CHAPTER 3

Counting (on) Trust

Lucy: "I'm getting so I don't trust anybody."

Linus: "Don't you even trust *me*?"

Lucy: "I trust you as far as I can throw that blanket."

Linus tosses the security blanket he always holds tight.

Linus (talking to Charlie Brown): "My sister trusts me eight feet."

From the comic strip <u>Peanuts</u>[1]

If there are multiple dimensions of trust, then particularized and generalized trust ought to be distinct from each other empirically as well as analytically. If generalized trust is a value, it ought to be stable. In this chapter, I make no bold theoretical claims. Instead, I take on some methodological issues. First, I discuss the measurement of generalized and particularized trust. Then I consider methodological issues in establishing that trust is indeed a value. If trust does indeed reflect moral concerns, it should be stable over time. After all, people don't change their minds on their core values. And people should think about trust as something that is general, not simply reflecting their day-to-day experiences. I find support for both claims: Trust *is* stable–or at least as stable as most predispositions in political and social attitudes. And when people "think aloud" about trust, they discuss it in general terms. I also consider some reservations expressed about the standard trust question. There are methodological problems that won't go away, but they are not severe.

Rarely there is a survey that asks a wide range of trusting questions, such as the Pew

Center Survey discussed in Chapter 2. Such a data source permits a test of my argument that

generalized and particularized trust are distinct components of faith in others. Usually, a survey

that contains *any* social trust question will only use the format for generalized trust.[2] The Pew

Center data support my contention that this item taps (very well) generalized trust. I suggest an

alternative way of measuring particularized trust using questions that are available in some

national surveys (those conducted, at least prior to 1996, by the American National Election

Studies).

As elsewhere, I have tried to restrict as much of the technical discussion as possible to

tables and footnotes. But this *is* a chapter about measurement issues, so I have not been as

successful as some might like. The faint of heart or those who trust me (strategically) may safely

move to Chapter 4.

<div align="center">Generalized and Particularized Trust</div>

Morris Rosenberg (1956) developed what has become the standard interpersonal trust

question asked in a plethora of surveys: "Generally speaking, do you believe most people can be

trusted or can't you be too careful in dealing with people?" As I indicated in Chapter 2, trusting

"most people" means that we trust strangers. If we only put our faith in people we know or we

place our confidence in people we think we know well (folks like ourselves), we are particularized

trusters.

If we think of trust as a single concept, we may use the standard question to make

arguments about how we place confidence in others based upon our experiences (Offe, 1997, 17).

This doesn't make sense either analytically or empirically. Often there seems little we can do.

Few surveys ask about trusting specific groups. One that does is the Pew Research Center

metropolitan Philadelphia survey of 1996. As I showed in Chapter 2, this survey asks a wide

range of trust questions, providing 16 indicators of trust in other people generally (the standard

question), strangers (including people you meet on the street), family members, friends and

coworkers, members of churches and other groups people join, and various levels of government

as well as specific agencies.

If generalized and particularized trust are separate empirically as well as analytically, they

should form separate spheres. The data reduction technique of factor analysis lets us determine

the underlying structure of the 16 trust questions. More specifically, I expect this diverse set of

questions to reflect three dimensions of trust: a generalized trust factor that includes the standard

question as well as faith in strangers, a particularized trust dimension emphasizing one's family

and people you know well, and a trust in government factor. Confidence in our leaders is

different from faith in other people, whether we know them well or not (see Chapter 5).

And this is what I find (see Table 3-1). The factor analysis shows three distinct dimen-

sions, just as predicted.[3] And the three factors reflect trust in strangers, friends and family, and

government.   The variable with the highest loading (correlation) on the strangers dimension is

people you meet on the street. Not far behind is the standard interpersonal trust question,

followed by the people where you shop. *The highest loadings on this dimension reflect people*

we don't know at all–as well as the standard question, The standard question clearly is linked to

trusting strangers. The friends and family dimension is marked by high loadings (in order) for

people at work, your boss, people at your church and club, your family, and the fire department.

There is also a strong loading for your neighbors–but neighbors also fit on the strangers dimension. And this makes sense. Some neighbors we know well, others we don't.[4] So trusting neighbors is a mixture of faith in both friends (slightly higher loading) and strangers (slightly lower).

The highest correlations with this factor are for people we know well–our coworkers, people at our places of worship and our club. The correlation for our family is somewhat lower–and this should not be surprising, since the family is special for everyone.[5] The loading for the fire department is somewhat surprising–since we might expect it to load on the government factor. However, many fire departments are made up of volunteers, not government employees. People may regard firefighters, especially volunteers, as something other than service providers. They show up, rather peculiarly, on the friends and family dimension rather than the stranger factor. Overall, the friends and family dimension appears to represent particularized trust.

The negative loadings on the friends/family factor, compared to the positive ones for the strangers dimension, are of no particular import. They do *not* indicate that people who trust strangers don't have faith in their friends and family–or vice versa. Just the opposite is true. People who believe that "most people can be trusted" place greater faith in friends and family, strangers and government for *every* specific trust question. The correlation between the factor scores for generalized and particularized trust is positive–and even moderate (.386).[6]

The differences between the two dimensions is that the gaps are much greater between trusters and mistrusters for strangers than for friends and family. Generalized trusters place confidence in everyone, particularized trusters only in people they know well. I shall show in Chapter 4 that the pattern I have uncovered in the data reflects the theoretical argument I made

in the previous chapter: Trust in strangers reflects an optimistic world view rather than one's life circumstances. Trust in friends and family depends on experiences to a far greater extent.

There is a third dimension, as I hypothesized. This factor represents trust in government, with the highest loading for the federal government and slightly lower correlations with the state and city government. The schools have a much lower loading, perhaps reflecting the distinctive status of our educational system.[7] The government dimension is distinct from the other two factors: It has weak correlations with both the stranger and friends and family factors.[8] Finally, two trust items–whether it is easier or more difficult to trust people your own age and whether others trust you–don't load on any factor.[9]

We can distinguish–empirically as well as analytically–between generalized and particular-ized trust. The standard interpersonal trust question serves as a good measure of generalized trust, or faith in strangers. It has a simple correlation of .69 with the stranger factor scores. However, it is more difficult to get a measure of particularized trust. Surveys don't regularly ask about trust in friends and family.

I thus suggest an alternative strategy. It does not measure trust *per se*. But it is based on the logic of particularized trust and exploits data that are available at least in most ANES surveys. Particularized trusters have faith only in their own kind. So black particularized trusters would feel most comfortable with African-Americans and less positive toward whites. A similar dynamic works in reverse: White particularized trusters are more positively disposed to other whites than toward blacks. ANES surveys generally ask people to place groups on "feeling thermometers" ranging from zero (very negative) to 98 (very positive). While such measures do not measure trust, they provide good indicators of people's predispositions to people like themselves and

people who are different from themselves.

Using the 1992 ANES I constructed measures of in-group and out-group particularized trust. I selected thermometer scores based upon the availability of demographic information. The groups I employed are Asian-Americans, blacks, whites, Hispanics, Southerners, Catholics, and Jews.[10] I classified each respondent as either belonging or not belonging to each group. Each person has two scores: one for how they rate in-groups and the other for how highly they judge out-groups. The particularized trust score is the average adjusted thermometer rating for each bloc of in- or out-group.[11] Particularized trusters will have strongly positive evaluations of their own group and negative appraisals for others. Thus, positive scores for in-groups and negative ones for out-groups reflect particularized trust, faith in people like yourself rather than "most people."

Thermometers are not available in all years. Even when they are, not all groups are included each year. So I developed measures that employ only those groups that are common to a large number of surveys: blacks, whites, Southerners, Catholics, and Jews. The reduced and more expansive lists are almost perfectly correlated. The 1992 in-group measure using seven groups has a correlation of .999 (because there are few Asian-Americans or Hispanics in the sample) with the reduced list, while the out-group indices correlate at .966.

As with the Pew measures, people with positive views of their own groups also tend to like out-groups.[12] But the two measures have very different consequences for civic engagement, as I shall show in Chapter 7. People who like their own groups tend to withdraw from the forms o f civic participation that stem from trust (volunteering, giving to charity, willingness to serve on a jury). People with positive evaluations of people different from themselves tend to get involved

in their communities.[13]

<u>The Stability of Trust</u>

If trust is a value, then it should be stable over time. Values should be enduring. "Mere" preferences may not be. At the extreme, I may prefer strawberry ice cream one day and coffee ice cream the next. I may have confidence in government when the Democrats are in power but not when the Republicans hold office. I may favor a particular policy alternative until someone gives me good reasons to change my mind.

On core values, however, I am not likely to change my mind readily. It is hard to imagine how someone might believe in God on weekends but not on weekdays (even if they act as if they do and don't in this manner). Nor are we likely to be tolerant toward people different from ourselves some days but not on others. In part what sets a value apart from a preference is how deeply rooted (and thus how enduring) the latter is. Most political and social attitudes are notoriously unstable, largely because people don't pay a lot of attention to issues (Converse, 1964). But people hold values dear. Values *do* change, but far less frequently than "mere" preferences for one policy outcome over another. How stable, then, is trust? If trust does not persist over time, we ought not to call it a value.

To investigate stability, we need panel data–repeated measurements on the same people over time. There are two data sources that permit comparisons over several years.[14] First is the American National Election Study (ANES) panel in 1972, 1974, and 1976. Second is the Niemi-Jennings socialization study of high school students and their parents in 1965, 1973, and 1982. Both surveys tap attitudes on trust and many other questions over a fairly lengthy period of time. The ANES panel permits me to compare attitudes over a four-year period. The Niemi-Jennings

survey covers a 17-year period–and has data on both youth and their parents. This will also allow me to examine the effects of parental values on their children's ideals (see Chapters 4 and 5).

However, both sets of surveys share a common drawback. They overestimate, sometimes substantially, the share of trusters in the population. There are more consecutive (or nearly consecutive) measures of trust in the General Social Survey (GSS) than in virtually any other survey.[15] The GSS trend shows a steep decline in interpersonal trust in the 1970s from the higher figures measured by the Civic Culture survey in 1960 and the ANES surveys in the 1960s (see Chapter 1 and Putnam, 1995).

The Niemi-Jennings surveys show higher levels of trust than other surveys, with gaps of between 17.5 percent and 30 percent.[16]   The ANES 1976 survey also shows a considerably higher level of trust than the GSS *in any surrounding year* or even the 1972 or 1974 ANES. These differences suggest mild caution in interpreting the ANES panel and greater care in making inferences from the Niemi-Jennings panels. But they are the only panels we have and they can be instructive about what shapes change–even if they don't tell us much that is useful about the *direction* of change.

There is no simple criterion for determining stability. I use three straightforward measures. The first is the percentage of people who give the same response from one time period to the next. What share of the population is consistent–either as trusters or mistrusters–over time? Second, what is the linear relationship over time periods? I employ tau-b, a linear correlation for ordinal data, and its nominal counterpart, phi. Tau-b is particularly useful since it measures the difference between "concordant" and "discordant" observations–or, more straight-forwardly, between people who are consistent and those who are not.

Absolute consistency may be too much to expect in the face of value change (even if measured in the wrong direction!). So I also employ a third measure–the curvilinear correlation coefficient gamma, used for ordinal data, and its nominal counterpart, Yule's Q.[17] Tau-b can only equal 1.0 if everyone is consistent: Trusters must remain trusters and mistrusters must stay misanthropes. Gamma, on the other hand, can attain a value of 1.0 if most people are consistent and all changers move *in the same direction*. I present each of these three measures–the percentage consistent, tau-b, and gamma– in Tables 3-2 and 3-3. These are all simple indicators of stability. I could employ more sophisticated measures such as test-retest reliability correlations. But their interpretation is not so obvious and they would not change the conclusions I present below.[18]

For both the ANES and Niemi-Jennings panels, I selected variables that tap political or social dispositions and that were asked in all three waves of each survey. In a few cases I selected questions that were only asked twice but that are particularly relevant to studying attitude stability. I sought–and found–a wide range of issues and values in each survey, encompassing attitudes that ought to be very stable and those where one might expect greater fluctuation.

The attitudes that ought to be most strongly anchored are attitudes that we are most likely to learn from our parents: deeply-held moral tenets and identifications such as partisanship. It takes a lot to shake people from their core values, often based on religious principles. Until recently partisan identification was almost as enduring and "inheritable" as were ideals based upon faith (Campbell et al., 1960). There is a vigorous debate over whether partisanship is still so stable as it was in the 1950s and 1960s (see Niemi, 1980; and Miller and Shanks, 1996, among many others). Whatever the answer, party identification should still display more consistency

over time than many other social and political attitudes. Beyond core values and identification are what Carmines and Stimson (1989) call "easy" issues. These are public policy positions that depend on these deeply-held ideals. Examples include attitudes on race, abortion, and morality in daily life. *If trust in other people is a value, then it should show a high level of consistency*–perhaps not quite as high as religious values, but comparable to other "easy" issues.

Trust should also be more consistent than affect toward the political system, personal efficacy, or "mere" policy preferences, all of which are likely to change over time or simply be unstable (Converse, 1964). In the ANES panel, 24 percent did not pick an ideological identification at all in 1972–and 63 percent of those who did changed their position (on a three-point scale) by 1974. In contrast, only two percent of 1972 respondents did not have a party identification and just 19 percent changed (again on a three-point scale) by two years later.

Second, some questions may be salient, but not rooted in core beliefs. In the 1972 post-election survey, only two percent of panel respondents had no opinion on whether they trust the government to do the right thing. But trust in government is often not very stable: From 1972 to 1974, 43 percent of people changed their minds (on a three-point scale). Trust in government is not a deeply held value as much as it is a reflection of the current conditions in the nation and the popularity of the incumbent administration (see Chapter 4). So we would expect considerable fluctuation in how much people trust the government even though they may care very much about national performance.

I present the results of for the ANES panel in Table 3-2 and those for the Niemi-Jennings panel in Table 3-3. (In the latter table, the results for parents are in regular type and those for children are in bold.) In both tables, the survey questions are listed in order of the value of

gamma over the full course of the panel (from 1972 to 1976). As alluded to above, I collapsed

multi-category data to either dichotomies or at most three-point scales. Recall that all statistics

are based only on people with complete data on each question for each comparison.[19]

For the ANES panel, there is strong support for trust in people as a stable predisposition.

Of 17 questions considered, social trust ranks fourth in overall stability. Across the three waves

of the panel, about 75 percent of the respondents take the same position. Only party identifica-

tion, when abortion should be allowed, and whether one can run one's life as you wish have

generally higher percentage agreements across time. Trust seems generally at least as stable as

the optimistic world view about running one's own life. It ranks considerably higher than whether

you think your plans are usually realized. And trust in others outperforms attitudes on civil rights

and women's rights (both of which were in flux during the 1970s) as well as both internal efficacy

and evaluations of government performance. It ranks far above trust in government as well as

ideology and more specific issues such as a federal job guarantee and rights of the accused.

To be sure, the tau-b values for trust are only moderately high (ranging from .462 to

.521)–about the same as we find for ideology and equal rights for women. But the gammas are

very strong. In the 1974-76 wave, the curvilinear correlation was .826, about the same as running

your life as you wish and within striking distance of the most stable question in the panel: party

identification. In the ANES panel, movements over time are hardly random. Even using the more

conservative measures such as percent stable and tau-b, interpersonal trust fares better than all but

a handful of survey questions. It clusters with traditional patterns of identification, with an

optimistic world view, and with deeply-held moral views (marijuana legalization and when to

permit abortions).

There is initially strong support for the notion that generalized trust is a deeply-held and stable value. Additional evidence comes from Elizabeth Smith's (1999a, 20) survey of 389 tenth grade students in the fall and spring of 1996 and an ANES panel from the 1998 election survey and a 2000 pilot survey on trust. Smith reports a "stability coefficient" of .82 for trust, higher than that for "locus of control," "self-concept," political efficacy, political knowledge, political discussion, civic duty, and political trust. In the 1998-2000 ANES panel, 79.2 percent gave consistent answers on trust (tau-b = .590, gamma = .882, N = 260).

—————————————————

Tables 3-2 and 3-3 about here

The support appears somewhat more equivocal for the Niemi-Jennings data set, as I expected it might be (given the much higher level of trust in these surveys). For parents, trust ranks sixth of 13 questions based on the 1965-82 gamma. For the children sample, the 1965-82 gamma is among the lowest of all questions (only four items rank below trust). But this is hardly evidence that trust is unstable. The correlations (both tau-b and gamma) for trust in the 1965-82 are distinctly lower than those for either 1965-73 or 1973-82. Both of these correlations (especially the gammas) compare favorably with other questions. And note that the Niemi-Jennings questions contain far more "easy" issues than the ANES battery.

Three of the five items above trust in the ranking for parents deal with religious values (whether one is a member of a fundamentalist denomination, interpretation of the Bible as the literal word of God, and how often one attends religious services). A fourth is whether a Communist should be allowed to hold office. And the fifth is party identification. All tap either fundamental values or a deep sense of personal identification (party attachment).

In the Niemi-Jennings surveys, trust in other people has considerably stronger correlations and at least equal stable percentages as evaluations of one's life circumstances (plans usually realized and can you run your life as you wish), one's sense of self control (mind is hard to change), evaluations of government (general trust and the belief that most officials are crooked), and policy issues (rights of the accused and equal rights for women). Overall, the pattern is quite similar to that for the ANES panel. Trust is not the most stable value, but it does rank higher than most other questions.

The children are much less stable than their parents, especially when comparing trust in 1965 to trust in 1982. Is this just a function of young people "growing up" and developing their own values? Not necessarily, for the share of children expressing the same attitude on trust as their parents barely budges over time: It was 60.9 percent in 1965, 60.8 percent in 1973, and 60.1 percent in 1982. The high school students of the 1960s displayed considerably less stability in trust as adults in 1982 than their parents did when they were relatively young (in 1965). This suggests that young people did not become more consistent as they grew older.

Instead of a life cycle explanation, the best explanation may be generational. I cannot completely rule out life cycle effects, but I believe that the case for a generational account is powerful. The high school students of the 1960s became the (early) Baby Boomers. As I shall show in Chapter 6, other age cohorts became less trusting throughout the 1970s and remained so in the 1980s. The Boomers had very sharp declines in trust in the early 1970s, but by the late 1980s had become *the most trusting age cohort*. The Boomers were mightily affected by the social forces that marked the years when they came of age–the civil rights movement and the Vietnam war (see Chapter 6).[20]

The 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s were periods of value change for Baby Boomers. Between 1972 and 1974, 33 percent of Boomers, compared to 25.5 percent of non-boomers changed their positions on trust; between 1974 and 1976, the percentages were 30.6 percent and 22.2 percent. Looking at the ANES panel for Boomers and their elders, we see the same pattern as in the Niemi-Jennings data, though in not such great relief (see Table 3-4). Boomers are consistently less stable in their responses to the trust question than are non-Boomers.[21]

_____

Table 3-4 about here

The Niemi-Jennings data and the ANES panel for Boomers constitute a severe test. The Boomer generation rebelled against their parents on a wide range of values and issues, as Table 3-4 shows. Even party identification is marked by a sharp drop in stability from 1965 to 1982. The percentage of consistent trusters is even slightly greater (63.9) than unwavering party identifiers (60.2) among the children sample in 1982. And the seemingly low share of children giving the same answer on trust as their parents–around 60 percent–-is not that much lower than the share of Boomers who take the same party identification as their parents (cf. Carmines, McIver, and Stimson, 1987).[22]

Interpersonal trust is enduring for most people, as a deeply-held value should be. Most people don't shift from being a misanthrope to a truster over short periods of time–and, indeed, most people don't change much over longer periods either. If generalized trust were encapsulated experience, then we would expect larger shifts in trust across panels *unless* people met predomi-nantly others who are trusting or mistrusting. In recent years the public has been split, sometimes rather evenly, between trusters and mistrusters. The likelihood that most people would interact

largely with people like themselves (trusters with trusters and mistrusters with mistrusters) is small.

The impressive stability we have seen for most instances of trust (especially for the 1972-74-76 ANES panel and the parent sample for the Niemi-Jennings study) suggests that trust is an enduring value. Particularly in contrast to trust in government–which clearly reflects experience with the rulers of the day, trust in other people seems resistant to change for most people. And when we do see large shifts–for the early Baby Boomers especially in the Niemi-Jennings data–the causes of the disruption are rooted in social conflicts such as Vietnam and civil rights (see Chapter 6) rather than the happenstance of daily life.

Particularized trust is not quite as stable as generalized trust. Across the ANES panel, in-group trust is correlated at .449 from 1972 to 1976 (the requisite thermometers are not available in the 1974 wave). Out-group trust is more variable, with a correlation of .383. This may reflect imperfect measurement, changes in attitudes toward out-groups over time (whites rated blacks 11 percent less favorably in 1976 than in 1972), or both. Overall, the public became more sympa-thetic to their own groups and *less* favorably disposed to out-groups.[23] The intense social conflict during the 1970s suggests that these (linear) correlations are reasonably high. The correlations are not quite as strong as one finds for interpersonal trust, which is what I would expect for a type of trust that depends more on personal experience.

<p align="center">Trusting the Question</p>

We can measure both generalized and particularized trust. They are *not* the same thing. And generalized trust is quite stable–more so than particularized faith. There are two problems with particularized trust measures: They often do not use the word trust at all and they are not

always available in surveys. There are problems with the generalized trust question as well.   It

may have been asked too often–or at least too often in the wrong context.

Smith (1997) argues that responses to the trust question in the GSS series depend on

where in the survey the question is asked. In most years the GSS survey has at least two forms.

In one version the trust question follows some queries on whether life is exciting, work values,

how one gets ahead in life, and two sexual morality items. In the second version, trust follows

items on political ideology, reducing gaps in income between the rich and the poor, divorce laws,

legalization of marijuana some of the time and attitudes on crime in other years. Not surprisingly,

the second trust series shows less trust than the first. Smith reports a 7.7 percent overestimate of

trust in the first series compared to the second. He argues that the trust question calls "for global

assessments of people in general based presumably on one's entire life experience. Making

judgments based on such massive, cognitive retrievals are difficult and open to variability" (Smith,

1997, 174).

Is the trust question reliable? Or should we heed Smith's implicit warning that we should

not place great confidence in measures "open to variability"?   Smith's observations are clearly

correct, but they seem to overstate the dangers in utilizing the trust question. We should be wary

of using survey results that appear to overestimate the level of trust in American society.

However, when there is no alternative, the evidence does not suggest that we are likely to make

substantial errors of interpretation. Both of Smith's time series trend downward. By 1996, the

two series come close to converging (Smith, 1997, 177). The "overestimated" series declines

from 1973 to 1996 by 28 percent, the "underestimated" series by 24 percent from 1975 to 1996.

The 1972 and 1976 ANES measures seem to be overestimates based upon the order in which the

survey questions were asked (see Schuman and Presser, 1978).[24]

Despite the four-year time lag during a period of political and social turbulence and the different contexts of question order, the 1972 and 1976 trust items were strongly correlated.[25] In 1996, there was a much shorter time lag between the pre- and post-election ANES samples–just a few months. The pre-election question yielded 39 percent trusters, not appreciably different from three other surveys conducted in 1995 and 1996. The post-election question indicated that 51 percent of the population believed that "most people can be trusted."   The pre-election question followed items on spending priorities and confidence in the federal government; the post-election item came after some queries on political efficacy and whether one volunteered. This suggests a halo effect in the post-election survey, but not in the pre-election poll. Yet, again, there is strong stability.[26] I only need one trust question from the 1996 ANES, so it makes sense to use the pre-election item. But were I forced to use two, I doubt whether I would make too many erroneous inferences. Such problems call for recognition and even some caution. But they are hardly reasons for panic. The presence of other studies showing similar trends to the GSS is reassuring (see n. 15).

These caveats point to another cause for concern in studies of trust. Following Rosenberg (1956), most people who study trust really use his misanthropy scale or some variant on it (see Brehm and Rahn, 1997; Smith, 1997; Stolle, 1998b). This scale includes the standard trust question, as well as queries about whether most people would be fair or take advantage of you and whether most people would be helpful or are just looking out for themselves. The rationale for constructing such a scale is that multiple indicators of the same concept improve statistical reliability.

Even though the three items consistently form a unidimensional scale with reasonable properties,[27] there are six fundamental problems with this measurement strategy. First, saying that people might be helpful isn't the same thing as saying that you trust strangers. Bill might think that Jane would be helpful–giving him directions on how to get from one place to another–even though he might not trust others. You can be a misanthrope and still think that people will help you. Thirty seven percent of the 1972-98 GSS sample who don't trust other people nevertheless still believe that folks would help them. More people think that others would be helpful across the GSS time series (54.2 percent) than trust others (41.6 percent).

Fairness may be too ambiguous. Fewer people think that others would be fair–but 43.5 percent of *mistrusters* still believe that most people would be fair (rather than try to take advantage of you). There may be strong gammas among the three questions,[28] but they do *not* measure the same thing. And this is the core of my second concern: You don't need to say that someone shares your values just to say that they might help you out. But you may need to know much more about others–more details about their values–to say that they are fair. If we are concerned with trust, we should stick with an "unadulterated" measure of trust.

Third, the three questions don't display the same time trend. So a concern for waning trust doesn't translate into a worry about a decline in helpfulness. The correlation of trust with time from 1960 onward is -.862. Fairness has also decreased, although less sharply (r = -.534). But helpfulness has barely fallen (r = -.221).[29] And the over time trend shows a good correlation between trust and fairness (r = .652), but weak relationships between helpfulness and both trust (r = .146) and fairness (r = .132). Fourth, there is some evidence that both fairness and helpful-ness may be less stable than trust in people (see Table 3-5). [30]

_____

Table 3-5 about here

Fifth, trust should matter more for reaching out to people who are different from yourself than either helpfulness or even fairness. And it does. The 1996 GSS asks people if and where they volunteered. Across 15 types of organizations and four summary measures,[31] trust had higher correlations with volunteering than fairness for seven groups and all four summary indicators. The two measures had similar correlations for two organizations, neither had much effect for five groups, and fairness had a higher correlation for just one (religious volunteering). For five of the 15 types of volunteering, people who thought others would be helpful are *less* likely to get involved in their communities. For only two groups–religion and education–is there any relationship between helpfulness and civic engagement. So trust predicts civic engagement far better than either fairness or helpfulness.

Using a scale may thus obscure some of the associations between trust and participation. I constructed a misanthropy scale (through factor analysis). But trust had higher correlations with volunteering than the composite scale in nine of the 19 comparisons. The overall message is straightforward: Since the standard trust question really seems to measure generalized trust, why bother to make it more complicated than it needs to be–and ought to be?

The same caveat applies to Putnam's surrogate measure of trust in the DDB Needham Life Style surveys, "Most people are honest." The honesty measure might work if, as Putnam (2000, 135-136) argues, we were really interested in perceptions of trustworthiness. But this is not my central concern and it is far from clear that honesty and trust are the same thing, even if they are related. The 1972 ANES asked people if they agreed that "most people are basically

honest": 86.4 percent agreed, compared to just 46.7 percent who said that "most people can be trusted." The two measures are correlated, to be sure, but the relationship is moderate.[32]   Almost all people who believe most people are dishonest say that "you can't be too careful in dealing with people." Yet barely more than half of people who say that most people are honest are ready to trust strangers. Trust is trust. It isn't helpfulness, fairness, or even honesty.

Finally, and most critically, we now have evidence that people mean different things when asked open-ended questions about trust, fairness, and helpfulness. The 2000 ANES Pilot survey asked subsamples of respondents to "think aloud" about what they meant by each of the questions in the misanthropy scale. I then coded the responses for each question according to whether the respondent referred to personal experience, a general world view, or no content at all.[33] For the generalized trust question, some responses based upon personal experience were:

I basically think people can't be trusted, the people that work for me. You have

people you have to tell them on a day to day basis simple things, following rules.

and:

I would say that on the whole most people can be trusted. Trying to think of with

whom I have entrusted duties. And how many times that has been broken, and

how many times the promises have been kept. 95% have kept their promises.

Comments that reflect general world views include:

Still an optimist about people and you try to trust people first.

and:

Well, you can't be too careful in dealing with people. The fact is that a lot of them

are thinking of themselves and they are after one thing and one thing only and

that's what is going to benefit themselves.

Others gave no meaningful response at all–mostly simply repeating the question.

Overall, 147 respondents "thought aloud" about trust, 117 about fairness, and 138 about helpfulness. Here we see big differences among the three misanthropy measures (see Table 3-6). Fifty-eight percent of respondents gave "general" responses to the trust question; only 22.5 percent referred to their experiences. In contrast, 29 percent gave general responses to helpfulness, while 45 percent mentioned specific examples where others helped them. The question on trust brings up general evaluations of society to many people, while issues of helpfulness brings up specific incidents such as:

> Most part people try to be helpful, thinking of people in general, thinking of people
>
> opening doors for you if your hands are full and at the grocery store, people will
>
> reach something for you if you can't reach it and just in general.

The fairness question is right in the middle, with 43.6 percent referring to general ideas, 34.2 percent to experience, and 22.2 percent to nothing at all. When I exclude the middle category, the results are more powerful: 72 percent of people who could give a distinct reply to the trust question "thought aloud" in general terms, compared ot 56 percent for fairness, and just 39 percent for helpfulness. People think about trust, helpfulness, and fairness in distinct ways. ***They also think about trust largely in general, or moral, terms–and not primarily based upon their perosnal experiences.*** And this pattern is ubiquitous. Mistrusters are only very slightly more likely to rely upon personal experiences (by 30 percent to 26 percent for trusters)–and this difference is not statistically significant.[34]

———————————

Table 3-6 about here

The Road Ahead

I have a simple solution to the problem of question order on trust questions: Use multiple surveys to mitigate the risk of unwarranted inferences. Even if there were no questions about the GSS surveys (or any others), I would adopt this strategy. Different surveys tap different aspects of trust as well as its roots and consequences. A more common strategy is to develop a theme and test it on a single data base. But no single survey–or even a group of surveys--can help me answer the many questions I want to pose about trust.

So I make a virtue out of necessity. Each survey I examine tells a slightly different variant of the larger story I shall tell. But together they add up to a portrait of the trusting person as an optimist who believes that she can control her own fate, who lives in a benign world, who bases her trust on this world view more than on life experiences, who values diversity and civil rights yet sees a country with a common culture, and who is willing to participate in civic life with people different from herself. I turn now to the roots of trust. Even values have their roots in people's predispositions and I set out to show in Chapter 4 what moves moralistic (generalized) and knowledge-based (particularized) trusters, armed with the measures developed in this chapter and the reassurance that the trust data are trustworthy.

TABLE 3-1

Factor Analysis of Trust Measures in 1996 Pew Philadelphia Study

Trust Measure	Trust Strangers	Trust Friends/Family	Trust Government
Trust People Meet on Street	**.484**	-.245	-.309
Most People Can Be Trusted	**.446**	-.224	-.134
Trust People Where You Shop	**.430**	-.391	-.231
Trust Neighbors	**.414**	**-.481**	.195
Trust People at Work	.157	**-.619**	-.203
Trust Your Boss	.071	**-.589**	-.236
Trust People at Church	.159	**-.576**	-.157
Trust People at Your Club	.328	**-.534**	-.104
Trust Your Family	.129	**-.391**	.011
Trust Fire Department	.117	**-.318**	.142
Trust Schools	.148	-.306	**-.339**
Trust City Government	.215	-.208	**-.631**
Trust State Government	.065	-.147	**-.706**
Trust Federal Government	.061	-.077	**-.741**
Others Trust You	.137	-.240	-.122
Trust People Your Own Age*	.029	-.035	.025

Entries are rotated (Varimax) factor loadings.

* Question is whether it is easier or more difficult to trust people one's own age.

TABLE 3-2

Stability of Attitudes on ANES Questions over the 1972-74-76 Panel

	Percent stable			tau			gamma		
	72-74	74-76	72-76	72-74	74-76	72-76	72-74	74-76	72-76
Party Identification*	81.4	81.5	79.9	.747	.747	.725	.918	.914	.902
Favor Marijuana Legalization*			71.0			.569			.795
Can Run Life as One Wishes	81.7	82.3	81.1	.461	.462	.416	.824	.830	.790
Trust in People	**73.1**	**76.1**	**73.4**	**.462**	**.521**	**.473**	**.762**	**.826**	**.784**
When Allow Abortion**			80.1			.558			.738
Civil Rights too Fast		63.0			.469			.707	
People Like Me Have No Say		72.0			.400			.706	
Public Officials Don't Care	70.5	70.9	69.5	.415	.413	.393	.710	.707	.685
Voting Only Way to Have Impact	70.3	73.1	69.8	.453	.401	.390	.757	.695	.679
Politics Too Complicated	76.2	75.0	72.9	.408	.456	.356	.735	.780	.671
Favor Equal Rights for Women*	63.3	68.6	61.5	.482	.531	.437	.686	.741	.633
Members Congress Lose Touch	71.2	74.1	69.8	.371	.408	.322	.673	.734	.621
Plans Usually Realized	71.4	69.9	67.3	.398	.427	.346	.688	.723	.619
Trust Government*	57.5	70.2	56.9	.353	.406	.334	.624	.697	.602
Ideology*	63.1	62.4	62.0	.515	.553	.463	.632	.661	.596
Federal Government Guarantee Job*	57.6	56.6	56.1	.366	.384	.385	.535	.569	.568
Rights of the Accused*	55.8	56.7	56.1	.331	.368	.370	.557	.548	.552

*   Recoded to three-point scale.
**   Percent stable based upon collapsed categories.

TABLE 3-3

Stability of Attitudes on Niemi-Jennings Questions for Youth and Parent Panels*

	Percent stable			tau			gamma		
	65-73	73-82	65-82	65-73	73-82	65-82	65-73	73-82	65-82
Religious Fundamentalist Denomination	91.0	90.3	90.3	.819	.806	.809	.981	.979	.982
	85.8	*86.3*	*82.0*	*.714*	*.712*	*.636*	*.953*	*.948*	*.914*
Party Identification**	81.2	83.6	80.2	.717	.772	.700	.902	.938	.902
	61.3	*69.3*	*60.2*	*.421*	*.558*	*.381*	*.626*	*.766*	*.589*
Interpretation of Bible***	93.2	93.4	92.6	.576	.576	.529	.826	.822	.776
	89.5	*89.3*	*89.5*	*.453*	*.587*	*.410*	*.728*	*.841*	*.672*
How Often Attend Religious Services	62.3	63.4	60.1	.592	.633	.557	.775	.811	.743
	37.7	*53.8*	*42.2*	*.301*	*.527*	*.285*	*.489*	*.691*	*.446*
Let Communist Hold Office	69.5	76.8	71.8	.366	.523	.391	.680	.829	.711
	63.6	*77.8*	*64.6*	*.335*	*.536*	*.333*	*.651*	*.847*	*.635*
Trust in People	**73.8**	**74.1**	**71.7**	**.403**	**.449**	**.388**	**.725**	**.763**	**.708**
	66.6	***71.8***	***63.9***	***.308***	***.419***	***.228***	***.580***	***.722***	***.453***
Ideology*		64.7			.483			.693	
		51.6			*.320*			*.472*	
People Like Me Have No Say	72.2	70.6	69.6	.243	.327	.271	.551	.631	.596
		73.1				*.270*		*.578*	
Voting Only Way to Have Impact	67.7	67.0	63.1	.359	.340	.289	.640	.683	.554
	66.2	*70.4*	*68.5*	*.251*	*.365*	*.310*	*.501*	*.660*	*.593*
Plans Usually Realized	69.7	75.8	67.9	.316	.371	.261	.615	.712	.544
	67.5	*74.7*	*67.7*	*.237*	*.371*	*.215*	*.489*	*.707*	*.466*

TABLE 3-3 (Continued)

Stability of Attitudes on Niemi-Jennings Questions for Youth and Parent Panels*

	Percent stable			tau			gamma		
	65-73	73-82	65-82	65-73	73-82	65-82	65-73	73-82	65-82
Can Run Life as One Wishes	64.5	68.5	64.7	.290	.370	.286	.540	.653	.532
	59.0	*65.6*	*59.6*	*.164*	*.306*	*.180*	*.326*	*.561*	*.354*
Mind Is Hard to Change	75.8	73.4	69.8	.374	.328	.214	.712	.648	.473
	72.2	*76.8*	*74.0*	*.178*	*.322*	*.193*	*.439*	*.673*	*.480*
Government Officials Mostly Crooked	46.8	48.4	47.0	.238	.273	.239	.364	.419	.435
	44.2	*52.9*	*43.9*	*.169*	*.244*	*.139*	*.280*	*.399*	*.233*
Government Should Help Minorities***		47.4			.272			.413	
		28.7			*.287*			*.435*	
Trust Government*	47.3	60.0	44.8	.192	.334	.196	.331	.558	.356
	40.0	*54.7*	*29.9*	*.137*	*.276*	*.141*	*.239*	*.481*	*.257*
Rights of the Accused*		50.1			.183			.305	
		42.9			*.243*			*.397*	
Favor Equal Rights for Women*		32.2			.094			.163	
		63.7			*.333*			*.599*	

*   Parents in regular type; youth in italics.
**   Recoded to three-point scale.
***   Percent stable based upon collapsed categories.

TABLE 3-4

Stability of Interpersonal Trust by Cohort in the 1972-74-76 ANES Panel

	Percent Stable	tau-b	gamma
1972-74 Pre-boomers	74.6	.490	.791
Early Baby Boomers	*66.9*	*.347*	*.626*
1974-76 Pre-boomers	77.8	.554	.855
Early Baby Boomers	*69.4*	*.383*	*.676*
1972-76 Pre-boomers	74.1	.483	.792
Early Baby Boomers	*70.0*	*.417*	*.732*

Pre-boomers in regular type, late Baby Boomers in italics.

TABLE 3-5

Stability of Misanthropy Measures in the Niemi-Jennings Child/Parent Samples

		Trust	Fairness	Helpfulness
Children 1965-73	tau-b	.308	.266	.223
	gamma	**.580**	**.562**	**.437**
Children 1973-82	tau-b	.419	.302	.264
	gamma	**.722**	**.600**	**.505**
Children 1965-82	tau-b	.228	.174	.181
	gamma	**.453**	**.399**	**.367**
Parent 1965-1973	tau-b	.403	.411	.373
	gamma	**.725**	**.818**	**.707**
Parent 1973-1982	tau-b	.449		.456
	gamma	**.763**		**.757**
Parent 1965-1982	tau-b	.388		.340
	gamma	**.708**		**.665**

TABLE 3-6
"Thinking Aloud" About Trust, Fairness, and Helpfulness

Misanthropy Measure	**% Response**	**% Response (Adjusted)**
Trust	General: 57.8 No Content: 19.7 Experience: 22.5	General: 72.0 Experience: 28.0
Fairness	General: 43.6 No Content: 22.2 Experience: 34.2	General: 56.0 Experience: 44.0
Helpfulness	General: 29.0 No Content: 26.0 Experience: 44.9	General: 39.2 Experience: 60.8

NOTES

1.   From the comic strip Peanuts, about the daily life of children. Linus is Lucy's brother.

Charlie Brown, the main character in the strip.

2.   As opposed to questions on trust in government, which are easier to find.

3.   The dimensions were rotated using the Varimax criterion, an orthogonal rotation that

makes the factors as independent as the data structure permits.

4.   Or it may be that this question is too specific to respondents (as Jeffrey Mondak has

suggested to me), making it less than ideal as a measure of either generalized or

particularized trust.

5.   With less variation, the correlation will be smaller.

6.   Factor scores are composite variables weighted by the factor loadings.

7.   Parents with children are somewhat more supportive of the school system than are people

without children ($p < .005$). And schools are obviously more salient to parents. The

levels of government in the survey do not have the specialized clientele groups that

schools do–or perhaps the overall level of good will. Schools are considerably more

popular than any level of government in the survey.

8.   The correlations are .167 and .164, respectively.

9.   People may not worry about trusting people who are older or younger–at least not now.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, young people warned each other not to trust anyone

over 30. Young people are still more likely to place greater faith in people their own age (

$r = -.261$ with age). But people don't link trusting people of different ages with trusting

strangers. The correlation between trusting people of different ages and the standard

question is -.003; the correlation with trusting people you meet on the street is .004. And

there is little indication that reciprocity matters. Believing that others trust you does not

make you more likely to place greater confidence in either strangers or friends and family.

10.   There are also thermometers on gays, legal immigrants, and illegal immigrants–but there is

no way to determine whether a respondent fits any of these categories. I also constructed

measures of particularized trust for political in-groups and out-groups (the poor, liberals,

conservatives, union members, feminists, and fundamentalists). See Uslaner (1998a).

11.   I adjusted the score by subtracting the mean for each group from each individual's score,

so as not to weight favored (or disliked) groups too much.

12.   The correlation is .522.

13.   The two measures do not correlate very highly with interpersonal trust. People with high

scores on in-group trust are somewhat less trusting (r = -.134), but there is little

correlation between trust and out-group evaluations (r = .004).   For other years out-

group evaluations have higher correlations with generalized trust. The patterns are (all

entries are Pearson correlation coefficients; the 1972 and 1976 scores use the shorter list):

Year	In-group trust	Out-group trust
1964	-.005	.155
1972	-.084	.061
1976	-.071	.141

14.   The 1996 American National Election Study asked the trust question in both the pre- and

post-election surveys. However, the interval between the two surveys was quite short

(only a few months). And the second wave appears "contaminated" by question order effects (see below). The trusting share jumps from 38.7 percent to 50.8 percent. The pre-election question is preceded by a battery of questions on spending priorities, while the post-election question follows a question on volunteering.

15. For 1972 and 1974, the ANES panel data are reasonably close to the GSS trend (off by 2.5 percent in 1972 and 4.6 percent in 1974). However, the 1976 ANES sample from the panel indicates that 59 percent of Americans believe that "most people can be trusted," the highest figure since the Civic Culture survey in 1960. The 1976 panel sample is almost 13 percent more trusting than the GSS respondents. Looking at the full 1976 ANES–not just the panel respondents–the gap falls sharply. In the 1976 ANES, 52.8 percent said that most people can be trusted–for a difference of 6.7 percent with the GSS. In all of the tables, I use figures from the panel rather than from individual surveys. In contrast, for the Niemi-Jennings survey, the data in this chapter come from the parent and child surveys separately in order to maximize the number of cases.

16. In 1965, trust was still relatively high in the United States–54.1 percent from the means of the 1964 and 1966 ANES. But the Niemi-Jennings parent sample found 72.6 percent trusting–a gap of almost 20 percent. Almost 65 percent of high school students said most people can be trusted, a figure reasonably close to an ANES estimate. The 1968 ANES was the first survey to have sufficient responses to calculate a cohort mean for the 1965 high school students (N = 62). It showed that 67.2 percent of young people were trusting. So the gap is only 2.5 percent. The gaps don't close over time. In 1973, 68.1 percent of adults in the Niemi-Jennings data are trusters, compared to 47.4 percent for the GSS. For

the children, the gap grows to 17.5 percent: 59.5 percent in Niemi-Jennings and 42

percent in the GSS are trusters. By the 1980s, the difference is almost 30 percent. The

children appear to have a slight increase in trust in the Niemi-Jennings data.   In contrast,

the GSS sample for this cohort in the early 1980s show only 33.7 percent trusting, an 8.3

percent drop from 1973. There is also a 22 percent gap for the parents–who do show a

substantial fall-off in trust levels.

17.   For dichotomies such as trust, tau-b reduces to phi and gamma to Yule's Q. To avoid

confusion, I refer to all correlations as either tau-b or gamma.

18.   The test-retest correlations I calculated are uniformly higher than tau-b and lower than

gamma–but usually closer to gamma.

19.   So a person who is a truster in 1972, who did not answer the question in 1974, and who is

a mistruster in 1976, would be included in the percentages (and correlations) for the 1972-

1976 comparison but not for the 1972-1974 or 1974-1976 computations.

20.   In Chapter 6 I show that attitudes toward civil rights and Vietnam played a key role in

shaping *changes* in trust across the 1972-74-76 ANES panel. The relationship was

stronger for Baby Boomers than for non-boomers. The simple correlations between

change in trust from 1972 to 1976 and attitudes toward Vietnam were -.158 for Baby

Boomers and .011 for non-boomers. Changes in trust show correlations with changes in

feeling thermometers toward blacks of .103 for Boomers and .011 for non-boomers.

21.   The 1972-74 change difference is significant at $p < .01$, the 1974-76 at $p < .005$. Over the

ANES panel, the average gamma for Boomers is .678 compared to .812 for non-Boomers;

68.8 of Boomers were consistent, compared to 76.5 percent of their elders.

22.	In 1965, 68.5 percent of parents and children shared party identification. In 1982, 63.8

percent did. But in 1973, only 58.5 percent had a common partisanship–lower than any

figure for interpersonal trust. Only on core religious values is there strong continuity for

the Boomers. The Boomers were not torn over trust. They displayed less consistency

than their elders on all sorts of issues. Overall, then, the Boomers' consistency on trust

does not seem quite so low when placed in perspective.

23.	The mean in-group trust increased from -.513 to -.153. The mean out-group trust fell

from -.036 to -.254.

24.	We know from other surveys discussed above (the 1976 and 1996 ANES and the Niemi-

Jennings samples for both children and parents) that trust will appear too high when it is

preceded in a survey by questions on optimism and self-control. If people give positive

responses to questions of optimism and/or self-control, they may be more likely to say that

they trust other people. The optimism questions may have set the stage for "false

positive" responses. The 1972 ANES the trust question followed a battery on economics

as well as trust in government and a question on morality–so it should not be

contaminated by any "feel good" effects of optimism. In the 1976 ANES trust was

preceded by batteries on optimism and political efficacy.

25.	Tau-b = .473, gamma = .784.

26.	Tau-b = .588, gamma = .895.

27.	The correlations between trust and helpfulness in the 1972-98 GSS are .377 (tau-b) and

.673 (gamma). The correlations between trust and fairness are .424 (tau-b) and .766

(gamma). For fairness and helpfulness, tau-b = .445 and Gamma = .757. The ANES

asked the trust questions in 1964, 1966, 1968, 1972, 1974, 1976, 1992, 1996, and 1998. But it only asked the fairness question in 1972 and 1996 and it only posed the helpfulness query in 1964, 1968, 1972, and 1992. Nevertheless, the ANES correlations are uniformly higher (gammas ranging from .808 to .875); and the correlations from the 1971 and 1978 Quality of Life survey are also higher (ranging from .772 to .855). Even so, in the 1972 ANES, 23.4 percent of respondents who mistrusted other people nevertheless felt people would mostly be helpful. And 37.4 percent of mistrusters nevertheless felt that most people would be fair.

28. See also the generally strong patterns of linkage among the three questions in Chapter 5.

29. The b in a regression of helpfulness and time is insignificant, with t = -1.068.

30. The 1972-74-76 ANES doesn't have multiple measures on either helpfulness or fairness. But the Niemi-Jennings socialization study has data for both children and parents across three waves for helpfulness and measures of fairness for all three waves for children and for two waves for parents. But there is a big caveat here: These surveys show that more people believe that others would be fair than helpful–in sharp contrast to all other studies. And parental stability on fairness may be high simply because the vast majority of these samples (86 percent in 1965 and 81 percent in 1973) agree that most people are fair. Nevertheless, both the tau-b's and the gammas are higher, often considerably, for trust than for either fairness or especially for helpfulness (see Table 3-5).

31. The summary measures are two dummy variables and two totals. I constructed dummies for whether one volunteered at all and whether one volunteered for secular organizations. The totals are also for all volunteering and for secular organizations.

32. Tau-c = .345 and gamma =.617. The honesty measure is a five-point Likert measure, but I dichotomized it and recoded the small share of people in the middle (7.4 percent) as missing values. The correlations are based upon the full five-point scale for honesty. For the dichotomous measure, phi = .311 and Yule's Q = .847. Putnam has made the DDB Needham data from 1975 to 1998 available on his web site, http://www.bowlingalone.com. I downloaded the data and calculated means for each year. The over time correlation between trust and perceptions of honesty is just .453.

33. I am grateful to Donald Kinder, Nancy Burns, Pat Luevano, and especially Ashley Gross of the American National Election Studies for making the data available to me. The ANES sent me transcripts of the "talk aloud" statements with (mis)identifying respondent numbers. I coded the statements and the ANES staff integrated my codes into the regular ANES pilot data set, so that it is impossible to trace comments to specific individuals.

34. The ANES did not ask the generalized trust question to the same sample as it ask the "thinking aloud" question. However, almost all of the "thinking aloud" sample answered the question in 1998. Given the stability across the panel (79%, see above), it seems reasonable to make this comparison. The correlations between the type of argument used and trust in 1998 are phi = -.047 and Yule's Q = -.106, eliminating the "no responses" (the tau-c and gamma with the "no responses" are -.055 and -.111).