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What is This?

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The State and the Development of Social Trust

Francisco Herreros and Henar Criado

Abstract. The role of the state in the promotion of social or generalized trust is one of the most important ongoing topics in social capital research. We suggest that the state can play a positive role in the creation of social trust as a third-party enforcer of private agreements. This positive effect depends on the efficacy of the state. We also argue that the effects of the state on social trust will be unevenly distributed among majoritarian and minoritarian ethnic groups. These hypotheses are tested using the European Social Survey (2002–03) and confirmed for a dataset of 22 European countries.

Keywords: • Trust • State efficacy • Corruption

Introduction

The recent literature on social capital in general, and trust in particular, has devoted increasing attention to the role of public institutions. A number of studies dealing more or less directly with the connections between the state and public institutions and social trust have stressed the potentially negative role that the state can play in promoting relations of trust. According to Boix and Posner (1996), for example, the lack of social capital in Southern Italy can be attributed to the way in which the Norman state hindered the development of cooperative relations among Italian peasants. Padgen (1988), in turn, attributes the lack of social trust in Southern Italy to the Spanish viceroys who, in the 16th and 17th centuries, destroyed the relations of trust existing in Neapolitan society. Huysseune (2003) identifies the Italian state as the main culprit for the cynicism and lack of trust in Southern Italy, due to its role in promoting clientelism and patronage in the region. At the same time, communist regimes have often also been seen as having consciously destroyed relations of trust (Dowley and Silver, 2003; Flap and Völker, 2003; Iglic, 2003; Mondak and Gearing, 1998; Nichols, 1996: 634–8; Uslaner, 2003).

In contrast, a number of recent works have posited the existence of a positive relation between public institutions and trust. Hardin (1996, 1998), Huck (1998),

Levi (1998), Offe (1999), Rothstein (2000), Guseva and Rona-Tas (2001), Heimer (2001), and Darley (2004), among others, have all highlighted the role of the state in enforcing contracts, and the positive consequences of this for social trust.

There are some studies that have empirically tested the influence of the state on the development of social trust. Some of these studies have found a connection between social trust and democracy (Paxton, 2002: 265), public social expenditure (Van Oorschot et al., 2005: 49), political campaigns (Rahn et al., 1999), and trust in institutions, such as the legal system (Rothstein, 2001: 232, 2005: 112–15). However, other results are more mixed or even negative (Dowley and Silver, 2003; Uslaner, 2002, 2003).

In general terms, the most empirically oriented studies about the relation between the state and social trust lack clear theoretical mechanisms to link both variables. Besides, the effects of the state on people's expectations of trust are usually assumed to be evenly distributed among social groups. Most of the analyses of the role of the state on social trust do not distinguish between different social groups, assuming implicitly that the effects of the state on trust are the same for all groups of people. This assumption could confuse analysis of the effects of the state on trust, especially in modern societies characterized by high levels of ethnic and cultural heterogeneity. The literature on ethnic relationships in modern societies shows that ethnic groups hold different perceptions of public institutions' legitimacy. Ethnic groups with a positive stance toward public institutions could be differently affected by the state's actions in the promotion of social trust than ethnic groups with more cynical attitudes toward the state. Therefore, in modern multicultural societies, the analysis of the effects of the state on social trust would require interactions with membership of different ethnic groups (especially minoritarian versus majoritarian ethnic groups) in society, because the impact of the state on social trust could be differently distributed among the social groups that make up the political community.

In our article, we will further explore these questions. First, we will present a theoretical mechanism to connect the role of public institutions as guarantors of private agreements to the generation of social trust. Specifically, we will analyze the expected effects of the efficacy or inefficacy of public institutions on people's trust in their fellow citizens and the expected distribution of the state's effects on trust across different ethnic groups. Second, we will test empirically whether public institutions have an effect on social trust with a cross-country empirical analysis for 22 European countries from the 2002–03 European Social Survey.

The article will be structured as follows. In the next section, we present the theoretical links between public institutions and the state and the hypotheses derived from them. In the third section, we empirically test these hypotheses.

State Efficiency and Social Trust

Before proceeding with the analysis of the role of the state in generating social or generalized trust, it is perhaps necessary to begin by clarifying what we mean by trust. For the purposes of this article, we subscribe to a rational choice definition of trust. This approach differs from the notion of "moralistic trust" (Uslaner, 2002) or "altruistic trust" (Mansbridge, 1999: 135). These notions capture more the notion of trustworthiness than the idea of trust. That is, a "moralistic" or "altruistic" truster is certainly trustworthy, because, for whatever reason, she will always honor

the trust placed in her, but it is more difficult to consider that her way of forming expectations about other people's trustworthiness is well grounded. Instead, a rational choice definition of trust entails harder information requirements about other people's trustworthiness in order to place trust in them.

Possible definitions of trust from a rational choice perspective include those of Coleman (1990: 99–100) and Hardin (2002: 3). Coleman defines trust as a decision to cooperate under uncertainty. This definition is problematic because the decision to trust is equal to the decision to cooperate and, therefore, trust seems to be a redundant concept. Hardin defines trust as encapsulated interest. According to Hardin (2002: 3), "I trust you because your interest encapsulates mine, which is to say that you have an interest in fulfilling my trust." In this definition, trust is an expectation: the expectation that the trustee encapsulates the interest of the truster. In the rest of the article, we will use a concept of trust as expectations about the trustee's preferences. The information requirement of this expectation implies that while certain forms of trust based on blind faith are excluded, it does not require full information about other people's trustworthiness either. In the games that we present in this section the truster faces uncertainty about the trustee's preferences and the role of the state is, in general terms, to provide more information for the truster to be better able to ground her expectations. This idea is compatible with notions of "generalized" or "social" trust, understood as trust in strangers. In this case, trust is also an expectation about other people's trustworthiness. In order to form that expectation, some pieces of information can be used, but this does not assume that full information about the other player's preferences is needed for it to be considered rational. That is, we are not assuming that it is necessary to gather all the relevant information about other people's trustworthiness. In most cases, the gathering of full information about other people's preferences will be very costly and inefficient (Popkin, 1991). Expectations of trust in strangers can be based on informational short cuts. Some of these pieces of information can be, for example, external appearances or stereotypes about the stranger's type (Gambetta and Hamill, 2005). Another source of this expectation, as we will see in the games below, is the actions of the state.

The state can affect the citizen's expectation about other people's trustworthiness by acting as a third-party enforcer of agreements. A certain amount of risk is inherent in relations founded on trust. When the truster entrusts something to a certain person, she cannot be completely sure if the trustee will honor the trust placed in him or if he will betray it. As we have seen, trust is a rational and also a subjective expectation about the trustee's behavior. The notion that this expectation is rational implies a calculation that the trustee's interest encapsulates that of the truster. However, this is also a subjective expectation and, as such, may be incorrect, as there is always a risk that the trustee will betray the trust placed in him. One way that this risk can be reduced is for a third party to enforce the agreement between the truster and the trustee. Consider the following example of a simple game. There are two players: A and B. A has to decide whether to make a contract with B. If she decides to cooperate with B, B can honor the trust placed in him or betray it. A's payoffs are b if she decides to cooperate with B and B honors this trust, and $-c$ if B betrays her. The status quo payoff is zero. The problem for A is that player B may be one of a number of different types. The different types of B players are determined by the value they assign to the trust placed in them. This value, v_b, is uniformly distributed on [0,1]. If player B

betrays the trust placed in him, he obtains a payoff a, but if he decides to honor that trust, his payoff is v_b, the value he attaches to the trust placed in him. The probability that $v_b \geq a$ is $1-a$.[1] In this case, B will honor the contract. Therefore, A will only make a contract with B if her prior beliefs about B's type are $\Pr(v_b \geq a) = 1-a$, providing that $b \geq 0$. However, now imagine the existence of a third party able to impose a penalty $-s$ if B betrays the trust placed in him. In this case, B will honor such trust whenever $v_b \geq a-s$; and $\Pr(v_b \geq a-s) = 1-(a-s)$. The probability of B honoring the trust is clearly greater than in the previous case and, therefore, the risk assumed by player A in entrusting something to player B is correspondingly lower. This third party with the power exogenously to impose a penalty whenever player B breaches a relation of trust could be a public institution, such as the administration or courts, with the power to impose fines or other penalties or sentences.[2]

Does the state's role as a third-party enforcer of agreements foster the development of trust? We have seen in the game above that it does indeed reduce the risks involved in the agreement. However, this might not necessarily generate trust. In fact, some authors maintain that the opposite is true. Uslaner (2002: 45, 47), for example, argues that trust is not encouraged by making people respect the law: courts may, at most, help to build some form of "strategic trust." According to Ullman-Margalit (2004: 65), in modern societies, the state acts as a substitute for trust: the state's enforcement of legally binding contracts not only does not generate trust, but in fact relieves society of the need for trust. In this sense, she coincides with some analyses of European welfare states that contend that formal arrangements make informal relations superfluous and, hence, that welfare states have a crowding-out effect on trust (Van Oorschot et al., 2005: 35). Analyzing issues of trust on the Internet, Nissenbaum (2004) maintains that trust is incompatible with security and certainty. Therefore, the security provided by the existence of a third party which enforces agreements will tend to replace rather than enhance trust. Similarly, Murnighan et al. (2004) have recently argued that the enforcement of a legal contract may in fact undermine internal understanding and mutual trust between the parties to an agreement. Finally, Torsvik (2000: 460) claims that the concept of trust is incompatible with the presence of a third party enforcing agreements.

All these authors defend, therefore, the existence of some kind of trade-off between the role of the state as a third-party enforcer of private agreements and the development of social trust. Here, we argue that this criticism can be countered by treating the participants in a trust situation as Bayesian learners. In the game above, player A knows that there are various types of player B. She knows that the probability of these types, determined by how much they value the trust placed in them, is distributed uniformly on [0,1]. But she cannot be sure about player B's type. Rather, she has to form an idea of the subjective probabilities about player B's type, in other words, about player B's trustworthiness. These probabilities are the result of player A's prior beliefs about player B's trustworthiness, and reflect the level of trust that player A has in player B. For the purposes of this argument, it is not necessary to know the origins or source of these beliefs. The important thing is to determine how these beliefs may be affected by the existence of a public institution acting as an agreement enforcer. This third-party enforcer, for example the courts, imposes, as we know, a penalty of $-s$ when player B breaks the

agreement. As long as $v_b \geq a-s$, B types will honor the agreement. The probability of this happening is greater in these circumstances than in the absence of sanctions by the courts. The presence of the third-party enforcer may alter A's beliefs about B's trustworthiness. Her prior beliefs were $\Pr(v_b \geq a) = 1-a$. Now, with the penalty for breaking agreements in force, she can update this belief to $\Pr(v_b \geq a-s) = 1-(a-s)$. If $s \geq a$, then player A can be pretty certain that player B types will honor the agreement. She will trust player B to fulfill the agreement. In order to clarify this idea further, imagine that player A plays the trust game repeatedly, each time with a different player B. Initially, and as noted above, she has prior beliefs about the other player's trustworthiness. However, after various rounds of the game, she will learn that whenever a player B breaches the agreement, the courts sanction him with a penalty $s \geq a$. In the light of this new information, type-A players will update their prior beliefs about player B's trustworthiness.

Therefore, the presence of the state as a third-party enforcer of agreements should boost social trust. Rather than there being a trade-off between state enforcement of agreements and trust, we find that the state reinforces trust. Nevertheless, in real life, states are not perfect enforcers of agreements. First, as we have seen, our game presupposes A's asymmetric information about B's type, but also that the state (the third-party enforcer of agreements) has complete information about B's nonfulfillment of the agreement. However, this result may change if the state is inefficient. Second, our model assumes that the learning process put in motion by the presence of the state as a third-party enforcer of agreements affects all people equally, but, most probably, the capacity to update prior beliefs differs among different groups of people.

A benign version of the idea that the state does not have perfect information about the breaching of agreements is that the state (for example, the courts) may make mistakes when imposing sanctions on those who break agreements. In this sense, some authors point out that a requisite for the state to generate social trust is the nonarbitrariness of the application of sanctions (Montinola, 2004: 304–5). Therefore, state inefficacy can hinder the development of trust. Let us illustrate this idea in our game.

In the game, the court has perfect information about the violation of agreements and always sanctions the culprit. Now suppose that courts only apply sanctions with probability p when player B breaks the agreement. Therefore, they fail to apply sanctions with probability $1-p$. In this case, player B will honor the trust placed in him whenever $v_b \geq a-ps$; and $\Pr(v_b \geq a-ps) = 1-(a-ps)$. If this final probability is met and, as always, $b \geq 0$, then player A will cooperate with player B. The consequence is that the less efficient the state is, the less likely it is that player A will trust player B.

From the arguments developed so far, we can derive the following hypothesis:

H1:   If the state is not efficient in the enforcement of private agreements, the probability of people trusting their fellow citizens is lower than if the state is efficient or non-corrupt.

The second objection to the general model was that the effects of the state as a third-party enforcer of private agreements on trust will most probably be unevenly distributed among different groups of people. We will deal with this objection in the next section.

Social Trust, Ethnic Groups, and the State

According to public opinion studies, there are differences among social groups in their degree of identification with political institutions (Newton, 1999a; Stimson, 1999). These differences are especially acute in the case of ethnic divisions. Therefore, we should expect that the effect of the state will probably be different for members of the country's majoritarian ethnic group than for members of minoritarian ethnic groups. This is an important caveat to the role of the state in the promotion of social trust in developed countries, taking into account that those societies tend to be increasingly multicultural.

There is a growing literature on the role of ethnic differences in the development of social capital and social trust. It is generally assumed that increased diversity is associated with lower social capital and social trust (Alesina and La Ferrara, 2002; Costa and Kahn, 2003; Delhey and Newton, 2005; Knack and Keefer, 1997). Costa and Kahn (2003), for example, conclude that social capital is lower in more heterogeneous communities (in terms of income and race and ethnicity). Rice and Steele (2001) find that ethnic diversity across Iowa's counties is associated with lower levels of social trust. Delhey and Newton (2005), in a comparative analysis of 60 countries from the World Values Survey, conclude that ethnic fractionalization is negatively associated with social trust, a result which, to a large extent, confirms previous comparative analyses, for example, those of Alesina and La Ferrara (2002), Knack and Keefer (1997), and Anderson and Paskeviciute (2006). These lower levels of social trust seem to be related to distrust among different ethnic groups. As Delhey and Newton (2005: 312) put it "the greater the dissimilarity of other people, the more suspicion and distrust." This distrust could be based on cultural stereotypes (Gambetta and Hamill, 2005) or on other more rational mechanisms such as the difficulty of enforcing trust outside subgroup boundaries. Ties between subgroups may not be sufficiently dense to sustain enforceable trust (Frank and Yasumoto, 1998: 673).

There are also some implications of ethnic heterogeneity on the role of the state in promoting social trust. Within a heterogeneous society, even if the state can promote an increase in general levels of social trust, this does not necessarily mean that the increase will be the same for all ethnic groups in a society. More concretely, we could expect a different impact of the state on social trust for majoritarian and minoritarian ethnic groups.

Consider, for example, two groups in society, A and B. Group A is the "majoritarian," whereas group B is the "minoritarian." The members of both groups display trust within their groups and a certain amount of distrust about the members of the other group. Most probably, the degree of distrust of strangers will be higher for members of group B, being the minoritarian group, on the grounds that the majoritarian group has a higher capacity of harming the minoritarian group. Indeed, most studies about social capital in minoritarian ethnic groups conclude that the levels of trust toward strangers are lower among the members of these groups. For example, in the USA blacks show generally higher levels of social distrust than whites (Wuthnow, 2002: 86). According to Sigelman and Tuch (1997), they consider that most whites view blacks negatively, as lazy, less intelligent, and more violent. In Putnam's (2000: 22–3) terms, these groups tend to develop "bonding" social capital, a form of exclusive social capital that indeed provides social and psychological support for ethnic minorities, but is an obstacle for relations outside the ethnic subgroup. The members of group B, the minoritarian ethnic group,

will also probably display higher levels of distrust toward the state. This could be due to the fact that the minoritarian group is discriminated against or, in terms of the "group dominance perspective," that citizenship rights are disproportionately regarded as the primary property of dominant groups rather than subordinate groups (Sidanius, 1993) or, further, that social mobility and access to jobs in the state apparatus by members of minoritarian groups are conditioned by acceptance of the culture of the dominant ethnic group (Anderson, 1983; Gellner, 1983). A more benign possibility is that the group is not really subject to discrimination, but, given the control of the state by the representatives of the majority, the minority will not feel represented in the state. In reality, there is a body of work on ethnic communities that indicates more distrust and cynicism by minoritarian ethnic groups toward the state. Most of the evidence comes from studies of race relationships in the USA. Various studies consistently show that political trust is lower among black people than among whites (Beck et al., 1990; Bobo and Gilliam, 1990; Richardson et al., 2001) and that there are strong differences between blacks and whites in their opinion about the general fairness of the US political system (Hutchings and Valentino, 2004: 389). Other studies also find high levels of political cynicism among Hispanics in the USA (Buzan, 1980; Michelson, 2001). In a similar vein, a study of ethnic groups and patriotism in Israel and the USA by Sidanius et al. (1997) finds that patriotism is lower among African-Americans than among Euro-Americans, and (not surprisingly) among Israeli-Arabs than among Israeli-Jews.

In the absence of an efficient state as a guarantor of agreements, the differences in social trust between both groups will be low, as both of them will have few reasons to trust strangers (although the degree of social distrust toward strangers will be slightly higher among members of group B) and both will show similar levels of distrust toward the state. If the state is efficient, the differences in social trust among the groups will probably be increased. The members of the majority will have very good reasons to trust: they can trust in the capacity of the state to enforce agreements and, therefore, have grounds to trust strangers. Members of group B will have more reasons to trust than in the previous situation, but, nonetheless, will probably show lower levels of social trust than the members of group A. In this case, the initial differences between both groups in social trust are compounded by the differences in trust in the state. As we have seen, most empirical studies show that minoritarian ethnic groups tend to display lower levels of trust in the state. Even if the state becomes more efficient, this would not be automatically translated into an increase in the levels of trust in institutions among minoritarian ethnic groups. In fact, the empirical evidence shows that even in countries with a fairly efficient public administration, such as the USA, minoritarian ethnic groups show significantly lower levels of trust in institutions than majoritarian ethnic groups. Therefore, although both their levels of social trust will probably be higher than in the absence of an efficient state, the differences in social trust between groups A and B will also probably be higher in the new scenario.

From this argument, we can derive the following hypothesis:

H2:   *As the state becomes more efficient, the initial differences in the levels of social trust between majoritarian and minoritarian groups will increase. More specifically, the state's efficacy has a larger effect on the levels of trust in majoritarian groups than in minoritarian groups.*

To test these hypotheses, we will use cross-national individual data from 22 countries from the 2002–03 first round of the European Social Survey. The countries are Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Finland, France, the United Kingdom, Greece, Hungary, Sweden, Switzerland, Slovenia, Ireland, Israel, Luxembourg, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Poland, and Norway. These data provide variation at the institutional (country) level and at the individual level. These two levels of variation are needed to test the mechanisms that link the efficacy of the state to social trust.

The Model

The empirical model combines two levels of data: contextual aggregate data and individual-level data. The most appropriate way of analyzing both levels simultaneously is through a multilevel model (Jones and Bullen, 1994: 252–5). Populations exhibit complex structures with many levels. This complexity in the data has usually been overlooked in traditional analyses. By using multilevel models we are able to model the different levels of the data simultaneously, gaining the potential for improving estimation, valid inference, and a better substantive understanding of the social phenomenon. In order to test directly the impact of the institutional context on individual behavior, we need to analyze simultaneously micro- and macro-level data through a multilevel model. A hierarchical or multilevel model is the most appropriate model for estimating the effects of macro- and micro-variables with nested data. The multilevel model is able to measure how social trust is affected by citizens' characteristics (education or membership in associations) as well as by the efficacy of the institutional context. Moreover, the multilevel model allows for analyzing how these two levels interact (Goldstein, 1999; Jones and Bullen, 1994).

The Dependent Variable: Social Trust

The dependent variable in our analysis is people's trust in others. The indicator for social trust included in the European Social Survey is the standard survey question: "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?" The answer to this question is located on a scale from zero to 10, zero being no trust at all and 10 indicating complete trust. This ordinal variable has been recoded as a categorical variable, with the value zero including previous values from zero to four and the value one, previous values from five to 10.

The Independent Variables

There are two types of independent variables in the model: those at the country level and those at the individual level. The first independent variable at the country level referred to is the degree of efficacy of state institutions. Our first hypothesis was that state efficacy fosters higher levels of social trust, whereas lack of efficacy hinders the development of social trust. To test this hypothesis, we need a variable that captures the efficacy of state institutions. This variable has been built following the Public Institutions Index included in the World Economic Forum's 2003–04 *Global Competitiveness Report.* Low values in the Public Institutions Index indicate the low efficacy of public institutions, whereas high values indicate high efficacy.

This index is the mean of two subindexes. The first one is the "contracts and law subindex." This variable measures the independence of the judiciary, the protection of property rights, the neutrality of the government in the assigning of public contracts, and the pervasiveness of organized crime. The second is the "corruption subindex," which measures the pervasiveness of bribes in economic exchanges and tax payments.

Some of the items in the two subindexes are directly related to the efficacy of the state. As regards property rights, the "contracts and law subindex" measures how well they are protected. This can be considered as an index not just of how these rights are delineated in law, but of the efficacy of the state in the enforcement of property rights. The pervasiveness of organized crime indicates low efficacy in the enforcement of the law. In fact, most of the studies about organized crime, such as Gambetta (1988) about the Italian Mafia or Shvarts (2002) about the Russian Mafia, consider that one of the causes of the rise of Mafioso organizations is the unreliability of state protection. This is also the case with the items of the two subindexes related to corruption. Corruption is treated in the index as one of the dimensions of state inefficiency. The items related to corruption are the neutrality of the government in the assigning of public contracts and the pervasiveness of bribes in economic exchanges and tax payments. Corruption is usually understood as one of the most damaging forms of state inefficiency (La Porta et al., 1999; Mauro, 1995).

Other items of the Public Institutions Index are indirectly related to state efficacy. This is the case with the independence of the judiciary. According to Ratz (1979: 217), litigants can only be guided by the law and not by other considerations, to the extent that the judge applies it. The principles of the independence of the judiciary, such as the method of appointing judges and their security of tenure, are guarantees to ensure that judges are independent of all external pressures. Therefore, the independence of the judiciary is a necessary condition for an effective application of the law and this, in turn, is one of the dimensions of state efficacy.

The construction of this index allows us to test our hypothesis about the role of state efficiency in the creation of social trust. The descriptives of the Public Institutions Index are shown in Table 1. As we can see, there are important differences among countries. As expected, Scandinavian countries have the most efficient public institutions. There are seven countries with a score of more than six, that is, with a fairly efficient public administration. These are Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. The countries of the sample with less efficient institutions (with a score of less than five) are Greece, Italy, the Czech Republic, and Poland.

The second variable at the country level is the Gini coefficient of income inequality. To explain variation across countries in the level of social trust, some cross-national studies about social trust include as a variable the level of income inequality, measured through the Gini coefficient (Rothstein, 2005: 107; Uslaner, 2002). The idea in these studies is that most of the variation in the levels of social trust across countries is explained by economic inequality. This socioeconomic variable has been included in the models as a control variable.

The independent variables at the individual level are membership of a minority or of the majority in society, education, gender, income, and participation in associations. Membership of a minority or the majority in society has been included

TABLE 1. *Public Institutions Index*

Denmark	6.56
Finland	6.52
Sweden	6.28
Switzerland	6.20
Germany	6.10
Netherlands	6.02
United Kingdom	6.01
Luxembourg	5.92
Austria	5.83
Israel	5.82
Norway	5.73
Portugal	5.52
France	5.50
Ireland	5.46
Belgium	5.41
Spain	5.28
Hungary	5.18
Slovenia	5.11
Greece	4.71
Italy	4.56
Czech Republic	4.51
Poland	4.17

Source: European Social Survey 2002–03.

in the models to test our second hypothesis, that the impact on social trust of the efficacy of state institutions is unevenly distributed among social groups, specifically among majoritarian and minoritarian groups in society. The idea is that at low levels of state efficacy, the differences in social trust between these two groups should be small, whereas at high levels of state efficacy, members of the majoritarian group should display much higher levels of social trust than members of minoritarian groups. This variable has been included in the model as a categorical variable, with a value of one for those who belong to a minoritarian ethnic group and a value of zero for those who do not.

Education is a classical variable associated with trust in individual-level empirical studies. It is generally considered one of the strongest determinants of generalized trust (Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Rothstein and Uslaner, 2005). More specifically, higher levels of formal education are expected to be associated with higher levels of social trust. Education is an ordinal variable that measures the years of education completed. Income is also a variable traditionally considered to be related to social trust: higher income levels are usually regarded as predictors of high levels of social trust. Income is an ordinal variable that ranges from one (lowest income level) to 12 (highest income level). Participation in associations has usually been considered a variable related to the development of social trust (Putnam, 1993, 2000; Stolle and Rochon, 1998; Wollebak and Selle, 2003). In general terms, it is claimed that membership in voluntary associations fosters processes of democratic learning (associations as "schools of democracy") and socialization in habits of social trust and mutual cooperation (Newton, 1999b: 11;

Stolle, 1998). It is also claimed that the development of mutual trust between co-members of associations is expanded to people outside the associations, although the theoretical mechanisms for this expansion of trust are not at all clear (Boix and Posner, 1996). Therefore, membership of associations should be related to higher levels of social trust, although some recent analyses doubt the plausibility of this relation and the direction of causality between both variables (Hooghe, 2003; Stolle, 2001, 2003). More specifically, the relation between participation in associations and social trust can be affected by a "selection bias," in the sense that people with previously high levels of social trust are more prone to participate in associations. We have included this variable in the model as a classical "social capital" variable in the explanation of social trust. The variable of participation in associations is a dummy variable with a value of one for those people that are members of at least one association and a value of zero for people who are not members of any association. We have also added another classical socio-demographic variable: gender. Gender is a dummy variable with a value of zero for males and a value of one for females.

Results

The results of the multilevel models are shown in Table 2. This table includes two models. The first one is an additive model and the second one includes an interaction term between the Public Institutions Index and membership of a minoritarian group. As has been pointed out by previous studies about social capital, the results show that membership in associations, income, and education are significantly related to levels of social trust. Members of associations seem to be more trusting than nonmembers, and more educated and affluent people are also more trusting. By contrast, gender and levels of inequality are not significantly related to social trust.

Regarding the first hypothesis about the role of the state in the development of social trust, the idea was that a more efficient state guarantees the fulfillment of private agreements, fostering the development of trust between citizens. We use as a proxy of state efficacy the Public Institutions Index. This idea has been tested in Model 1 of Table 2.

As predicted by our first hypothesis, the efficacy of the state increases the levels of social trust. The coefficient of the variable that refers to the Public Institutions Index is positive and significant. In those countries where the state is more efficient, the probability of people trusting their fellow citizens is higher. The coefficient remains significant and positive after controlling for the levels of equality between countries, as measured through the Gini coefficient. In fact, the levels of equality in the distribution of income measured through the Gini coefficient are not significant. This means that, for our sample, the differences in income distribution across countries do not explain the differences in the levels of social trust. Institutional contextual variables, such as the efficacy of the state, seem to have a larger effect on trust. The inclusion of the individual-level variables, as can be seen, does not affect the significance of the effect of the state on social trust either. The coefficient of education is significant and positive: higher levels of education are associated with higher levels of social trust. In accordance with the social capital literature, participation in associations is also associated with higher expectations of social trust.

TABLE 2. *The Institutional Determinants of Social Trust*

Independent variables	Model 1	Model 2
Constant	–3.13**	–3.23**
	(1.44)	(1.44)
Individual-level variables		
Education	0.05***	0.05***
	(0.004)	(0.004)
Income	0.04***	0.04***
	(0.007)	(0.007)
Associational membership	0.26***	0.26***
	(0.03)	(0.03)
Minority	–0.29***	1.85***
	(0.06)	(0.66)
Gender	0.004	0.003
	(0.026)	(0.026)
Country-level variables		
Between-country variation	0.15***	0.15***
	(0.05)	(0.05)
Gini coefficient	–2.24	–2.20
	(2.66)	(2.66)
Public Institutions Index	0.58***	0.60***
	(0.16)	(0.16)
Interaction: Public Institutions Index*minority		–0.48***
		(0.11)
Log likelihood	44063.72	44043.25
N	35221	35221

Note: ***Significant at 99 percent. **Significant at 95 percent.

Therefore, in the light of the results of Model 1 of Table 2, our first hypothesis seems to be confirmed: impartial and efficient states tend to increase the levels of social trust. Given that it is a logit model, the coefficients are not automatically interpretable. The most direct approach to interpreting these coefficients is to examine the predicted probabilities of supporting the government given different values of perception of the economy (Long, 1997: 62–79). We have calculated the predicted probabilities of social trust for two different scenarios. The first one is a country with the highest level of state efficacy. In the sample, this case corresponds to Denmark, where the probability of trusting for a citizen with a medium level of education who is a member of at least one association and does not belong to a minoritarian ethnic group is 86.6 percent. The second scenario is a country with the lowest levels of state efficacy. In the sample, this case corresponds to Poland, and the probability of trusting for the same individual's profile is 57.8 percent. This clearly reflects the impact of the state in the development of social trust.

   We turn now to our second hypothesis. This hypothesis was that the positive effects of state efficacy on the levels of social trust will be larger for majoritarian

groups than for minoritarian ones. This hypothesis has been tested in Model 2 of Table 2 through an interaction term between the Public Institutions Index and an individual variable that captures whether an individual belongs to an ethnic minoritarian or not. As can be seen in Model 2, the interaction is statistically significant. As in the case of Model 1, to interpret the logit coefficient correctly, we have calculated the predicted probabilities. These predicted probabilities are shown in Figure 1. The figure shows how the levels of state efficacy as measured by the Public Institutions Index (horizontal axis) influence the probability of social trust (vertical axis). These probabilities have been calculated for two different citizen profiles. First, we have calculated the predicted probabilities of trusting individuals for a citizen of a medium educational level who is a member of at least one association and who is not a member of a minoritarian ethnic group. The second profile is for a citizen who is a member of a minoritarian ethnic group, has a medium educational level, and who is a member of at least one association. We have calculated the predicted probability of trusting others for individuals having these two profiles for different levels of state efficacy. We can derive some conclusions from the results shown in Figure 1. First, the levels of social trust are higher for members of the majoritarian ethnic group in a country for all levels of state efficacy. Second, the differences in social trust between minoritarian and majoritarian ethnic groups tend to increase as the state becomes more efficient and less corrupt. In states with very low levels of efficacy, the probability of trusting others is very similar for both types of ethnic groups: 54.1 percent for minoritarian groups versus 54.6 percent for majoritarian groups. However, for high levels of state efficacy, the differences are very significant: 66.3 percent for minoritarian
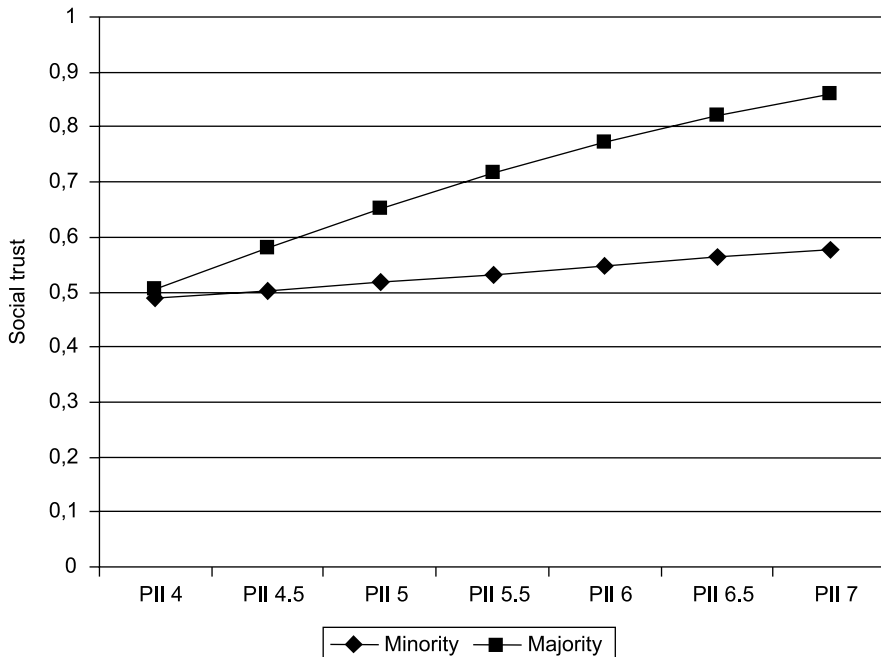

FIGURE 1. *The State and Social Trust in Majority and Minority Groups*

groups versus 90 percent for majoritarian groups. The levels of social trust for minoritarian groups increase with growing levels of state efficacy, although the increase is small, whereas for majoritarian groups, the effect on social trust of the increase in efficacy is spectacular. The effects of the increase of state efficacy on the levels of social trust of minoritarian groups is coherent with other studies that find that higher confidence in the government among members of minoritarian ethnic groups leads to higher levels of generalized trust (Bahry et al., 2005). To the extent that we can consider the level of social trust as an indicator of the integration of minoritarian ethnic groups into the wider society, our results point to a positive role for the state to play on this issue. This result, however, has to be complemented with the idea, included in our second hypothesis, that the effect of the state on the levels of social trust is, nonetheless, concentrated in the majoritarian ethnic group. The gap in the levels of social trust between majoritarian and minoritarian groups in countries with highly efficient states suggests that if the state aims to play a more decisive role in enhancing the levels of social trust among minoritarian ethnic groups, it should adopt measures to increase its legitimacy among those groups.

Conclusion

In this article, we have argued that the state can have a positive effect on the development of social trust. In order to develop this idea, we have proceeded through two steps. First, we have provided theoretical mechanisms for the relation between the state and trust in others. These mechanisms have to do with the efficacy of the state as a third-party enforcer of agreements. The more efficient a state is, the more social trust its citizens will display. We have also argued that this effect of the state will most probably be concentrated in the members of the majoritarian ethnic group in society. In a second step, we have tested these theoretical hypotheses for a sample of 22 European countries from the 2002–03 European Social Survey database. The results confirm our hypotheses. These results are interesting in themselves because they provide some evidence about the positive role that the state can play in promoting social trust. Another and more specific point of interest is that the positive effects of the state on the development of social trust remain for the countries in the sample after taking into account the differences in the distribution of income between countries. Finally, our results point to the fact that states can promote the integration of minoritarian ethnic groups, to the extent that the levels of generalized trust can be considered a signal of integration of these groups into the wider society, by improving their efficacy. Nonetheless, another result of our study is that the increase in the levels of social trust as a consequence of an improvement in the state's efficacy will be concentrated in the majoritarian ethnic group.

Therefore, our study shows that institutions clearly matter for social trust. Efficient states promote more trusting societies. However, the impact of institutions on social trust is not mechanical. It crucially depends on the degree of legitimacy of these institutions. We have seen how the effects of an increase in the efficacy of the state on social trust among minoritarian ethnic groups are much lower than in the case of majoritarian ethnic groups. This can be due to the fact that minoritarian ethnic groups are more skeptical about the role of the state. They usually show higher levels of distrust in public institutions. In terms of public

policy, this suggests that an increase in the state's efficacy cannot be automatically translated into higher levels of social trust for all social groups and, therefore, that the increase in efficacy should be accompanied by measures to enhance the legitimacy of the state among all social groups. How to achieve this goal is, however, beyond the scope of this article.

Appendix

The Trust Game: A State with Perfect Information

The expected payoffs for player A are as follows:

(1) EU (do not cooperate) = 0
(2) EU (cooperate) = $p(B_{HT})b + (1 - p(B_{HT}))(-c)$

Where $p(B_{HT}) \in [0,1]$ the probability that player B honors the trust placed in him.

The expected payoffs of player B are as follows:

(3) EU (honor trust) = v_b
(4) EU (betray trust) = $a-s$

We can solve the game by backward induction. Player B will honor the trust placed in him, given (3) and (4), when $v_b \geq a-s$.

Given that v_b is uniformly distributed on [0,1]:

(5) Prob $(v_b \geq a-s) = 1 - (a-s)$

If (5) holds, then $p(B_{HT}) = 1$ and, given (1) and (2), player A will cooperate when $b \geq 0$.

The Trust Game: A State with Imperfect Information

The expected payoffs for player A are as follows:

(6) EU (do not cooperate) = 0
(7) EU (cooperate) = $p(B_{HT})b + (1 - p(B_{HT}))(-c)$

Where $p(B_{HT}) \in [0,1]$ ↑ the probability that player B honors the trust placed in him.

The expected payoffs of player B are as follows:

(8) EU (honor trust) = v_b
(9) EU (betray trust) = $p(a-s) + (1-p)(a)$

Where $p \in [0,1]$ the probability that the state sanctions player B if he betrays the trust placed in him.

Player B will honor the trust placed in him, given (8) and (9), when $v_b \geq a-sp$.

Given that v_b is uniformly distributed on [0,1]:

(10) Prob $(v_b \geq a-sp) = 1 - (a-sp)$

If (5) holds, then $p(B_{HT}) = 1$ and, given (1) and (2), player A will cooperate when $b \geq 0$.

Notes

1. Given that v_b is uniformly distributed on [0,1], $\Pr(v_b \geq a) = 1 - F(a) = 1 - a$.
2. For details of the games, see the Appendix.

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