

# The Irony of Social Trust: Individual-level and Contextual-level Links with Protest Intention and Radical Right Support in Switzerland

STEPHANIE GLAESER\*

*Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland*

## ABSTRACT

This research examines how social trust translates into dynamics of mobilisation for inclusion or exclusion in Swiss cantons by studying how social trust is linked to equality-directed protest intention versus radical right support, comparing individual-level and contextual-level relationships. The study is based on data from the Swiss Household Panel collected between 2002 and 2008. The impact of individual-level and contextual-level social trust is analysed in three-level regression models of repeated observations, nested in individuals who are nested in cantons. The results indicate complex patterns that depend on the level at which social trust is assessed and confirm the need for a contextualised view of social trust and social capital. For individuals, higher social trust is associated with higher protest intention and lower radical right support. However, in cantons characterised by higher rates of social trust, individuals are less likely to engage in protest actions and more likely to support the radical right. Further analyses show that canton-level social trust is intertwined with other contextual factors, suggesting that in certain configurations, that is, combined with low levels of cultural and social diversity, climates of social trust may be linked to more restricted forms of solidarity and the persistence of inequality. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

*Key words:* social trust; protest; radical right support; social capital; social identity; collective action; inclusion; exclusion; Switzerland; multi-level analysis

## INTRODUCTION

Consistent with research that questions idealised accounts of social capital as a feature of communities, this study investigates how social or ‘generalised’ trust, frequently measured in surveys as agreement with the statement that ‘most people can be trusted’ and used as an indicator of ‘collective’ social capital, is related to protest intention and radical right support.

---

\*Correspondence to: Stephanie Glaeser, Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lausanne, NCCR LIVES, Geopolis Building, Lausanne, CH-1015, Switzerland.  
E-mail: stephanie.glaeser@unil.ch

By so doing, this study aims to capture two of its potential facets. The first facet conceives of social trust as a condition for collective action and democracy by creating and maintaining an equality-supporting inclusive society (e.g. Uslander, 2008), including disruptive political actions, such as participation in demonstrations, strikes and boycotts, that challenge normative settings. The second facet concerns the potential communitarian and exclusive aspects of social trust as a measure of cohesiveness, which may be linked to in-group favouritism and the reproduction of inequality (e.g. Bourdieu, 1986; Portes & Vickstrom, 2011), measured by radical right support. In this framework, the present study aims to disentangle individual-level from collective-level dynamics by operationalising social trust simultaneously as an individual predisposition to mobilise and as an aggregate measure of cohesiveness.

### *Mobilisation for inclusion versus exclusion in the Swiss context*

Switzerland represents a privileged context to study the links among cohesiveness, inclusion and exclusion at different levels. Characterised by direct democracy and federalism, the multilingual country is divided into 26 cantons that vary greatly with respect to structural and cultural features and political settings and that represent powerful decision-making entities. Switzerland has a reputation for prosperity and stability, but its direct-democratic decision-making settings have been increasingly mobilised by the radical right Swiss People's Party ('Schweizer Volkspartei' or 'SVP') as a powerful means of implementing its anti-immigrant discourse and critique of 'non-deserving' exploiters of the Swiss welfare system (Mazzoleni, 2008). Its success has been reflected in the popular approval of proposals and referendums supported or initiated by the SVP, for example, against mass immigration (2014), for more restrictive asylum regulations (2006), for a ban on minarets (2009) and for the deportation of criminal foreigners (2010). Traditionally a rural-agrarian party rooted in rural German-speaking, Protestant cantons, the SVP has spread its support to all parts of Switzerland and has steadily increased its electoral success from 11.9% to 28.9% from the federal elections in 1991 to those in 2007.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the SVP's claims remain mostly absent from protest politics, which tend to be mobilised by actors defending so-called global justice and new social movement issues (anti-racism and solidarity with immigrants, peace, environmental protection, squatters and autonomous youth movements; Hutter & Giugni, 2009).

The present study proposes and empirically tests the assumption that protest intention and radical right support measure two opposing tendencies regarding the mobilisation for inclusion versus exclusion in the Swiss context. Protest participation should be associated with positive attitudes towards immigrants and social spending, whereas support for radical right parties should be related to negative attitudes towards immigrants and social spending. How might these two opposing tendencies be shaped by social trust, assessed at the individual and aggregate levels?

### *Social trust at the level of individuals and collectives*

Social or generalised trust has been described as a measure of social cohesion (Larsen, 2013) and as an indicator of how individuals 'evaluate the moral fabric in their society'

---

<sup>1</sup>The SVP's success has strongly reduced the significance of smaller right-wing parties like the Swiss Democrats or the Automobile Party, except for the regionalist Ticino League that has limited the SVP's rise in the Italian-speaking canton Ticino (Mazzoleni, 2008). All these parties are included in the measure of radical right support used in the present study (Method section).

(Rothstein & Uslander, 2005, p. 43). Many authors present social trust as a major component of the broadly used notion of social capital (e.g. Harpham, 2008; Putnam, 2000; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008) in its conception as 'features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (Putnam, 1995, p. 67).

The distinction between individual and collective features is an important dimension in this domain. Social capital always implies a 'collective' aspect, as it refers to social connections. However, as certain authors suggest, one can distinguish the social capital 'possessed' by individuals, which they can personally invest in and activate through their integration in networks, from the social capital of collectives or communities, which refers to a climate of generalised trust, reciprocity and cooperation (e.g. Putnam, 2000). The latter is frequently measured through surveys as the average level of trust in 'most people' or the density of associations and civic participation within a given context (van Deth, 2008). Its main distinctive feature has been depicted as the fact that every member of the collective can benefit from this trustworthy and cooperative climate, regardless of whether having personally contributed to it (e.g. Esser, 2008).

The present paper focuses on social trust, which is assessed both as an individual perception and as a contextual climate. At the individual level, it should reflect an outlook on trustworthiness in the environment, which makes individuals more or less open to engage in collective action that goes beyond their own interests. Social trust as a contextual climate represents the generalised trustworthiness perceived by members of a collective, measured as the mean level of individually expressed social trust within a context (see also Subramanian, Kim, & Kawachi, 2002). Both indicators thus refer to 'system trust' (Esser, 2008), which enables cooperation and reduces transaction costs between members of a collective that may not know each other personally. To simultaneously analyse the dynamics linked to individual-level social trust and the dynamics linked to climates of trust in Swiss cantons, the present study employs multi-level models (Hox, 2010). This method allows us to examine whether there is a distinct, contextual effect of social trust on protest intention and radical right support that goes beyond the effect of individual perceptions.

Previous research has stressed the importance of certain contextual features for the creation and maintenance of generalised trust, such as institutional frameworks of fairness and equality (Freitag & Bühlmann, 2009; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008; Uslander & Brown, 2005), control of 'free-riders', closure, density, stability of networks (e.g. Coleman, 1988; Esser, 2008; Putnam, 2000) and ethnic and cultural homogeneity (e.g. Putnam, 2007). The last set of characteristics refers to an important issue in the framework of the present research. One must believe that others are trustworthy and deserving to be motivated to change the system towards more social justice. As argued by Uslander (2002, p. 3), trust in 'most people' reflects the belief that one shares a moral community with people different from oneself and has 'a moral responsibility for their fate'. A certain amount of generalised trust thus seems necessary to shape conditions favourable to collective action towards social inclusion. At the same time, this trust might rest on contextual features that are potentially linked to the opposite dynamics: a climate of trust founded on too much stability and homogeneity might be linked to the endorsement of more restricted forms of solidarity and the promotion of in-group interests through, for instance, the support of the radical right. How have these two implications of social trust been studied in previous research?

*Social capital and social trust—a public good or a tool of exclusion?*

‘Generalised’ trust, also described as ‘thin’ trust (e.g. Putnam, 2000) or bridging social capital (Herrerros & Criado, 2009), has been depicted as an essential foundation of the functioning of contemporary societies (Larsen, 2013; Uslaner, 2002) and appears to be linked, almost per definition, to inclusive tendencies, in contrast to “particularised” or “thick” trust: It ‘can be viewed as a “standing decision” to give most people—even those whom one does not know from direct experience—the benefit of the doubt’ (Rahn & Transue, 1998, p. 545). Delhey, Newton, and Welzel (2011) showed that, in Western countries, the measure of trust in ‘most people’ indeed reflects out-group trust (concerning people met for the first time or those of another nationality or religion) more than in-group trust (concerning family, neighbourhood and people who are known personally). People who express higher levels of social trust tend to participate more in politics and civic organisations, give more to charity, be more open towards minority views (Putnam, 2000; Uslaner, 2002), approve the importance of civic solidarity (Zmerli, 2010), express more tolerant attitudes towards immigrants and other discriminated groups (Herrerros & Criado, 2009; Uslaner, 2002), participate more in collective action and protests (Benson & Rochon, 2004; Dekker, Koopmans, & van den Broek, 1997; Fatke & Freitag, 2012; Quaranta, 2013) and vote less for the radical right (Rydgren, 2009). Regions or nations with higher levels of generalised trust tend to have better working democratic and economic institutions and lower levels of crime and corruption and tend to be more egalitarian than regions with lower levels of trust (Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1993; Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005; Uslaner, 2002; Putnam, 2000).

‘In brief, everyone agrees that social trust is nice to have’, as Larsen states (2007, p. 83). However, the potential downsides of social capital in general have been stressed by various researchers. Especially when understood as the resources that individuals or groups can activate through their integration in networks (e.g. Bourdieu, 1986), social capital can be used, like any other type of capital, in ways that benefit or harm others, and it can be a powerful tool for the reproduction of social inequalities and the exclusion of outsiders. The same holds when social capital is understood as the social fabric of communities because its implications strongly depend on political and social circumstances (Putnam, 2000; Van Deth & Zmerli, 2010; Warren, 2008) as well as on prevailing norms of solidarity (Portes & Vickstrom, 2011). In her study of the collapse of the Weimar Republic, Berman (1997) argues that the richness of German civic society sustained the power of national socialism. Others suggest that aggregate indicators of community social capital might dissimulate the importance of inequalities in the access to community life and resources (e.g. Whitley, 2008). More generally, Portes and Vickstrom (2011) argue that conceptions of social capital based on Putnam’s framework tend to reflect an idealised vision of community based on homogeneity and mutual acquaintance that may not be compatible with the challenges and universalistic goals of modern democratic societies.

Even more relevant to the present research, the findings of Fitzgerald and Lawrence (2011) demonstrate that in the Swiss context, local cohesion at the level of municipalities, measured by home ownership, commuting patterns and linguistic similarities of residents, positively predicts support for the radical right Swiss People’s Party over and above the effect of individual community attachment.

The present study focuses on the question of whether generalised trust, commonly presented as linked to inclusive stances and based on a ‘fundamentally egalitarian ideal’ (Uslaner, 2002, p. 3), can also fuel exclusionary dynamics, given that it may be founded on social settings characterised by homogeneity, which may go hand in hand with more restricted forms of solidarity. To provide a contextualised understanding of the dynamics linked to canton-level social trust, the present study investigates how it is related to relevant canton-level indicators and includes the most technically adequate of these indicators as control variables in the multi-level models (Method section).

### *Research questions*

The present research aims to analyse whether, in Switzerland, social trust as a personal attitude or experienced as a contextual climate has different implications on mobilisation for inclusion versus exclusion, measured as the intention to participate in protest actions versus the support of radical right parties. How are these dynamics linked to the contextual features that underlie social trust in cantons?

## **METHOD**

### *Data*

The analyses are based on data from the *Swiss Household Panel* (FORS, 2013). Since 1999, this survey has followed all members of randomly sampled households in Switzerland via annual computer-assisted telephone interviews.<sup>2</sup> The present study uses the seven waves from 2002 through 2008 because the relevant variables were covered during this period. The final sample with valid answers for all included variables contains 36 360 observations completed by 10 863 individuals nested in 26 cantons. Of these, 94% are Swiss nationals, and 53% are female; and the average age is 46.10 ( $SD=17.05$ ).

Because of the longitudinal data structure, the links between contextual-level and individual-level social trust, protest intention and radical right support throughout the 2002–2008 period were analysed using three-level models with observations treated as Level-1 units. Respondents who changed their canton of residence between 2002 and 2008 were attributed to a single canton of reference, defined as the canton in which they had lived for the greatest number of years.

### *Measures*

*Outcome variables.* *Protest intention* was assessed by computing the mean score on three items: ‘To what extent, in the future, are you prepared to take part in a boycott/strike/demonstration’ (0=*never* to 10=*certainly*)? Exploratory factor analysis (method of extraction: principal axis factoring), performed separately for each survey wave on the three items, yielded one factor, explaining between 78.7% and 81.4% of the total

<sup>2</sup>To control for the clustering of respondents in households, the analyses were replicated with a sample based on the selection of one random person per household and survey wave. These confirmed the findings based on the whole sample.

variance, with an average of 79.9% of explained variance across the seven survey waves. The factor loadings lie between 0.75 and 0.78 for the boycott item, between 0.87 and 0.90 for the strike item and between 0.84 and 0.87 for the demonstration item.

*Radical right support* was measured using the question, 'If there were an election for the National Council tomorrow, for which party would you vote?'<sup>3</sup> This variable was coded 1 if respondents chose the SVP or one of the smaller parties active during the period under study (2002–2008), adhering to a strong anti-immigrant discourse and considered by political scientists as radical right, populist or national-conservative (Fitzgerald & Lawrence, 2011; Mazzoleni, 2008): the regionalist Lega dei Ticinesi (Ticino League), the Swiss Democrats or the Automobile Party. All other valid response categories (other parties, the categories 'other party', 'vote for a candidate, not for a party', 'for no party' and 'wouldn't vote') were coded 0. The category 'I don't know' was considered as a missing value.

*Individual-level predictors.* *Social trust* was assessed using the commonly employed 11-point scale: 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted (10) or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people (0)?'

*Political attitudes* measuring orientations related to protest mobilisation and radical right support included *approval of better opportunities for Swiss citizens* (0 = in favour of equal opportunities for Swiss citizens and foreigners/neither, 1 = in favour of better opportunities for Swiss citizens), *approval of lower taxes on high income* (0 = in favour of an increase/neither, 1 = in favour of lower taxes) and *approval of lower social expenditures* (0 = in favour of an increase/neither, 1 = in favour of a cut). These three indicators are positively associated with each other.<sup>4</sup>

*Socio-demographic characteristics* included *sex* (0 = female, 1 = male), respondents' *age* in years at the time of measurement, *Swiss citizenship* (0 = non-Swiss, 1 = Swiss as first, second or third nationality) and the *highest level of education achieved*. The yearly education categories were recoded so that each respondent was credited with the highest level of education obtained in the last year in which the individual questionnaire was answered. This recoding was based on the assumption that participants who had lower levels of education at previous measurement times were, at that time, moving towards a higher level of education and, thus, assumingly, to a higher socio-economic position. The highest achieved level was then recoded into three categories to compare respondents with low, middle and high levels of education. Dummy variables for low and high levels of education were included in the models, leaving middle-level education as the reference category.

*Contextual predictors.* *Canton-level social trust* was assessed by aggregating the individual scores on the social trust item, as is common in social capital research (Harpham, 2008; van Deth, 2008). More generally, the aggregation of individual-level measures to contextual indicators and their simultaneous integration with the individual predictor in multi-level models allow for a distinction between context and composition effects and are frequently applied in studies on context effects (e.g. Elcheroth et al., 2013). Individual scores on social trust were averaged into a single mean score by canton (averaging the scores from all seven waves from 2002 to 2008) after checking for temporal stability across the years. Pearson correlations between annual levels of social trust in cantons

<sup>3</sup>This question was asked to all respondents regardless of their voting rights.

<sup>4</sup>Binary logistic regression models were performed for each pair of indicators, separately for each of the seven survey waves. Detailed results (not shown owing to space restrictions) can be obtained from the author upon request.

between 2002 and 2008 led to coefficients between  $r(24) = .49$  and  $r(24) = .90$ , with an average correlation of  $r(24) = .68$  ( $p < .05$ ). Before aggregation, the observations were weighted by the respective transversal design weights.

The *percentage of non-Swiss citizens* and the *percentage of disability pensioners* were included in the models as control variables measuring cultural and social diversity at the level of cantons. These two indicators were selected from a set of variables assumed to be relevant to canton-level social trust. Features such as the homogeneity of cantonal settings were assessed by the potential confrontation with different kinds of cultural and social diversity, measured as the percentage of non-Swiss citizens (average of indicators for 2002–2008), disability pensioners (average of indicators for 2002 and 2008), unemployed persons (average of indicators for 2004 and 2008) and the degree of urbanisation (portion of persons residing in agglomerations or isolated cities, indicator for 2001). Contextual frameworks of equality were assessed by the cantonal level of income inequality (Gini coefficient, average of indicators for 2003 and 2006).<sup>5</sup>

Preliminary correlational analyses (Table 2) led to the selection of the *percentage of non-Swiss citizens* and the *percentage of disability pensioners* as canton-level control variables to avoid multi-collinearity and to avoid overloading the models given the low number of Level-3 units. Both display moderate correlations with canton-level social trust compared with the *percentage of unemployed*, which is highly correlated with social trust, versus the *degree of urbanisation* and the *level of income inequality*, which are not significantly correlated with social trust.

### Data analysis

Given the longitudinal data structure (repeated observations nested in individuals nested in cantons), a three-level linear model was fitted for the continuous scale *protest intention*, and a three-level logistic model based on Bernoulli distributions was fitted for the binary variable *radical right support*, using the software program HLM 6 (Raudenbush, Bryk, & Congdon, 2004). For each outcome variable, the first step was the estimation of a null model with varying intercepts at Levels 2 (individuals) and 3 (cantons). In a second model, individual predictors likely to change across annual measurements (social trust, political attitudes, age and Swiss citizenship) were added at Level 1 (observations), while sex and the highest level of education achieved, considered stable across the different measurement moments, were included at Level 2 (individuals). Note that even though the models distinguish between the levels of observations and individuals, both will be described as individual-level effects, as the present study focuses on the distinction between contextual-level and individual-level links, not on intra-individual variation. Canton-level social trust, the percentage of non-Swiss citizens and the percentage of disability pensioners were included in a third model.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>All indicators are based on data from the Swiss Federal Statistical Office and were retrieved from the website of Base de Données des Cantons et des Villes Suisses (<http://www.badac.ch/fr/index.php>).

<sup>6</sup>Additional models with varying slopes of social trust at Level 1 were tested to explore potential cross-level interactions, but no significant variance was detected for either of the two outcome variables. These findings suggest that the effect of individual-level social trust does not vary between cantons.

**RESULTS**

*Descriptive statistics*

Descriptive statistics for all measures included in the final models are shown in Table 1.

*Correlates of canton-level social trust*

Table 2 shows that canton-level social trust is negatively correlated with the percentage of non-Swiss citizens, unemployed persons and disability pensioners. The correlations with the degree of urbanisation and the level of income inequality are not significant.

*Multi-level models*

The baseline models (Table 3) show that both protest intention and radical right support vary significantly at the individual and cantonal levels. The intra-class correlation

Table 1. Means (and standard deviations) by level for all variables included in the final models

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
Level 1 (observations, <i>N</i> = 36 360)		
Protest intention	3.96	3.22
Radical right support	0.13	0.34
Social trust	6.05	2.32
Better chances for Swiss citizens	0.27	0.44
Lower social expenses	0.21	0.41
Lower taxes	0.09	0.29
Age	46.10	17.05
Swiss	0.94	0.25
Level 2 (individuals, <i>N</i> = 10 863)		
Low education	0.25	0.43
High education	0.25	0.44
Male	0.47	0.50
Level 3 (cantons, <i>N</i> = 26)		
Social trust	5.81	0.43
Percentage non-Swiss	18.55	6.77
Percentage disability pensioners	5.19	1.19

Note: Data from Swiss Household Panel and Swiss Federal Statistical Office.

Table 2. Canton-level correlates of social trust (Pearson correlation coefficients)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Social trust	–				
2. Percentage of non-Swiss citizens	–.41*	–			
3. Percentage of unemployed	–.70**	.85**	–		
4. Percentage of disability pensioners	–.54**	.46*	.54**	–	
5. Degree of urbanisation	–.14	.68**	.63**	.27	–
6. Income inequality	.16	.29	.17	–.25	.45*

Note: Data from Swiss Household Panel and Swiss Federal Statistical Office.

\**p* < .05.

\*\**p* < .01.

Table 3. Three-level regression models for protest intention (linear regression) and radical right support (logistic regression): unstandardised coefficients, standard errors and significance levels for full models; variance components for Models 0–2

Parameters	B coefficient (SE)					
	Protest intention			Radical right support		
Intercept	3.55 (0.15)***			−4.03 (0.12)***		
Level 1 (observations)						
Social trust	0.02 (0.01)**			−0.08 (0.02)***		
Lower taxes	−0.38 (0.03)***			0.28 (0.09)**		
Lower social expenses	−0.30 (0.03)***			0.82 (0.04)***		
Better chances for Swiss citizens	−0.22 (0.04)***			1.06 (0.05)***		
Age	−0.06 (0.00)***			0.00 (0.00)		
Swiss	0.20 (0.10)*			0.78 (0.07)***		
Level 2 (individuals)						
Low education	−0.61 (0.06)***			0.40 (0.05)***		
High education	0.57 (0.06)***			−0.59 (0.05)***		
Male	0.04 (0.07)			0.60 (0.08)***		
Level 3 (cantons)						
Social trust	−0.70 (0.19)**			0.80 (0.26)**		
Percentage of non-Swiss	0.03 (0.01)*			−0.02 (0.01)		
Percentage of disability pensioners	0.11 (0.07)			−0.10 (0.06) <sup>†</sup>		
Variance components	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2
Level 1 intercept	2.57	2.54	2.54	–	–	–
Level 2 intercept	7.43***	6.24***	6.24***	3.18***	2.66***	2.67***
Level 3 intercept	0.30***	0.33***	0.13***	0.31***	0.30***	0.13***

Note: HLM estimation with robust standard errors, method of estimation: full maximum likelihood for protest intention, full penalised quasi-likelihood for radical right support. All predictors (except for dummy variables) were grand mean centred. Sources: Swiss Household Panel and Swiss Federal Statistical Office.

\*\*\* $p < .001$ ,

\*\* $p < .01$ ,

\* $p < .05$ ,

<sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ .

coefficient indicates that 3% and 5% of the variation in protest intention and radical right support, respectively, are clustered between cantons.

*Protest intention.* The results reported in Table 3 confirm the empirical validity of the protest indicator as a measure of inclusive tendencies: Protest intention is negatively related to approval of better opportunities for Swiss citizens, lower taxes on high income and cutting of social expenditures. The willingness to participate in protest actions is also positively related to being male, being Swiss and having a high level of education and is negatively related to low educational attainment and age.

Most importantly, the results show opposite relationships for social trust depending on the level at which social trust is assessed. For individuals, higher social trust is associated with an increase in protest intention, whereas higher social trust at the canton level is linked to a decrease in protest intention. Finally, the cantonal percentage of non-Swiss citizens is positively related to protest intention and thus has an opposite effect compared with canton-level social trust, whereas the cantonal percentage of disability pensioners has no significant effect.

*Radical right support.* In contrast to protest intention, support for the radical right is positively predicted by approval of better opportunities for Swiss citizens, lower taxes on high income and cutting of social expenditures, thereby confirming its empirical validity as a measure of exclusionary tendencies (Table 3). The probability of supporting the radical right is higher among men, Swiss nationals and those with low educational attainment, whereas a high level of education is negatively related to radical right support.

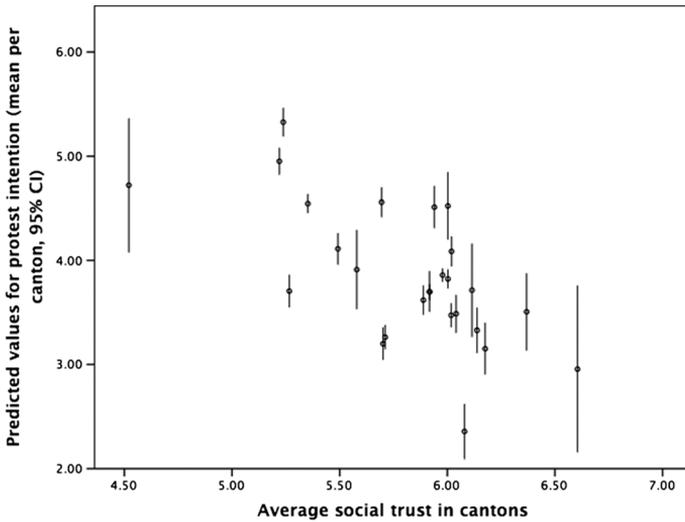


Figure 1. Predicted values for protest intention over the range of canton-level social trust. *Source:* Swiss Household Panel.

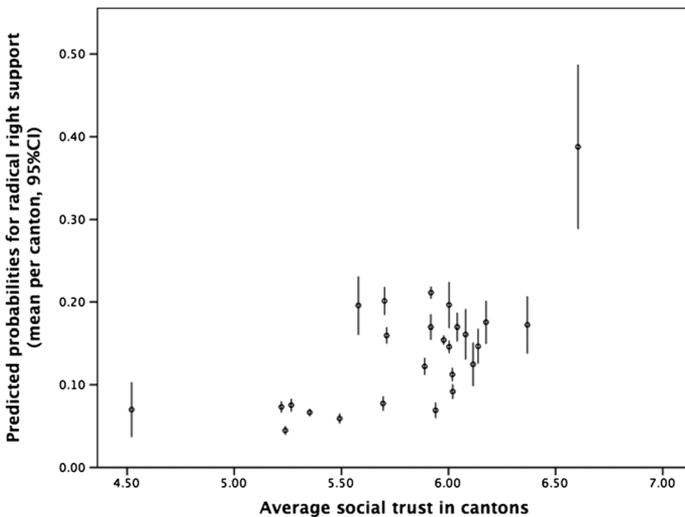


Figure 2. Predicted probabilities for radical right support over the range of canton-level social trust. *Source:* Swiss Household Panel.

Similar to protest intention, social trust gives rise to opposing relationships at the individual and cantonal levels. Higher social trust at the individual level is associated with a lower probability of supporting radical right parties, whereas higher canton-level social trust is associated with a higher probability of support for these parties. Furthermore, the effects of the canton-level control variables point in the opposite direction of canton-level social trust. However, only the percentage of disability pensioners has a marginally significant negative effect, whereas the percentage of non-Swiss citizens has no significant impact on radical right support.

Figures 1 and 2 show predicted values for protest intention and predicted probabilities for radical right support, plotted over the range of canton-level social trust.

## DISCUSSION

The present study has investigated how individual-level and contextual-level social trust is linked to protest intention and radical right support in Swiss cantons. The findings confirm that the outcomes are adequate measures of opposing tendencies rooted in different sets of political attitudes related to inclusion versus exclusion. Protest intention is negatively related to approval of better opportunities for Swiss citizens than for foreigners, lower taxes on high income and cutting of social expenditures, whereas support for radical right parties is positively related to these stances. Most importantly, the multi-level results reveal opposing patterns, depending on the level at which social trust is assessed. For individuals, higher social trust is associated with higher protest intention and lower radical right support. However, individuals who live in cantons with higher average rates of social trust are *less* likely to engage in protest actions and are *more* likely to support the radical right. For both outcome variables, the canton-level effect of social trust goes beyond the effect of individual-level trust and persists even when controlling for cantonal portions of non-Swiss citizens and of disability pensioners. Analyses of the canton-level correlates of social trust show that it is negatively related to the percentage of non-Swiss citizens, unemployed persons and disability pensioners. It is not significantly linked to the level of income inequality or to the degree of urbanisation, which might be because these cleavages are more adequately measured at other contextual levels than between cantons.

The individual-level results thus confirm the picture of social trust as a predictor of mobilisation for collective action and protest behaviour (e.g. Benson & Rochon, 2004) and a predictor of inclusive and tolerant orientations (e.g. Herreros & Criado, 2009; Uslaner, 2002). Individuals who trust others more are those who oppose right-wing voting and who are more willing to engage in protest actions, thereby potentially defending minorities and questioning existing power structures. However, when considered as an aggregate measure across Swiss cantons, higher levels of generalised trust appear to not entail a 'culture of trust' based on 'the idea that things will get better for those who have less and that it is in our power to make the world better' (Uslaner, 2002, p. 3). The cantons with stronger climates of trust are precisely those in which individuals are more likely to demobilise from protest and to support radical right parties that overtly call for the exclusion of immigrants and reductions in the welfare state. The results thus confirm earlier findings of a positive link between indicators of cohesiveness and radical right support in Switzerland (Fitzgerald & Lawrence, 2011).

More generally, the results demonstrate the importance of distinguishing between different levels of analysis and the use of multi-level models, revealing, in the present case, the coexistence of two opposing dynamics at the individual and contextual levels. This finding indicates a distinct context effect of canton-level trust that is not equivalent to the cumulative effect of individual trusters. This type of diverging relationship at different levels has been found in other multi-level research. For instance, Elcheroth (2006) observed a similar paradox in the context of war trauma and conceptions of humanitarian norms: Individual victims of war tend to express lower support for a legal conception of humanitarian norms compared with non-victims, whereas a higher rate of victims at the community level leads to more support of a legal conception of humanitarian norms. According to this author, such findings do 'not contain any logical contradiction' (p. 923) as the community-level indicator reflects a collective experience shaping a specific normative climate, whereas the individual-level indicator reflects personal experiences, which can both independently affect community members' reactions. Following these considerations, one may interpret the aggregate trust indicator used in the present study as reflecting the prevailing normative climate concerning generalised trustworthiness, whereas the individual expression of trust reflects how individuals themselves perceive others' trustworthiness.

Distinct patterns at the aggregate level may furthermore reveal the influence of structural features, as has been argued by Dekker et al. (1997, p. 239) who observed a positive correlation between formal political participation and protest participation at the individual level and a negative correlation at the national level, which they explain by differing structures of cleavages and political opportunity that 'shape the strategic repertoires used in collective action'. The present study has examined certain conditions that have been suggested as important for the creation and maintenance of social trust, which can provide a deeper understanding of the relationships between social trust and inclusion versus exclusion found in the Swiss context. Whereas social trust at the level of cantons does not seem to be related to economic inequality, it is highly intertwined with other canton-level indicators that reflect social and cultural homogeneity.

This finding indicates complex patterns that underlie social trust and mobilisation for inclusion or exclusion. Instead of distinct causal relationships, the multi-level results should be interpreted as dynamics that occur within regional configurations of structural, political and social factors. As shown by the negative correlations between canton-level social trust and the portion of non-Swiss citizens, unemployed persons and disability pensioners, cantons with relatively high levels of social trust are those in which residents are less frequently confronted with diversity in the sense of minorities or 'outsiders' regarding citizenship and employment. It is in these cantons that people are less likely to engage in protest and are more willing to support the radical right. Although a certain level of stability and closure in the community might be favourable to the creation of generalised trust and collective action, a high level of trust together with relatively little confrontation with diversity can be linked to more restricted forms of solidarity and exclusionary tendencies, especially if these issues are mobilised by political actors.

The complex relationships between social trust and mobilisation for inclusion versus exclusion or mobilisation for social change versus the defence of resources seem to reflect the complex task of finding an equilibrium between stability and change and between control and openness in modern societies. Perceiving others as trustworthy is important to mobilise for collective action towards equality-directed social change. However, a climate of social trust together with a high level of homogeneity appears to stimulate

motivation to defend the status quo, which can be expressed through support for radical right parties. This finding reinforces recent critics of research on prejudice reduction who claim a more complex approach to the achievement of social justice that contrasts with the traditional idealisation of social harmony (Dixon, Levine, Reicher, & Durrheim, 2012; Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2009). These authors suggest that positive intergroup attitudes do not necessarily correspond with status equality and the absence of discrimination. Indeed, in high-social-trust cantons, the majority appears to sustain the social order, but this apparent harmony can entail compromised minority rights and reinforce inequality at the broader societal level. Building more social capital might 'be good for us', as Putnam (2000, p. 414) argues, but what about those who are not recognised as members of the community?

To conclude, the findings confirm the need for a more complex view of the relationships between social trust, diversity, harmony and exclusion and demonstrate the benefit of a contextualised approach that understands social dynamics at different levels and takes into account the importance of the definition of boundaries of identity and solidarity. This is an important point regarding the political implications of social capital research, which has frequently called for strategies that help increase social capital for the benefit of everyone (Castiglione, Van Deth, & Wolleb, 2008) and which has, more recently, focused on the presumed harmful effects of diversity on social capital.

Rather than examining whether high levels of diversity erode social trust (e.g. Putnam, 2007), the present study suggests that in certain contexts and configurations, that is, combined with relatively low levels of diversity, climates of trust may be linked to the endorsement of more restricted forms of solidarity and the reproduction of inequality, thus potentially representing a risk, rather than a resource for, contemporary societies.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication benefited from the support of the Swiss National Centre of Competence in Research LIVES—Overcoming vulnerability: Life course perspectives, which is financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation. I am grateful to the Swiss National Science Foundation for its financial assistance. Furthermore, this study has been realised using the data collected by the SHP, which is based at the Swiss Centre of Expertise in the Social Sciences FORS. The project is financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation. Finally, I am very grateful to Guy Elcheroth and Dominique Joye for their valuable advice. I would also like to thank Sandra Penic; the members of the *Research Group on Collective Vulnerability and Social Change*; and two anonymous reviewers and review editor Li Liu, for their helpful suggestions.

## REFERENCES

- Benson, M., & Rochon, T. R. (2004). Interpersonal trust and the magnitude of protest. A micro and macro level approach. *Comparative Political Studies*, 37, 435–457.
- Berman, S. (1997). Civil society and the collapse of the Weimar Republic. *World Politics*, 49, 401–429.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). New York: Greenwood.

- Castiglione, D., Van Deth, J. W., & Wolleb, G. (2008). Social capital's fortune: An introduction. In D. Castiglione, J. W. Van Deth, & G. Wolleb (Eds.), *The handbook of social capital* (pp. 1–10). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Coleman, J. (1988). Social capital and the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, *94*, 95–120.
- Dekker, P., Koopmans, R., & van den Broek, A. (1997). Voluntary associations, social movements and individual political behaviour in Western Europe. In J. W. van Deth (Ed.), *Private groups and public life. Social participation, voluntary associations and political involvement in representative democracies* (pp. 224–243). London: Routledge.
- Delhey, J., Newton, K., & Welzel, C. (2011). How general is trust in 'most people'? Solving the radius of trust problem. *American Sociological Review*, *76*, 786–807.
- Dixon, J., Levine, M., Reicher, S., & Durrheim, K. (2012). Beyond prejudice: Are negative evaluations the problem and is getting us to like one another more the solution? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, *35*, 411–425.
- Elcheroth, G. (2006). Individual-level and community-level effects of war trauma on social representations related to humanitarian law. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *36*, 907–930.
- Elcheroth, G., Penic, S., Fasel, R., Giudici, F., Glaeser, S., Joye, D., Spini, D. (2013). Spatially weighted context data and their application to collective war experiences. *Sociological Methodology*, *43*, 364–411.
- Esser, H. (2008). The two meanings of social capital. In D. Castiglione, J. W. Van Deth, & G. Wolleb (Eds.), *The handbook of social capital* (pp. 22–49). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Fatke, M., & Freitag, M. (2012). Direct democracy: Protest catalyst or protest alternative? *Political Behavior*, *35*, 237–260.
- Fitzgerald, J., & Lawrence, D. (2011). Local cohesion and radical right support: The case of the Swiss People's Party. *Electoral Studies*, *30*, 834–847.
- FORS. (2013). *Swiss Household Panel* (waves 1 to 14) [data set]. Lausanne: FORS.
- Freitag, M., & Bühlmann, M. (2009). Crafting trust: The role of political institutions in a comparative perspective. *Comparative Political Studies*, *42*, 1537–1566.
- Harpham, T. (2008). The measurement of community social capital through surveys. In I. Kawachi, S. V. Subramanian, & D. Kim (Eds.), *Social capital and health* (pp. 51–62). New York: Springer.
- Herreros, F., & Criado, H. (2009). Social trust, social capital and perceptions of immigration. *Political Studies*, *57*, 337–355.
- Hox, J. (2010). *Multilevel analysis. Techniques and applications*, 2nd ed. London: Routledge.
- Hutter, S., & Giugni, M. (2009). Protest politics in a changing political context: Switzerland, 1975–2005. *Swiss Political Science Review*, *15*, 427–461.
- Larsen, C. A. (2007). How welfare regimes generate and erode social capital: The impact of underclass phenomena. *Comparative Politics*, *40*, 83–101.
- Larsen, C. A. (2013). *The rise and fall of social cohesion: The construction and deconstruction of social trust in the US, UK, Sweden and Denmark*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mazzoleni, O. (2008). *Nationalisme et populisme en Suisse: La radicalisation de la 'nouvelle' UDC [Nationalism and populism in Switzerland: The radicalisation of the 'new' UDC]*. Lausanne: Presses polytechniques et universitaires romandes.
- Portes, A., & Vickstrom, E. (2011). Diversity, social capital, and cohesion. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *37*, 461–479.
- Putnam, R. D. (1995). Bowling alone. America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy*, *6*, 65–78.
- Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Putnam, R. D. (2007). E pluribus unum: Diversity and community in the twenty-first century: The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize lecture. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, *30*, 137–174.
- Putnam, R. D., Leonardi, R., & Nanetti, R. (1993). *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Quaranta, M. (2013). The impact of institutional decentralization on protest in Western Europe. *International Political Science Review*, *34*, 502–518.

- Rahn, W. M., & Transue, J. E. (1998). Social trust and value change: The decline of social capital in American youth, 1976–1995. *Political Psychology, 19*, 545–565.
- Raudenbush, S. W., Bryk, A. S., & Congdon, R. (2004). *HLM 6 for Windows [computer software]*. Skokie, IL: Scientific Software International, Inc.
- Rothstein, B., & Stolle, D. (2008). The state and social capital: An institutional theory of generalized trust. *Comparative Politics, 40*, 441–459.
- Rothstein, B., & Uslaner, E. (2005). All for all: Equality, corruption, and social trust. *World Politics, 58*, 41–72.
- Rydgren, J. (2009). Social isolation? Social capital and radical right-wing voting in Western Europe. *Journal of Civil Society, 5*, 129–150.
- Saguy, T., Tausch, N., Dovidio, J. F., & Pratto, F. (2009). The irony of harmony: Intergroup contact can produce false expectations for equality. *Psychological Science, 20*, 114–121.
- Subramanian, S. V., Kim, D. J., & Kawachi, I. (2002). Social trust and self-rated health in US communities: A multilevel analysis. *Journal of Urban Health, 79*, 21–34.
- Uslaner, E. M. (2002). *The moral foundations of trust*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Uslaner, E. M. (2008). Trust as a moral value. In D. Castiglione, J. W. Van Deth, & G. Wolleb (Eds.), *The handbook of social capital* (pp. 101–121). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Uslaner, E. M., & Brown, M. (2005). Inequality, trust and civic engagement. *American Politics Research, 33*, 868–894.
- Van Deth, J. W. (2008). Measuring social capital. In D. Castiglione, J. W. Van Deth, & G. Wolleb (Eds.), *The handbook of social capital* (pp. 150–176). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Van Deth, J. W., & Zmerli, S. (2010). Introduction: Civicism, equality, and democracy—A “dark side” of social capital? *American Behavioral Scientist, 53*, 631–639.
- Warren, M. E. (2008). The nature and logic of bad social capital. In D. Castiglione, J. W. Van Deth, & G. Wolleb (Eds.), *The handbook of social capital* (pp. 122–149). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Whitley, C. (2008). Social capital and public health. Qualitative and ethnographic approaches. In I. Kawachi, S. V. Subramanian, & D. Kim (Eds.), *Social capital and health* (pp. 95–115). New York: Springer.
- Zmerli, S. (2010). Social capital and norms of citizenship: An ambiguous relationship? *American Behavioral Scientist, 53*, 657–676.