and testing. The social capital literature has suggested that local, regional, or national patterns of social capital are fixed and shaped by historical factors that occurred centuries ago (see Putnam, 1993; Fukuyama, 1995; and earlier accounts of similar arguments in Banfield, 1958). The implications of this have left many social scientists and policy makers dissatisfied. In his account of social capital differences between various Italian regions, for example, Putnam talks about how the new regime in the South—founded by Norman mercenaries and administratively and economically advanced—incorporated the southern towns and cities into its kingdom. The strong social hierarchy, however, left its mark, and artisans and middle classes were unable to take control of the towns and cities in the South. In some of the northern cities, on the other hand, self-government emerged. The communes were founded on

principles of mutual assistance and economic cooperation, and their general governing structure was much more egalitarian and liberal than the structure that existed in the South.⁵

Putnam shows how these historical conditions led to the development of a culture of trust in the North and one of mistrust in the South, both of which lasted over centuries as they became generalized and institutionalized (see Putnam, 1993: 122ff.). In other words, both vicious and virtuous circles started centuries ago and left their imprint on institutions and society, and they have now come to influence the performance of regional governments that look identical on paper. The message of Putnam's historical excursion is that today's levels of social capital were developed over long periods of time, and therefore can not change easily. One Italian regional president in an uncivic region called this a "counsel of despair," asking whether the fate of regional reform was really sealed centuries ago (Putnam, 1993: 183).

Even though Putnam's argument does not leave much room for a discussion of short-term factors that influence stocks of social capital, his research presents the basis for thinking about potential explanations. For example, if institutions transmit the message for citizens to cooperate, how are these institutions structured? If the Norman kingdom on one hand, and self-governed communities on the other hand, had such an enormous impact centuries ago, what parallels do we find in today's state structures that should or should not be replicated? Which other regional, local, or national factors are connected to strong or weak social capital? What can governments do to boost or hinder the development of social capital? What is the role of other institutions such as families in the development of generalized values and attitudes?

Previous research on trust and social capital can help us here in identifying various explanations for the development of virtuous or vicious circles in a village, region, or nation that are prevalent in research on the sources of social capital (see also Boix and Posner, 1998). The generalization and institutionalization of trust and reciprocity can be linked to the following arenas: voluntary associations, families, socioeconomic resources, ethnic conflict and divisions, as well as the experiences and influences of regional and national governments and institutions. I will briefly discuss each in turn: (1) the Tocquevillian notion of the importance of voluntary associations, (2) the family, (3) structural and economic disadvantage, (4) ethnic conflict, and (5) the role of governments and state institutions. These five prominent explanations should not be considered as counterhypotheses, but rather as complementary attempts to solve the complex puzzle of the institutionalization of generalized values and norms. A theory of the development of generalized trust and norms of reciprocity needs to take into account that the influences on attitudes of generalized trust are multifaceted and will not be explained by just one factor.

1.5.1 The Role of Voluntary Associations

One prominent hypothesis that has been suggested by Tocqueville, Putnam, and others considers the role of voluntary associations in the creation of generalized values such as trust and norms of reciprocity. The claim is that, in areas with stronger, dense, horizontal, and more cross-cutting networks, there is a spillover from the membership in organizations to the development of cooperative values and norms that citizens develop. In areas where networks with such characteristics do not develop, there are fewer opportunities to learn civic virtue and democratic attitudes, resulting in lack of trust. At least two main causal mechanisms are behind this potential connection between membership in voluntary associations and social capital. The benefits of memberships in associations might be understood collectively, as they result from the

⁵ See a critique of Putnam's historical analysis in Tarrow (1996) and Goldberg (1996).

overlapping memberships in a region. The logic is that citizens of a region interact with each other in many different associations and have positive cooperation experiences with each other in multiple settings. This will enhance their capacity to solve collective action problems with each other and others, and ultimately influence their general attitudes of trust and norms of reciprocity. This trust is spread within the whole community or region, inclusive of those citizens who are not active in associational life. Specifically, if people interact with their trusting neighbors, for example, they will themselves eventually become trusting. If people interact with their neighbors who are rich in norms of reciprocity, they eventually start to open credit slips themselves, and learn how to reciprocate. What is important is the experience of overlapping memberships and the spread of the learned values and attitudes to other citizens.

A second reason for the importance of voluntary associations lies in their external functions whereby they help to connect citizens with their governments (on this see also Tocqueville, 1835). In this way, voluntary associations function mostly as interest groups. The resulting contact with governmental actors and institutions might be fundamental in the creation and nurturing of values and norms that foster cooperation, or a positive view of the public good. However, so far social scientists have not found a strong positive relationship between membership in certain types of interest groups, such as unions, residential organizations, political parties, and generalized values such as trust and norms of reciprocity (see Stolle and Rochon, 1998; Uslaner, forthcoming).

This complex collective role of associations in regional or national life has not been examined in depth, as we need regional and local case studies and network analysis data to understand the social contacts of citizens in a given region and their effects on civic values and attitudes (but see Maloney, forthcoming). I follow up on the issue of membership in voluntary associations for social capital theory in section 1.6 below.

1.5.2 The Role of Parents

A complementary explanation for differences in generalized trust and norms of reciprocity has been associated with personality characteristics that are not easily influenced, but rather shaped and formed in the early years of one's life (Erikson, 1963: 249ff.; Farnsworth, 1966; Hardin, forthcoming; Newton, 1997a; Renshon, 1975; Uslaner, forthcoming; Wuthnow, 1997a). The infant trust "which normally does not need to be won but is there until it is destroyed, is blind and uncritical." This fact points to the relative power of parents on whom a young child depends (Baier, 1986 as cited in Misztal, 1995). However, besides these detrimental effects, parents are obviously able to facilitate a child's trusting outlook on the world.

According to prior research and recent studies, we can expect that parents influence these attitudes and norms of their children in three major ways. First, children who are provided with a trusting and open parental environment and who are socialized in a self-respecting and tolerant atmosphere are more likely to be trusting and to reciprocate (Erikson, 1963; Farnsworth, 1966; Uslaner, forthcoming). If, on the other hand, children experience parents' unreliability, neglect, or even abuse, this may deprive them, as children and later as adults, of the belief that trust is ever justified (Hardin, forthcoming: chapter 5). Second, parents teach their children how to judge others, and how to determine with whom they should be involved in a cooperative arrangement (Into, 1969). Third, families function as actual arenas of learning where children experience first-hand episodes of cooperation or defection (Into, 1969; Katz and Rotter, 1969). For example, parents have developed an attitude regarding their openness toward strangers that is

automatically transmitted to the child. They have created more or less open and cross-cutting networks of friends and acquaintances that function as "schools" or learning environments for their children.

In sum, these three influences have been mentioned as important sources of a child's trust development, which presumably determines their adult outlook on the world. Still, also in the search for this cause of generalized trust, we lack recent systematic and in-depth analyses of family life (Uslaner, forthcoming: chapter 4). More systematic research on whether and how family dynamics, interactions, and structures influence children's trust levels is needed.

Two issues are important in this context. First, if the trust that parents provide for their children matters for the development of generalized trust, as researchers suggested, we need to understand better how family trust or trust for personal acquaintances can be generalized and extended to unknown citizens. The second issue is the possibility that some of the national or even regional differences in generalized trust levels might be traceable to these variations in child rearing practices.⁶ If that is true, any study that explores why regions or nations differ in generalized trust should also consider systematic distinctions in family backgrounds.

1.5.3 The Role of Personal Resources, Structural and Economic Disadvantage

The most common predictors of generalized trust and norms of reciprocity are personal resources, connected to which are general economic circumstances such as education, income, and employment status. Education increases exposure to cosmopolitan culture, resulting in individuals who are more tolerant and less suspicious of differences. This argument is based on cognition (see Stouffer, 1963, as cited in Sullivan, Piereson and Marcus, 1982: 115ff.). With increased education, people learn that nonconformists are not necessarily bad, and this learning process takes place through exposure to nonconformists and their ideas. The same can be said for trust. Education expands horizons and makes people more accepting of "otherness" and therefore capable of bridging contacts. This may generate the leap of faith that leads to generalized trust (Putnam, 1995b). Similarly, income should have an effect on trust. The richer the individual and the higher the professional status, the less costly it is if that person is wrong. A rich and/or financially secure person can afford to trust more (Smith, 1997). Since income, education, and employment status levels may also vary systematically between regions or nations, these factors should not just be considered at the individual level, but also at the regional or even national level.

Economic disadvantages can play a role at a much more systemic level. The assumption might be that today's differences in social capital are mainly caused by structural and economic disadvantages of a certain region or nation, a factor for which Putnam carefully controlled. Inglehart and Franzese found in a large cross-national sample that levels of economic development determine cultural values and beliefs and that they in turn determine institutional differences (1999). Putnam, on the other hand, shows convincingly that in Italian regions, socioeconomic development of 1900 is much less correlated with social capital and institutional performance of the 1970s and 1980s and even with socioeconomic development of the 1970s than social capital of 1900 (Putnam, 1993: 155ff.). The evidence from the Italian data allows for the conclusion that the existence of regional social capital must have facilitated later

⁶ Bennich-Björkman (1998) provides another strong argument about the importance of child rearing practices for generalized trust. In her account, these practices vary from generation to generation.

socioeconomic developments and success, but it surely cannot be its only cause (Putnam, 1993: 159).

It is important therefore to control for the potential of economic development in regions and nations in order to better link them to levels of social capital. In addition, given these contradictory findings on the causal connection between social capital and economic development, I consider the causal effect still open to debate and to further testing. Any case study or comparative study should give us new insights into the direction of this relationship.⁷

1.5.4 The Role of Ethnic Conflict and Divisions

Why is trust so high in Scandinavia? The most common armchair answer to this question has been that Scandinavia encompasses countries that are largely homogeneous, and homogeneity should be one of the preconditions for generalized trust to thrive. Certainly, trust can be high and very strong within certain groups; in fact, research has shown that trust as well as cooperation is strongest among members of the same ethnic group (Boyd and Richerson, 1991; Brewer, 1981; Le Vine and Campbell, 1972; on ethnicity and trading see Landa, 1994: 101 ff.; Newton, 1997a: 578ff.), and I will discuss this point below. Yet, this form of trust is not what I consider generalized trust. Generalized trust is an encompassing attitude, in the ideal of which there is no distinction between the in-group and the out-group. It seems easier to develop in societies in which the ethnic and other group divisions are as small as possible, and the reasons for this are twofold. First, in regions or nations with strong, adversarial ethnic relations, the conflicts might pit different ethnic groups against each other in their struggle over governmental resources or cultural dominance. The consequences are decreasing intergroup trust, and at the same time increasing intragroup trust. Second, the presence of ethnically and culturally diverse groups constitutes a challenge and possibly a threat to citizens in that it becomes harder to “predict” the behavior of others (Hardin, 1993; Misztal, 1995: 137ff.). This uncertainty might be an inhospitable environment for the development of generalized trust. However, the cross-national evidence on this relationship is at best ambiguous and needs further testing. Whereas Knack and Keefer argue that ethnically diverse societies are more likely to develop social cleavages that threaten trust (1997: 1278ff.), Uslaner's results point out that the relationship disappears when other factors are included in the cross-national model (forthcoming). It is obvious that we need a better causal explanation and further cross-national or cross-regional tests regarding the influence of ethnic conflict.

However, not just living in an ethnically divided region and nation, but also the belonging to a certain ethnic group with a special history of exclusion and discrimination, might be influential for generalized trust. Therefore, it is not necessarily the persistence of discrimination that might cause minority groups to distrust others, but the actual side effect of the networks that such groups create (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993; see also Misztal, 1995: 243ff.). Minority groups, like any type of smaller group, often build very close-knit networks of “outsiders” that help with the provision of special resources, but at the same time, they exert pressures and

⁷ To complicate the picture even further, there certainly are a few examples of poorer neighborhoods that have developed good networks and trust among citizens. These neighborhoods were quite successful in crime prevention, for example (Putnam, 1993b). On the other hand, not all societies, regions, or neighborhoods that are wealthy are also more trusting, participatory, and inclined toward norms of reciprocity (see Oliver, forthcoming). It is the task of social capital research to understand what the institutional, governmental, and cultural conditions are that help to build social capital, controlling for economic and resource differences.

impose controls and demands on their members. One of the examples mentioned in this context is the Cuban immigrant community in Miami, where in an informal financial system, so-called “character-loans” for business start-ups were offered to newly arrived immigrants. These loans were based on each person’s business reputation in Cuba. This system was ironically intolerant and exercised strong pressures against nonconformists, which created strong in-group bonds, on one hand, but suspicion to the outside world, on the other. At the same time, such communities offer resources, such as a new reputation for business start-ups (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993). In sum, we need to be aware of ethnic influences on generalized trust. At the collective level, various levels of homogeneity might be correlated with generalized trust. Individually, the belonging to close-knit minority groups and the status of being an outsider might influence the individual’s ability to develop generalized trust.

Even though the above explanations regarding the family, voluntary associations, structural and economic disadvantage, as well as ethnic divisions might contribute to our understanding about the facilitation and nurturing of social capital, they cannot represent a complete picture of the complicated web of social capital creation. A complete picture must include the role of the state, by which I mean local and national governments and their institutions. This is the source of social capital that I discuss next.

1.5.5 The Role of Governments and State Institutions

There is an unfortunate tendency in the literature on social capital to view this resource as a given. The role of the state in social capital creation has usually been neglected in discussions about social capital. The fact that the state is left out of the bottom-up model that Putnam presents has been noted critically by Sidney Tarrow, for example, who argues that the “state plays a fundamental role in shaping civic capacity” (Tarrow, 1996: 395). Tarrow argues that for Putnam, as for Banfield (1958)], the character of the state is external to the model, suffering the results of the region’s associational incapacity but with no responsibility for producing it. For Tarrow, the best explanation for the differences in civic capacity in Italian regions as well as for the civic disarray in American cities is structural and connected to the state. Similarly, Margaret Levi disapproves of Putnam’s exclusive concentration on societal factors as explanatory variables for institutional performance and suggests that policy performance can be just as much a source of trust as a result (Levi, 1996). These scholars suggest that the state institutions and governments may play an important role for the development of social capital, yet there is little systematic empirical evidence about which aspects of the state and public institutions shape civic attitudes and behavior, such as generalized trust and norms of reciprocity. Before presenting the theoretical aspects of this relationship that are prominent and before summarizing the empirical findings to date, an important caveat needs to be discussed.

The search for the sources of social capital in the structure of political institutions or the actions of governments runs the risk of introducing circularity into the argument about social capital. The circularity enters when certain aspects of institutions cause social capital and social capital in turn causes the performance of institutions, so that institutions would be both sources for and consequences of social capital. How can this confusion be resolved? Through careful longitudinal studies and other principles of research design, it is possible and necessary to filter out those aspects of national, regional, or local institutions that might help to foster, develop, or destroy social capital from those aspects that have more to do with their performance. So, for

example, the emergence of national egalitarian institutions might foster the development of social capital, and at the same time it could be true that social capital leads to more responsive local or regional government. The focus is on different aspects of local or national institutions. However, it cannot be denied that the search for causes of generalized trust might also encompass aspects of governments that previously had been measured as their performance. In fact, I will discuss some empirical findings below that might indicate such an overlap.

The best way to understand the causal flow of the argument between social capital and institutions is to focus on the causal mechanism of the relationship. The examination of the causal mechanisms forces us to think more clearly about why and how two factors are related to each other (see Little, 1991: 15; see also King, Keohane and Verba, 1995: 85ff.). It is the task of social capital research to understand the causal flow of this relationship between social capital and aspects of political institutions, the results of which might constitute a challenge to the causal direction of the main relationship in Putnam's work. Not only do we need to know more about which institutional features are the causes or the consequences of social capital, but we also need to make a distinction between short-term and long-term institutional influences on generalized trust. It might be true that generalized trust is shaped through historical forces from the middle ages, but present-day local and regional as well as national governments are also able to make an impact on generalized trust.

The following section provides an overview of the research to date that examines the relationship between institutions and social capital. One state-related variable has been clearly identified as being related to social capital, namely democracy.⁸ Almond and Verba (1963) find that respondents in established democracies such as the United States and Britain exhibit a higher degree of trust and a greater propensity to join associations than respondents in the—at the time—less established democracies such as Italy, Germany, and Mexico. Not only do we find a strong correlation between forms of social capital and this form of government, but we also see an association between the number of years that a country experienced a democratic system and the level of generalized trust among the citizenry (Inglehart, 1997a). Even stronger is the relationship between social capital as measured by generalized trust and the extent of political rights and civil liberties in a given country (Sides, 1999). Generally, authoritarianism, or what Booth and Bayer Richard label “repression level” in their analysis of selected Central American countries, is found to have a strong influence on social capital (Booth and Richard, 1998). Repressive governments disturb civic developments in two major ways: first, they discourage formal group activity, and second, they discourage trust (p. 43). Generally, authoritarian governments seem to partially build their strength on the foundation of distrust among their citizens. A good example of this can be found in the activities of the GDR state-secret police, which pitted citizens against each other and provoked tight social control among friends, neighbors, and colleagues, and even within the family. No wonder that Sztompka talked about a “culture of mistrust” that has developed in post-communist societies of Eastern Europe, and that will slow down the reform process of democratic development in those regions (Sztompka, 1995). Sztompka elaborates some aspects of the political system in Eastern Europe that might contribute to the strong development and persistence of mistrust in those societies, some of which will point us to those aspects of institutions that are important for trust creation in democracies as well. He mentions the incredible uncertainty that citizens face in the adoption phase of the new democratic system; the inefficiency of monitoring institutions to guarantee law

⁸ However, see a more doubtful argument about this particular relationship in Uslaner (forthcoming).

and order; the image of the new political elite as self-interested; and, finally, the high expectations that have been raised in the transition years.

The Central American and Eastern European experiences provide insights into how democratic governments might be able to enhance and facilitate the development of generalized trust in that they highlight the quality of monitoring institutions, the importance of the political elite, and expectations that might be raised during the transition. When singling out democracies, the fact is that even though they usually score higher on measures of generalized trust, there are still significant differences between democracies in their ability to generate civic capacity. This variance needs to be explained. So, how do democratic governments of different types of democracies influence generalized trust that emerges within the population? Still lacking systematic empirical studies and evidence, some scholars have started to examine those aspects of government that seem crucial for the spread of trust and norms of reciprocity within the population.

At least two major kinds of governmental influence on trust have been discussed in this context. One has to do with inequalities that prevail within the society (see Boix and Posner, 1998). Differences in income distribution have been linked to the variance in welfare regimes, namely the differences between the universal and the means-tested type of welfare states (Rothstein, 1998) and the resulting tax policies and other income policies. For example, in Scandinavian countries where we find rather low levels of income inequality, trust levels are significantly higher compared to Germany and even the United States (see Stolle, 2000; Uslaner, forthcoming). Also, temporal variations in trust levels strongly correlate with temporal variations in income equality in the United States (Uslaner, forthcoming). Citizens who see their fellow citizens as equals and as “one of their own” can more easily make a leap of faith and give a trust credit to others who are not necessarily known. Certainly, national governments can manipulate and determine income equality and other redistribution policies, and they can also send out messages through public institutions and through the welfare system that communicate solidarity and inclusiveness, for example.

The other argument, which might also be compatible with the first, relates social capital between citizens to political trust and institutional trust. Levi argues that governments can realize their capacity to generate trust only if citizens consider the state itself to be trustworthy (Levi, 1999: 86). States, for example, enable the establishment of contracts in that they provide information and monitor laws, and they enforce rights and rules that sanction lawbreakers and protect minorities (Levi, 1999: 85ff.). In his analysis of the Swedish case, Rothstein writes: “If people believe that the institutions that are responsible for handling ‘treacherous’ behavior act in a fair, just and effective manner, and if they also believe that other people think the same of these institutions, then they will also trust other people” (1999a). These differences in government and state capacity to monitor free-riding and punish defection have not been examined thoroughly in an empirical and comparative way; however, they provide a plausible explanation for national differences in social capital levels, and also for differences between various types of democracies.⁹

Following the idea about the importance of causal mechanisms, one first step toward understanding how governments and institutions might shape the society’s generalized trust is to examine the relationship between generalized trust and political trust (trust in political institutions and politicians). Most authors who examine these concepts find a relationship

⁹ See also Armony (1999) on the importance of governmental institutions and monitoring agencies for generalized trust in the United States and Argentina.

between these two types of trust. Rothstein notes the positive correlation between generalized trust and political trust in Swedish survey data of the 1990s (Rothstein, 1999b), and Hall indicates that political trust and generalized trust are also correlated in Britain (Hall, 1999). Kaase discusses the consistently positive but weak correlation between the two types of trust in cross-national survey samples (Kaase, 1998: 14).

However, the interpretations of this correlation vary. Uslaner, who finds a weak relationship at the individual level in U.S. survey data, argues that confidence in governmental institutions and political leaders is an entirely different phenomenon compared to trust in other people (Uslaner, forthcoming: chapters 4 and 7). Some social scientists, who recognize the correlation between the two types of trust, see generalized trust mostly as a predictor of political trust. For example, Lipset and Schneider claim that in the United States, what they call the “personal characteristic of trust in others” might explain developments in public confidence. “A general feeling of confidence in institutions seems to derive from a personal outlook of optimism, satisfaction and trust” (1983: 120ff.). Newton and Norris elaborate this causal flow when they find a strong correlation at the aggregate level in the analysis of the World Value Surveys in seventeen trilateral democracies. They interpret their findings as evidence that social capital “can help build effective social and political institutions, which can help governments perform effectively, and this in turn encourages confidence in civic institutions” (1999). This, of course, is the logic of Putnam’s argument, in which he shows that regional governmental performance depends on levels of regional social capital. The problem with all of these analyses is that the flow of causality is not clear, which has been noted by a number of authors who explore this relationship in more depth.

Brehm and Rahn, for example, have tried to disentangle the causality between these two types of trust with a statistical analysis of the General Social Surveys (GSS) data set and a model that allows for reciprocal causation. They found that confidence in institutions has a larger effect on interpersonal trust than the other way around, even though they see both types of trust influencing each other (Brehm and Rahn, 1997: 1014ff.). Similar conclusions have been reached in the analysis of cross-national data also allowing for reciprocal causation, in which Sides shows that aspects of political institutions such as political rights and civil liberties matter for social capital, more than the reverse relationship (1999).

However, the analysis of the causal flow between governments and generalized trust so far cannot solve the problem that the *causal mechanism* of this relationship remains unclear. Given the Putnam logic from trust to performance to confidence in politicians, we do not know *how* trusting people create better service performance and better local politicians who are responsive. Do more trusting citizens contact governmental officials more frequently to pressure them into good performance? Or is it that local politicians just reflect the culture of trust or distrust that prevails in their local societies? How exactly can the trust or distrust of citizens and their ability to reciprocate influence governmental performance and as a result stimulate their confidence in politicians? The reverse logic is just as plausible, namely, the quality of local service delivery and a healthy politician-citizen relationship can cause differences in regional or national political trust and attitudes toward local politicians which in turn influence generalized trust. The reason is that citizens who are disappointed with their local politicians and who have experienced the effects of politicians’ dishonesty, unresponsiveness, and lack of respect, transfer these experiences and views to people in general (although not to people they know personally), (see Stolle, 2000: part 2). Similarly, good experiences with local government can be generalized

to other people who are not personally known. However, the question here is how these experiences are generalized to the public at large.

In sum, there is obviously a strong relationship between government actions and social capital, and the theoretical and empirical evidence suggests that the flow of causality runs from local and national government actions to forms of social capital. We need regional, complex, and contextual studies in which the causal mechanisms of these relationships between these political and social phenomena are unraveled, and large-N studies in which newly identified aspects of the causal relationship can be tested.

In this section, I have presented the social capital research agenda that attempts to identify the causes and sources of social capital at the city, regional, or national levels. At this point, most of the prominent explanations have not been sufficiently developed theoretically or successfully tested empirically. It is clear that the spread of generalized trust and norms of reciprocity are complex phenomena, and cannot be explained by one factor alone. The task is to identify more clearly which aspects of familial, regional, and national institutions make low or high regional and national levels of social capital so enduring, as Putnam showed for the Italian cases. In addition, social capital research needs to examine those features of regional and national governments and institutions that influence social capital in a short-term perspective. The results of the latter research will be important for public policies that are designed to foster social capital in those areas in the world where it is needed. These seem to be the promising avenues for further research that should be based on large-N as well as contextual studies.

The next section focuses more closely on one potential source for generalized trust, namely membership in voluntary associations. This factor deserves special attention in the discussion about social capital, because in the social capital literature it is highlighted as an important generator of civic values and generalized trust.

1.6 Values, Norms, and Networks: Measurements and Components of Social Capital

The second major theme in social capital research is concerned with the relationship between those aspects of social capital that are structural, such as networks or other forms of social interaction, and those aspects that are cultural, such as generalized reciprocity and trust (see again Figure 1). So far, the social capital school has predominantly used membership in voluntary associations or other types of networks as the indicator of social capital, assuming that such groups and associations function like a school of democracy, where cooperative values and trust are easily socialized.¹⁰ However, it is important to note that we do not have an empirical proof of this assumption. In other words, we do not truly know whether voluntary associations fulfill this function, or if so, how. In addition, it is important to know which other aspects of social interaction are sufficient and necessary for the institutionalization of cooperative values and generalized trust.

The problem is that there is no micro-theory of social capital that explicitly states which aspects of social interactions matter for the creation of generalized trust and norms of reciprocity. So, while the micro-relationship between membership in voluntary associations and trust and attitudes of cooperation underlies contemporary theories of social capital, the efficacy of voluntary associations in creating trust and reciprocity has so far only been assumed in the literature and has not been empirically tested or explored.

¹⁰ Another reason for this choice has been, of course, that indicators of memberships in associations as opposed to other types of social interactions or attitudinal data have been readily available.

Networks of civic engagement, norms of reciprocity and trust constitute the heart of social capital. To Putnam, these three elements of social capital belong together, although he stresses and builds his argument on the assumption that membership in social networks such as soccer clubs, singing groups, and bowling leagues¹¹ facilitates mobilization and socialization effects, as well as democratic learning processes. Particularly, the argument is based on the assumption that networks produce trust and facilitate the learning of cooperative attitudes such as norms of reciprocity among members. “Internally associations instill in their members habits of cooperation, solidarity, and public-spiritedness.... Participation in civic organizations inculcates skills of cooperation as well as a sense of shared responsibility for collective endeavors” (Putnam, 1993: 89ff.). True, at the macro-level, the relationship between associational membership, other indicators of civic behavior, and governmental performance is evident and strong in the Italian study.

Putnam transfers his insights from the macro-relationship in Italy to the American context. For example, in his studies of the United States, Putnam assumed that declining membership in associations and other types of social interaction are connected to reduced levels of trust and cooperative attitudes in the U.S. population (Putnam, 1995a). This essentially assumes the validity of a micro-theory of social capital that posits a causal link between association membership and trust. However, is it correct to use the density of membership in any type of association in a given region as an indicator of that region's level of trust and norms of reciprocity?¹² Are all associations alike in their ability to develop trust and other social capital traits among their members?¹³ Which are the decisive mechanisms in associations or other types of social interactions that are responsible for the learning of trust and cooperative attitudes?¹⁴ To answer these questions, we must examine how these different components of social capital—such as association membership, other social interactions, and trust as well as cooperative attitudes—relate to each other sequentially. In short, we need a micro-theory of social capital that connects its structural and cultural aspects.

The problem so far has been that very few data sets actually combine these indicators of social capital, trust, and cooperation with measures of the structure of individual associations or interactions, the content of their work, and the degree of social contact that exists. National and cross-national surveys that include questions on generalized attitudes, like the American National Election Studies, the General Social Surveys, or the World Value Studies, do not give detailed information about the respondent's involvement in different types of associations. Some exceptions are the Belgian national survey (Hooghe, 1999) and the time budget study in the Netherlands (Dekker and De Hart, 1999). However, even the use of national-level survey data with more detailed associational indicators does not give much insight into the associational life of specific groups; hence, group-level characteristics as causes of social capital production cannot be directly identified. As a result, we do not know whether trust and cooperative attitudes increase linearly with the length of time spent in any type of association or other social interaction, or whether it is a function of a particular type of involvement or a special type of

¹¹ These types of groups stand for a whole range of socializing groups, and are used here as examples to illustrate the larger point about which groups matter.

¹² On this see Seligson (1999).

¹³ On this point, see preliminary research in Stolle and Rochon (1998).

¹⁴ See Stolle (1998).

group.¹⁵ The answers to these two questions are the pressing issues in the construction of a micro-theory of social capital. I will review the theoretical underpinnings of this relationship and the evidence that is available to answer these two questions in the following two subsections.

1.6.1 Does Membership or Social Interaction Lead to Trust and Reciprocity?

Research on participation and political culture has concentrated on the relationship between membership in voluntary associations and general civic traits of the members. Most empirical studies on the effect of voluntary associations showed that members of organizations and associations exhibit more democratic and civic attitudes as well as more active forms of political participation than nonmembers. Almond and Verba (in *The Civic Culture*), and many other authors, found that members of associations are more politically active, more informed about politics, more sanguine about their ability to affect political life, and more supportive of democratic norms (Billiet and Cambré, 1996; Hanks and Eckland, 1978; Olsen, 1972; Verba and Nie, 1972). Others noticed that the number and type of associations to which people belong, and the extent of their activity within the organization, are related to political activity and involvement (Rogers, Bultena and Barb, 1975). In later research, Verba and his colleagues found that members of voluntary associations learn self-respect, group identity, and public skills (Verba, Schlozman and Brady, 1995; see also Dekker, Koopmans and van den Broek, 1997; Moysen and Parry, 1997; Yogev and Shapira, 1990).

To these findings, the social capital school adds the insight that membership in associations should also facilitate the learning of cooperative attitudes and behavior, including reciprocity. In particular, membership in voluntary associations should increase face-to-face interactions between people and create a setting for the development of trust. This in-group trust can be utilized to achieve group purposes more efficiently and more easily. However, the social capital school says more than this. Through mechanisms that are not yet clearly understood, the development of interpersonal trust and the cooperative experiences between members tends to be generalized to the society as a whole (see also Boix and Posner, 1996). In this way, the operation of voluntary groups and associations contributes to the building of a society in which cooperation between all people for all sorts of purposes—not just within the groups themselves—is facilitated (for empirical evidence regarding this relationship, see Almond and Verba, 1963; Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Hooghe and Derks, 1997; Hooghe, 1999; Seligson, 1999; Stolle and Rochon, 1998, 1999).¹⁶

The problem with the research to date is that even though individuals who join groups and who interact with others regularly show attitudinal and behavioral differences compared to nonjoiners, the possibility exists that people self-select into association groups, depending on their original levels of generalized trust and reciprocity. This is a classic problem of endogeneity. People who trust more might be more easily drawn to membership in associations, whereas people who trust less might not join in the first place.

Ideally one would track association members over time in order to filter out the separate influence of group membership on trust, controlling for the mentioned self-selection effects. However, such longitudinal data are rarely available, and can only be collected through enormous

¹⁵ However, see some group-level studies that investigate membership influences on political and social views and behavior other than trust by Eastis (1998) and Erickson and Nosanchuck (1990).

¹⁶ The theoretical relationship between membership in voluntary associations and democratic payoffs in the wider society has been discussed in Gundelach and Torpe (1997), Foley and Edwards (1996), Jordana (1999) and Boix and Posner (1996).

time and costs. Another strategy is to compare those who are more active with those who are less engaged in associational life. Hooghe, for example, analyzed an interesting Belgian national data set that combined precise associational and attitudinal indicators. He found that any membership in one's lifetime, even in one's childhood (irrespective of more or less involvement), is connected to attitudinal differences, from which he concludes that there must be some influence of membership (Hooghe, 1999). Even though Hooghe can distinguish between people who are more engaged and less engaged, he still cannot fully resolve the endogeneity problem. Other quasi-experimental or quasi-longitudinal research, however, does not give clear-cut messages about important membership effects that increase social capital. Smith, who designed a panel study with adolescents of a Florida high school, finds that one-year participation in extracurricular activities indeed helps to increase political trust among the participants. However, she recorded negative or no effects with regard to generalized trust and efficacy (Smith, 1999).

In sum, the micro-link of the social capital theory between association membership and generalized trust is largely under-studied. We do not know enough about the actual effects of association membership on generalized trust and other civic attitudes because studies have not dealt successfully with the endogeneity problem. The further task of social capital research should be to create better-designed studies to filter out whether other types of social interaction, other than formal group memberships, have effects on various attitudes and behavior that we label social capital.

The study of associational membership and other social interactions suffers from another problem besides the issue of endogeneity. It is possible that not all types of social interaction have similar effects on their participants. It could be that in Smith's study, different types of extracurricular activities also have different influences on generalized trust and cooperative norms. Similarly, in my study (2000: part 1), membership in various types of associations might influence their members differently. Some associations might have special characteristics that foster the socialization influence on generalized trust. The reason this question arises is again that we do not have a micro-theory that explains which aspects of associational life or other social interactions are important for the learning of generalized attitudes. We need to go one step further and look at the causal mechanisms behind this relationship, which is the topic of the following subsection.

1.6.2 What Makes Associations Work?

This section examines *how* the membership in associations or other types of social interaction might be able to influence generalized trust. Since specific questions about group characteristics or features of associations that potentially cause and develop specific civic traits and attitudes have not been explored in detail in the literature on social participation and social capital, it is important to create testable hypotheses for aspects that matter in social interactions. The results of such tests are important insights that can be used to build a micro-theory of social capital.

Formulations of social capital provide some criteria for which types of social interactions matter for generalized trust to thrive, and I will develop these criteria into four testable hypotheses below. Proponents of social capital argue that it is built on the effect of regular interactions of groups of people who maintain informal contact with each other. First and most important, face-to-face interaction, positive and repeated cooperation experiences, and exchange within the group life are mentioned as necessary preconditions for social capital to thrive and to

be productive. This is why memberships in so-called checkbook organizations supposedly do not create similar effects for social capital. This thesis has been contested with arguments about positive effects of checkbook memberships on political awareness and tolerance in Maloney (1999), and arguments about the importance of checkbook memberships for social movements in Minkoff (1997).

Second, the group experiences might be even more pronounced in their impact when the members of the group are diverse and from different backgrounds. This type of interaction is called bridging (Putnam, 1993: 90; see also Erickson and Nosanchuck, 1990). Those group interactions bring members into contact with a broad sampling of other segments of society and, as a result, the formative experience is likely to be much more pronounced than if the association is itself a narrowly constituted segment of society (Putnam, 1995b; Rogers et al., 1975).¹⁷ This insight from studies on the mobilizing capacity of groups and associations informs the social capital school about potential mechanisms important for generalized trust. This hypothesis, which needs further testing,¹⁸ suggests that interactions in groups with individuals who are less known to each other should be more productive of social capital than social interactions with people one already knows.¹⁹ This hypothesis suggests that even social interactions in the workplace might be useful for generalized trust and reciprocity, because work environments often foster the mingling of various social groups or at least groups with diverse viewpoints (see Mutz and Mondak, 1998). The remaining question to consider in connection with this hypothesis is: *How* are the in-group experiences with diverse people generalized to the citizens at large?

Third, memberships in hierarchical associations such as the Catholic Church in southern Italy, which do not create mutuality and equality of participation, do not count as social capital-rich groups (Putnam, 1995a). Putnam (1993) excluded church groups in Italy as builders of social capital, because they maintain “ecclesiastical hierarchy and traditional obedience and acceptance of one's station in life” (1993: 107 ff.). In his study of the development of social capital in the United States, on the other hand, Putnam includes membership in church associations, because of their more egalitarian structure. These decisions as to which groups count are based on the assumption that member-directed associations create social capital, whereas leader-directed associations do not. The reason is that relationships within vertical networks, because of their asymmetry, are not able to create experiences of mutuality and reciprocity to the same extent as relationships in horizontal networks could. Vertical networks cannot sustain social trust and cooperation, as “vertical flows of information are less reliable than horizontal flows” (Putnam, 1993: 174). Theorists of social capital therefore suggest that horizontally structured associations contribute more to trust creation than do less horizontally structured associations. This thesis, even though appealing, is very hard to test at the micro-level (Putnam tested it at the macro-level), because horizontal and vertical structures are hard to

¹⁷ In the extreme case of homogeneity, the association may not only be narrowly constituted but may also have as its purpose the denial of equal rights or opportunities to others. In such cases, it is more than reasonable to doubt the effectiveness of associational membership in promoting generalized trust or reciprocity.

¹⁸ Very homogenous associations do not seem productive of social capital (see Stolle and Rochon, 1998). However, trusting individuals self-select into more diverse associations (Stolle, 2000).

¹⁹ This is, of course, the reason why “Bowling Alone” is not really a substitute for “League-Bowling.” Recent research, however, has pointed out the importance of informal gatherings for social capital production. Yet no one has systematically shown how these different types of social interaction relate to the development of generalized values and norms.

measure. The analysis might include associational authority structure; however, they do not vary substantially between the associations in a certain culture.

Fourth, the social capital school devalues memberships in newly developing self-help groups, where a strong “I” orientation (as opposed to a “we” orientation) might prevent the experience of successful cooperation. These few criteria of the social capital theory are available for the testing and construction of a micro-theory, which will help us in identifying those causal mechanisms that inhere in social interactions for the development of civic traits. As I showed, some social scientists have contested these parameters and the stringent view of social capital theory about which social interactions matter. Surely, it seems correct to highlight the potential importance of alternative forms of social interactions, which can strengthen civil society and hence democracy. However, neither the social capital school nor its critics have sufficiently tested the actual potential of various social interactions for trust and cooperation development in the wider society. The empirical analysis that is necessary for building the micro-theory of social capital will reveal whether membership in voluntary associations is really the most important form of social interaction that produces social capital. At this point, we might encounter the problem that, for example, more trusting and cooperative individuals join associations with certain characteristics. Any analysis or test of the micro-theory should be aware of the self-selection problem.

1.7 Consequences of Social Capital

Finally, the question needs to be posed: Why should we care about social capital? What do we know about its consequences and its positive effects? In the beginning of this paper, I described how this social resource has been connected to all kinds of social and political phenomena and positive societal outcomes. Here I want to review the evidence more systematically, as this is the third research area that I suggest should be pursued in social capital research (see again Figure 1). Careful examination of social capital's consequences can also reveal interesting findings regarding the nature and important aspects of social capital, whether they are structural or cultural.

Two points are important in considering the consequences of social capital. First, it is essential that the concept of social capital be strictly defined, and its measurements further enhanced. Given the research on social capital and the logic that this concept inheres, I have argued in this paper that the most important dimension of social capital is the institutionalization of generalized trust. This dimension most accurately shows how cooperative norms and values have pervaded societies in general. Therefore, we should define and measure social capital as the spread of generalized norms of reciprocity and trust. Not all of the authors who I briefly reviewed throughout this paper have defined social capital in the same way, but have given priority to more structural aspects, such as membership in networks.

Second, a thorough discussion and further research on the consequences of social capital are useful for making better distinctions between the resource of social capital and its benefits (Portes, 1998; Woolcock, 1997). The following is a review of the consequences that have been linked to social capital at the individual, regional or city, and national levels.

Hagan, Merkens, and Boehnke, for example, have defined social capital according to Coleman as strong social relations and social bonds in the family, school, and other settings that result in informal social control (1995: 1035ff.). They find that anomic aspirations and right-wing extremism are more prevalent among East German than West German adolescents, yet

especially in the East the effects are constrained by parental controls and school influence. Also, Wilson and Musick use a network perspective when they analyze the American's Changing Lives data set. They estimate social capital as the number of children in one's household and self-reported informal social interaction. They find that social capital positively influences formal volunteering (Wilson and Musick, 1997).

The work that describes social capital as the individual participation in networks has demonstrated a wide variety of effects of social capital. This is possible because various aspects of social structures are seen as important for a number of individual-level and wider societal outcomes. However, in that social capital is measured as ranging from number of children to achievement scores in schools, we run the risk of (1) broadening the concept to mean everything, and therefore (2) possibly losing the conceptual narrowness of the social capital concept. Here I suggest that it should be specified which causal mechanisms and which aspects of network participation will create benefits for the larger society, as discussed in detail earlier. In addition and in relation to the discussion in section 1.6, we need to go beyond correlational research in order to determine the actual causal effects of network participation.

There is also experimental and other psychological work that examines the consequences of generalized attitudes of trust and norms of reciprocity. Trusting people have been found to be cooperators (Orbell and Dawes, 1991; Rotter, 1971), and also at the collective level a trusting society is a cooperative society (Putnam, 1993). Societies with higher generalized trust levels and norms of reciprocity achieve higher levels of economic development (Fukuyama, 1995; Knack and Keefer, 1997; Putnam, 1993).

In sum, the existence of generalized trust and norms of reciprocity is believed to cause highly important societal outcomes. These are certainly the reasons why social capital has been seen as both an important societal resource and a promising theoretical concept of interest. There is at least one issue that needs to be considered while searching for the consequences of trust and reciprocity. As most of the research is based on large-scale survey analysis, it often appears easier to establish a correlation between generalized attitudes and societal outcomes, yet the causal mechanism behind it is less clear. The question, for example, is *how* is trust connected to economic development and better institutions? Therefore, this research agenda should be supplemented with more case studies and possibly experimental research that reveal the actual causal link.

1.8 Conclusion

Social capital is a vital societal resource. In social sciences, the concept of social capital is currently receiving considerable academic attention, and rightly so, because the concept will allow social scientists to use specific aspects of political culture as explanatory variables in a cross-national setting.

In this paper, I have developed a research agenda that builds on the logic of social capital developed by Robert Putnam. I demonstrated that—according to this logic—social capital is the institutionalization of generalized attitudes such as trust and norms of reciprocity. This approach to social capital research focuses on generalized norms and attitudes, but does not stand in direct contrast to network-oriented approaches to social capital.

The logic of social capital provokes the most interesting question, namely, how these attitudes and norms become institutionalized and generalized. This question constitutes one of the three research areas that I proposed in the above agenda. In addition to the study of (1) the causes of social capital, I proposed two other important areas: (2) the causal relationship between

structural and cultural components of social capital (micro-theory), and (3) the consequences of social capital. The research agenda advances the building of social capital theory in important ways, because it has the goal of overcoming the current weaknesses that the concept of social capital suffers. In particular, the research I propose within the suggested framework would overcome the current lack of analyses on important causal relationships that involve social capital.

The first weakness in social capital research that is emphasized in the research agenda is the lack of research on the sources of social capital. How are norms of trust and reciprocity generalized and institutionalized? I discussed several candidates for further empirical investigation: families, networks and associations, ethnic cleavages, economic resources, and the role of local and national governments. With the last factor, I brought the “state back” into the social capital debate. If generalized trust is so closely tied to institutions, which institutional structures foster or hamper developments of social capital? Can contemporary regional or national governments influence levels of social capital? I argued that in answering these questions, it is important to not just identify relationships that are based on correlations, but to research in depth the causal mechanisms between social capital and its institutional sources.

The second issue that needs more clarification relates to the relationship between structural and cultural components of social capital. Networks, and in particular membership in voluntary associations, have often been confused with the actual definition or measurement of social capital, and therefore need special attention. The question is how do networks of civic engagement and cultural aspects of social capital such as generalized trust relate to each other sequentially? Moreover, which aspects of networks or social interactions actually contribute to the institutionalization of trust and norms of reciprocity? In short, there is no micro-theory of social capital. The research has suffered so far from endogeneity problems, the lack of relevant data on group memberships, and the lack of testable hypotheses.

For the research in both of these under-studied areas of social capital research, it is important to go beyond a correlational analysis and to clearly identify the causal mechanism behind the relationships. The same is true for the further study of the consequences of social capital in the wider society. In-depth case studies, specific survey projects with a longitudinal focus, as well as experiments seem to facilitate the social capital research agenda that I have outlined in this paper. Only when we have a precise understanding of when certain aspects of social capital matter, and when we realize where social capital comes from, can we also draw conclusions about its rise and decline.

Figure 1
Social Capital Research Agenda



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CLUBS AND CONGREGATIONS:
THE BENEFITS OF JOINING AN ASSOCIATION

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Introduction

The social capital school has proposed that one of the important mechanisms for generating good democratic outcomes is participation in networks of voluntary associations (Putnam, 1993, 1995a and 1995b). In his study of Italy, Putnam regards the density of membership in associations as one indicator of regional social capital, showing powerfully the effects of different levels of membership density on several societal outcomes and on the effectiveness of government performance (Putnam, 1993; see also Case & Katz, 1991; Fukuyama, 1995; Granovetter, 1985; Hagan, Merkens & Boehnke, 1995; Jencks & Peterson, 1991; Knack and Keefer, 1997).

Networks of civic engagement, norms of reciprocity and trust constitute the heart of social capital. To Putnam, these three elements of social capital belong together, although he stresses and builds his argument on the assumption that membership in social networks such as soccer clubs, singing groups and bowling leagues,²⁰ facilitates democratic mobilization and socialization effects. “Internally associations instill in their members habits of cooperation, solidarity, and public-spiritedness... Participation in civic organizations inculcates skills of cooperation as well as a sense of shared responsibility for collective endeavors” (Putnam, 1993: 89ff.).²¹ It is plausible and almost self-evident that groups of voluntary associations will produce certain goods that are available to the group itself. However, it has not been satisfactorily proven, *whether* and *how* voluntary associations really create trust and other societal pay-offs that benefit the wider society outside of the group, although such an assumption underlies contemporary theories of social capital. In other words, we do not truly know whether voluntary associations fulfill this function, or if so, how.

In his studies of the United States, for example, Putnam assumes that declining membership in associations is the cause for all kinds of social evils, such as reduced levels of trust and cooperative attitudes in the U.S. population (Putnam, 1995a). In his work on Italy, Putnam uses the indicator of regional associational membership as one important predictor of the region’s institutional performance (Putnam, 1993: 89ff.).²² Both works essentially assume the validity of a micro theory of social capital that posits a causal link between association membership and other civic attitudes and behavior that benefit the wider society. However, is it correct to use the density of membership in any type of association in a given region as an indicator of that region's level of trust and norms of reciprocity? To what extent can associations serve as the causes and creators of trust and cooperative values? Are all associations alike in their capability to develop trust and other social capital traits among their members? Which are the specific mechanisms in associations that are responsible for the potential learning of trust and cooperative attitudes? To

²⁰ These types of groups stand for a whole range of socializing groups, and are used here as examples to illustrate the larger point about which groups matter.

²¹ Putnam also mentions external effects of voluntary associations as intermediaries between citizens and governments, see Putnam (1993:89ff.). Regionally, the higher the density or number of such groups, the better community members can overcome collective action problems and the better they can collaborate for mutual benefit. The cross-cutting and overlapping involvements initialized in voluntary associations in a community strengthen the local network of interaction, which in turn facilitates the solution of local or communal issues. See also Tocqueville [1835] as a proponent of both internal and external effects of voluntary associations.

²² Another reason for this choice of associational membership as the most important social capital indicator has been, of course, that measurements of memberships in associations as opposed to other types of social interactions or attitudinal data have been readily available.

answer these questions, we need to examine how the different components of social capital, such as association membership, trust, and cooperative attitudes relate to each other sequentially.

Problems arise in obtaining answers. First, even though at the macro-level, the relationship between associational membership, other indicators of civic behavior, and governmental performance is evident and strong in Putnam's study of Italian regions, there is no micro-theory of social capital, which explicitly states which aspects of social interactions matter for the creation of generalized trust and norms of reciprocity. Such a micro-theory of social capital needs to define the theoretical causal connection between the structural and cultural components of social capital.

The second related problem is the lack of empirical research about the causal relationship between these aspects of social capital. So far, very few data sets actually combine cultural indicators of generalized trust and cooperation with structural measures of individual associations or interactions, the content of their work, and the degree of social contact.²³ National and cross-national surveys that include questions on generalized attitudes, such as the American National Election Studies, the General Social Surveys or the World Value Studies, do not give detailed information about the respondent's involvement in different types of associations; hence group level characteristics as causes of social capital production cannot be directly identified. As a result, we do not know whether trust and cooperative attitudes increase linearly with the length of time spent in any type of association or other social interaction, or whether it is a function of a particular type of involvement or a special type of group. However, the answers to these two questions are the pressing issues in the construction of a micro-theory of social capital and at the same time enhance our understanding of the sources of generalized trust.

There are two related research questions that this paper will address. First, even though we find association members to be more civic and trusting, to what extent can these effects be attributed to the group experience per se, as opposed to self-selection? Second, to what extent can we distinguish between effects of group membership that pertain strictly to the group itself, versus those that have influences on the wider society? To investigate the link between individuals' civicness and trust, their group attitudes and their involvement in associations, I have constructed and administered a questionnaire to identify the traits of individuals and of the associations to which they belong. The questionnaire includes items on several social capital indicators, as well as information about group activities and the nature of involvement and interaction within the group. I personally gathered data for nearly 1,000 association members of various local groups nested in several associational types in Germany, Sweden and in the United States.

The Centrality of Generalized Trust for Social Capital Research

Research about the causal relationship between cultural and structural components of social capital brings together insights from the schools of political and social participation, and of civic attitudes and behavior. Most empirical studies on the effect of voluntary associations showed that, relative to non-members, members of associations exhibit more democratic and civic attitudes as well as more active forms of political participation. Almond and Verba (1963), and many other authors found that members of associations are more politically active, more informed about politics, more sanguine about their ability to affect political life, and more supportive of democratic norms (e.g., Billiet and Cambré, 1996; Hanks and Eckland, 1978;

²³ However, see some group level studies that investigate membership influences on political and social views and behavior other than trust by Eastis (1998) and Erickson and Nosanchuck (1990).

Olsen, 1972; Verba & Nie, 1972). Others noticed that the number and type of associations to which people belong, and the extent of their engagement within these associations, are related to political activity and involvement (Rogers, Bultena & Barb, 1975). In later research, Verba and his colleagues found that members of voluntary associations learn self-respect, group identity, and public skills (e.g., Dekker, Koopmans & van den Broek, 1997; Moyser & Parry, 1997; Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995; Yogeve & Shapira, 1990).

To these findings, the social capital school adds the insight that membership in associations should also facilitate the learning of cooperative attitudes and behavior. In particular, membership in voluntary associations should increase face-to-face interactions between people and create a setting for the development of trust. This in-group trust can be used to achieve group purposes. Further, the social capital school claims that through mechanisms not yet clearly understood, the development of interpersonal trust and cooperative experiences between members tends to be generalized to the society as a whole (see also Boix & Posner, 1996; see Knight, forthcoming). In this way, the operation of voluntary groups and associations contributes to the building of a society in which cooperation between all people for all sorts of purposes -- not just within the groups themselves -- is facilitated.²⁴

Generalized attitudes of trust extend beyond the boundaries of face-to-face interaction and incorporate people not personally known. They are indicated by an abstract preparedness to trust others and to engage in actions with others (see Yamagishi and Yamagishi, 1994; Yamagishi, forthcoming). These attitudes of trust are generalized when they go beyond specific personal settings in which the partner to be cooperated with is already known, they even go beyond the boundaries of kinship and friendship, and the boundaries of acquaintance. In this sense, the scope of generalized trust should be distinguished from trust in personal relationships. This more immediate form of trust may be called private or personalized trust; it results from cooperation and repeated interactions with one's immediate circle, whether that be a family, community, or fellow member of a voluntary association. The scope of generalized trust also needs to be distinguished from identity-based forms of trust that include only people one knows personally as well as those who fit into a certain social identity that one holds (see Brewer, 1981; Kramer, Brewer and Hanna, 1996; Messick, 1991; Messick and Kramer, forthcoming). Even though identity-based trust is "depersonalized" in this conception of trust, total strangers couldn't be trusted. Total strangers could not be categorized easily into a known social identity.

The important question is how the trust that we obviously build for people we know well can be extended and used for the development of *generalized* trust, or trust for people we do not know well. In Hardin's words, how do we develop a general level of expectation of trustworthiness (Hardin, 1993; see also Hardin, forthcoming)? How do we make the leap of faith to people we do not know? How do we generalize and feel comfortable with those about whom we do not have much information? How is generalized trust institutionalized? In short, we need a mechanism that explains the development of generalized trust.

Several mechanisms have been suggested and discussed. Hardin, for example, argues that the general expectations about others' trustworthiness are strongly influenced by an individual's previous experiences (Hardin, 1993). Uslaner argues that generalized trust is a moral value that is

²⁴ For some empirical evidence on the correlation between associational membership and generalized attitudes and behavior see Almond & Verba, 1963; Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Hooghe & Derks, 1997; Seligson, 1999; Stolle & Rochon, 1998; Stolle and Rochon, 1999. The theoretical relationship between membership in voluntary associations and democratic pay-offs in the wider society has been discussed in Gundelach and Torpe (1997), Foley and Edwards (1996), and Boix and Posner (1996), and Jordana (1999).

mainly shaped through one's experiences during childhood and in conditions of equality (Uslaner, forthcoming). It has also been suggested that participation in school, family, work, and community is likely to have "strong internal effects" on the building of civic virtues (Mutz and Mondak, 1998; Newton, 1997). In addition, the role of government and public policies have been brought into the debate about the development of generalized trust (Levi, 1998; Sides, 1999; Stolle, 2000).

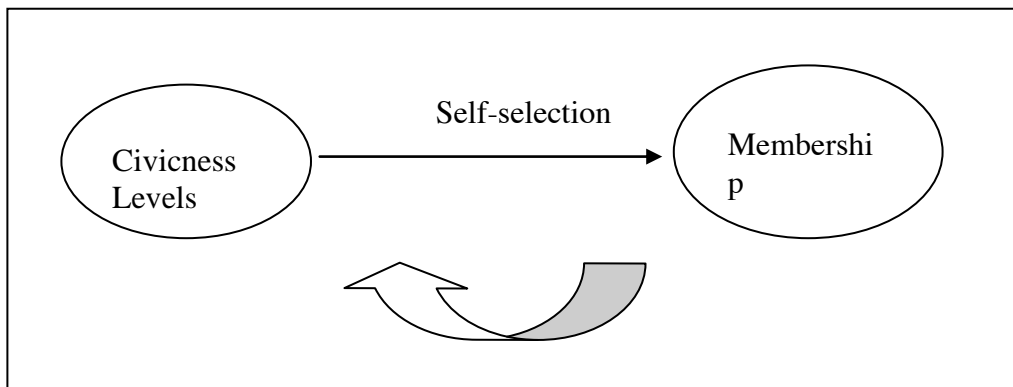
In this paper, the capacity of voluntary associations to facilitate generalized trust will be examined, since social capital theorists assume the existence of this capacity. With voluntary associations as with other potential sources for generalized trust, the task is to specify the mechanisms and aspects of the interactions that are either beneficial or inhibiting for generalized trust.

Arguments about the importance of voluntary associations in fostering trust and civic attitudes have been criticized for focusing too narrowly on certain types of secondary associations as the main source of social capital. For example, Minkoff (1997) emphasized the importance of checkbook associations, whereas Foley and Edwards (1996) pointed out the significance of social movements for the creation of social capital. Other critics note that more informal contacts and gatherings, such as with friends or in cliques, could be equally productive. Alternative forms of social interactions can strengthen civil society and hence democracy. However, neither the social capital school nor its critics have sufficiently tested the actual potential of various social interactions for the development of trust and civic values. The goal of this paper is to fill some of these gaps in social capital and trust research. I have selected the most prominent mechanism of social interaction, namely membership in voluntary associations, and examined its facilitative and mobilizational potential for various civic values and attitudes, such as generalized trust.

Hypotheses and Research Design

The first and most problematic issue concerning the above research questions is the possibility that people self-select into association groups, depending on their original trust or general civicness level. This is a classic problem of endogeneity. People who trust more or who are more civic might be more easily drawn to membership in associations, whereas people who are less civic or less trusting might not join in the first place. This concern is depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1



In other words, it could be that although we seek to observe the rounded arrow, our results are driven by the relationships depicted by the black arrowhead. Social capital theory has not sufficiently dealt with this problem (but see Brehm and Rahn, 1997). Ideally one would track association members over time in order to filter out the separate influence of group membership per se on civiness, controlling for the mentioned self-selection effects. However, we do not have the longitudinal data available, primarily because collecting such data would entail enormous costs in time and efforts. The more efficient strategy then is to sample members from different kinds of groups. With my self-collected data set with association members in several groups, nested in various associational types in three countries we can test whether civic attitudes and behaviors are really a product of membership effects.

The key concerning the above problem is to be able to determine whether the membership itself has a separate effect on the development of civic attitudes and behavior, disregarding of whether self-selection is at work or not. The question is whether the group socialization period within an association *adds* to the building of the individual's trust, civic engagement and cooperation that can be used *outside* of the group life.

To determine added membership effects with my data set that includes association members from several groups, I compare members of associations who joined for only short periods with members who have participated for a long time. This comparison tests whether the additional membership effects exist, namely, whether the length of time spent in an association causes civic outcomes. In this analysis, a categorical variable is utilized, which measures different periods of membership for each respondent. The variable makes seven distinctions, which range from very short periods of membership (a few months) to major parts of one's adult life. Assuming that the association members in the sample are somewhat similar in terms of their attitudes and behavior, this variable -- length of membership -- reveals the learning effects in associations.²⁵

The second issue that this paper clarifies relates to the differences between associations. Even though we might find that associations are virtuous, they need not be equally virtuous. Are all associations alike in their capability to develop trust and other social capital traits among their members? We can take advantage of the presence of 10 associational types in my data set to examine their distinct capacities to develop trust, civic attitudes and behavior. To understand better which types of associations are connected to civic outcomes and trust, another comparison is undertaken, namely between members of different associational types that are distinguished by several dummy variables.

These variables, length of membership and associational types, are the main independent variables for the analysis that follows below. Their ability to explain an array of several indicators of trust, civic values and behavior that relate to the group and to the society at large will be tested. With the selection of the dependent variables, which distinguishes between group-related and society-related indicators of civiness, I make my third contribution to the social capital debate. If the major claim of the social capital school about the significance of secondary voluntary associations for democracy is correct, then we ought to see that membership has an added effect

²⁵ However, even though by capturing added membership effects, there is another problem with endogeneity. In a model, explaining in-group trust, for example, a coefficient for length of membership that is significantly different from zero might not just indicate added membership effects. It could certainly be that members who do not develop strong in-group trust in their fellow-association members drop out of the association at some point, so that all of those left have developed strong in-group trust. It is possible that parts of my results are driven by this phenomenon; however, the likelihood will be discussed below in the result section.

on society-related indicators of civiness and especially on generalized trust in a variety of social and apolitical groups. In short, the main purpose of this paper is to test whether and in which associations membership effects actually exist. In addition, the analysis reveals how far these effects reach into the wider society.

The Data

My data set includes responses to a questionnaire with several items on various types of social trust, societal engagement, community involvement, group activity, and associational membership. The questionnaires were distributed to members of associations in Germany, Sweden and the United States in 1996, 1997 and 1998. I usually went to an association meeting, observed interactions, and (either during a break or at the end of the meeting) asked all members to fill in the questionnaire. The questionnaire usually took between 20 to 40 minutes to complete. The respondents were nearly all of the members who attended a particular meeting, training session, rehearsal, or competition.²⁶

To control for regional differences and their impact on social capital, association members were selected who reside in the capital cities of the two European countries, in Berlin and Stockholm; Philadelphia and its suburbs were chosen as an equivalent city in the United States. This choice of cities allows for the test of the above hypotheses in a range of metropolitan areas in advanced industrialized democracies. Ten different types of associations were selected. All in all, there were 50 local groups of association members. Table 1 summarizes the associations studied in each country and the number of respondents per associational type.

[Table 1 about here]

The associational types were selected in order to test several propositions of the social capital theory and its critiques. For example, bowling leagues and church choirs, as well as groups from similar types of association sectors were chosen, mainly because social capital theory focuses on these apolitical associations as the typical sources of social capital generation. Other types of associations chosen exhibit more public-oriented purposes. Two assumptions can be made about associations that seek to provide public goods rather than to develop a private interest: There might be a higher self-selection bias with members of such organizations, and there might be a different pattern of the development of civic attitudes and behavior in such organizations. Therefore, parents' associations were selected, prevalent in Sweden (*Farsor och Morsor*) in which members go on so-called night walks for the purpose of trying to stay in contact with adolescents in their neighborhoods. For the United States, a neighborhood group and political organizations, such as the League of Women's Voters and campaign volunteers were selected. The choice of such organizations beyond solely apolitical groups allows testing hypotheses regarding associations directed to different purposes.²⁷

Dependent Variables

²⁶ Per association, there were usually one maximal two people who refused to fill in the questionnaire. The overall response rate in relation to present association members is approximately 95%. Therefore, the possibility of bias through self-selection of respondents can be discounted.

²⁷ Other than the purposeful choice of specific associational types, the 50 different local groups were chosen on a random basis. I usually called central agencies of the associational type in the cities for names, addresses and telephone numbers of specific groups. Then they were selected according to criteria such as availability, size, and convenience. In the case of bowling leagues, teams that were present during the training times on a given day in a huge bowling hall in Berlin and in a suburb near Philadelphia were chosen.

Measuring Aspects of Social Capital

This paper constitutes a test of an array of different types of civic attitudes such as generalized trust and behaviors and their potential roots in associations. The author makes two different types of distinctions. On one hand, public and private forms of social capital are distinguished (see also Stolle and Rochon, 1998). Private social capital captures those attitudes and behaviors that mainly benefit the members of the voluntary association and group life itself. Such forms of social capital might be exclusive and not accessible to people outside of a particular group. Therefore, the use of private forms of social capital for situations outside of each group, i.e. for situations of cooperation with people less known, is not as obvious. The use of private social capital for democracy is more limited. However, private social capital still might function as an asset to those that regularly interact with each other. Public social capital, on the other hand, includes attitudes and behavior that go beyond the group life itself. It includes generalized values, for example, that tend to influence behaviors in settings outside of group life, wherever the individual enters potential cooperation games. The assumption of the social capital school is that those attitudes, values and behaviors learned in associations can be used elsewhere. Therefore, if this proposition is true, we ought to find that members who have experienced group life for longer periods of time, for example, are also more trusting in a generalized sense, toward all people, not just towards their group members. The question is whether group membership has an effect on both private and public forms of social capital.

The second distinction is between attitudes and values as well as behavior. Do attitudes and values that are shaped and socialized over long periods of time change through the experience of membership in associations? Is the experience of membership too short-lived to have an impact on the change of attitudes and values (Newton, 1997)? Can associational membership even cause changes in behavior?

Nine different attitudinal and behavioral indicators of private and public forms of social capital were selected. They all have in common that they tap a certain sense of engagement, readiness to cooperate, to give the benefit of the doubt, to commit, to involve and to trust. The choice of so many dependent variables is supposed to depict a wide array of aspects of social capital, even though generalized trust should be seen as the heart of social capital. In the following, the measurements along these two dimensions of private and public forms of social capital will be discussed in turn. The exact question wording, scaling techniques and reliability measures can be found in the Appendix.

Private Social Capital: Group-Related Behavioral Change

Here three measures for group-related behavioral indicators will be introduced, as they describe aspects of private social capital: activity levels, level of socializing, and conversational breadth.

1) Activity Levels for the group

This variable is constructed from individual scores on a two-item scale, both of which depict the respondents' engagement with projects and tasks within the group. Generally, members in Swedish groups are twice as engaged as those in German or US groups.

2) Level of Socializing outside of the group activities

This variable is based on one questionnaire item that captures the respondents' socializing pattern with members of the associational group outside of the actual group life, for example after the rehearsal, or after the practice. Members in bowling leagues in all three countries, for example, are particularly social beyond the regular group life.

3) Conversational Breadth

This variable is constructed from individual scores on several questions about the respondent's conversation topics within the group. The questions range from conversations about private issues, professional, societal, political and neighborhood questions to topics related to the hobby or group tasks. Generally, members in US associations exhibit a slightly higher conversational breadth.

Private Social Capital: Group-Related Attitudinal Change

Here two measures for group-related attitudinal indicators as aspects of private social capital are introduced. They encompass in-group trust and commitment.

4) In-group trust

This variable measures the trust that association members have for their fellow-members. High in-group trust is partially a function of group size. Larger groups, especially large choirs, do not exhibit as much in-group trust (correlation is $r = -.42$ for the whole sample, significant at the $p < .0001$). Smaller groups, such as the self-help group, all show high in-group trust. Generally, US groups exhibit more in-group trust than Swedish or German groups.

5) Commitment Level

This item depicts the individual's commitment to his or her particular association.

All three behavioral indicators as well as both in-group trust and commitment levels are classified as private forms of social capital as they are directed solely at the members of the group. It is not obvious how engagement for the group, socializing with the members after the meetings and conversational breadth directly affect attitudes and behavior outside of the group life.²⁸ Potentially, and according to theories of social capital, we expect also a connection between in-group trust and types of trust that are related to the outside world, such as generalized trust. But we do not have any evidence of this relationship.²⁹ It is the hypothesis of this paper that membership as measured in length of time spent in one of the selected groups has a positive impact on these types of behaviors and attitudes.

Public Social Capital

It follows a discussion about aspects of public social capital, or potential by-products of group life that are to the benefit of the wider society.

²⁸ It certainly could be the case that socializing and conversing in a group contribute to the formation of generalized values such as trust. However, current research has shown that there is not much evidence that membership in more conversational and more social groups over time contributes to the development of generalized trust (see Stolle, 2000).

²⁹ In fact, I found that in-group trust and generalized trust are inversely related (see Stolle, 1998).

Public Social Capital: Society-Related Behavioral Change

Two measures for society-related behavioral change are tested. The indicators include civic engagement in communities and voting in local elections.

6) Civic Engagement outside the group life

Civic engagement in communities constitutes one type of behavior that is useful for the larger society. This variable, a four-item scale, captures the respondent's activities at the neighborhood or community level, outside of the actual group life. Of course, members of neighborhood organizations are most active in neighborhood and community projects. Generally, members in US groups are much more involved locally than members in Swedish or German groups.

7) Vote in local elections

This indicator is straightforward and measures whether the respondent has voted during the last local election. Since members in voluntary associations are generally more engaged and more politically active, there is not much variation in responses. Most members in the sample voted. However, not all members in US associations vote, and they are least active in US bowling leagues and neighborhood organizations.

Public Social Capital: Society-Related Attitudinal Change

Two measures for society-related attitudinal indicators as aspects of public social capital are introduced, they include generalized trust and openness toward strangers.

8) Generalized Trust

Generalized trust is the most important aspect of public social capital. I used a six-item scale, all of the items tap a presumption of the trustworthiness of people in general, or of highly abstract groups of people such as fellow citizens, strangers, and foreigners. Generally, members in Swedish associations are significantly more trusting than members in US or German groups.

9) Approach toward new neighbors

This variable tries to tap the respondents' attitudes toward strangers. The item asks the respondent to imagine a scenario in which a new family from elsewhere moves into the neighborhood and to choose what kind of contact the respondent would establish. The answers suggest four different responses: nothing, waiting for an initiative from the neighbor family, starting a conversation, or inviting the family over. The link here is that associational membership over time and the social contacts established in groups could eventually spill over to a more open and inclusive approach in other settings.

In short, all of these attitudinal and behavioral indicators of public social capital tap the potential of activity and engagement as well as openness, acceptance of otherness, and trust that can be used in various situations, especially in contact with persons unknown. The social capital school assumes that such attitudes can be the product of regular and face-to-face interactions with other people and cooperation experiences within a group.

Control Variables

The regression models for each of the above indicators that are discussed below, include the main independent variables, namely the distinctions between associational types and between different periods of participation, as well as other types of control variables that are related to civic and trusting attitudes and behavior. These control variables are mainly personal resource

variables, such as age, education, income, gender, and length of living in the municipality. One additional control variable is of special importance. It captures additional memberships of the respondent beyond the association I visited. It could certainly be that the respondent is a member of several other associations that also exert influences on the person's behavior and attitudes. We do not have the information about how long the person has been a member in other associations, nor do we know more about the specific circumstances of the additional involvement. However, at least we can control for multiple memberships and identify whether they are related to the social capital indicator in question. In the following, each set of private versus public social capital indicators is examined in turn.³⁰

Results

Group-Related Behavioral Change

The first set of dependent variables captures behavior within the group: activity levels, levels of socializing outside of the group life, and conversational breadth (see Tables 2,3, and 4).

[Table 2, 3 and 4 about here]

As predicted, all three indicators show very strong added membership effects, demonstrated by the coefficients for the length of membership variable. The longer one joins any of the selected associations, the more the individuals are active, the more do they socialize outside of their group life with each other, and the more they converse about various issues in all three countries (with the exception of conversational breadth in Sweden). The logic is that the members become more familiar with, more attached (see also next section), more committed to the association and the fellow-members. This obviously breeds an openness to talk more widely, to socialize more after hours and even to take on more tasks.³¹

There is something in the nature of the associational type as well that allows members to be more active, more conversational and more socializing. For example, members in neighborhood groups in the US are significantly more active and less conversational than members in bowling leagues (see the coefficients for group dummies in Tables 2,3 and 4). In addition, socializing patterns outside of the group-life are significantly related to a group measure of fun-orientation. This variable indicates whether most association members view either the serious involvement with the given hobby or socializing aspects as their main goals of each associational meeting (Table 3). The higher group value of socializing is of course significantly related to individual socializing patterns outside the group life. Furthermore, in Germany, members in self-help groups socialize significantly less than those in sport and bowling leagues. This is also true for members in Swedish parents and pet groups. It is not entirely clear whether these effects can be attributed to added membership effects or self-selection. Both are possible, and to get a better picture, activity levels are plotted along the variable length of membership, see Figure 2.

³⁰ Because the personal resource variables and the group variables work differently in different countries, in the analysis below, the samples are separated into country samples. The consequence is that the sample size shrinks.

³¹ There is a possibility, however, that those who talk more and who take on more tasks are also the ones who stay in an association for long periods, whereas all the others drop out. However, if this were the case, then we would need to have a general drop-out rate of at least 60% in Sweden and about 80% in the US and Germany in order for such a high increases in group-related civic behavior to occur. These numbers were calculated under the conservative assumption that members who drop out are not at all engaged or active. The dropout-rate N_d/N can be calculated as follows:

$$N_d/N = 1 - [(\text{activity average for recent joiners}) / (\text{activity average for long-term joiners})].$$

[Figure 2 about here]

The Figure is created by adjusted means for activity levels, adjusted for age, education, income and gender plotted along the increasing time of membership. The lines indicate that activity levels rise steeply in associational types in all three countries, but they start at a slightly higher level of activity in Sweden when members just join. In addition, we do not see significant differences between associational types, as already indicated by the regression analysis for activity levels (Table 2). Figure 2 suggests two points. First, length of membership is the dominant variable driving the results. Second, we do not see strong self-selection effects with regard to associational type, i.e. members do not self-select into special types of associations on the basis of their activity levels (with the exception of US neighborhood groups).

For all three indicators, activity, socializing and conversational breadth, personal resource variables, such as education, age, income, gender and the length of living in one's municipality are controlled. Some of these resource variables work differently in the three cultural contexts. For example, in the US, female association members are significantly more active and engaged than male members, not so in the European cases. In Sweden, we find a strong gender influence on the level of conversational breadth. Women share significantly more topics in their associations than men, more so than in Germany and in the US. In all three countries, it's the younger people in associations that share several conversational topics widely, an interesting generational effect that should not go unnoticed. Another similarity in all three national settings is that personal resource variables do not strongly affect private social capital (behavioral aspects).

The measure of number of additional memberships per respondent outside of the particular association that I visited also indicates some influence. Whereas members with several memberships do not seem to socialize more outside of their group life, generally they are more active, and they converse on a wider array of issues. It is not certain whether this is an indication of self-selection, in which case the number of additional group memberships stands for special characteristics of a "joiner-nature,"³² which might affect group-related behaviors. An alternative interpretation would be that the given behavioral change is caused by an increasing number of individual memberships.

These results are perhaps not surprising – we expect group life to influence certain behaviors of the members that have to do with the group itself. It is less certain that attitudes would change as well. But that will be the subject of the next section.

Group-Related Attitudinal Change

The second set of variables includes attitudes that relate to the group and its members, namely in-group trust and commitment to the group. Attitudes are not changed influenced so easily during one's lifetime. They are formed and developed over long periods of time, and through the daily contact with institutions, the family, schools, friends, etc. The results are therefore not as clear-cut as with behavioral indicators.

[Table 5 about here]

In-group trust, measured at the individual level is not strongly influenced by the actual group experience, but more intensively by one's personal resources. Only in the United States, do long-time association members trust their fellow members more than people who joined a group

³² This expression refers to possibility that personal characteristics and resources might cause that an individual enters multiple associational memberships.

not too long ago, as shown in Table 5. There is no such influence in the European cases. Older members in the United States trust their fellow members more than younger members.

However, it seems as if in each associational group, members create a certain trust level that does not change very much with increased times of membership. For example, members in US church choirs seem more trusting in comparison to members in neighborhood groups and bowling groups. But the difference between members who participated in church choirs for a long time and those who just joined is not as stark. See also Figure 3. In sum, in-group trust is a group-specific phenomenon that is influenced by some personal resources. The added membership effects are generally low.

[Figure 3 about here]

Individual commitment levels are measured only in the US sample. This variable is interesting because it is determined by other group-related attitudes and behavior. Members who trust their fellow-members more and who are more active in their groups, are also more committed to the associational life of their group, see Table 6. Even controlling for these effects, I find that more time spent in a given group, influences commitment levels positively.

[Table 6 about here]

As Figure 4 demonstrates as well, commitment levels are fairly similar when people enter an association, and they rise rapidly in the first months of membership, and from there continue to rise over longer membership periods. Still, commitment levels are highest in US church choirs, which results from the additional dimension of sharing religious values within the group. Participation in an US church choir then means more than the weekly visit in a hobby group.

[Figure 4 about here]

However, we have to be careful with the interpretation of these results. In-group trust, and particularly commitment levels could also be causes for length of membership.

In sum, attitudes that focus on the group or group members are not as clearly connected to the membership experience over time as the behavioral patterns discussed before. More predominantly, in-group trust is influenced by personal resources and to a degree by the type of association. Commitment levels are clearly related to the time spent in an association generally, but the levels vary dependent on the type of association. Even though we find effects from the length of group membership on attitudes toward the group, we have to keep in mind that these attitudes, such as in-group trust and commitment, do not directly benefit the larger society, outside of a particular group. They cannot easily be utilized in another context.

Society-Related Behavioral Change

This is different with the third set of variables that includes measures of civic engagement in one's community and voting in local elections. The question with regard to civic engagement is whether members become more engaged in their communities once they have joined an association for longer periods of time. The proposition is that association membership mobilizes its members to engage in their neighborhoods and communities. The answer is not obvious: in the US and even more so in Germany they do; in Sweden, on the other hand, they do not. Table 7 indicates that in Sweden, those who have participated in associations for long periods of time are even significantly less active and engaged in their communities.

[Table 7 about here]

This is certainly a puzzling finding that needs more explanation. Generally, civic engagement levels are lower in the European cases, and particularly in Sweden (possibly the type

of involvement is different in Sweden). The regression results in Table 7 and Figure 5 indicate that members of Swedish church choirs and parents groups are significantly more active than members in pet and boule groups, for example. So, it is very much the type of group one joins that is related to civic engagement in the community. However, an interesting logic seems to reveal itself. People, who want to fix things in their communities and who want to be active, join certain associations. However, the longer members participate in their associations, the less likely they are to invest their energies outside of them, with the exception of Swedish parents groups. As a result, the members' engagement levels in their communities drop.

[Figure 5 about here]

In the United States to a certain degree, and particularly in Germany, members become more engaged the longer they participate in an association, see Figure 5. In the Philadelphia area, the younger people, women, and those who have lived in their community for longer are more likely to be active in their neighborhoods. Members of political groups and those in neighborhood groups are significantly more active than members in bowling leagues. In Germany, it is not so much the type of association that affects civic engagement, but most importantly the length of membership.

Besides additional memberships, two other control variables were included in this model, namely political efficacy and a measure of the frequency of the respondent's reading of local news. In all three countries, members with higher levels of political efficacy, those with more memberships, and those who read the local newspapers are more engaged in local affairs. The coefficients for these three variables are relatively large, and it leads me to conclude that with the exception of Germany, civic engagement in communities is mainly determined by other factors than the experience of associational membership in a social group. The number of additional memberships (outside of the group I visited) plays an important role in the United States sample, and again we cannot be sure whether this indicates something about a "joiner-nature" or about the effects of multiple memberships on civic engagement in one's community. For civic engagement, we need to understand better the actual mobilizational sources that lead people to join certain associations in the first place, such as neighborhood groups, political groups and parents groups in which members are more active in their communities. The country differences between the European and the US cases are also worth further investigation. In sum, it is not predominantly the course of the membership and the added experience of the group that influence civic engagement levels, again with the exception of Germany (and members of US bowling leagues).

[Table 8 about here]

This result is also confirmed by examining voting habits, as can be seen in Table 8. The possibility that voting is influenced by patron-client relationships in the three cases under consideration: Stockholm, Berlin and Philadelphia can be excluded, because this is not the way local elections are organized in these three large metropolitan settings. Therefore voting in local elections is an act that contributes to the public good in one's region.³³ Except in Germany again, there is no influence that results from group life per se. Surely, members in political groups vote more (in the US), than members in bowling leagues and neighborhood groups. Members in Swedish church choirs, who are also more active in their communities, vote more than members in Boule, Pet and Parents' groups. In addition, reading the local newspaper has positive effects

³³ See a discussion about voting in local elections as an act of patron-client relationships in Putnam, 1993.

on voting in local elections in Sweden and the United States. But in these countries, the additional time in a group, does not contribute to the increased chance that a member votes locally.

In short, only in Germany, and to a lesser extent in the United States, do we see that the length of time spent in a voluntary association has actually additional mobilizing effects on a person's social and political behavior outside of the group life, especially in the community where one lives. Membership in certain groups, such as political groups, neighborhood groups, parent groups, and church choirs in Sweden (not church choirs in the other two countries) are related to more civic engagement. However, the results on societal behavioral indicators suggest that these group differences are a matter of self-selection than an actual effect that results from the experiences within the group. In some German groups and a few US groups, however, we see that civic engagement increases with the time an individual spends in the association.

Society-Related Attitudinal Change

The most important aspects of public social capital are attitudes that depict the readiness to cooperate and openness to strangers. Generalized trust measures those aspects well. In a village, town, region, or nation in which most citizens trust each other, they will also want to cooperate with each other. They are ready to engage in projects, activities, and in problem-solving, because they are not afraid to approach each other. In addition, generalized trust is an attitudinal resource for individual civic action, life satisfaction, and values of egalitarianism (see Inglehart, 1997 for aggregate results; Uslaner, forthcoming).

The following analysis identifies whether generalized trust and openness towards strangers change with the time one spends in certain types of voluntary associations. The test will be particularly important, not only for the social capital school, but also for theories about the sources of generalized trust.

[Table 9 about here]

The empirical test did not withstand the strong claims of the social capital school. Generalized trust is not significantly influenced by added membership effects. In none of the national sub-samples was the length of membership variable significant, as the results in Table 9 show. Personal resources and experiences seem to determine generalized trust. Older people are more trusting in the US, whereas in Europe we can say the opposite. This result shows that in a cross-national perspective trust is not necessarily linked to the older generation. Income has positive effects on trust in Sweden and in the United States--one can afford to trust more when there is not so much at stake. The number of additional memberships outside of the group I visited is weakly related to generalized trust in the United States, not so in Germany and Sweden. The implication of this finding is discussed in the conclusion below.

Two additional control variables were included in models on generalized trust, personal experiences with one's parents and experiences with people in the immediate environment (see Appendix for the exact question wording). The first indicator measures parental socialization influences during the respondents' childhood; it turns out to be a significant predictor of generalized trust in the European cases. In a distrusting, cautious environment -- one in which, for example, children are warned to be careful with strangers -- generalized trust probably cannot fully develop. The bivariate correlation is $r=.27$ for the whole sample (significant at the $p<.001$ level). The second indicator, which measures the experience of being betrayed by someone

known, also appears to be an influence on generalized trust in Germany, but not in the other two countries.

Controlling for these resources and experiences, I still find group differences. In all three countries, members of church choirs are significantly more trusting than members in bowling, boule, sports groups. In Sweden this is also true for members in pet groups. The comparison between members in church choirs and members in bowling groups is depicted in Figure 6.

[Figure 6 about here]

For this part of the analysis, I have selected only members of those associational groups that are the same in all three countries, namely bowling leagues and church choirs. I show adjusted means of generalized trust for all the different length categories of participation. There are several observations to be made with this Figure. Generally, members of church choirs are significantly more trusting compared to those in bowling leagues, with the exception of German bowling leagues. This is the case already in the beginning when they enter these groups, which points to the high likelihood of self-selection effects. Members with higher trust levels, self-select into certain groups, such as church choirs. However, and more importantly, in most of these cases, we do not find an added effect of membership, with the exception of US bowling leagues.

All of these pieces of evidence taken together suggest that we deal here with self-selection effects. People who decide to enter an association have most likely done that in the context of higher trust. Furthermore, people who become members of certain types of associations such as church choirs do that also in the context of higher trust levels compared to people who, for example join bowling leagues. Does that mean self-selection? We cannot be entirely sure, but the fact that the entry levels of trust are fairly distinct for different associational types in all three countries, seems to be an indication that differences existed long before membership became an event. Ironically and in seeming justification of the argument about “bowling alone,” membership in US bowling leagues represents an exception in that longer membership affects generalized trust (see Figure 6).

[Table 10 about here]

The results are similar when examining the openness towards strangers (tested only in the US sample). This openness is strongly influenced by general attitudes such as generalized trust, and by personal resources such as gender and age (see Table 10). Women and younger people think that they would be generally more open and inviting to newly arrived neighbors. Those with more association memberships generally, as well as members in bowling leagues, and neighborhood groups believe that they are significantly more inviting than members in political groups. However, joining a certain group for a longer time does not make people more open towards newly arrived neighbors (see coefficient for length of membership variable).

[Figure 7 about here]

Figure 7 confirms that the length of membership is not very influential for supporting the openness towards newcomer families in one’s neighborhood. There seems to be a boost in the early joining phase, but it is not an attitude that lasts over the course of the membership.

Conclusion

Evidence for the social capital theory of the effects of associational membership is hard to generate. However, the key to understanding the mobilizing and civic potential of voluntary associations is to examine the added membership effects that result from the socialization experience of the group. One way to do that is to sample members from various associations, and

to merge information on these specific local groups with data about individual members. This I have done with my self-collected data set. Even then, with associational membership being such a special, short-lived effect in one's lifetime, it is very hard to filter out any significant relationships due to a particular membership experience.

However, in this paper, important tests of the social capital theory were performed and the new insights contribute to constructing a micro-theory of social capital and to theories of generalized trust. Besides social associations that the social capital school considers important, the study includes also political, self-help and community groups. This purposeful selection of associational types allows the generalization of the results to a wide range of formal associations. Because the samples originated in metropolitan areas in a variety of advanced industrialized democracies, we should expect to find similar results in metropolitan areas in other Western countries. However, in rural or developing areas, where associations might play a more pivotal role in every-day life, the findings might be different. Let me recapitulate the results and discuss their implications.

First, membership in voluntary associations does have a lot of different functions and mobilizational effects, and they serve as learning schools for civic skills (Verba, Brady and Schlozman, 1995). The analysis has demonstrated that members indeed learn certain skills, attitudes and behavior, however, most of which can be utilized in the group context only. The added influence of group life is strongest on group-related behavioral indicators, such as tasks and responsibilities for group purposes, the level of socializing with group members outside of the actual group life and the conversational breadth. In addition, membership over longer periods positively affects commitment levels and in-group trust, at least within US groups. I characterized those attitudes and behavior as private social capital, because they are not universal and cannot be generalized to other settings. We do not know, for example, whether the ability to take on tasks and responsibilities for the group does also translate into the readiness to involve in other cooperative situations. Similarly, we do not know whether the ability to develop commitment and in-group trust can be utilized in a different context.

Second, the follow-up question was to understand whether members who joined groups for longer periods might learn more generalized and universal skills, attitudes and behavior. The findings with regard to indicators of public social capital are less convincing. Out of the two behavioral and two attitudinal indicators, only those of civic engagement in communities and voting were related to membership over time in Germany, and there was a weak group effect on civic engagement in the US. Otherwise in Sweden and the US, none of the public social capital indicators were an outcome of added membership effects. This is a disturbing finding for social capital theory, as associations' side-effects and pay-offs relate mainly to the group itself, but not to the wider society. The importance of those types of associations in the used data set, however, has been said to bring about generalized and universal attitudes and behavior. This connection could not be confirmed empirically.

The main reason then that we find voluntary associations indeed to accommodate more trusting, more open and more civically engaged people has to be attributed to self-selection. As further analysis steps indicated, people who trust more, self-select into certain types of associations.³⁴ This is an enormously important finding for social capital theory. The results verify our common understanding as developed by social capital theory about the connection between membership in voluntary associations and trust, civic engagement and openness to

³⁴ See further evidence for self-selection in Stolle (2000).

strangers, but they do not verify strongly that these types of interactions are *causes* for these generalized attitudes and behavior.

There is one caveat to be made in relation to this finding. Might it be possible that it is not the membership in a specific group that contributes to the building of civic attitudes and behavior and particularly to generalized trust, but the multitude of associational memberships that gives rise to such influences? Our measure of additional memberships has been included in the above analyses as a control variable. The limitation is that the data set does not provide the length of participation in these other groups or more information about the additional groups. Therefore, self-selection effects resulting from a “joiner-nature” and added effects from multiple memberships cannot be clearly distinguished. However, the results revealed that additional memberships mattered significantly for some of the societal indicators, but only weakly for generalized trust in the US and Sweden. Yet the effect is not consistent enough and not strong enough to serve as an explanation for the causal relation between membership and social capital. In addition, even if the multitude of associational memberships was important, we ought to find an influence at the micro-level, which means an influence with just one membership, because multiple memberships most likely work as an accumulation of a single experience.

Third, there are certain associations that are more virtuous than others. For example, members in church choirs are more trusting in a generalized sense. In Sweden, members of church choirs are more civically active and vote more than members in other groups. Membership in church choirs is also linked to high private social, as we find high commitment levels and high in-group trust in US church choirs, for example. Members in US neighborhood groups are particularly active in their groups, but also beyond that they engage in civic projects in their communities more than members of other associations. My analysis so far has indicated that most of these effects that reach into the wider society seem to be driven by self-selection. Members of church choirs join such groups at a higher level of generalized trust and with more openness to strangers than members who join bowling leagues.

Fourth, it is an advantage to have a cross-national sample available to test several social capital hypotheses. The advantage is clearly that a test reveals which hypotheses hold cross-nationally. In the analysis presented here, the relationship between civic indicators and length of membership could be confirmed in all three countries with behavioral group-related measures. The length of membership is positively related to activity levels and socializing patterns in all three cases. The relationship between length of membership and indicators of public social capital as well as other attitudinal variables, on the other hand, varied dependent on the cultural context of the respondents. There are also strong country differences in trust levels, civic engagement and attitudes towards strangers that cannot be explained by the influence of membership alone (not discussed in this paper). These insights demonstrate that the different cultural and institutional structures in the three countries independently affect the relationship between membership and civicness. The difficulty is to explain why these indicators work so differently in these settings and to identify all the aspects of civil society that are connected to these phenomena.

Several questions remain before we can draw any conclusions about the role of voluntary associations for the learning of generalized attitudes such as trust. Even though my data set constitutes a good alternative to following members of associations over years, we still need to better understand the extent to which we can distinguish between self-selection and added membership effects. The attempt of integrating the length of membership variable into the analysis is a good attempt, but we need to compare its effects more efficiently to those of self-

selection. I suggest the following steps of research and analysis in order to advance our insights into social capital theory. First, it would be worth collecting panel data on association members of a wide array of groups. This would allow us better to distinguish self-selection effects from effects of sustained joining over time. At the same time, we would be able to test a wider range of hypotheses related to social capital theory because we could include several types of groups and group structures. Secondly, we need to know more about those factors in civil society and national level institutions that directly affect the structure of group life. For example, we need to know more about why Swedish groups are more active than groups in other countries.

Finally, the short-lived experiences of group life do not satisfactorily explain the development of generalized trust. In addition, in this analysis negative experiences with others who are important to us are less important to our generalized expectation of others' trustworthiness than Hardin's insights lead us to expect. At the same time, parental socialization matters for generalized trust. However, compared to these and to the group influences we analyzed above, country variations in generalized trust are strongest (see Stolle, 2000). Theories of the sources of generalized trust should embrace these results. Empirically, two areas are the most promising for further insights into generalized trust development. On one hand, we need to explore other forms of social interaction further, for example the contact at the workplace and in the community that are connected to trust creation. On the other hand, we need to systematically analyze family socialization practices and the effects of governments and national institutions on trust development in a cross-national perspective. Generalized trust and civic values may be mainly determined by such factors.

Table 1: Data Set

<u>Sweden</u>				
21 groups 356 respondents				
Boule Leagues	Bowling Leagues	Church Choirs	Pet Groups	Parents Groups
9	2	7	1	3
116	39	148	19	34

<u>Germany</u>			
14 groups 261 respondents			
Bowling Leagues	Sports Groups	Church Choirs	Self-Help Groups
7	2	4	1
70	47	125	19

<u>United States</u>				<u>Total:</u>
<u>13 groups</u> <u>283 respondents</u>				
Bowling Leagues	Church Choirs	Political Groups	Neighborhood Organ.	All Groups
3	7	2	1	50
108	133	32	9	901

Table 2: Activity Levels

OLS Regression Results

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficients (t-value)		
	USA	Germany	Sweden
Personal Resources:			
Age	-.10 (-1.6)	.05 (.6)	-.18*** (-3.0)
Education	-.06 (-.10)	.16** (2.2)	.19***** (3.3)
Income	-.06 (.9)	.02 (.3)	.01 (.3)
Gender	.22***** (3.2)	-.10 (-1.3)	-.02 (-.3)
Length of Living in Municipality	.07 (1.1)	.05 (.8)	.02 (.3)
Group Related Variables:			
Length of Membership	.30***** (4.2)	.27***** (3.8)	.36***** (5.6)
Number of Additional Memberships	.15** (2.3)	.10 (1.5)	.14** (2.4)
Member of Political Groups	-.11* (-1.5)		
Member of Church Choirs	.00 (.4)	-.08 (-1.1)	-.11 (-1.2)
Member of Neighborhood Groups	.24***** (3.9)		
Member of Self-Help Groups		.07 (.9)	
Member of Parents Groups			-.00 (-.3)
Member of Pet Groups			-.06 (-.9)
Member of Boule Groups			-.18* (-2.0)
Constant (unstandardized)	.39 (1.3)	-.64 (-1.7)	.51 (1.4)
Number of cases	238	246	327
Adjusted R square	.17	.11	.24

*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01; *****p<.001 (two tailed test)

USA: Bowling leagues were excluded.

Germany: Bowling and Sport groups were excluded.

Sweden: Bowling leagues were excluded.

*Table 3: Level of Socializing Outside of the Group-Life
OLS Regression Results*

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficients (t-value)		
	USA	Germany	Sweden
Personal Resources:			
Age	-.09 (-1.2)	-.01 (-.2)	.02 (.3)
Education	-.08 (-1.2)	-.04 (-.6)	.01 (.2)
Income	-.01 (.2)	-.07 (-1.0)	.05 (.8)
Gender	.09 (1.3)	-.08	.05 (.8)
Length of Living in Municipality	-.13* (-2.0)	.01 (.2)	-.03 (-.5)
Group Related Variables:			
Length of Membership	.32**** (4.5)	.35**** (5.1)	.26**** (3.7)
Number of Additional Memberships	.08 (1.2)	.00 (.0)	1.0 (1.6)
Member of Political Groups	.03 (-.4)		
Member of Church Choirs	.11 (-1.2)	-.03 (-.35)	-.01 (-.8)
Members of Self-Help Groups		-.21*** (-3.1)	
Members of Parents Groups			-.16** (-2.5)
Members of Pet Groups			-.16** (-2.3)
Other Controls:			
Fun Orientation within Group	.01 (.13)	.25*** (2.6)	.21*** (2.7)
Constant (unstandardized)	1.3** (2.3)	.83** (2.2)	.21 (.5)
Number of cases	270	246	242
Adjusted R square	.09	.20	.13

*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01; ****p<.001 (two tailed test)

US: Bowling and Neighborhood groups were excluded.

Germany: Bowling and Sport groups were excluded.

Sweden: Bowling and Boule leagues were excluded.

Table 4: Conversational Breadth

OLS Regression Results

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficients (t-value)		
	USA	Germany	Sweden
<u>Personal Resources:</u>			
Age	-.15** (-2.3)	-.20** (2.4)	-.22**** (3.6)
Education	.06 (.8)	.07 (.9)	.06 (.9)
Income	.04 (.6)	-.02 (-.25)	.04 (.6)
Gender	.11 (1.6)	-.08 (-1.1)	.23**** (3.8)
Length of Living in Municipality	-.05 (-.7)	-.01 (-.01)	.06 (1.0)
<u>Group Related Variables:</u>			
Length of Membership	.16** (2.2)	.30**** (4.1)	-.05 (.7)
Number of Additional Memberships	.16** (2.4)	.14** (2.2)	.14** (2.4)
Members of Political Groups	-.01 (-.2)		
Members of Church Choirs	-.05 (-.6)	-.15** (-2.2)	-.05 (-.7)
Members of Neighborhood Groups	-.12* (-2.0)		
Members of Self-Help Groups		-.04 (-.5)	
Members of Parents Groups			.15** (2.4)
Members of Pet Groups			-.11* (1.8)
Constant (unstandardized)	.35*** (3.0)	.37**** (3.3)	.45**** (4.4)
Number of cases	270	247	272
Adjusted R square	.07	.10	.13

*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01; ****p<.001 (two tailed test)

US: Bowling leagues were excluded.

Germany: Bowling and Sport groups were excluded.

Sweden: Bowling and Boule leagues were excluded.

Table 5: Group-Related Attitudinal Change: Individual In-group Trust
OLS Regression Results

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficients (t-value)		
	USA ^a	Germany	Sweden
Personal Resources:			
Age	.19*** (2.8)	.10 (1.1)	-.08 (-1.3)
Education	-.10 (-1.5)	.09 (1.2)	.09 (1.3)
Income	.05 (.8)	-.09 (-1.3)	.00 (.07)
Gender	-.06 (-.8)	-.16** (-2.1)	-.12* (1.7)
Length of Living in Municipality	-.03 (-.4)	-.04 (.5)	-.08 (-1.2)
Group Related Variables:			
Length of Membership	.13* (1.9)	.03 (.4)	.07 (1.0)
Number of Additional Memberships	.04 (.6)	.08 (1.3)	.11* (1.7)
Members of Political Groups	.04 (.6)		
Members of Church Choirs	.11* (1.7)		-.08 (-1.0)
Members of Self-Help Groups		.12* (1.8)	
Members of Bowling Groups		.14* (1.7)	
Members of Parents Groups			.02 (.4)
Other Controls:			
Betrayed by a known person	-.10 (-1.6)	.9 (1.4)	.13** (2.1)
Constant (unstandardized)	6.5**** (8.7)	.91*** (2.9)	1.1**** (5.1)
Number of cases	267	246	272
Adjusted R square	.10	.07	.04

*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01; ****p<.001 (two tailed test)

US: Bowling leagues and Neighborhood groups were excluded.

Germany: Sport groups and Church choirs were excluded.

Sweden: Bowling leagues and Pet groups excluded.

^a Note that the measure for in-group trust in the US sample is a 1-10 point scale, and therefore different from the in-group trust measure in the European cases. See also Appendix.

Table 6: Commitment to Associational Life
OLS Regression Results

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficient (t value)
	USA
Personal Resources:	
Age	-.11* (-1.8)
Education	-.08 (-1.4)
Income	.00 (.0)
Gender	.06 (1.0)
Length of Living in Municipality	.01 (.2)
Group Related Variables:	
Length of Membership	.23**** (3.7)
Number of Additional Memberships	.04 (.7)
Members of Political Groups	.05 (.8)
Members of Church Choirs	.27**** (4.0)
Members of Neighborhood Groups	.04 (.7)
Other Controls:	
Individual In-group Trust	.28**** (5.1)
Individual Activity Level	.15** (2.5)
Constant (unstandardized)	1.7**** (5.2)
Number of cases	268
Adjusted R square	.31

*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01; ****p<.001 (two tailed test)

Bowling leagues were excluded.

Table 7: Civic Engagement outside of Group-Life
OLS Regression Results

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficients (t value)		
	USA	Germany	Sweden
Personal Resources:			
Age	-.14** (-2.3)	-.12 (-1.3)	.17*** (2.6)
Education	.05 (.8)	.04 (.5)	.03 (.5)
Income	.09* (1.7)	-.11 (-1.4)	.00 (.1)
Gender	.12** (2.1)	.02 (.25)	.04 (.7)
Length of Living in Municipality	.11** (2.1)	-.05 (-.6)	-.01 (-.2)
Group Related Variables:			
Length of Membership	.11* (1.7)	.19** (2.3)	-.22***** (-3.6)
Number of Additional Memberships	.15*** (2.7)	.12* (1.7)	.19***** (3.3)
Members of Political Groups	.15** (2.4)		
Members of Church Choirs	.08 (1.1)	-.00 (-.1)	.18*** (2.6)
Members of Neighborhood Groups	.15*** (3.0)		
Members of Sports-Groups		-.05 (-.6)	
Members of Parents Groups			.24***** (4.2)
Members of Bowling Groups			.07 (1.1)
Other Controls:			
Political Efficacy	.21***** (3.8)	.13* (1.9)	.11* (1.8)
Follow municipal or local newspaper	.31***** (5.7)	.32***** (4.3)	.25***** (4.2)
Constant (unstandardized)	-.13 (.8)	.07 (-.4)	-.21* (-1.7)
Number of cases	268	181	275
Adjusted R square	.37	.13	.26

*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01; *****p<.001 (two tailed test)

US: Bowling leagues were excluded.

Germany: Bowling leagues and Self-help groups were excluded.

Sweden: Pet and Boule groups were excluded.

Table 8: Society-Related Behavioral Change: Voting in Local Elections

Logit Analysis

Independent Variables	Coefficient (Wald Statistic)		
	USA	Germany	Sweden
Personal Resources:			
Age	.02* (4.1)	.06 (1.4)	.02 (.7)
Education	.05 (1.0)	.32* (3.8)	-.00 (.0)
Income	.13 (1.6)	-.33 (1.1)	.13 (.3)
Gender	-.21 (.3)	1.9 (2.6)	-.05 (.0)
Length of Living in Municipality	-.47** (5.4)	-.31 (.4)	-.08 (.5)
Group Related Variables:			
Length of Membership	.03 (.1)	1.0*** (6.7)	-.11 (.3)
Number of Additional Memberships	.08 (.8)	.19 (.18)	.55** (4.6)
Members of Political Groups	3.03** (4.2)		
Members of Church Choirs	1.0 (1.0)	-2.9** (4.8)	1.33** (4.6)
Members of Bowling Groups	.59 (.33)		1.62 (1.6)
Other Controls:			
Political efficacy	.15 (.41)	-1.08 (1.6)	.20 (.3)
Follow municipal or local newspaper	.98**** (13.6)	.28 (.1)	1.23** (5.3)
Constant	-3.8** (6.1)	-3.6 (1.9)	-1.7 (1.2)
Cox & Snell R square	.20	.15	.16
χ^2 (df)	58.901 (12)	27.33 (10)	32.696 (11)
-2-Log Likelihood Ratio	225.985	36.991	95.173
Percent Predicted Correctly	80	95	90
Number of Cases	263	168	190

*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01; ****p<.001

US: Neighborhood groups were excluded.

Germany: Bowling and Sport groups were excluded.

Sweden: Pet, Boule and Parents groups were excluded.

Table 9: Generalized Trust

OLS Regression Results

Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficients (t value)		
	USA	Germany	Sweden
<u>Personal Resources:</u>			
Age	.15** (2.2)	-.01 (-.06)	-.15** (-2.4)
Education	-.03 (-.5)	.03 (.4)	.15*** (2.6)
Income	.14** (2.2)	.02 (.2)	.19*** (3.0)
Gender	-.11 (1.6)	.05 (.6)	.03 (.4)
Length of Living in Municipality	-.09 (1.4)	-.09 (-1.3)	.07 (1.0)
<u>Group Related Variables:</u>			
Length of Membership	.10 (1.4)	-.05 (-.6)	.04 (.6)
Number of Additional Memberships	.11* (1.8)	.05 (.7)	.08 (1.4)
Members of Political Groups	.08 (1.1)		
Members of Church Choirs	.21*** (2.8)	.16** (2.2)	.15** (2.2)
Members of Neighborhood Groups	.04 (.7)		
Members of Self Help Groups		.04 (.5)	
Members of Parents Groups			.14** (2.4)
Members of Pet Groups			.12** (2.0)
<i>Other Controls:</i>			
Parents in past	.09 (1.5)	.21*** (3.2)	.15*** (2.8)
Betrayed by someone known	.01 (.2)	-.14** (2.1)	-.03 (-.5)
Constant (unstandardized)	1.03**** (6.2)	1.2**** (6.5)	1.37**** (9.5)
Number of cases	257	218	286
Adjusted R square	.13	.10	.15

*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01; ****p<.001 (two tailed test)

US: Bowling leagues were excluded.

Germany: Bowling and Sport groups were excluded.
 Sweden: Boule and Bowling leagues were excluded.

Table 10: Openness Towards Strangers
 OLS Regression Results

Independent Variables	Standardized coefficients (t value)
	USA
<u>Personal Resources:</u>	
Age	-.14** (-2.0)
Education	.02 (.4)
Income	-.03 (-.4)
Gender	.16** (2.3)
Length of Living in Municipality	.02 (.3)
<u>Group Related Variables:</u>	
Length of Membership	.07
Number of Additional Memberships	.16** (2.4)
Members of Church Choirs	.18 (1.6)
Members of Neighborhood Groups	.15** (2.2)
Members of Bowling Groups	.19* (1.7)
<i>Other Controls:</i>	
Generalized Trust	.23**** (3.5)
Number of cases	253
Adjusted R square	.09

*p<.10; **p<.05; ***p<.01; ****p<.001 (two tailed test)

Political groups were excluded.

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Appendix Operationalizations of Concepts

Private Social Capital: Group-Related Behavioral Change

1) Activity Levels for the group

This variable is constructed from individual scores on a two-item scale.

Item 1: *Have you within the last year planned or prepared a project for the association, maybe together with your fellow-associational members?*

Item 2: *Have you had in the past or do you have at the moment a responsibility task within the association?* Dichotomous answer possibilities.

Cronbach's alpha of two item scale=.60

2) Level of Socializing outside of the group activities

This variable is measured by only one item:

Item: *Do you meet some of the other associational members also outside the organized associational life?* Answer possibilities in four categories.

3) Conversational Breadth

The talk index sums the individual answers for seven questions about various conversational topics to an individual average. The higher the index, the more wide-ranging the topics of conversation the respondents have with other association members in their groups.

Question: *In case you have conversations, what do you talk about? Please choose all the suitable alternatives.* Answer possibilities include the following conversational topics: private lives, professional lives, societal questions, politics, life in the immediate living environment and local questions, common hobby, other interests and hobbies.

Cronbach's alpha of seven item scale: .73

Private Social Capital: Group-Related Attitudinal Change

4) In-group trust

This variable is constructed by a question on a 4 point scale.

Item: *Would you say that in general you can trust the members of your association more than other people?* Answer possibilities include whether group members trust their fellow members a lot more than other people, a little more than other people, as much as other people, or less than other people. Within the US sample, an additional in-group trust variable was included, it measures trust towards other group members on a scale between 1 and 10.

5) Commitment Level

One survey item asks about the individual's commitment to his or her particular association.

Item: *Personally, how committed do you feel to this choir?* The answer possibilities range from 'not at all' to 'very strongly' and can be given in five categories. Indicator is available only in the US sample.

Public Social Capital: Society-Related Behavioral Change

6) Civic Engagement outside the group life

This variable is a four-item summated rating scale. The common dimension of the four items was confirmed by factor analysis³⁵ (See factor loadings in parentheses).

Item 1: *Have you participated in a community/neighborhood project?* (.847)

Item 2: *Have you initialized a community/ neighborhood project?* (.598)

Item 3: *Have you financially supported a community/neighborhood project?* (.705)

Item 4: *Name the community project you had in mind when you answered the last questions?*

(.742) The first three items allow three different answers that range from strong involvement to no involvement. The last item allows a dichotomous answer.

Cronbach's alpha of four-item scale: .81

7) Vote in local elections

This variable measures whether the respondent has voted during the last local election.

Item: *Did you vote in the last state election in Pennsylvania (or other state)?* Answer possibilities are dichotomous.

Public Social Capital: Society-Related Attitudinal Change

8) Generalized Trust

The generalized trust scale consists of 6 questionnaire items. The common dimension of the six items was confirmed by factor analysis.

Items	Factor Loading
(1) Trust for another National (Swede, German, etc)	.711
(2) Trust for a stranger	.701
(3) Trust for a foreigner	.643
(4) Being concerned about being cheated	.576
(5) Standard Generalized trust	.539
(6) People stand up for others	.498

Extraction Method: Unweighted Least Squares.

Full wording:

Question: *How much do you trust the following groups of people?*

Item 1: *Another fellow citizen?*

Item 2: *A stranger?*

Item 3: *A Foreigner?*

Item 6: *In our society we have to be concerned about constantly being cheated.*

Item 5: *Would you think that one can trust other people, or should one be careful with others.*

Item 4: *Whatever a lot of people say, most do not stand up for others.*

Items 1-3 were part of a larger battery of questions about trust towards other groups of the population; answer possibilities could be given in four categories according to strength of trust. Items 4 and 6 were scaled in five categories, according to agreement level. Item 5 was scaled in two categories. The addition of these 6 items to a summated rating scale produced a scalability coefficient Cronbach's alpha= .76.

³⁵ Extraction method was unweighted least squares.

9) Openness toward strangers

This variable is somewhat unusual, and has not typically been asked in other surveys. It tries to tap the respondents' attitudes toward strangers.

Item: *Assume that a family from another area is moving into your neighborhood, not too far from you own house/apartment. What of the following would you consider doing? Choose only one.* The answer possibilities ranged from inviting the person/family over to one's house, starting a conversation, waiting until the person/family initiates the social contact, to nothing at all.

Other Variables

Number of Additional Memberships

This variable adds the memberships indicated in a list of 25 types of associations. It ranges from zero (no additional membership) to a maximum of ten additional associational memberships.

Length of Membership

This variable measures the length of time the individual has spent in the group that I visited.

Item: *Since when have you been a member of this particular association?* In most questionnaires this question could be answered in seven categories: less than a year, for a year, more than 1 year and less than 3 years, between 3 and 5 years, between 5 and 7 years, more than seven years, the whole period of one's adult life.

Fun orientation (group measure)

This variable measures the extent to which associational members of a group see their meetings as a possibility to socialize as opposed to a serious practice of hobbies or interests.

Item: *While you come together with the other associational members, at training, at competitions or other, do you usually talk a lot, or do you follow more the Bowling activity without much conversation?* Answers were distinguished in five categories and averaged per group.

Parental Socialization

This variable taps parental socialization influences in the respondent's childhood.

Item: *When you were small, have your parents taught you to be careful in contact with strangers? For example, have they pointed out to avoid contact with people you do not know? Please, choose just one alternative.* The answer choices were between: They have told me to be very careful; they have told me to be a little careful, and they have not told me to be careful in contact with others/strangers.

Betrayed by someone known

This variable attempts to measure whether the respondent has been betrayed by someone close. It results from a battery of sub-questions on the following item:

Item: *Have you been cheated in your life by someone?* Sub-question: Yes, by a person I knew.
Possible Yes/No answer.