Sources for Trusting Most People:
How National Goals for Socializing Children Promote the Contributions Made by Trust of the In-Group and the Out-Group to Non-Specific Trust

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Abstract

We proposed a model suggesting how national goals for socializing children moderate the contributions made by the individual’s level of in-group trust and out-group trust to his/her level of trust in most people, viz., non-specific trust. Consistent with our hypotheses, a two-level HLM analysis of representative data across 49 countries from the World Values Survey (2005-2007) indicates that the individual’s level of trust in people known personally is a predictor of non-specific trust for persons of all national groups, but a stronger predictor in countries emphasizing socialization for Self-directedness as opposed to Other-directedness. The individual’s trust in out-groups is likewise a predictor of non-specific trust for all national groups, but a stronger predictor in countries emphasizing socialization for Self-directedness as well as for Civility as opposed to Practicality. Although trust in the family is not a significant predictor of non-specific trust across all national groups, it predicts non-specific trust in those countries characterized by socialization for Self-directedness. Our findings have important implications for the impact of variation in socialization practices for human capital formation and associated management practices across national cultures.

Keywords: interpersonal trust, dimensions of culture, cross-cultural management, national goals for the socialization of children, World Values Survey
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“Trust thyself only, and another shall not betray thee.”

Thomas Fuller, *Gnomenologia* (1732)

Trust is a key construct in the social sciences, behavioral sciences and related fields. In particular, it is generalized trust (i.e., trusting unfamiliar others and out-group members) which plays a crucial role in the modern society’s functioning and thriving (e.g., Fukuyama, 1995; Inglehart, 1999; Putnam, 1993; Uslaner, 2004; Zucker, 1986). To assess the level of generalized trust, most surveys have utilized General Social Survey’s (GSS) trust question: “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people? (1 = Most people can be trusted; 2 = You can’t be too careful)” Thinking critically about this measure, however, Delhey, Newton, and Welzel (2011) observed that the radius of trust in unspecified “most people” varies considerably across cultures, such that in some cultural groups it is extended to remote others (e.g., in the U.S.A. and U.K.), whereas in some cultures it is limited to familiar others and to in-groups (e.g., in China and South Korea). As a result, it is better to consider GSS trust question to be a measure of non-specific trust instead of generalized trust.

This issue of the radius of non-specific trust (i.e., trust in “most people”) (see also Realo, Allik, & Greenfield, 2008; Reeskens, 2013; Welch, Sikkink, & Loveland, 2007) raises an important question for social and cultural psychologists: What socio-psychological sources (i.e., sources of trust) does the individual’s non-specific trust
derive from, and how can we unpack the cultural complexity underlying this dynamic? Especially, what cultural mechanisms can widen the individual’s circle of non-specific trust and in turn facilitate cooperation between unrelated and unfamiliar people? In this article, we develop a culturally sensitive model to identify the sources of one’s non-specific trust, and reveal the moderating role of national contexts for the socialization of children on one’s development of non-specific trust. Our model was tested against representative national data from 49 countries, and gained intriguing support. Our study is thus a promising starting point to understand the socio-psychological mechanisms for the development of non-specific trust, and to unpack its cultural complexities through the lens of national emphases on the socializing of children, the nation’s future human capital.

**The Socio-Psychological Sources for Developing Non-Specific Trust**

Trusting others can be a costly endeavor, given that trusting another renders the trustor vulnerable to the trustee’s actions (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). This is especially the case when the trustee is not specified (e.g., “most people”), as the trustor will face some uncertainty whether the trustee is a benevolent and reliable person suitable to trust. If the unspecified trustee connotes out-group members, an additional social consideration is that the shared norm of reciprocity is more strongly established and enforced among in-group members compared to out-group members (Putnam, 1993; Fukuyama, 1995; Yamagishi, 1998), which in turn renders incentive structures favoring in-group cooperation over cooperation with outsiders. As a result, people often exhibit in-group biases in trusting (Brewer, 2008; Williams, 2001; Yamagishi, 1998), and consider out-group members suspect. Various historically derived resentments and antagonisms
towards certain ethnic, racial, and national out-groups further exacerbate such a deficit for initiating inter-group cooperation (Stephan & Stephan, 2000).

However, in a modern society, where social networks are fluid and large-scale exchange is economically functional (Zucker, 1986), trusting unfamiliar and remote others (i.e., targets for generalized trust) is critical for the society’s as well as the individual’s thriving (e.g., Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Fukuyama, 1995; Helliwell & Putnam, 2004; Putnam, 1993; Uslaner, 2004). From this perspective, it is important to examine what socio-psychological sources could boost one’s confidence in having optimistic beliefs about the trustworthiness of unspecified trustees, especially those from the out-group.

Based on the extant research (e.g., Delhey & Welzel, 2012; Freitag & Traunmüller, 2009; Glanville & Paxton, 2007; Newton & Zmerli, 2011; Stolle, 2002), we identified three major sources for deriving and supporting the individual’s non-specific trust. First, an individual’s non-specific trust could be derived from his/her experiences with familiar in-group members, such that trust in unspecified trustees can be eventually extended to the out-group by projecting one’s in-group trust (e.g., Delhey & Welzel, 2012; Glanville & Paxton, 2007; Freitag & Traunmüller, 2009). The key mechanism of such trust generalization may be the perceived similarities between familiar others and unfamiliar others (cf., Stolle, 2002). For instance, in the inter-group context, a superordinate and inclusive social identity (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993), such as shared nationality or humanity, bridges the gap between the in-group and the out-group, which in turn reduces the in-group bias in trusting others, and promotes inter-group cooperation (Brewer, 2008; Buchan, Brewer, Grimalda, Wilson,
Fatas, & Foddy, 2011). Besides, from the social learning point of view, the individual’s positive experiences with his/her in-groups in the past can also spill over to other groups of people and other settings, which in turn produces a generalized expectation of any unspecified and unfamiliar other’s benignity and trustworthiness in future interactions (see Glanville & Paxton, 2007, for a review).

Secondly, the individual’s non-specific trust is based on his/her expectations for unfamiliar trustees over and beyond what may be provided by personal experiences interacting with others. Each cultural group has its repertoires, narratives, or worldviews regarding the outsider and the out-group (e.g., Eidelson & Eidelson, 2003; Korostelina, 2013; Liu & László, 2007). If the cultural narrative somehow frames intergroup relationships as interdependent and cooperative instead of independent or competitive, then out-group suspiciousness or/and animosity is disengaged, and the positive attitudes and benign expectations toward the out-group are enabled to flourish (Williams, 2001). From this perspective, the expectation of the outsider’s benevolence and dependability could be a direct source for enlarging one’s non-specific trust, and is not necessarily dependent on the projection of one’s in-group experiences. In other words, we propose that out-group trust, independent of in-group trust (see Delhey & Welzel, 2012), is a root of one’s trust in unspecified social agents across a broad range.

Thirdly, the individual’s non-specific trust is guaranteed by his/her confidence in the effectiveness of societal institutions in promoting cooperation across relational and group boundaries (cf., Freitag & Traunmüller, 2009; Robbins, 2012; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008; Stolle, 2002). Societal institutions, such as legal services and government regulations, bridge the gap between local groups (e.g., families, personal networks) by
formalizing and enforcing the rules of reciprocity and cooperation, which serve as the institutionalized (vs. informal) mechanism for producing trust on a wider societal scale (Bachmann & Inkpen, 2010; Delhey & Welzel, 2012; Robbins, 2012; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008; Zucker, 1986). Historically, this enlargement of the radius of trust is achieved through the modernization processes by which the state, rule of law, and accountable government are established in replacement of parochial associations and arbitrary governance (see Fukuyama, 2011; North, Wallace, & Weingast, 2012). On the flip side, when societal institutions are ineffective or even corrupt, institutional mistrust then becomes prevalent (e.g., Chang & Chu, 2006; Cook, Hardin, & Levi, 2005; Newton, 2001; Uslaner, 2004), generalized trust is diminished, and social relationships beyond known others are avoided for fear of exploitation (North et al., 2012). Indeed, empirical evidence suggests that people’s generalized trust is elevated by the quality of democracy, government effectiveness, and the rule of law in society (Newton & Zmerli, 2011), or a society’s institutional quality (Robbins, 2012).

Taken together then, we propose that one’s in-group trust, one’s out-group trust, and one’s institutional trust are three sources of his/her non-specific trust. In particular, when out-group trust and institutional trust are dominant over in-group trust as the root of trust generalization, the individual’s non-specific trust will be more closely tied to generalized trust, which reduces his/her dependence on local groups and enhances his/her willingness to engage in broad-scale social cooperation (see Delhey et al., 2011; Delhey & Welzel, 2012).

National Culture and Developing Non-Specific Trust
Researchers have conducted many global investigations assessing people’s non-specific trust (e.g., the World Values Survey), and noted striking cultural differences. As mentioned earlier, Delhey et al.’s (2011) study revealed that the radius of people’s non-specific trust was narrower (i.e., more in-group connected) in some cultures, but was wider (i.e., more out-group connected) in others. In parallel with this finding, Jing and Chen’s (in preparation) recent meta-analytic review indicates that there is a converging pattern of findings suggesting that Westerners and East Asians differ substantially in their levels of generalized trust, such that Westerners trust strangers to a greater extent than do East Asians.

A possible factor that accounts for this difference is national culture (see also Allik & Realo, 2004; Delhey et al., 2011; Delhey & Welzel, 2012; Realo et al., 2008), a variation which can be mapped onto Individualism and Collectivism (Hofstede, 1983; Triandis, 1995). Individualism and Collectivism theory suggests that the collectivists’ interdependence is limited to their local networks, whereas the individualists’ cooperative spirit is extended to unfamiliar others and strangers as a result of the permeability (vs. rigidity) of social networks, voluntary association and cooperation, and the protection provided by societal institutions (see Allik & Realo, 2004; Triandis, 1995; Yamagishi, 1998). Indeed, by analyzing data regarding the relationship between Individualism-Collectivism and social capital, Allik and Realo (2004) found a statistical association between Individualism and generalized trust across states within the U.S.A. as well as across 42 countries. By contrast, familial collectivism (e.g., loyalty and interdependence with one’s family) was found to be negatively associated with social capital across 58 countries (Realo et al., 2008).
Despite these previous attempts (e.g., Allik & Realo, 2004; Realo et al., 2008), there is still limited research about the mechanisms by which cultural Individualism and Collectivism is translated to shape the individual’s tendency to trust more widely. In the current article, we will introduce a novel approach for unpacking national culture in order to understand these trust-related cultural complexities.

**The Role of National Culture**

National culture refers to the social context in which social psychological processes lead to psychological outcomes characterizing a nation’s human capital (Bond & Lun, 2014). This capital-building promotes national agendas for survival and development in light of that nation’s current ecological, economic, societal, political, religious and international circumstances, as they have emerged throughout that nation’s history.

Conceptualized in this way, national culture will impact on its citizen’s psychological characteristics by positioning the psychological characteristics of its citizenry differently with respect to the citizenry of other nations. So, for example, national groups vary widely in terms of their citizens’ average level of subjective well-being (Veenhoven, 2008), whether defined as life satisfaction, happiness, absence of negative affect or some combination of these indicators. This and other similar outcomes distinguishing the citizens of one culture from those of other cultures could be termed the “positioning effect of national culture” (Leung & Bond, 1989).

But, how should culture be unpacked? What is it about national context that leads to the production of different average levels of a psychological outcome, viz., its positioning effect? Bond and Lun (2014) have proposed that a sensible starting point for
exploring this developmental issue is to compare how children in a nation are socialized. As children constitute the future human capital of a nation, the qualities that are emphasized in raising succeeding generations should reflect characteristics of the nation’s historical-ecological legacy and promote its development. These socialization goals will then be reflected in the typical psychological profile of that nation’s citizenry, viz., its citizens’ typical motivational and cognitive profile. These in turn could be used to explain the behavioral outputs of a nation’s citizens, such as its performance on tests of educational achievement, pace of life, homicide rate, and level of alcohol consumption (Minkov, 2013). Given the critical role of early childhood experience in the establishment and development of one’s trust (e.g., Erikson, 1950; Hardin, 2002; Rotter, 1967; Uslaner, 1999), we will apply this novel approach for unpacking culture to disentangle the cultural dynamics underlying the development of non-specific trust in this study.

**National Goals for the Socialization of Children and Developing Non-Specific Trust**

Using responses of representative samples from 55 nations in the World Values Survey, Bond and Lun (2014) have extracted two fundamental dimensions underlying countries’ goals for socializing their children. The first one is Self-directedness vs. Other-directedness, a contrast which emphasizes fostering a citizenry’s self-determination and independence vs. fostering its obedience and religious faith. The second is Civility vs. Practicality, a contrast which emphasizes fostering its citizenry’s tolerance and benevolence towards others vs. fostering its instrumentality and materialism. Indeed, certain similarities can be noted between these two dimensions and Inglehart’s (1997) dimensions of Traditional vs. Secular-Rational values and Survival vs. Self-Expression values. But, socialization goals refer to the processes of human capital production,
whereas values, however measured, can be considered outcomes of such culturally shaped socialization. By introducing this new construct of child socialization goals, the question of why and how psychological outcomes, such as value endorsement, emerge from national cultures may be better understood.

The importance of socialization for Self-directedness in the development of non-specific trust lies in self-determination and individualization. In particular, socialization for Self-directedness fosters independence and personal responsibility rather than the social embeddedness and compliance characterizing other-directedness. In a society where a person’s embeddedness does not play an important role in determining another person’s behavior, trusting and being trustworthy should be internally motivated and maintained (self-determined), such that a variety of social agents is likewise presumed to possess the moral integrity to govern their actions. As a result, the projection of one’s knowledge and experiences about in-group members’ honesty to unspecified trustees is more likely to happen (see also Stolle, 2002).

More importantly, independence and autonomy facilitate voluntary associations and “bridging interactions” (see Putnam, 2000; Stolle, 2002), exchanges with others that increase the individual’s experiences of cooperation with people of different character (see also Allik & Realo, 2004). Socialization for self-directedness also facilitates individualization and de-categorization (see Allport, 1954; Brewer & Miller, 1988), which in turn attenuates the tendency to derogate and dehumanize the out-group, thereby increasing the likelihood of recognizing a shared benevolence and reliability between in-group members and out-group members. Consequently, the circle of non-specific trust is widened to incorporate remote others, which in turn emancipates the social agent from
committed and closed relationships, so that he or she feels freer to cooperate to realize personal agendas with all persons, including strangers (see also Yamagishi, 1998). From this perspective, socialization for Self-directedness strengthens the linkage between one’s trust in the in-group and one’s non-specific trust, as well as between one’s trust in the out-group and one’s non-specific trust.

The importance of socializing children for Civility in the development of non-specific trust lies in building expectations and institutional supports for fair and considerate behavior towards the generalized other. In particular, the universalism promoted by civility (Parsons, 1991; Putnam, 1993) ameliorates in-group bias against the out-group, provides the basis to form a common identity and shared humanity that encompasses the out-group, and thus improves the cultural imagination and worldviews regarding inter-group relationships. In addition, the sustaining dynamic of civil society derives from its institutional support and effectiveness in ensuring justice and equality uncompromised by parochialism and nepotism (see North et al., 2012; Robbins, 2012; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008; Stolle, 2002; Zucker, 1986), thus boosting a citizen’s confidence in cooperating with his or her fellows regardless of prior knowledge and the availability of local controls for monitoring another’s observance of the trust granted (see Yamagishi, 1998; Zucker, 1986). From this perspective, socialization for Civility strengthens the linkage between one’s trust in the out-group and one’s non-specific trust, as well as between one’s trust in societal institutions and one’s non-specific trust.

In summary, we propose the following hypotheses:
**Hypothesis 1:** Levels of a citizenry’s non-specific trust will be higher in nations characterized by higher levels of Self-directedness [vs. Other-directedness] and of Civility [vs. Practicality].

**Hypothesis 2:** The linkage between one’s in-group trust and one’s non-specific trust, as well as between one’s out-group trust and one’s non-specific trust, will be stronger in nations characterized by higher levels of Self-directedness.

**Hypothesis 3:** The linkage between one’s out-group trust and one’s non-specific trust, as well as between one’s institutional trust and one’s non-specific trust, will be stronger in nations characterized by higher levels of Civility.

**Method**

**Participants**

Our data set is extracted from Wave 5 of the World Values Survey (WVS, 2005-2007). Wave 5 includes data from representative samples across 57 countries/regions. However, given inconsistent assessment instructions for child socialization goals given to Hongkongese and Guatemalans (see Bond & Lun, 2014), respondents from Hong Kong and Guatemala were dropped from our analysis. Besides, we also excluded participants who failed to follow the standard protocol of assessing goals for child socialization to provide up to 5 goals. Iran, Iraq, Japan, and New Zealand were dropped due to a lack of out-group trust measures in their survey protocols. Egypt and Rwanda were dropped due to a lack of complete sets of institutional trust measures in their survey protocols. As a result, 55,149 respondents (49% males) from 49 countries whose ages range from 15 years to 98 years ($M = 41.56, SD = 16.54$) were included in the analysis.

**Assessments and Measures**
Individual level variables.

Non-specific trust. Non-specific trust was assessed by the item “Most people can be trusted”. Participants responded to this item using a binary choice (1 = Most people can be trusted, 2 = Need to be very careful). Responses were recoded so that higher scores indicated greater non-specific trust in most people, whereas lower scores indicated caution.

In-group trust. In-group trust was assessed by responses about trust towards two different targets, including “Your family” and “People you know personally”. Participants indicated their trust with regard to each target on a 4-point scale (1 = Trust completely, 4 = No trust at all). Responses were recoded so that higher scores indicated greater trust.

It should be noted that the original in-group trust measure in WVS Wave 5 designed by Welzel (2010) is comprised of three targets, including “Your family”, “People you know personally”, and “Your neighbors”. We omitted “Your neighbors” and used “Your family” and “People you know personally” as separate indicators based on the following considerations. First of all, people’s experiences with their neighbors may vary considerably across different national cultures. For instance, in rural society, people live closely with their neighbors and know them well, yet this is not the case in industrialized society, especially in cities. Indeed, Cronbach’s alphas for the original three target in-group trust measure were low in some countries of our sample (alphas range from .36 to .70, \( M = .54, SD = .07 \)). Secondly, one’s family experiences are critical for developing interpersonal trust (e.g., Erikson, 1950; Hardin, 2002; Rotter, 1967), yet are different from one’s experiences with friends and acquaintances, with whom there is greater freedom of choice to associate. From this perspective, we expect differential roles to be
played by the family and by known people in non-specific trust development, and thus consider these two targets separately for in-group trust.

**Out-group trust.** Out-group trust was assessed by responses about trust towards three different out-group targets, including “people you meet for the first time”, “people of another religion”, and “people of another nationality”. This measure was originally designed by Welzel (2010), and was validated for its configural and partial metric invariance across countries in a larger WVS Wave 5 sample (Delhey et al., 2011). Participants indicated their trust with regard to each target on a 4-point scale (1 = Trust completely, 4 = No trust at all). Responses were re-coded, so that higher scores indicated greater trust. Cronbach’s alphas for this operationalization of out-group trust ranged from .68 to .88 across the 49 countries (M = .77, SD = .05). Scores across three targets were then averaged to generate a composite score for out-group trust.

To test whether this three-item, out-group trust measure is equivalent across countries in our sample, we performed a multiple-group, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS software (see Byrne, 2010), based on Muethel and Bond’s (2013) measurement model. Configural invariance was achieved in this sample, $\chi^2 (258.78)/df (49) = 5.28$, CFI = .996, RMSEA = .009, SRMR = .031 (for recommended cut-off values, see Byrne, 2010; Byrne & van de Vijver, 2010; Hu & Bentler, 1999). These results indicate that the similar latent variable was being measured (i.e., the same item loaded on the same latent factor) across the 49 countries in this sample.

Neither metric invariance nor scalar invariance was achieved in this sample, $\chi^2 (1103.30)/df (97) = 11.37$, CFI = .982, RMSEA = .014, SRMR = .030, and $\chi^2 (17308.23)/df (241) = 71.82$, CFI = .698, RMSEA = .036, SRMR = .062, respectively.
(for recommended cut-off values, see Chen, 2007). This result indicates that factor loadings and item intercepts for our measurement of out-group trust were not equivalent across 49 countries.

A lack of metric/loading invariance and scalar/intercept invariance may cause estimation bias in regression slopes and means for cross-cultural comparison (see Chen, 2008). However, this is of no present concern based on both theoretical and empirical reasons. First of all, we are interested in how dimensions of national socialization for children moderate the individual-level relationship from the predictor (e.g., out-group trust) to the outcome (i.e., non-specific trust), not the magnitude of individual-level associations per se (i.e., individual-level regression slopes) or mean comparisons of out-group trust levels. Secondly, we compared regression slopes of the outcome (i.e., non-specific trust) on the latent out-group trust factor, with or without imposing metric invariance across countries. As a matter of fact, changes of regression slopes were negligible in most countries, which suggested little influence of measurement non-invariance to the estimation of the predicted relationships.

**Institutional trust.** Institutional trust was assessed by responses about trust towards four different societal institutions, including “the government”, “the justice system”, “the police”, and “the civil services”. Participants indicated their confidence in each target on a 4-point scale (1 = A great deal, 4 = None at all). Responses were recoded so that higher scores indicated greater trust. Cronbach’s alphas ranged from .66 to .93 across the 49 countries (M = .78, SD = .05). Scores across four targets were then averaged to generate a composite institutional trust score.
We also tested the measurement invariance of this four-item measure using a multiple-group CFA in AMOS. To set up the measurement model, one constraint applied was to correlate the item error between trust in the government and trust in the civil services, given their overlap in content. Configural invariance was achieved in this sample, $\chi^2 (367.62)/df (49) = 7.50$, CFI = .995, RMSEA = .011, SRMR = .000, which indicates a similar factor being measured across 49 countries.

Neither metric invariance nor scalar invariance were achieved in this sample, $\chi^2 (2060.07)/df (193) = 10.67$, CFI = .973, RMSEA = .013, SRMR = .037, and $\chi^2 (27540.68)/df (385) = 71.53$, CFI = .606, RMSEA = .036, SRMR = .047, respectively, which suggests factor loadings and item intercepts of this institutional trust measurement were not equivalent across 49 countries.

The same theoretical reason discussed earlier leads us not to worry about this measurement non-invariance. Moreover, we also compared regression slopes of non-specific trust on the latent institutional trust factor, with or without imposing metric invariance across countries. Once again, changes of regression slopes were small in most countries of this sample.

**Demographic covariates.** The participant’s sex and age were included as covariates in the analysis, given that they are considered important demographic/social factors leading to trust (e.g., Croson & Buchan, 1999; Delhey & Newton, 2003; Mishler & Rose, 1997).

**Country level variables.**

**National goals for socializing children.** Ten qualities that children can be encouraged to learn at home were listed on the WVS, including (1) *independence*, (2)
hard work, (3) feeling of responsibility, (4) imagination, (5) tolerance and respect for other people, (6) thrift, saving money and things, (7) determination and perseverance, (8) religious faith, (9) unselfishness, and (10) obedience. Participants were instructed to select up to five qualities from these ten which he/she considered to be especially important. The percentage of participants in each country who selected a given quality was calculated to represent each country’s endorsement rates of that quality, reflecting their nation’s socialization context for human capital-building.

Based on WVS Wave 5’s national endorsement rates, Bond and Lun (2014) extracted and validated two dimensions for a nation’s socialization agenda: Self-directedness vs. Other-directedness and Civility vs. Practicality. Self-directedness was captured by positive loading items including imagination, independence, feeling of responsibility, determination, and perseverance, whereas Other-directedness was captured by items including obedience, religious faith, and hard work. Civility was captured by positive loading items including tolerance and respect for other people and unselfishness, whereas Practicality was captured by items including hard work and thrift, saving money and things. Standardized factor scores reported by Bond and Lun (2014) were utilized to represent each country’s standing on these two dimensions.

Analysis of WVS Data

Our analysis was based on a two-level, linear HLM analysis (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002) where individual level measures (i.e., non-specific trust, trust in the family, trust in people known personally, out-group trust, institutional trust, and demographic covariates) were nested within countries. According to Mood’s (2010) simulation study, the linear probability model is appropriate for estimating continuous predictors’ average effects on
a dichotomous outcome. The individual-level predictors were centered around their group means, whereas the societal/country level predictors were centered around their grand means. In order to work with standardized coefficients, all variables were standardized prior to HLM analysis. Given the adequate sample size of country-level units in our sample, our results were based on robust standard errors.

**Results**

**How a Nation’s Socialization Focus Influences its Mean Level of Non-Specific Trust**

National means of our outcome variable, non-specific trust, are graphed in Figure 1. A random-intercepts HLM analysis confirmed that, as illustrated in Table 1, national focus on socialization for Self-directedness is associated with higher national means of non-specific trust ($\gamma = .39, p < .001$), after controlling for the individual’s gender and age. On the contrary, there was no significant association between national focus on socialization for Civility and national means of non-specific trust ($\gamma = .00, ns$), after controlling for the individual’s gender and age. Adding the predictors of Self-directedness and Civility at the country level explained 43% between-country variance in means of non-specific trust.

**How a Citizen’s In-group Trust, Out-group Trust, and Institutional Trust Contribute to his/her Non-Specific Trust**

As illustrated in Table 2, a random-coefficients HLM analysis confirmed that one’s levels of trust in people known personally ($\gamma = .09, p < .001$), of trust in the out-group ($\gamma = .21, p < .001$), and of trust in societal institutions ($\gamma = .08, p < .001$) were separate, positive predictors of his/her level of non-specific trust. In contrast, one’s level
of trust in one’s family was not a main-effect predictor of his/her level of non-specific trust ($\gamma = .01, ns$).

These individual level predictors together explained 9% of the individual-level variance in non-specific trust. It is worth noting that out-group trust showed stronger predictive ability than the other predictors across all national groups, making the mobilization of out-group trust the decisive factor in extending the radius of non-specific trust (see also Delhey et al., 2011).

Nonetheless and consistent with our theorizing about national culture, cross-level interactions indicate that the above individual-level associations varied between countries (see Table 3 for individual-level regression results within each country) and were moderated by national focus on the socialization of children. Given the number of variables and interactions examined, we will only report and interpret cross-level interactions significant at .01 level in the following section.

**How a Nation’s Socialization Focus Moderates the Relation of In-group Trust to Non-Specific Trust**

As illustrated in Table 2, national focus on socialization for Self-directedness moderates the linkage of one’s trust in the family to his/her level of non-specific trust ($\gamma = .02, p < .01$). Further plotting (see Figure 2) indicates that the individual’s level of trust in the family is a stronger predictor of his/her level of non-specific trust in countries emphasizing Self-directedness (simple slope = .03, $p < .01$, 1 $SD$ above the country mean of Self-directedness) than in countries emphasizing Other-directedness (simple slope = -.01, $ns$, 1 $SD$ below the country mean of Self-directedness). Socialization of children for
other-directedness eliminates the connection between trust in the family and non-specific trust.

Likewise, national focus on socialization for Self-directedness also moderates the linkage of one’s trust in known people to his/her level of non-specific trust ($\gamma = .04, p < .001$). Further plotting (see Figure 3) indicates that the individual’s level of trust in known people is a stronger predictor of his/her level of non-specific trust in countries emphasizing Self-directedness (simple slope = .13, $p < .001$, 1 SD above the country mean of Self-directedness) than in countries emphasizing Other-directedness (simple slope = .05, $p < .001$, 1 SD below the country mean of Self-directedness). Socialization of children for other-directedness thus blunts the pan-national connection between trust in known people and non-specific trust.

**How a Nation’s Socialization Focus Moderates the Relation of Out-group Trust to Non-Specific Trust**

As illustrated in Table 2, national focus on socialization for Self-directedness moderates the linkage between one’s level of out-group trust and his/her level of non-specific trust ($\gamma = .11, p < .001$). Further plotting (see Figure 4) shows that the individual’s level of out-group trust is a stronger predictor of his/her level of non-specific trust in countries emphasizing Self-directedness (simple slope = .32, $p < .001$, 1 SD above the country mean of Self-directedness) than in countries emphasizing Other-directedness (simple slope = .09, $p < .001$, 1 SD below the country mean of Self-directedness). As with known people, socialization of children for other-directedness thus blunts the pan-national connection between trust in out-group members and non-specific trust.
It was also confirmed that national focus on socialization for Civility moderates the linkage between one’s level of out-group trust and his/her level of non-specific trust ($\gamma = .03$, $p < .001$). Further plotting (see Figure 5) suggests that the individual’s level of out-group trust is a stronger predictor of his/her non-specific trust in countries emphasizing Civility (simple slope = .24, $p < .001$, 1 SD above the country mean of Civility) than in countries emphasizing Practicality (simple slope = .18, $p < .001$, 1 SD below the country mean of Civility). Again, Socialization of children for Practicality thus blunts the pan-national connection between trust in out-group members and non-specific trust.

**Discussion**

What are the socio-psychological sources for deriving and supporting one’s trust in various types of others, and what is the role of a country’s goals for the socialization of its children in modulating these dynamics? In the current article, we proposed that in-group trust, out-group trust, and trust in society’s institutions contribute to one’s non-specific trust, and a nation’s socialization goals of Self-directedness [versus Other-directedness] and of Civility [versus Practicality] are cultural facilitators that strengthen the linkages between these sources and one’s non-specific trust.

We tested our theorizing against representative data across 49 countries from the World Values Survey (2005-2007), using a two-level, HLM analysis. Consistent with our hypotheses, a citizen’s level of trust in people known personally is a predictor of non-specific trust for citizens of all national groups, but a stronger predictor in countries emphasizing socialization for Self-directedness; the individual’s trust in the out-group is likewise a predictor of non-specific trust for citizens of all national groups, but a stronger
predictor in countries emphasizing socialization for Self-directedness as well as for Civility. Interestingly, although trust in the family is not a significant predictor of non-specific trust across all national groups, it predicts non-specific trust in countries characterized by socialization for Self-directedness. Taken together, our study delineated a socio-psychological model of non-specific trust development, and highlighted the contextual effect of national goals for child socialization on this process.

Our study has important implications for how a country’s goals for socializing its future human capital could play a role in promoting its societal trust. We believe that, when socialization goals facilitate children’s self-directedness rather than their other-directedness, citizens gain more confidence to trust unspecified trustees based on the optimism derived from their experiences interacting with in-group persons, be they family or persons known personally, as well as enhancing their expectations about the trustworthiness of out-group persons. Moreover, when socialization goals promote children’s tolerance and benevolence rather than their instrumentality and materialism regarding others, the contribution made by a citizen’s out-group trust to his/her non-specific trust is further strengthened, probably as the result of positive cultural narratives and worldviews regarding the nature of inter-group relationships. In sum, the striving for self-determination and responsibility in children (Self-directedness) not only facilitates the projection of in-group experience, but also dissolves inter-group boundaries and weakens categorical discrimination; the striving for tolerance and benevolence in children (Civility) promotes inter-group commonality and undercuts out-group hostility. As a result, non-specific trust is more tied to the out-group and more generalized to remote others in those countries emphasizing both Self-directedness and Civility.
Extant theories have highlighted the critical role of cultural norms, beliefs, values, and institutions in supplying social capital (e.g., Allik & Realo, 2004; Delhey & Welzel, 2012; Fukuyama, 1995; 2011; Putnam, 1993). For instance, to account for the thriving of broad societal cooperation and trust transcending kin groups, Fukuyama (1995; 2011) drew our attention to religious beliefs and institutions, such as the Judeo-Christian tradition which extends familial ties (see also Grief, 2006; Reher, 1998). Allik and Realo (2004), as well as Realo et al. (2008), explored the linkage between Individualism-Collectivism and social capital. However, unlike these studies, our study specifies the socialization of children as a means by which culture exerts its influence on developing non-specific trust and enlarging the individual’s circle of trust. Given the implications of socialization goals for all types of educational practices, be they occurring in the family, the school or the workplace, our findings have significant implications for policy planners and decision makers in any type of social institution, be it school, legal, medical, governmental or business, especially in countries where the generalization of non-specific trust to the out-group is problematic.

Countries high on self-determination and civility, such as Norway, Finland, Switzerland, and Sweden (see Bond & Lun, 2014, for a detailed map of countries) thus provide a natural advantage for the inter-personal relations of citizens socialized in these countries. There, members are equipped with the capability to trust people in general and engage in wider cooperation through socialization practices in the family and other societal institutions; their radius of trusting is broader. On the other hand, citizens raised and working in countries low on self-determination and civility, such as Romania, India, and Indonesia, face a natural deficit in trusting others, be they known others or strangers.
Businesses and governments should take into account these liabilities and adjust corporate socialization programs and national institutional controls to address the issue of trust-building across relational and group boundaries, so as to enhance cooperative possibilities in their organizations and polities.

Our findings also revealed the differential role of trust in the family and trust in people known personally in the dynamics leading to non-specific trust. Unlike trust in known people, trust in the family is not a significant predictor of non-specific trust across all national groups. This result is consistent with the finding that there is a low and inconsistent correlation between an individual’s trust in the family and trust in persons known personally. Familism is a contained island of ascribed living, without necessary implications for forming associations with strangers and out-groups (Fukuyama, 1995; Realo et al., 2008; Yamagishi, 1998). In contrast, in-groups comprised of friends and acquaintances are chosen in varying degrees by individuals in the course of their daily living and form a basis for generalizing the trust extended to unspecified others. However, by using WVS Wave 5’s original three-target composite measure of in-group trust (see Welzel, 2010), the difference between trust in the family and trust in known people on the dynamics of developing non-specific trust would not be detected. The present findings thus demonstrate the need for separating the family and known people as types of in-group trust, and call for a more careful differentiation between a person’s experience with collectives that are ascribed and those that are achieved in shaping his/her interpersonal cognitions and behavior.

However, and perhaps more interestingly, our results indicated that national goals for socializing children moderated the linkage between trust in the family and non-
specific trust. In countries characterized by Self-directedness rather than Other-directedness, one’s level of trust in the family is related to his/her level of non-specific trust, whereas in countries high in Other-directedness, it is not. This finding further highlights the powerful role of Self-determination and Individuation on dissolving group boundaries, even for basic groups, such as the family.

Moreover, it demonstrates the importance of testing the contextual effect of national culture as well as unpacking national culture using socialization emphases. For instance, Romania is characterized by both Other-directedness and Practicality. As illustrated in Table 3, the standardized regression slopes of non-specific trust for Romanians of trust in the family, trust in known people, trust in the out-group, and trust in societal institutions were -.03 \( (t = -1.18, \text{ns}) \), .10 \( (t = 3.14, p < .01) \), .09 \( (t = 2.67, p < .01) \), and .07 \( (t = 2.45, p < .05) \), respectively, yielding an \( R^2 \) of 4%. In contrast, Norway is characterized by both Self-directedness and Civility. As illustrated in Table 3, the standardized regression slopes of non-specific trust for Norwegians of trust in the family, trust in known people, trust in the out-group, and trust in societal institutions were .08 \( (t = 2.95, p < .01) \), .09 \( (t = .09, p < .01) \), .33 \( (t = 10.75, p < .001) \), and .17 \( (t = 5.96, p < .001) \), respectively, yielding an \( R^2 \) of 23%. What is true for non-specific trust in one national context is not true in another, or truer to a lesser extent, and socialization goals for children make the difference.

Our current study thus provides a novel perspective for understanding the role of national culture in trust development. Instead of focusing our social scientific lens on the citizen’s values or beliefs such as Individualism-Collectivism (e.g., Allik & Realo, 2004; Realo et al., 2008) or Inglehart’s (1997) value dimensions (e.g., Inglehart & Baker, 2000;
Inglehart & Oyserman, 2004), which may be regarded as the outcome of socialization processes, we focus instead on the important but neglected domain of socialization goals, viz., how human capital is socialized by the various institutions and agencies comprising a given nation’s context for people-making. Focusing on the dynamics of human capital formation rather than its product in terms of its citizen’s psychological profile suggests avenues for intervention; family, school, and organizational cultures can be oriented accordingly.

**Limitations and Future Directions**

Our findings have some limitations. First of all, the level of non-specific trust was not found to be higher in countries characterized by Civility rather than Practicality, even though Bond and Lun (2014) have shown a relationship of Civility-Practicality to other outcomes, like subjective well-being. We do not at present know why.

Secondly, our results did not support the argument that child socialization for Civility could strengthen the contribution made by one’s institutional trust to his/her non-specific trust. As a matter of fact, Newton (2001) argues that the individual’s political trust and social trust (i.e., trust in people around one) may tap into different realms (the evaluation of political reality vs. the response to social reality). From this perspective, it is possible that child socialization agenda matters less to the pathway from the citizen’s confidence in societal institutions to his/her trust in most fellow citizens, given that the institutional reality (e.g., to what extent legal services and government regulations in a given society effectively protect non-specific trusting) is less a product of one’s early rooted socialization experiences, but more influenced by a society’s structural background (e.g., history of political corruption). However, it is also plausible that child
socialization for Civility interacts with other socio-economic factors, such as democracy and economic development, in such a way that its unique effect on the relation of institutional trust to non-specific trust is overshadowed. Future studies should take a closer look into this issue.

Thirdly, given our use of cross-sectional data, the causal effects implied by our theorizing are not directly tested, even though they may be plausible. For future studies, longitudinal data should be collected to further test our model of trust development and its cultural constraints. The recently published Wave 6 of the World Values Survey may provide this opportunity.

Lastly, we should acknowledge that our model accounts for modest variance in a person’s non-specific trust, and is very weak indeed in some countries (see Table 3). Clearly, there are other potential sources of non-specific trust at the individual level and other potential moderators of non-specific trust development at the societal level. For instance, Welzel (2013) showed that the individual’s emancipative values, activity in voluntary associations, and formal education experience were individual-level predictors of generalized or non-specific trust. Delhey et al.’s (2011) study revealed that cultural legacies (e.g., Protestant vs. Confucian heritages), economic modernity (Reeskens, 2013), and institutional qualities influenced the radius of non-specific trust at the societal level, and Delhey and Welzel (2012) showed that human empowerment, cooperative experiences, social divisions, and cultural legacies were societal-level predictors of out-group trust. These variables may also contribute to the dynamics of culture and non-specific trust development that we are interested in understanding.
Nevertheless, the central goal of this study was to demonstrate how national contexts of child socialization, as a novel approach to cultural unpacking, moderate the contributions of one’s in-group trust and out-group trust to his/her non-specific trust. Adding too many other control variables in our model would complicate our story and obscure our main theme.

In addition, it is also important to explore a possible trajectory in the development of non-specific trusting— is there a “critical period” when trust in family may make a difference in non-specific trusting? After all, the term “family” is ambiguous and may refer to family of origin, family of creation or both, depending on a person’s marital status. Trust in one’s family of origin may moderate the link between Self-directedness and non-specific trust for unmarried persons rather than for married persons who have formed their own families. This possibility may be examined by differentiating the WVS sample further in future studies.
References


Table 1

*Standardized Coefficients of Regressing Country Means of Non-Specific Trust on Country Scores on the National Focus for the Socialization of Children*

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<th>Outcome: Non-Specific Trust</th>
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<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Country Level Predictors</strong></td>
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<td>Civility (vs. Practicality)</td>
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</table>

*Note. Results were based on robust standard errors. Sample size of each country was not weighted to be equal.*

*p < .01. **p < .001.*
Table 2

*Standardized Coefficients of a Two Level HLM Analysis of Cross-Level Interactions between the Individual Level Predictors and National Focus for the Socialization of Children*

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<td>Trust in societal institutions</td>
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<td><strong>Country Level Predictors</strong></td>
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Note. Only cross-level interactions significant at the .01 level are reported in this table.

Results are based on robust standard errors. Sample size of each country was not weighted to be equal.

*p < .01. **p < .001.
Table 3

*Standardized Coefficients of Regressing Individual Scores of Non-Specific Trust on Individual Level Predictors within Each Country*

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Country</th>
<th>Trust in the family</th>
<th>Trust in people known personally</th>
<th>Trust in the out-group</th>
<th>Trust in societal institutions</th>
<th>Variance explained (R^2)</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* *p* < .05. **p* < .01. ***p* < .001.
Figure 1. National means of non-specific trust (the World Values Survey, 2005-2007) across 49 countries.
Figure 2. Cross-level interaction between a nation’s Self-directedness and a citizen’s trust in the family to his/her level of non-specific trust.
Figure 3. Cross-level interaction between a nation’s Self-directedness and a citizen’s trust in known people to his/her level of non-specific trust.
Figure 4. Cross-level interaction between a nation’s Self-directedness and a citizen’s out-group trust to his/her level of non-specific trust.
Figure 5. Cross-level interaction between a nation’s Civility and a citizen’s out-group trust to his/her level of non-specific trust.