

The effects of voluntary associations' characteristics in the promotion of generalized trust

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Outline

- Antecedents
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Antecedents to my dissertation

- Trust became a hot topic in the ninety's:
 - Putnam (1993) & Fukuyama (1995)
 - Linked at the national level to a set of benefits:
 - Government and firm performance & efficacy
 - Economic and financial development
 - Economic growth
 - Equitable income distribution
 - Lower transaction costs and corruption
 - Lower crime levels.

Antecedents ...

- Colombia: One of the lowest ranking countries in general trust in others amongst 64 countries (World Values Surveys, 1995-1997; Cuellar, 2000).
- *New data as of 2003.*

Antecedents...

- Putnam's thesis (1993): Membership in voluntary associations (horizontal networks) **promotes** trust development.
 - Linked trust to institutional effectiveness of local government and economic performance of different regions
 - Importance of social capital & trust

Purposes

To build on Putnam's thesis (1993) that *membership in voluntary association produces general trust in others*, empirically examining in Colombia whether the effect that participation in a voluntary association has on its members' general level of trust is not only a direct effect but *a relationship moderated by specific characteristics*.

What is trust?

Kramer (1999) defines trust as an individual's expectation, assumption, or belief comprising the **intention to accept vulnerability** based upon positive expectations of the intentions, motives, and prospective actions of others.

What type of trust I am talking about?

- Two broad conceptualizations:
 - Choice behavior (game theory)
 - **Psychological state** (dispositional tendency or temporal state).
These processes do not necessarily express themselves as behaviors.
- Two types of **individual level** trust have a **person as its object**:
 - **General trust in others** (generalized trust): propensity to trust others.
 - **Personalized trust** (particularized trust): engendered by face to face interactions.

What is a voluntary association?

A non-profit distributing, non-governmental private group, where participation is voluntary and, although it can be organized and financially recompense some people, its success depends on member cooperation.

Associations' characteristics

Goals

- Rent seeking behavior (Olson, 1982); efficacious organizations (Knack & Keefer, 1997). Associations proposed to create conditions fostering the *spillover of trust* were those engaged in activities seeking public goods beneficial to society as a whole.
- Passive and active membership associated to members' goals (Knoke & Adams, 1987). Active membership associated to affective & normative goals is related to higher levels of general trust.

Associations' characteristics

Composition

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986); atraccion por similitud (Byrne, 1971).

Associations proposed to create conditions fostering the promtion *of trust* were those that congregate dissimilar people in terms of demographic characteristics.

Associations' characteristics

Outside contacts

Contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954): to reduce prejudice and tension between groups they have to come in contact with each other under certain conditions.

Associations proposed to foster the promotion *of trust* were those that enable frequent interactions with outsiders who are not similar to members

Purposes (Cont.)

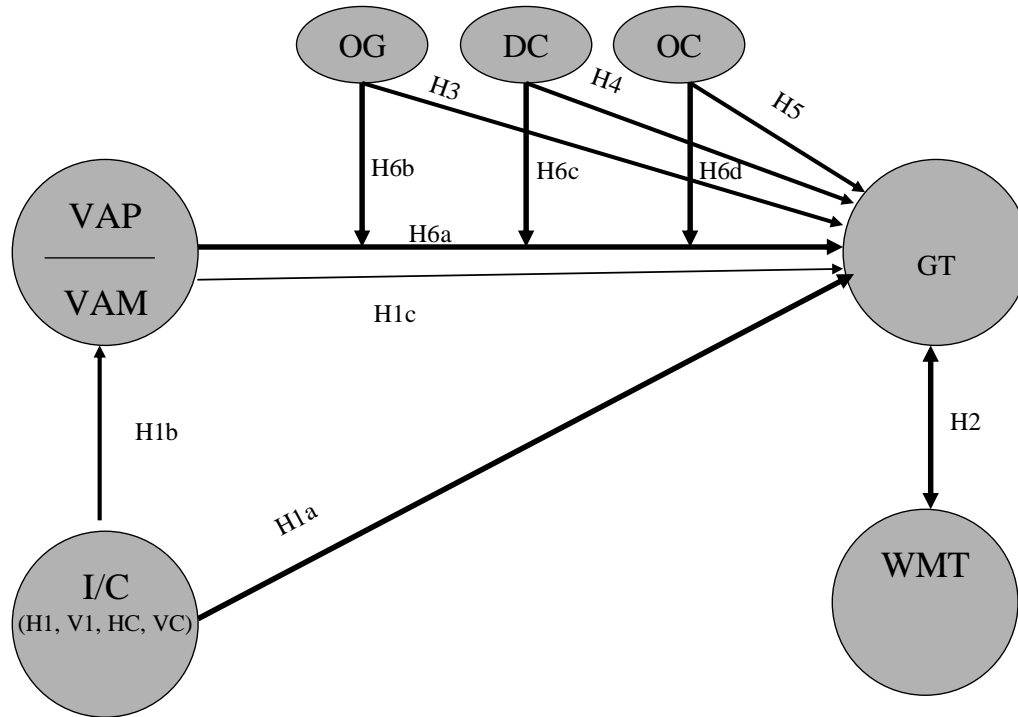
To examine assertion that *intense family ties prevent trust from developing beyond family boundaries*, looking at the role that the *cultural values of collectivism and individualism* play at the individual level in the differences in the levels of trust in others in general.

Collectivism/Individualism

Individualists construct their self-concept by focusing on personal attributes, whereas collectivists focus on attributes that link them to other people and their in-group.

Cultural variables: Patterns of attitudes, beliefs, categorizations, self-definitions, norms, and role definitions that can be identified by a group of people sharing the same language, historical period, and geographical space.

Proposed main variables and hypotheses



Methods

Sample:

- 77 individuals belonging to 18 associations in two Colombian cities. Religious, professional, sports, cultural, charity, bird watching, community local groups.
- On average:
 - 43 years old
 - College education
 - Colombian upper middle class
- Almost half (48%) were male, and 62% of the group were working, while 18% were homemakers, 8% were retired, 8% were unemployed, and 4% were students.

Methods (Cont.)

Measures:

- *General trust*
 - GSS misanthropy index: trustworthiness, honesty, and fairness (also used in the WVS)
 - Trust item (GSS, and WVS)
 - A new GSS item
 - Index used in Central America (Seligson & Renno)
 - Yamagishi's Index
- *Personalized trust: Within member trust (Stolle)*
- *Associations' characteristics: Individual and organizational level*

Results

- Low levels of general trust in others and low levels of personalized trust
- None of the study's hypotheses were supported...

What do you do if you get no results?

Hypothesized explanations

1. No relationship between VAP and GT

Relationships characterized by strong and stable family (Ogliastri et al., 1999) and friendship ties (Fitch, 1998), coupled with a weak institutional frame (Cuéllar, 2000).

Families are:

- Centrally important aspect of social life
- Not really nuclear
- Instrumental for meeting many important kinds of needs

Therefore:

- No need to explore non-family alternatives
- Not much practice trusting strangers
- Outside family, much greater ambiguity, uncertainty about unknown risks.

Meaningful relationships are closed to outsiders so emancipation from established relationships has no positive outcome for the individual in society at large (Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994).

Hypothesized explanations (Cont.):

2. Not a meaningful hypothesis: number of memberships is more important than type of membership (active vs. passive) (Wollebaek & Selle, 2002).

3. Lack of variability

Limitations & future research

- Constructs
 - General trust
 - Dispositional or quasi-dispositional
 - Multidimensional
 - Spanish words
 - Individualism and collectivism
- Design issues
 - Self-selection
 - Cross-sectional vs. longitudinal study
- Production of trust & trust in different contexts