

The Democratic Utility of Trust: A Cross-National Analysis

Amaney Jamal Princeton University
Irfan Nooruddin The Ohio State University

Studies of political culture have long emphasized the importance of generalized trust for effective democratic governance. Individual-level models continue to treat generalized trust as a crucial predictor of more democratic political cultures, leading some scholars to suggest that building generalized trust is an important means of developing democratic prerequisites, like the appreciation of democratic values, in the nondemocratic world. In this paper we refute this conventional wisdom, arguing that the democratic utility of trust varies cross-nationally depending on existing levels of democracy within a country. Seldom have existing studies looked at the ways in which levels of generalized trust relate to microlevel indicators of support for democracy while controlling for overall institutional contexts. We argue existing government institutions play an important role in promoting levels of generalized trust because, in democracies and nondemocracies alike, political confidence in existing political institutions is linked to higher levels of generalized trust. The democratic utility of trust therefore is not consistent across the globe. The degree of democracy determines the extent to which generalized trust becomes meaningfully linked to support for democracy. We offer evidence from a multilevel model using World Values Survey data to support these claims.

Studies of political culture have long emphasized the importance of generalized trust—the propensity to trust fellow citizens—for effective democratic governance. Generalized trust is important for democracy because it serves three interrelated functions. First, it enhances communal ties, norms of reciprocity, and collective action among the populace (Almond and Verba 1963; Fukuyama 1995; Putnam 1993). Trusting individuals are more likely to be politically engaged, more likely to care about their communities, more likely to be involved in voluntary associations, more likely to be involved in economic transactions outside immediate networks, and more likely to expand on their networks, personal contacts, and relationships. Generalized trust, according to Uslaner, “is trust in people who are likely to be different from ourselves, rather than trust in people like ourselves” (2004, 502). According to Newton, “Trust is probably the main component of social capital, and social capital is a necessary condition of

social integration, economic efficiency and democratic stability” (2001, 202). In short, trusting individuals are more likely to hold the values deemed important for democracy (Przeworski 1991; Uslaner 2002).¹ Second, generalized trust has also been linked to higher levels of political confidence. When citizens have higher levels of political confidence, they are more likely to feel efficacious; they believe their participation can make a difference (Leigninger 2002; Hetherington 1998; Levi and Stoker 2000). In essence, then, strong communal bonds and confidence in existing political institutions bolster democratic governance. Third, and according to several cultural theorists, trust bolsters a stronger appreciation for democracy (Norris, 1999; Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer, 1998). Say Mishler and Rose, for example, “trust [should further] contribute to citizens’ normative commitments to democratic values and their rejection of authoritarian appeals” (2005, 1051). In fact, many studies examining aggregate data on generalized trust

¹A growing literature has also advocated that levels of *distrust* may produce the necessary healthy skepticism to keep democracy more effective. For example, see Norris (1999), Pharr and Putnam (2000), Cleary and Stokes (2006). However, we note that this literature focuses on skepticism about those in power, rather than distrust of one’s fellow citizens. In this paper, we specifically address the larger literature linking levels of generalized trust of fellow citizens to better democratic outcomes.

have also found that generalized trust is highly correlated with effective democratic governance (Almond and Verba 1963; Inglehart, 1990; Muller and Seligson, 1994).

In this paper, we examine the conditions under which levels of generalized trust are useful to democracy by examining the ways in which generalized trust is linked to support for democracy more carefully. First, we contend that the often-assumed *democratic utility* of generalized trust is not constant across the globe. Individual-level models often find that generalized trust is associated with democratic values, like support for democracy, but these models, based predominantly on data from Western democratic countries, lack a more nuanced understanding about the ways in which *regime type* influences the utility of generalized trust for support for democracy. A core assumption of existing theoretical approaches and debates is that generalized trust, in and of itself, is beneficial for, useful to, and desirable for support for democracy regardless of regime type. But why should generalized trust be useful to democratic values across the globe? After all, authoritarian regimes, too, are very much invested in inducing generalized trust among the populace.² If, in democracies, generalized trust helps citizens make use of existing democracy, through collective mobilization, the right to associate, freedom of expression, and the right to pursue economic opportunities, it is also possible for generalized trust to help citizens living in nondemocratic countries to make use of existing nondemocratic institutions like clientelistic channels or personalistic ties.

We advance two major arguments. First, starting from the premise that generalized trust is structured by risk aversion, we argue that governing institutions play an important role in instilling levels of generalized trust (Hardin 1997; Levi 1996; Sztompka 1999). We contend where citizens have higher confidence in existing political institutions (political confidence), they also have higher levels of generalized trust. Second, we argue that generalized trust only contributes to support for democracy in already democratic settings. While generalized trust linked to political confidence in democracies reinforces support for democracy, generalized trust linked to political confidence in authoritarian settings results in less support

for democracy. Hence, the *democratic utility* of generalized trust varies among societies that are already democratic and those that are less democratic. More precisely, the degree of democracy determines the extent to which generalized trust becomes meaningfully linked to support for democracy.

In this paper, we find that levels of political confidence shape levels of generalized trust cross-nationally. Citizens who hold their political institutions in higher confidence are more likely to be trusting whether they live in democracies or in authoritarian settings. Political confidence in democracies may be the result of citizen contentment with the existing democratic nature of the regime and should therefore bolster support for democracy in these countries. In less democratic countries, political confidence can be a result of several factors. Individuals who are direct beneficiaries of the regime through the channels of clientelism and patronage, for example, will hold the regime in higher esteem. In nondemocratic countries, citizens who are more invested in and supportive of the existing regime are more likely to be trusting yet less likely to be supportive of democracy. Support for democracy would undermine their existing support for the authoritarian regime. In fact, in these societies, trusting individuals are more likely to be supportive of existing authoritarian regimes (Jamal 2007). We therefore argue that the “democratic utility” of trust is in fact predicated upon the existence of democratic governing institutions.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, we summarize the literature on generalized trust and support for democracy. Next, we argue that political confidence encourages generalized trust across the globe. In the third section of the paper, while paying attention to alternative explanations, we advance our major hypothesis: generalized trust will be more likely linked to support for democracy in democratic than in nondemocratic settings. In the final section, we test our hypotheses, demonstrate the robustness of our results, and discuss avenues for future research.

Trust and Support for Democracy

One of the long-standing stated correlates of support for democracy has been generalized trust. This individual-level association between generalized trust and support for democracy has been highlighted by scholars of civic culture: Inglehart (1990) and Muller and Seligson (1994), for example, find that generalized trust and support for democracy are positively associated with one another. Other scholars, like Rothstein and

²Some strategies of authoritarian regimes attempt to induce vertical trust while others attempt to promote generalized trust. Strategies such as clientelism and patronage promote vertical trust, which leads to atomization and isolation. However, other strategies which involve rallying effects, patriotism, and nationalism do seek to induce more generalizable forms of trust across the population.

Uslaner, discuss the normatively desirable traits linked with generalized trust. They write:

“We see the same positive patterns at the societal level. Cities, regions and countries with more trusting people are likely to have better working democracy, to have more open economies, greater economic growth and less crime and corruption. Both at the individual and societal levels, many things that are normatively desirable seem connected to social trust.” (2005, 41–42)

Certainly, regardless of the level-of-analysis, extant theory makes clear that higher levels of generalized trust should *not* be associated with lower levels of support for democracy. As Seligson argues,

“[O]ne would not predict for any country that people with lower levels of trust would be more supportive of democracy³, while those with higher levels of trust would be less supportive, although it is possible to imagine conditions under which that reversal might occur. If that reversal were wide-spread, however, one would not expect to find macro-level associations linking high trust to democracy. In fact, one would normally predict a positive micro-association, even if a weak one, between trust and support for democracy, producing congruence between micro- and macro-level associations.” (2002, 275)

But does the implicit claim that generalized trust’s positive democratic utility is constant across the globe have merit? Answering this question requires theorizing the source of trust in societies, to which task we now turn.

The Political Institutional Foundations of Trust

Levels of generalized trust among citizens depend on the availability of political institutions to secure citizens’ interests. Political institutions, we maintain, play a key role in enhancing generalized trust. Applied here, this insight implies that citizens who have higher levels of political confidence in existing political institutions are also more likely to be trusting (in both democratic and nondemocratic societies). Citizens are more likely to trust one another because existing institutions are perceived to secure their interests (Brehm and Rahn 1997; Cleary and Stokes 2006; Hardin 1997, 2001; Knight 2001; Levi 1996; Offe 1999). Citizens who feel their interests are protected through the mechanism of existing political (whether democratic or authoritarian) institutions are more likely to be trusting. Yet, since these levels of generalized trust are linked to political confidence,

³Seligson (2002, 277–79) refers to the strong correlation between trust and democracy found in Ronald Inglehart’s work. We believe this line of argumentation extends to works that link trust to more effective democracy like that of Putnam’s *Making Democracy Work* as well.

they will correspond to support for more democracy in democratic societies and support for less democracy in authoritarian societies.

To examine the extent to which generalized trust is useful to support for democracy, it is thus first necessary to examine the relationship between political confidence and generalized trust cross-nationally. We construct an index of political confidence based on three questions asked by the 2002 World Values Survey to respondents in 81 countries. The questions asked respondents to state their confidence in three different national political institutions: parliament, government, and political parties. We then model the respondent’s stated level of generalized trust as a function of the resulting political confidence index and a set of demographic control variables.⁴ The results of this analysis are reported in Table 1.

We find compelling evidence to support our first supposition: political confidence matters for levels of generalized trust. Where citizens have higher levels of political confidence, they are also more likely to be trusting of other members of their societies regardless of regime type.

Our principal argument, then, is that because generalized trust emerges from confidence in *existing* political institutions, higher levels of trust should not be similarly useful for support for democracy everywhere. Presumably, citizens who have more confidence in their regimes in democratic and nondemocratic settings are also those citizens who find existing political institutions to be more beneficial. The implication is profound: where citizens have more political confidence, they are more trusting, but the effects of this trust will be different across regime types. Our theoretical framework, therefore, predicts that levels of generalized trust will not be directly linked to support for democracy across the globe (H1). Rather, the democratic utility of trust is predicated upon already existing democratic political contexts (H2).

Existing studies have often looked at aggregate levels of generalized trust and compared them to aggregate objective scores on democracy to advance a common argument: lower levels of generalized trust are directly linked to lower levels of democracy. By contrast, we argue it is not necessarily the case that the democratic world is more trusting than the nondemocratic world (see Table A2 in the online appendix at <http://www.princeton.edu/~ajamal/JamalNooruddin.Web%20>

⁴For the sake of exposition, we defer a more detailed discussion of the measurement of the control variables and of the statistical model till later in the paper. Note here that since we are pooling respondents from many different countries, we allow a random effect to capture unmodeled heterogeneities across countries.

TABLE 1 The Effect of Political Confidence on Trust

Variable	Dependent Variable = Trust		
	Coefficient	Standard Error	P-value
Female	-0.009	0.004	0.06
Age	0.001	0.0002	0.00
Married	0.007	0.006	0.25
Parent	-0.010	0.007	0.18
< High School Education	-0.022	0.006	0.00
Employed	0.014	0.005	0.01
Religiosity	0.019	0.003	0.00
Traditionalism Index	0.043	0.004	0.00
Personal Happiness	0.032	0.003	0.00
Political Confidence	0.047	0.003	0.00
Constant	0.168	0.026	0.00
N	31402		

Notes: Dependent Variable is "Trust." Coefficient entries are maximum likelihood coefficients estimated using the xtmixed procedure in Stata 9.2.

% Correctly Predicted: 76%.

Appendix.Final.pdf). And even if the democratic world were more trusting, we are not sure under what conditions generalized trust becomes useful to support for democracy. Seldom have existing studies looked at the ways in which levels of generalized trust relate to microlevel indicators of support for democracy controlling for overall institutional contexts. In other words, the logic that generalized trust is useful for democracy would remain compelling *only* if levels of generalized trust directly correspond to support for democracy consistently across the globe regardless of political-institutional context.

Alternative Explanations

Our argument thus far suggests that context matters. More specifically, we have argued that the degree of democracy, measured by political and civil liberties, determines the extent to which generalized trust, a correlate of political confidence, becomes meaningfully linked to support for democracy. Several alternative explanations, however, may also explain the democratic utility of trust. These operate on two levels. First, the sources of trust in individuals might affect whether or not trust has a positive democratic utility. For instance, trust associated with strong religious or traditional-values orientations might have a different effect than trust correlated with membership in civic associations. Second, while we have argued the degree of democracy is the primary macro-institutional characteristic shaping the democratic utility of trust, one plausible alternative is that it is the quality of governance rather than regime type that matters. Consider each alternative explanation in turn.

First, at the individual level, a probable explanation contends that religion and religiosity shape the democratic utility of trust. Because smaller groups are better able to enforce norms that enhance cooperation and reciprocity than larger networks, one would expect those more likely to attend religious institutions and more religiously observant individuals to hold higher levels of generalized trust. However, these levels of generalized trust would not necessarily foreshadow support for democracy since they are shaped by more traditional understandings of authority. Generalized trust increased by the mechanisms of religious observance, it is argued, does not bode well for support for democracy (Putnam 1993).

Second, culture might shape the democratic utility of trust, particularly the extent to which citizens hold "traditional predispositions." Inglehart and Baker (2000) argue, for example, that traditional values—which they conceive as a constellation of values about God, country, tolerance, authority, and family—constitute a distinct world view held by some citizens and dominant still in some parts of the world. Here an alternative to our argument would suggest that citizen world views rather than regime-type determine the democratic utility of trust. In other words, levels of generalized trust may be high in authoritarian settings but because these levels of generalized trust are constrained by "traditional" predispositions they are less likely to be linked to support for democracy. If true, one would expect that in more traditional societies, societies that very well might exhibit significant levels of generalized trust, higher levels of generalized trust will not

directly correspond to higher levels of support for democracy.

Third, associational memberships might constitute another alternative explanation. Associational life generates stockpiles of social capital, including generalized trust, that serve as a key foundation of democratic effectiveness (Putnam 1993). Membership in associations, therefore, might be driving the relationship between generalized trust and support for democracy, and must therefore be accounted for to understand trust's true effects.

Fourth and finally, one might wonder whether the causal mechanism runs through regime-type (democratic or authoritarian) or through the quality of governance (regardless of whether democratic or authoritarian) in a society. Maybe it is the level of corruption or the quality of regulation in a society that affects both whether citizens trust each other and support democracy. Therefore, in the empirical models below, we account for whether the quality of governance affects the democratic utility of trust.⁵

Other Concurrent Explanations: Revisiting the Type and Breadth of Trust

The preceding discussion has presented a theoretical framework suggesting that the effect of generalized trust on support for democracy is conditional on the political-institutional context within which people live. Plausible alternative country-level arguments are introduced as well. Yet before we can test our argument against the alternatives, another, more critical, argument must be considered: that it is not the *democratic utility of trust* that differs, but rather the *type and breadth of trust* that differs across regime types. More specifically, is trust in authoritarian settings more particularized and narrow than in democracies? Scholars of civic culture and social capital agree that generalized trust is a desirable trait because it is the necessary building block for collective action and norms of reciprocity that are beneficial to civic cultures.⁶ Cooperation is important for democracy because it enables citizens to work together in ways that alleviate pressures from the state, it reduces the costs of collective action,

and it helps build interpersonal bonds among strangers. Generalized trust is extremely useful in transforming individual citizens into collective units beneficial for state-society relations in a democracy.

As such, there are two conditions that mediate the relationship between generalized trust and democracy. The first is that trust must be generalizable and not particularized. The predisposition to trust must not only be a function of a narrow network like family, work, church, and/or ethnicity. Particularized trust, as Uslaner puts it, operates against the ethos of collective cooperation that generalized trust facilitates (Uslaner and Conley 2003). Second, trust must not simply be a naïve gesture towards society. It must be based on informed knowledge of others and society and shaped by norms of reciprocity (Cleary and Stokes 2006; Hart 1978; Norris 1999). Otherwise, misplaced trust based on naïve predispositions of trustworthiness may actually lead to exploitation and disappointment—qualities that are not conducive to reinforcing mutual bonds of trust in society more largely. This line of argumentation posits that a healthy democratic polity necessitates a certain level of skepticism, distrust, and cognizant questioning of the status quo. Scholars like Fukuyama (2000) in fact have expressed concern about the quality of trust located in less democratic societies where family linkages are strong. Generalized trust in these types of societies can bolster nepotism and corruption. This raises the important question of whether trust is broader and less particularized in more democratic or better governed states? If true, this would undermine our argument because it would suggest that the democratic utility of trust should be higher in democracies than in nondemocracies, not for the reasons we have argued, but because trust is “better” in these states.

To tackle this issue, using data from the 2002 wave of the World Values Survey, we examine the correlates of generalized trust across 81 countries that vary according to their degree of democracy and quality of governance, measured here by Freedom House scores and World Bank Governance indicators, respectively. We examine trust's correlations against four variables that we believe tap into attitudes considered important in civic culture studies. First we examine the association of generalized trust with a commitment of service to others.⁷ Second, we examine whether respondents believe that tolerance and respect for other people is a childhood quality that they value. Third, examining a less democratic norm,

⁵Rothstein and Uslaner (2005) identify economic inequality as an important factor for the level of generalized trust in a society. In separate analyses, we measure inequality using country-level Gini coefficients and investigate its effect on the democratic utility of trust. Greater income inequality does appear to reduce the democratic utility of trust, but the results reported below hold (see Table A5 in the online appendix). Since the inequality measure has a lot more missing values, we report below the models without it.

⁶See, for example, the seminal works of Inglehart (1990), Uslaner (2002), Almond and Verba (1963), Mishler and Rose (1997), and Putnam (1993).

⁷The “Service to Others” variable has considerably less data available; its correlations with trust are based on data from 36 countries.

we consider the correlation of generalized trust and the value of obedience among children, since the latter is a good indicator of “authoritarian predispositions” (Schuman, Bobo, and Krysan 1992; Stenner 2005). And finally, we examine the correlation of generalized trust with national pride since trust-in-others is deemed important for a collective sense of community. If in fact trust is more desirable in democracies than nondemocracies, then we should see different correlations across different levels of freedom and quality of governance.

The correlation matrix in Table 2 illustrates that generalized trust operates similarly in democratic and nondemocratic settings. The association of generalized trust with these norms is quite systematic across cases leading us to maintain that the “type and breadth of trust” does not vary across political contexts. Therefore, should our data support our hypotheses, we can have more confidence in our theoretical argument that it is political context that shapes the “democratic utility of trust” rather than the inherent nature of that trust. In the next section, we present our empirical strategy for testing this claim.

Empirical Analysis

The argument developed above suggests that whether generalized trust conduces to support for democracy depends on whether individuals live in democratic societies. This argument suggests that the determinants of individuals’ support for democracy exist on two levels: an individual level and a national or macro level. At the individual level, the level of confidence one has in the governing institutions in one’s country affects the level of generalized trust one evinces. Higher levels of political confidence are correlated with greater levels of generalized trust, *ceteris paribus*. This trust then shapes support for democracy at the individual level, but whether this effect is positively significant depends itself on a macro-level factor: the type of institutions currently in place. Where citizens live in democracies, individual-level trust enhances support for democracy, but in nondemocratic settings, we would expect not to find this relationship. The latter factor—national-level political institutions—thus provides a “context” within which individuals exist and behave and this context conditions the impact of individual-level factors on political attitudes, like support for democracy.

Individual-level data were drawn from the 2002 release of the fourth wave of the World Values Survey (henceforth, WVS; for a detailed description of the WVS Project, see Inglehart et al. 2005 or <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>).

The fourth wave of the WVS surveys citizens in some 80 countries worldwide, which provides us with ample opportunity to explore the effect of variations in political structure on individual attitudes.⁸ Country-specific surveys are conducted by country experts and local polling companies, which assuages concerns about the cross-country comparability of questions and responses.⁹

Since our primary interest is the relationship of generalized trust to support for democracy, we begin by discussing the measurement of our dependent variable. In measuring support for democracy, we wish to keep separate citizens’ affect for democratic institutions from their evaluation of the performance of these institutions, especially since citizens in nondemocratic states will have little basis for the latter.¹⁰ Therefore, we use a support for democracy scale utilized by Inglehart and Welzel (2003) and Welzel and Inglehart (2005). This index, which we follow Inglehart and Welzel in calling “overt support for democracy,” is constructed in two steps. First we sum the respondent’s support for the statements “Having a democratic political system is a good way for running a country” and “Democracy may have problems but it’s better than any other form of government.” This yields a 0–6 scale, where 6 is the most prodemocracy.¹¹ Second we add the respondent’s support for the statements “Having a strong leader who

⁸The results hold if we replicate the analysis using the third wave (1995–97) of the World Values Survey. See Figure A1 in the online appendix. We prefer the most recent wave, however, as the cross-national coverage is greater providing us with more developing countries to analyze.

⁹We do not mean that the surveys are specific to each country, but rather that great effort is taken by the principal investigators of the World Values Survey to make sure that theoretical concepts translate appropriately from country to country. As with any cross-national effort, this is difficult, but the WVS is one of the oldest and most respected of such efforts and so we are confident of the instrument’s validity.

¹⁰As an alternative dependent variable, we create a democratic support scale using five statements from the WVS including those that involve direct evaluation of democratic performance. The statements are: (1) It is good to have a democratic political system; (2) Even though democracy has problems, it is better than the alternatives; (3) In democracies, the economic system runs badly; (4) Democracies are indecisive; and (5) Democracies are not good about maintaining order. The results are robust to using this dependent variable instead (see Table A4 and Figure A6 in the online appendix). We prefer the “overt support for democracy” measure since it does not mix notions of “democratic legitimacy” (the first two statements) with evaluations of democratic performance (the last three statements) which might be especially difficult for citizens in nondemocratic countries to answer.

¹¹Responses to the first question are coded as follows: 3 = Very good; 2 = Fairly Good; 1 = Fairly Bad; and 0 = Very Bad. Responses to the second question are coded 3 = Agree Strongly; 2 = Agree; 1 = Disagree; and 0 = Disagree Strongly.

TABLE 2 The Quality of Trust: Trust's Correlations with Democratic Attributes

	Overall	Freedom House			WB Governance	
		Low	Middle	High	< Mean	> Mean
Service to others	<i>-0.02</i>	<i>0.06</i>	<i>0.03</i>	<i>-0.01</i>	<i>0.02</i>	<i>0.03</i>
<i>No. of Obs.</i>	48736	9590	18075	16070	34573	10875
Teach Children Tolerance	<i>0.03</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>-0.03</i>	<i>0.07</i>	<i>-0.01</i>	<i>0.08</i>
<i>No. of Obs.</i>	110000	12457	35022	56217	64739	44939
Teach Children Obedience	<i>-0.08</i>	<i>-0.08</i>	<i>-0.02</i>	<i>-0.11</i>	<i>-0.03</i>	<i>-0.11</i>
<i>No. of Obs.</i>	110000	12457	35022	56216	64739	44935
Pride in Nationality	<i>-0.02</i>	<i>0.03</i>	<i>-0.01</i>	<i>-0.02</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>-0.02</i>
<i>No. of Obs.</i>	110000	12266	34528	53440	63434	42628

Note: *Italics* represent pair-wise correlations significant at $p < 0.001$ or better.

Source: Authors' calculations using data from World Values Survey 2002.

does not have to bother with parliament and elections” and “Having the army rule,” which yields a 0–6 pro-autocracy scale. We then subtract the second scale from the first which yields an overall index of democratic support, ranging from -6 (maximum autocracy) to 6 (maximum democracy).¹²

Having established an empirical measure of our dependent variable, we turn next to its individual-level correlates. To measure *generalized trust*, we utilize responses to the question, “Do you agree that, in this country, most people can be trusted or is it that one needs to be very careful?” Of the 80,000 respondents

¹²Since the “overt support for democracy” measure focuses on attitudes about freedom rather than exclusively evaluations of democratic performance, the measure should have validity in both democracies and nondemocracies. To check this we conducted two auxiliary tests. First, we calculated Cronbach's alpha for the two prodemocracy questions that factor into the “Overt Support for Democracy” dependent variable for those countries that are clearly nondemocratic (combined freedom house score of less than or equal to 4 on a 12-point scale) and for those that are clearly democratic (combined freedom house score greater than or equal to 9 on a 12-point scale). The alpha for the nondemocratic countries was 0.627; in democracies, it was 0.624. This makes us more confident that the questions are tapping the same underlying attitudes across regime types. Second, a simple comparison of the mean across the two regime groups is also encouraging: the average for nondemocracies is 2.6; for democracies, it is 3.3 (the range is -6 to 6), and the standard deviation for both subsamples is 2.1. That is, respondents in democratic settings evince more prodemocracy sentiments but not overwhelmingly so.

We further correlate the variable (support for democracy) with whether the respondent thinks it is important to teach children to be tolerant, which is a good proxy for democratic attitudes while being independent of government itself. Our idea is that if negative responses to democracy in nondemocracies are simply a fear of the unknown, then that variable should have no correlation with the “teach children tolerance” variable. We find that in nondemocracies, support for democracy is positive (and significantly) correlated with teaching children tolerance ($\chi^2 = 39.84$; $p < 0.001$). Support for democracy in the nondemocratic world does, indeed, tap into a larger set of democratic orientations. Also, see figures A2 and A3 in the web appendix for a discussion on the importance of support for democracy for democracy itself.

for whom we have answers, roughly a quarter (26.89%) states that most people can be trusted. We create a dichotomous variable where “1” is coded as having answered that most people are trustworthy and “0” as having answered that one can never be too careful.

We include a set of demographic controls for whether the respondent is *female*, *married*, and a *parent*, and for the respondent's *age*. We mean-center the age variable at 40.¹³ We also account for whether the respondent has less than a *high school education* and for whether the respondent is presently *employed*. Other than age, all the demographic characteristics are coded dichotomously. Finally, we control for three possible individual-level alternative explanations outlined above.¹⁴ To summarize

¹³More specifically, our rescaled age variable is $(age-40)/10$. We divide the mean-centered age by 10 to bring the scale of the variable closer to that of the dependent variable.

¹⁴We also accounted for whether more tolerant or optimistic individuals, who might also be more trusting, are more likely to favor democratic practices (Weldon 2006). To measure tolerance, we utilized answers to a question asking respondents whether they thought it important to teach children *tolerant attitudes* (see Table A6 in the online appendix). As alternative measures, we also considered responses to questions asking respondents how they felt about having neighbors of a different race, or who were immigrants. Next, since attitudes towards leadership are likely to inform one's opinion about democracy, we capture how respondents feel about having *strong leaders*. Since democracy, by its design, diffuses power away from any particular individual, we expect that those who think strong leaders are good should express less support for democracy (see Table A7 in the online appendix). When we consider the *strong leader* hypothesis, we use the alternative dependent variable (see footnote 11 above) since the strong leader question is part of our “overt support for democracy” dependent variable. To capture *optimism*, we considered two questions. The first asks respondents whether the future is bright or bleak. There are too few observations available to use this variable however, so we use instead a question asking respondents to indicate their level of *personal happiness* (see Table A8 in the online appendix). The results reported below do not change if we include these variables in the analysis, and so we exclude them to minimize missing data issues and to increase parsimony.

briefly here, scholars have argued for some time as to the compatibility of religion and democracy, and we therefore include a measure of individual's *religiosity*, which we operationalize using data on the frequency of attendance at worship services.¹⁵ A second alternative explanation concerns citizens' identification with traditional values and beliefs. Here we use a *traditionalism* scale developed by Ronald Inglehart and Wayne Baker. This scale, formed by a confirmatory factor analysis, consists of five items: whether one considers abortion ever justifiable, the importance of providing children autonomy,¹⁶ how important God is in one's life, whether one favors more respect for authority, and the strength of one's sense of national pride (Baker and Jamal 2006; see also Inglehart 1997; Inglehart and Baker 2000; Norris and Inglehart 2004). Our third alternative explanation concerns *membership in voluntary associations*. Membership, and the social capital it connotes, is thought to increase support for democracy by developing society's stock of social capital and by teaching citizens the civic skills required to flourish in an open and democratic society (Putnam 1993; Tocqueville 1956). We take a very inclusive view of which associations should matter and if respondents claim to be members of church organizations, cultural activities, labor unions, political parties and local political organizations, human rights groups and conservation groups, professional associations, youth groups, sports/recreation groups, women's groups, peace movements, health-related groups, or any other group of their choosing, we count them as a "Member" and the corresponding variable is coded "1." If a respondent does not claim to be a member of any of these associations, she is coded "0" on this variable.

¹⁵The religiosity measure has three categories: "1" is individuals who report attending worship services less than once a year; "2" is those attending more than once a year and at special festivals; and "3" codes those who report attending at least once a month or more frequently.

¹⁶Autonomy is measured by forming an index from answers to four questions. Respondents are asked whether they value teaching children the following values: determination, independence, obedience, and religious faith. The first two are coded "1" and the latter two "-1." Thus, a respondent who agrees to all four values scores "0" on the index, while one who answers affirmatively only to the first two values scores "2" and one who answers affirmatively only to the latter two values scores "-2."

We also collect data on three country-level factors suggested by our argument.¹⁷ To measure the *level of democracy* in the country, we utilize the 2000 Gastil Index, which is also called the Freedom House Score.¹⁸ This index has two components, each of which ranks countries on a 7-point scale for Political Rights and Civil Liberties respectively. Combining these scales additively yields an index that ranges from 2 to 14. We rescale the index from 0 to 12 such that higher values go to countries whose citizens enjoy greater levels of democracy.

Second, we utilize the World Bank's 2002 measures of various aspects of a country's governance to create a *governance index*. This index is based on three aspects of a country's macropolicy environment: government effectiveness, rule of law, and control of corruption, and coded so that higher values are associated with better governance outcomes.

Third, we also control for the country's *GDP per capita* (logged) in 2000, which serves as a proxy for the average income or level of economic development in the country. Since richer countries might be thought to be more supportive of democracy, and wealth might be plausibly associated with levels of freedom and quality of governance, including this variable in our models avoids spurious correlations.

Finally, to gain leverage on our argument that generalized trust, as a function of political confidence, affects support for democracy only in existing democratic settings, we interact trust with the country's democracy score. Further, to ensure against

¹⁷In separate analyses, we used two alternative country-level religious measures and one alternative country-level economic variable (see Tables A9 and A5 in the online appendix). First, we used data on the percent of the population that is Muslim (from Steven Fish) and Catholic (from Bruce Russett). Second, we used dummy variables for whether the majority of the population is Muslim or Catholic. We focus on these two religious traditions since both have been previously associated with values deemed antithetical to democracy (Huntington 1996). Third, we examine if more unequal countries, as measured by the country's Gini coefficient, have a different democratic utility of trust. Our results do not change if we use these alternative country-level variables, nor do they provide any empirical leverage. Therefore, we exclude them from the final model to maximize observations.

¹⁸We also used the country's Polity score as an alternative indicator. All results reported below are robust to the use of the Polity measure; see Table A10 in the online appendix. We also checked to see if the two components of the Freedom House measure—political rights and civil liberties—have different effects or if one is driving these results (see Table A11 in the online appendix). Finally, we check to see if the relationship between the democratic utility of trust and the country's freedom house score is nonlinear by interacting trust with dichotomous indicators for low- and mid-level FH scores (see Table A12 in the online appendix). Our results are robust to all these alternative specifications.

spuriousness, we also include the interaction of political confidence and democracy. If we are correct, the interaction between trust and democracy should be positive and significant—indicating that trust’s effects on support for democracy increase as the country’s level of democracy increases—even in the presence of the interaction between political confidence and democracy.

Summary statistics for all variables used in the analysis are reported in Table A1 in the appendix.

Model and Results

We begin our empirical analysis by establishing the considerable cross-national heterogeneity that exists in the effect of generalized trust on support for democracy. We estimate country-specific regression models predicting the level of support for democracy as a function of generalized trust and the set of demographic and alternative attitudinal variables described above. This gives us 66 estimated country-specific coefficients on generalized trust, of which 25 are positive and statistically significant at the 0.05 level or better (26 more are positive but not significant). Three countries (Philippines, Uganda, and Tanzania) evidence a negative and statistically significant relationship between generalized trust and support for democracy though twelve more have negative coefficients with t-statistics below 1.96. (The estimated coefficients and standard errors are reported in Table A3 and Figures A5 and A6 in the online appendix.) What explains why generalized trust has different effects (in terms of size, significance, and direction) on support for democracy in different countries? Our argument states that *context matters*, and specifically that political confidence in the existing regimes (whether democratic or not) matters for levels of generalized trust.

To explore this argument more rigorously, we estimate a multilevel model of support for democracy.¹⁹ The basic intuition behind a multilevel model is best expressed as thinking of the research question as a two-stage process. In the first stage, country-specific estimates of some independent variable on the dependent variable of interest are obtained, just as we did above. In the second stage, these estimates are

treated as dependent variables themselves and modeled as a function of some country-level variable suggested by theory. In our case, this variable is the country’s Freedom House score. The two regression models implied above are referred to as level one and level two regressions, respectively.

There are two approaches to estimating such multilevel models. The first is to estimate the two stages separately and then to correct the standard errors in the second stage manually.²⁰ The second approach, which we adopt here, is to estimate a reduced form of the system of equations in a single-stage. The one-stage model is substantively equivalent to the two-stage model and is typically more efficient too (Beck 2005, 258).²¹

Table 3 presents results from a model in which political confidence is excluded to maximize the sample at hand. Table 4 adds a measure of political confidence as well as an interaction of political confidence with regime type to account for a possible alternative causal path, since political confidence is causally prior to trust in our explanation. When political confidence is included to control for possible spuriousness, the number of countries in the estimation sample is reduced by over half. This limits both the generalizability of the findings as well as providing a weak test of an argument predicated on the variation in regime types across countries. Nevertheless, given the obvious importance of accounting for political confidence, Table 4 represents an important robustness analysis of our claims.

The results in Table 4 bolster our argument. Our main coefficient of interest (trust*FH) is estimated even more precisely (i.e., has a smaller standard error) than in Table 3, where political confidence is omitted, and not only sustains its significance but is also larger in magnitude than the political confidence interaction. This leads us to believe that the relationship is not spurious—that generalized trust does exert an independent effect on support for democracy even while controlling for political confidence and its interaction with regime type, but that, per our argument, this positive effect of trust on support for democracy is conditional on regime type. However,

²⁰For good discussions and applications of this two-stage estimation strategy, see Jusko and Shively (2005), Lewis and Linzer (2005), Duch and Stevenson (2005), and Kedar (2005).

²¹The multilevel model utilizes a random effect to capture unobserved heterogeneity. In other models (see Table A15 in the online appendix), we estimate the model using OLS with country fixed effects so that we can apply sample weights to account for the fact that sample sizes vary by country. Our results hold.

¹⁹The special issue of *Political Analysis* edited by Orit Kedar and W. Phillips Shively is an excellent introduction of these methods for political scientists (Kedar and Shively 2005). See also Kreft and de Leeuw (1998), Raudenbush and Bryk (2002), and Steenbergen and Jones (2002). Figure A4 in the online appendix provides a technical exposition of our model.

TABLE 3 Multilevel Model of Support for Democracy (DV = Overt Democrats)

	Without Membership in Associations			With Membership in Associations		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Intercept	2.45*** (.14)	2.75*** (.54)	2.98*** (.59)	2.49*** (.14)	3.28*** (.58)	3.73*** (.63)
Individual-Level Factors						
Female	-0.08*** (.02)	-0.10*** (.02)	-0.10*** (.02)	-0.05** (.02)	-0.07*** (.02)	-0.07*** (.02)
Age	0.01*** (.001)	0.01*** (.001)	0.01*** (.001)	0.01*** (.001)	0.01*** (.001)	0.01*** (.001)
Married	0.08*** (.02)	0.07** (.02)	0.07** (.02)	0.09*** (.02)	0.07** (.02)	0.07** (.02)
Parent	-0.06* (.03)	-0.05 (.03)	-0.05* (.03)	-0.06* (.03)	-0.05 (.03)	-0.06 (.03)
< High School Education	-0.53*** (.02)	-0.51*** (.02)	-0.52*** (.02)	-0.52*** (.02)	-0.50*** (.02)	-0.51*** (.02)
Employed	0.08*** (.02)	0.07*** (.02)	0.07*** (.02)	0.05* (.02)	0.04 (.02)	0.04 (.02)
Religiosity	0.09*** (.01)	0.08*** (.01)	0.08*** (.01)	0.06*** (.01)	0.05** (.01)	0.05*** (.02)
Traditionalism Index	-0.29*** (.01)	-0.29*** (.01)	-0.29*** (.02)	-0.27*** (.01)	-0.27*** (.01)	-0.27*** (.01)
Associational Member				0.19*** (.02)	0.19*** (.02)	0.15*** (.02)
Trust	0.23*** (.04)	-0.45*** (.13)	-0.39* (.19)	0.20*** (.05)	-0.50*** (.15)	-0.73** (.23)
Trust Interactions With						
Freedom House Score		0.07*** (.01)	0.07** (.02)		0.08*** (.02)	0.09*** (.03)
WB Governance Score			-0.15 (.06)			-0.13 (.07)
Religiosity			-0.19 (.16)			-0.34 (.19)
Traditionalism			0.06 (.09)			0.03 (.11)
Associational Membership						0.16*** (.05)
Context-Level Factors						
Freedom House Score		-0.03 (.06)	-0.05 (.06)		-0.08 (.06)	-0.13 (.07)
WB Governance Score			0.39 (.29)			0.55 (.29)
GDP per capita (Log)		0.24* (.11)	0.03 (.18)		0.27* (.11)	0.01 (.18)
Variance Components						
Intercept	1.146 (.201)	0.794 (.146)	0.782 (.144)	1.130 (.217)	0.713 (.144)	0.681 (.130)
Trust	0.088 (.021)	0.048 (.014)	0.041 (.013)	0.089 (.024)	0.051 (.018)	0.037 (.014)
No. of Observations	53071	48849	47995	45479	41257	40403
No. of Countries	66	61	60	55	50	49
Pseudo-R²	.25	.23	.23	.24	.21	.21

Note: Entries are maximum likelihood coefficients estimated using the xtmixed procedure in Stata 9.2. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. ***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05.

TABLE 4 Multilevel Model of Support for Democracy Controlling for Political Confidence
(DV = Overt Democrats)

	Without Membership in Associations			With Membership in Associations		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Intercept	2.45*** (.14)	2.86*** (.79)	3.371*** (.88)	2.59*** (.10)	4.06*** (.91)	5.17*** (1.02)
Individual-Level Factors						
Female	-0.08*** (.03)	-0.10*** (.02)	-0.10*** (.03)	-0.02 (.03)	-0.05 (.03)	-0.05 (.03)
Age	0.01*** (.001)	0.01*** (.001)	0.01*** (.001)	0.01*** (.001)	0.01*** (.001)	0.01*** (.001)
Married	0.06** (.03)	0.05** (.03)	0.04** (.03)	0.08** (.04)	0.06 (.04)	0.06 (.04)
Parent	-0.10* (.04)	-0.09 (.04)	-0.09* (.04)	-0.14** (.05)	-0.13** (.05)	-0.14*** (.05)
< High School Education	-0.47*** (.03)	-0.44*** (.03)	-0.45*** (.03)	-0.45*** (.04)	-0.41*** (.04)	-0.42*** (.04)
Employed	0.09*** (.03)	0.09*** (.03)	0.09*** (.03)	0.06** (.03)	0.08** (.03)	0.07** (.03)
Religiosity	0.03** (.02)	0.02 (.02)	0.03*** (.02)	-0.04* (.02)	-0.05** (.02)	-0.0*** (.02)
Traditionalism Index	-0.20*** (.02)	-0.18*** (.02)	-0.18*** (.02)	0.12*** (.02)	0.09*** (.02)	0.09*** (.02)
Associational Member				0.18*** (.03)	0.16*** (.03)	0.13*** (.04)
Political Confidence	0.02 (.01)	-0.13** (.05)	-0.15*** (.05)		-0.07 (.06)	-0.09 (0.06)
Political Confidence X FH Score		0.02*** (.01)	0.02*** (.01)		0.01** (.01)	0.01* (.01)
Trust	0.15** (.07)	-0.54*** (.17)	-0.35 (.31)	0.05 (.08)	-0.67*** (.22)	-0.75 (.42)
Trust Interactions With						
Freedom House Score		0.08*** (.02)	0.06* (.03)		0.09*** (.03)	0.09* (.05)
WB Governance Score			-0.03 (.09)			-0.05 (.13)
Religiosity			-0.049 (.23)			-0.12 (.34)
Traditionalism			0.03 (.14)			0.05 (.17)
Associational Membership						0.15* (.08)
Context-Level Factors						
Freedom House Score		-0.03 (.09)	-0.09 (.09)		-0.15 (.10)	-0.28* (.12)
WB Governance Score			0.62 (.43)			0.91* (.46)
GDP per capita (Log)		0.01 (.17)	-0.25 (.24)		0.08 (.19)	-20 (.18(.23))
Variance Components						
Intercept	1.417 (.342)	1.031 (.261)	1.006 (.259)	1.531 (.446)	0.831 (.259)	0.732 (.234)

TABLE 4 (Continued)

	Without Membership in Associations			With Membership in Associations		
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Trust	0.111 (.034)	0.057 (.022)	0.044 (.060)	0.114 (.044)	0.059 (.029)	0.057 (.029)
No. of Observations	26270	24650	23805	19066	17446	16601
No. of Countries	35	32	31	24	21	20
Pseudo-R²	.24	.22	.23	.22	.18	.19

Note: Entries are maximum likelihood coefficients estimated using the xtmixed procedure in Stata 9.2. Standard errors are reported in parentheses. ***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05.

as expected given the reduced sample sizes and variation in key independent variables, the confidence intervals for some of the control variables increase slightly. Given the consistency of the key substantive results, we focus the following discussion on Table 3, which covers a much larger set of countries.²²

Table 3 reports six different model specifications. Models 1–3 do not include membership in associations since this variable has considerably more missing values; models 4–6 add this variable and, while the sample is reduced, our results hold. The analysis proceeds as follows. First, we report a baseline model with just individual-level variables (Models 1 and 4). Next, we add a cross-level interaction between trust and the level of freedom in the country (Models 2 and 5). Last, we add alternative cross-level interactions between trust and quality of governance, as well as alternative individual-level interactions between trust and religiosity, traditionalism, and associational membership (Models 3 and 6).²³

Consider the purely individual-level models (1 and 4) in Table 3 first. All the variables in these models are statistically significant—not surprising given the sample size—with signs in the expected direction. The largest substantive effects are for whether one has lower levels of education, holds

²²In alternative specifications we limit the sample only to those above or below a minimum threshold of democracy on the Freedom House scale to provide another robustness check against spurious results. Our results do not change; see Table A13 in the online appendix.

²³These additional cross-level interactions allow us to test the claim that trust affects democratic support differently based on the presence of these factors, which we showed earlier in Table 1 were correlated with levels of trust. Developing a causal model of trust, which we could then incorporate in a two-stage model of democratic support, is beyond the scope of this paper.

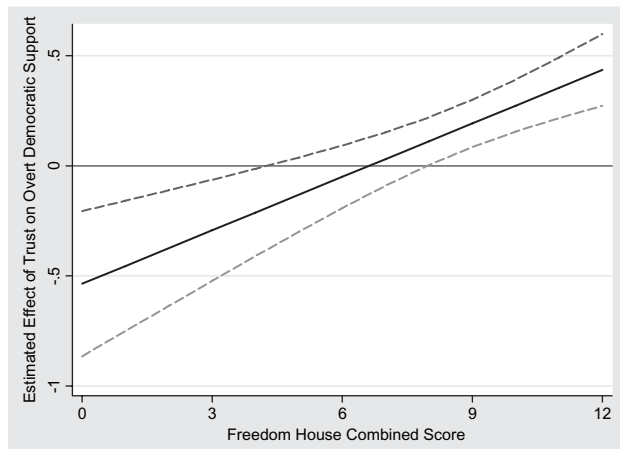
traditional values, and is trusting. While the first two reduce support for democracy, those who are more trusting express greater support for democracy. In model 4, associational membership also has a strong positive effect on support for democracy. The individual-level results therefore appear to support the conventional wisdom that generalized trust bolsters support for democracy. Finally, the bottom of Table 3 presents the variance components for each model. Observing the changes in these variance components as we add the country-level intercept terms and the cross-level interactions will also provide a sense of how much explanatory power these add.²⁴

Models 2 and 5 add a cross-level interaction between trust and the country's level of democracy, as well as a cross-level intercept for GDP per capita.²⁵ Doing so has an important effect. As the variance components at the bottom indicate, adding the cross-level interaction terms reduces the unexplained cross-national variation in the effect of generalized trust on support for democracy by half. The results for the other individual-level variables in the model are

²⁴We follow Weldon (2006) in calculating the reduction in unexplained variation as the relative change in size of the random effect. The baseline variance for the trust coefficient's random effect (from a purely individual-level model) is 0.088; adding the national-level factors and the cross-level interaction between trust and democracy reduces the variance of the trust coefficient's random effect to 0.047. Thus, the reduction is $(0.088 - 0.047) / 0.088$, or approximately 47%.

²⁵We also interact country GDP with trust to see if it is wealth, rather than democracy, that converts trust into democratic support. The trust-GDP interaction term is never statistically significant, and the trust-Democracy interaction is always significant, bolstering our claim that it is democracy, not wealth, that affects the democratic utility of trust. We also included various indicators for respondent's sociotropic evaluations of the economy; our results are not affected. See Table A14 in the online appendix.

FIGURE 1 Predicted Effect of Trust at Different Levels of Freedom House (DV = Overt Democrats)



unaltered by the inclusion of this cross-level interaction, and so we focus our discussion on it exclusively. The uninteracted trust variable now captures the effect of generalized trust on support for democracy when the country's freedom house score is 0. At this nondemocratic extreme, the effect of generalized trust is now *negative* and statistically significant, but since there are no countries in our sample at that extreme, the key is to interpret the full interaction term. This interaction of trust with the freedom house score is positive, and also statistically significant, which means that as the country's overall level of democracy increases, the effect of individual-level trust on support for democracy increases, as well. As Model 5 indicates, this positive effect is robust to controlling for associational membership.

Based on the estimates from Model 2, Figure 1 provides a clearer illustration of the cross-level interaction effect between individual-level generalized trust and national political freedom. Figure 1 plots the estimated effect of *Trust* on *Support for Democracy* at different levels of the Freedom House score. We also plot the estimated 95% confidence intervals. Given that most of the countries in the World Values Survey are relatively free, it is to be expected that the effect is more precisely estimated in the upper range of the X-axis. Substantively, Figure 1 tells us the following: In democratic societies, generalized trust bolsters support for democracy, but it has the *opposite* effect in nondemocratic societies. And in societies in the middle-to-low range of the Freedom House scale, generalized trust has a statistically insignificant effect on support for democracy. As we have argued, the

effect of being trusting on support for democracy is greater in democratic societies, and increasing as the level of democracy increases.

Is the estimated effect of trust large in a substantive sense? First, if we compare trust's effect in Model 2 of Table 3 to the effects of the other correlates of support for democracy, it is larger than all but two of the other correlates (education and traditionalism). While traditionalism dominates the model in terms of the size of its effect (0.18 with a range of 5), education's effect is essentially the same size as that of trust ($|\beta_{ed}|=0.44$). And the effects of other factors such as employment, gender, and religiosity are all smaller than that of trust. Second, while the theoretical range of the dependent variable is -6 to 6 , 90% of the data fall above 0 (the 10th percentile) and 75% above 2 (the 25th percentile). Thus, trust's effect is to move the respondent either up (in democracies) or down (in nondemocracies) the scale by between 7 to 10% of the effective range, controlling for a host of other factors.

Does controlling for other alternative country-level factors and interactions weaken the relationship identified above? Models 3 and 6 in Table 3 add a measure for the quality of national governance to the model, as well as a cross-level interaction with generalized trust. We also add interactions of generalized trust with individual-level religiosity, traditionalism, and associational membership, allowing us to see if the results reported above are being affected by other correlates of trust. Three findings are noteworthy: (1) the positive interaction between trust and level of democracy persists, and remains statistically significant; (2) better quality of governance does not increase support for democracy, nor does it affect the effect of generalized trust on support for democracy (i.e., the interaction between trust and governance is not statistically significant); (3) whether the respondent is religiously observant or holds traditional values does not affect the democratic utility of trust, but being a member of voluntary associations bolsters trust's democratic utility. Put together, these results bolster our argument that individual-level trust's effect on support for democracy is context conditional. Additionally, these results offer strong support for the claim that associational membership can reinforce positive individual-level attributes linked to democracy and suggest that the absence of political freedoms and civic organizations are a greater hindrance to the development of support for democratic values in the developing world than are personal religiosity and traditional values, a finding with important policy implications for those interested in democracy promotion.

Conclusion

In this paper we have argued that the democratic utility of trust varies across regimes. Generalized trust alone explains neither support for democracy nor support for authoritarianism. The relationship between generalized trust and support for democracy is mediated by context. Because generalized trust is linked to political confidence, in democracies, trust is positively associated with support for democracy. In nondemocratic societies, by contrast, higher levels of generalized trust are not linked to more support for democracy. It appears generalized trust is not naturally useful to democracy. Rather, trust is nurtured and reinforced by existing political institutions, and citizens who are more confident in extant institutions, whether democratic or authoritarian, are more likely to be trusting. Further, these results are robust to controlling for the level of political confidence citizens report, as well as for the interaction between such political confidence and regime type.

The findings in this paper illustrate that the relationship between generalized trust and support for democracy is mediated by the existence of political institutions. Oftentimes, scholars of democratization and policy makers assume that collective action and cooperation can be enhanced and generated solely from the individual level. If citizens can work together on common projects or within given associations, they will “learn” to become more trusting in ways that conduce to support for democracy more broadly. Yet, the findings of this paper suggest that institutions also matter for the generation of generalized trust useful for support for democracy. Institutions that garner support among the population are more likely to bolster levels of generalized trust. Yet, only in democratic settings do levels of generalized trust correspond to higher levels of support for democracy.

Future research on the role generalized trust plays in enhancing democracy needs to pay more explicit attention to the ways in which citizens link their interests to existing political institutions. Individuals make cost-benefit analyses before trusting others. Looking to existing political institutions, citizens are more trusting when they have more confidence in these institutions. This paper’s findings suggest that future scholars must isolate the mechanisms that enable more trust that is conducive to democracy by carefully examining the relationship of political institutions and levels of generalized trust.

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Amaney A. Jamal is Assistant Professor at Princeton University, Princeton, NJ 08544.

Irfan Nooruddin is Associate Professor at The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH 43210-1373.