

The Poverty of Trust in the Southern United States

Brent Simpson, *University of South Carolina*

Abstract

This paper bridges two lines of research. One line shows that social relations in the southern United States are more “collectivist” than social relations in non-southern regions. The second line of work argues that collectivist social relations generate lower levels of general trust than individualist social relations. At the intersection of these two arguments is the prediction that Southerners are, on average, less trusting than non-Southerners. I test this prediction using trust measures taken from the General Social Survey. As expected, results from whites, but not blacks, show the predicted regional differences. Importantly, regional differences in trust occur after controlling for regional variation in other factors related to trust. I conclude by outlining various implications of the findings and questions for future research.

Introduction

Research on trust occupies an increasingly central place in the social sciences. The growing ubiquity of work on the topic stems in part from the wide-ranging consequences of trust (Glaeser et al. 2000). As Rotter (1980, 443) writes: “The entire fabric of our day-to-day living, of our social order, rests on trust... almost all of our decisions involve trusting someone else.” Given the extensive benefits of trust, several new lines of research have emerged to explain its origins. One of the most active research programs explains variation in trust with reference to the different types of social ties that link actors to each other and to the social groups to which they belong (Buchan et al. 2002; Yamagishi 1988; Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994). Most of this work focuses on how international differences in trust (e.g., between Japanese and Americans) are linked to cross-national differences in the patterning of social relations (Miller and Kanazawa 2000; Yamagishi 1988; Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994). The central demonstration of this research program, discussed in detail below, is that *social relations* in “collectivist societies” (e.g., Japan) generate lower levels of trust than social relations in individualist societies, such as the United States. This relationship stands in contrast to the conventional view that collectivist cultures generate more trust and cooperation than individualist cultures.

The key aim of the present research is to demonstrate that there are significant *intranational* differences in trust in the United States.¹ I show that these regional differences in trust can be predicted by extending theory developed to explain trust differences between nations. Specifically, I integrate research on the negative relationship between collectivist social relations and trust with research showing that the southern United States is more collectivist than non-southern regions. The implication is straightforward: we should observe lower levels of trust in the South.

An extension of the theory to intranational differences in trust could have a number of theoretical and empirical payoffs. In addition to extending the explanatory domain of the

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theory, the extension may also increase precision. International applications, by definition, gloss over variation within nations (Voronov and Singer 2002). By locating and explaining regional peaks and valleys of trust within nations, we may gain more insight into which (if any) regions are most influential in the creation of international differences.

Beyond increased scope and precision, the extension to intranational differences can serve as a reality check on international “cross-cultural” studies, where differences such as language may confound relationships between key variables (Miller and Mitamura 2003; Vandello and Cohen 1999). Most important for current purposes, a large literature links low trust to a variety of social ills. The discovery of regional differences in trust reported in this paper may therefore help pave the way to an increased understanding of regional differences in important social and economic problems. These and other implications are taken up later.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. I begin by reviewing research on international differences in social relations and trust. After discussing how collectivist social relations generate lower levels of trust than individualist social relations, I address why social relations in the southern United States are more collectivist than social relations in the non-South. I then describe the data and methods used to test the main argument of the paper: net of regional differences in other variables associated with trust, Southerners are less trusting than non-Southerners. As discussed below, previous work suggests that regional differences in trust will be limited to (non-Hispanic) whites. But, for comparison purposes, I also assess the argument using data from black respondents. After presenting the results, I discuss limitations of the current work and conclude with some suggestions for addressing these limitations.

Collectivism and Trust

The traditional framework for understanding differences between individualist and collectivist societies (e.g., Triandis 1995) suggests that, given a tension between individual and collective interests, actors in collectivist societies tend to give greater priority to group goals. But research by Yamagishi and colleagues calls into question the traditional argument that a tendency for actors in collectivist societies to prioritize collective – over individual – goals results from worldviews or broad cultural values that emphasize cooperation and trust (Hayashi et al. 1999; Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994). Their research explains such group-oriented behavior in collectivist societies with reference to *collectivist social relations* and the concomitant high level of internal monitoring and sanctioning within such groups. This is the approach taken in the current explanation. That is, I focus on collectivist vs. individualist social relations, rather than collectivist vs. individualist worldviews. Thus, when I henceforth refer to collectivism and individualism, I am referring to characteristics of social relations rather than more diffuse (cultural or personal) worldviews.

Compared to individualist social relations, collectivist social relations tend to be strong and densely connected. In addition, collectivist social relations tend to be multiplex (organized around a number of issues) while individualist relations tend to be simplex (organized around a single issue). For example, if Anna and Bob are connected by a multiplex social relation, they will engage in a number of activities together (e.g., watching movies, talking politics and golfing). Meanwhile, if Anna and Bob are connected by a simplex relation, they will tend to participate in only one type of activity together. The greater tendency for actors connected by collectivist social relations to spend much time engaged in many different activities together leads to continual monitoring and, when necessary, sanctioning of each other’s behavior (Miller and Kanazawa 2000). At issue is how differences in the patterning of social relations – and the concomitant monitoring and sanctioning – lead to differences in trust.

Central to the theory of collectivism and trust is the distinction between *general trust* and *assurance*. General trust is an “expectation of goodwill or benign *intent*,” whereas assurance is “expectations of benign *behavior* for reasons other than the goodwill of alter” (Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994, 132).² Thus, in assurance relations, Person A has positive expectations about Person B’s behavior because it is in B’s self-interest to act benignly.

According to the theory, the high level of informal monitoring and sanctioning that characterize collectivist social relations limits expectations of benign behavior to relations within group boundaries. That is, monitoring and sanctioning systems increase an actor’s expectation that others within his or her ingroup will act benevolently (i.e., they generate assurance). However, when actors go outside their groups to interact with strangers, the safety net of the sanctioning system disappears, leaving them with relatively low expectations of trustworthy behavior from others. That is, they have low levels of general trust, a prediction supported in a number of recent studies (Hayashi et al. 1999; Yamagishi 1988; Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994).³

In sum, a number of studies suggest that compared to individualist relations, collectivist social relations (through assurance) tend to reduce the need for general trust and thus, by extension, inhibit the development of general trust outside group boundaries. The resulting distrust, in turn, may serve to reproduce these collectivist relations because distrusters will tend to stick with assurance relations rather than risk interaction outside group boundaries. The comparatively lax individualist social relations, on the other hand, tend to increase general trust.⁴ Thus, by linking variation in trust to international differences in social structures, this research program underscores the central role of trust in the creation and persistence of cross-national differences in a variety of social and economic phenomena.

In the sections to follow, I extend the theory to predict cross-regional differences in trust in the United States. But first I turn to the issue of why southern whites’ social relations are more collectivist than non-southern whites’ social relations. I then argue, based on the above reasoning, that we should expect lower levels of trust among whites in the South. Thereafter I discuss why we should not expect similar regional differences for blacks.

Collectivism in the Southern United States

Sociologists (Reed 1974; 1983), social psychologists (Conway et al. 2001; Vandello and Cohen 1999), and historians (Grantham 1994) have variously argued that, compared to non-southern regions, social relations in the South are characterized by collectivism. Vandello and Cohen (1999) outline four primary causes of this difference: defeat in the Civil War, history of slavery, poverty and prominence of religion. I discuss each briefly in turn.

Following Reed (1974), Vandello and Cohen argue that loss of the Civil War led Southerners to define themselves as a people and region in opposition to a “powerful external threat.” Vandello and Cohen liken this perception to that of a minority group that coalesces in reaction to potential hostility from a more powerful majority. The end result, Vandello and Cohen assert is localist tendencies and strong ingroup identification. (See also Grantham 1994.)

Vandello and Cohen link collectivist social structures in the contemporary South to the region’s history of slavery in several ways. First, the agricultural system of the slave South was collectively oriented insofar as work was carried out by groups with highly interdependent members rather than by isolated individuals. Furthermore, the strongly overlapping categorical distinctions that characterized the institution of slavery (slave/master, white/black) helped solidify status hierarchies and, following social identity theory (Turner 1985), ingroup boundaries. The coupling of congruent status divisions with ingroup/outgroup distinctions, Vandello and Cohen (1999) argue, led to more collectivist social relations.

Finally, Vandello and Cohen suggest that poverty and the prominence of religion contribute to collectivist structures in the South. Poverty increases collectivism due to the increased reliance on social ties and fellow ingroup members. Religious groups can produce similar effects to the extent that they encourage multiplex relations (e.g., social, emotional and financial support between members) and emphasize ingroup-outgroup distinctions (Iannaccone 1994).

Empirical work has uncovered a number of indicators of the higher levels of collectivism in the South. For example, Reed (1974) shows that Southerners have stronger attachments to their friends, families and others in their community than non-Southerners. Similarly, these surveys show much stronger norms of obedience to groups such as the family in the South than the North. Importantly, more recent work by Reed (1993) and others (Grantham 1994; Vandello and Cohen 1999) shows that these regional differences have largely persisted over the past several decades.

Collectivism and Trust Among African Americans

Following the logic of the argument outlined earlier, the greater propensity of southern social structures towards collectivism should produce lower levels of general trust in the South. However, there are a number of reasons that we may not expect to observe such regional differences among African Americans. First, the "Great Migration" of southern blacks into the Northeast and Midwest is a relatively recent phenomenon. That is, many blacks currently living in the non-South were born in the South, and many others are first generation non-Southerners. (See Tolnay 2003.) A tendency for southern black out-migrants to carry with them various codes for relating to others, and to pass these codes on to their children (explicitly or not), can be expected to attenuate differences in collectivism – and by extension, trust – between southern and non-southern blacks. Similarly, as noted by Tolnay (2003) (see also Lemann 1991), participants in the Great Migration tended to join friends and family members who migrated before them. This resulted in African American enclaves, many of which likely had features of collectivist communities.⁵

Finally, some factors discussed earlier that lead to higher levels of collectivism among white Southerners either do not apply to black Southerners or apply equally to blacks in the South and non-South. For example, the typical reaction of black Southerners to loss of the Civil War was obviously quite different than the typical reaction of white Southerners.⁶

The main analyses outlined below focus on regional differences in trust among whites. This focus is consistent with most of the recent work on intranational cross-cultural comparisons (Nisbett and Cohen 1996). After analyzing the trust responses of white respondents, I then turn to whether there are regional differences in trust among African Americans.⁷

Predictions

The collectivist social relations à distrust argument suggests we should expect white Southerners to report lower levels of trust – net of other factors normally associated with trust and region. Although no specific predictions are made about differences between whites in non-southern regions at this stage of the research, any such differences are expected to be small compared to the differences between the South and non-South. Thus, the analyses reported below simply compare Southerners to non-Southerners.

Previous work points to several factors that, if not controlled, may create a spurious relationship between region and trust. First, the South has a higher proportion of religious fundamentalists than the non-South. Because fundamentalist churches tend to be characterized

by collectivist social relations, (Iannaccone 1994), Miller and Kanazawa (2000, 112-13) predicted and found that fundamentalists are less trusting than non-fundamentalists. Similarly, some previous work points to possible differences in trust between adherents to different religions (c.f., Glaeser et al. 2000; Alesina and La Ferrara 2002). Thus, the analyses reported below include various controls for religion.

Both income and education (Alesina and La Ferrara 2002; Glaeser et al. 2000) positively affect trust. Because Southerners have somewhat lower incomes and less education than persons in non-southern regions (based on my own analyses of data from the General Social Survey), I control for both these variables. Finally, previous work has shown that trust is negatively related to community size (Putnam 2000). Because average community size is smaller in the South, I control for this variable.

In sum, there are a number of factors that previous work suggests may generate lower levels of trust in the South (e.g., income and education), as well as factors that may lead to more trust (smaller communities). Importantly, as discussed above, a number of these factors are associated with the genesis of collectivist social relations in the South. However, the arguments outlined earlier suggest that, once established, we should expect collectivist social relations to persist net of these antecedents.

Data and Measures

This section describes the data and measures used to test the arguments outlined above. The data are taken from the *General Social Survey* (hereafter GSS), a full probability survey of English speaking adults living in non-institutional settings in the United States. The National Opinion Research Center has conducted the survey annually from 1972 to 1994 and, since then, biennially. The analyses reported below use data from interviews conducted from 1972 to 2000.

As shown in Table 1, assignment of states to the South vs. non-South is based on the Census Bureau's classification.⁹ It is important to note that the analyses of this paper regress trust on region (and various control variables), rather than measures of collectivist social relations. The logic of this test is based on the demonstration in previous work reviewed above that the South is more collectivist than the non-South. This approach is analogous to that taken in international comparisons (Hayashi et al. 1999; Yamagishi 1988). These studies assume, based on prior work, international variation in collectivist social relations and predict international differences in trust from that assumption. The current analytic approach is also consistent with comparisons of different social categories within the United States, such as Miller and Kanazawa's (2000) study of trust differences between members of fundamentalist vs. mainline churches. None of these studies directly measures collectivist social relations.⁹

Dependent Measures

The GSS contains three questions that tap into respondents' level of general trust (Table 1). The first measure, *trust*, is the one normally used in research on trust, but some researchers have pointed to potential problems with this measure. Miller and Mitamura (2003), for example, suggest that the standard *trust* measure may conflate trust with the related concept *caution*. This potential conflation is more serious, they suggest, when the measure is used in cross-national comparisons, where languages "necessarily involve slight changes in the meaning, and are read and answered in different social contexts." (2003, 62) Thus, if analyses with the *trust* measure uncover the predicted trust differences, and these differences are analogous to those reported in cross-national applications, the current research would offer

Table 1: Descriptions of Variables

Variable	Description
Sumtrust	Simple combination of three binary measures: trust, helpful, and fair (see below): Range = 0-3, Mean = 1.57
Trust	Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted (coded 1) or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people (coded 0)?
Helpful	Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful (1), or that they are mostly just looking out for themselves (0)?
Fair	Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance (0), or would they try to be fair (1)?
Region	Region respondent lived at time of interview, based on Census Bureau classification: South = AL, AK, DE, DC, FL, GA, KY, LA, MD, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA, WV. Non-South = all remaining states.
Community	Type community <i>R</i> lives: Large City (Central city of 112 largest SMSAs), Suburb (Suburb of 112 largest SMSAs), Smaller City (Counties having towns of 10,000 or more), Rural (Counties having no towns of 10,000 or more).
Fundamentalist	Whether <i>R</i> considers herself fundamentalist (1) or moderate or liberal (0)
Income	<i>R</i> 's family income (in constant 1986 dollars) in 1,000s: Range = .33-143.78, Mean = 30.43
Education	Number of years of schooling: Range = 0-20, Mean = 12.47
Religion	Respondent's Religion: Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, Non-religious
Race-live	Whether African Americans live in respondent's community at time of interview (whites only): Yes = 1 (50.2%), No = 0

additional confidence in the measure, and the conclusions drawn from cross-national applications.

In either case, Yamagishi et al. (1999) show that the *helpful* measure solves the potential confound suggested by Miller and Mitamura. They write (1999, 148), "in contrast to [*trust*], which is double-barreled, i.e., measuring trust on the one hand and need for prudence on the other, response categories to [*helpful*] represent two extremes on a single dimension, belief in human benevolence." The two response categories for *fair* also fall on a single dimension. Thus, if the trust measure is confounded by the problems suggested by Miller and Mitamura, the use of *helpful* and *fair* provide appropriate alternative measures. As will be shown immediately below, however, there is a strong level of agreement between the three measures, and regional differences in responses to the three measures are highly consistent.

Preliminary analyses (available upon request) revealed highly consistent regional differences in responses to the trust items, and the three measures are highly correlated ($\alpha = .68$), suggesting that they tap into the same underlying concept, *general trust*. Thus, responses to the three measures were summed to create a new variable, *sumtrust*, which ranges from 0 to 3 (Table 1). The analyses reported below are based on this measure.

(Analyses with each of the three binary measures yield the same general conclusions as those reported below.)

Control Variables

Based on the above discussion, the analyses implement several control variables, all of which are given in Table 1. In addition to income, education and community type, the analyses control for whether the respondent is fundamentalist (vs. moderate or liberal). I also control for respondent's religion using a series of dummy variables. Finally, I control for respondent's gender (following Alesina and La Ferrara 2003) and age (Glaeser et al. 2000).

Results

The arguments presented earlier suggest that, net of the control variables, we should observe regional differences in trust among whites, but not blacks. Thus, I begin the analyses with whites and then repeat the analyses using data on black respondents.

As an initial step, I regressed the main dependent measure (*sumtrust*) on the region dummy variable, the control variables and all two-way interactions between the region dummies and control variables. The only interactions that reached significance involved the community type dummies. But given that these interaction terms did not affect key results, they were removed. (These more detailed analyses are available upon request.) The discussion to follow is based on the Model 1a analysis (Table 2), which includes only main effects.

Model 1a shows that, net of the control variables, there is a strong effect of region on trust. Southerners respond far less trustingly than non-Southerners ($p < .001$). To assess the robustness of this finding, I conducted several variations on the Model 1a analysis: I included alternative (and additional) control variables; I conducted separate binary logistic regressions for each of the three binary measures of trust (Table 1); and I compared the South to each non-southern region, rather than collapsing non-southern regions. I could not make the basic effect go away. Thus, southern whites' lower trust appears to be highly robust.

Results for African Americans

As noted earlier, there are a number of reasons that we should not expect the predicted regional differences in trust to apply to African Americans. To address this point, I repeated the Model 1a analyses reported above with data from black respondents. The results of this analysis are given in Model 2 (Table 2). As expected, net of the control variables, black Southerners are not less trusting than black non-Southerners ($p = .72$).

Alternative Explanations

The results reported thus far provide support for the argument linking region and trust. But recent work by Alesina and La Ferrara (2002) suggests a possible alternative explanation for those findings. These authors show that, *ceteris paribus*, living in a community with blacks has a negative effect on whites' general trust. Thus, whites who live near blacks can be expected to report being less trusting of others in general than whites who do not live near blacks. (They report that blacks' general trust is unaffected by a community's racial heterogeneity.) The

Table 2: Beta Coefficients from Multiple Regression Analyses for Whites (Models 1a&b) and Blacks (Model 2)

Variable	Model 1a (N = 17,725)	Model 1b (N = 16,967)	Model 2 (N = 2,669)
South (<i>vs. non-South</i>)	-.080****	-.082****	.008
Community (<i>ref. = smaller city</i>)			
Large City	-.037****	-.033****	-.024
Suburb	-.041****	-.035****	-.054*
Rural	.029****	.029****	-.029
Male	-.049****	-.048****	-.048**
Age	.194****	.194****	.161****
Education	.242****	.242****	.158****
Income	.100****	.099****	.131****
Fundamentalist	-.076****	-.073****	-.009
Religion (<i>ref. = not relig.</i>)			
Protestant	.087****	.084****	.013
Catholic	.035***	.031*	.056*
Jew	-.012	-.014	.016
Race-live		-.026****	

* $p \leq .05$ ** $p \leq .01$ *** $p \leq .005$ **** $p \leq .001$ (two-tailed)

question thus becomes whether regional differences in trust can be explained by a greater tendency for southern whites (compared to non-southern whites) to live near blacks.

To address this question, I repeated the Model 1a analysis for whites, but replaced the region variables with a new variable *race-live* (Table 1). As an initial step, I included all Model 1a control variables, but not the South/non-South dummy variable. Consistent with the Alesina-La Ferrara finding, this initial analysis revealed a strong negative relationship between *race-live* and *sumtrust* ($p < .001$). Net of the control variables, whites who live near blacks are less trusting than those who do not.

I then repeated the analysis with the South dummy included. As shown in Model 1b, the effect of *race-live* decreased slightly but remained highly significant ($p = .001$). Most importantly for current purposes, however, the *South* variable was highly robust, with Southerners reporting lower levels of trust ($p < .001$).¹⁰ Thus, regional differences in trust cannot be explained by a greater tendency for southern white respondents to live near blacks.

A second alternative explanation for the general findings reported above shifts the focus from the respondents, or *trusters*, to the *targets* of trust. According to this explanation, when non-Southerners report higher levels of trust, they may simply be reporting greater perceived trustworthiness of *others* in the non-South (compared to others in the South). If so, when

Southerners and non-Southerners are considering the same target population, we should not observe regional trust differences.¹¹

I addressed this explanation by comparing trust differences between natives and migrants to various regions. Specifically, I crossed each respondent's region of residence at the time of the interview with his or her region of residence at age 16 (a proxy for native region), which yielded five categories: (1) Southerners who moved to a non-southern region, (2) non-southern natives (respondents who remained in a specific non-southern region), (3) respondents who moved from one non-southern region to a different non-southern region, (4) non-Southerners who moved to the South, and (5) southern natives.

The analyses reveal that, net of the Table 2 control variables, southern natives are significantly less trusting than all remaining categories ($p < .05$). But the most important comparison for current purposes is between southern natives and non-Southerners who move to the South. That migrants to the South are significantly more trusting than southern natives ($p = .001$) suggests that differences in trust between Southerners and non-Southerners do not result from differences in the perceived trustworthiness of *others* in various regions.

As further evidence against this alternative explanation, I repeated the analysis but changed the reference category to *non-southern natives*. Once again, the results are highly reassuring. Southerners who move to the non-South are significantly less trusting than non-southern natives ($p = .002$). Thus, we can rule out the possibility that regional differences in trust are driven by regional differences in the perceived trustworthiness of others.

Issues for Future Research

The results of this paper support the theory linking region, collectivist social relations and trust. But due to data limitations, the analyses did not directly measure social relations. Instead, the logic of the analyses was based on prior demonstrations that southern social relations are more collectivist than non-southern social relations. (As discussed earlier, this logic is like that used in international comparisons of collectivism and trust.) While this is a useful starting point, future work should directly measure how collectivist social relations co-vary with trust across regions.

Similarly, future research should be directed at assessing regional variation in actors' reliance on *alternatives* to general trust. As noted earlier, assurance relations and general trust serve as alternative solutions to some of the same cooperation problems (Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994). From this perspective, collectivist and individualist social relations generate assurance-based and general trust-based solutions, respectively. Previous work suggests that Japanese depend more on assurance relations than Americans, while Americans rely more on general trust. Meanwhile, the present research finds that (white) non-Southerners have higher levels of general trust than (white) Southerners. Thus, a question for future work is whether Southerners depend more on assurance relations than non-Southerners. Empirical investigations of these questions could employ both survey methods (Yamagishi and Yamagishi 1994) and experimental studies that manipulate the social proximity and monitoring/sanctioning capabilities of interdependent actors (Buchan et al. 2002).

Implications for Regional Differences in Social Institutions and Interpersonal Behavior

Previous work has shown that trust is associated with a wide range of macro-level phenomena, including economic development and civic engagement (Fukuyama 1995; Putnam 2000). Meanwhile, other research finds that the South has higher rates of poverty and

lower levels of political participation than non-southern regions (Grantham 1994; Vandello and Cohen 1999). A question for future research rests at the intersection of the regional differences detailed in previous work and the findings reported in this paper: Can regional differences in trust account for regional variation in these various social and economic ills?

The positive relationship between trust and trustworthiness noted earlier in the paper also implies a number of additional questions. First, if high trusters are also more trustworthy, as shown in previous research (Orbell and Dawes 1993), and non-Southerners are more trusting than Southerners (as shown above), should we expect non-Southerners to be, on average, more trustworthy than Southerners? For example, will non-Southerners be more likely than Southerners to honor an interdependent stranger's trust? Especially suggestive in this regard is Yamagishi et al's (1998) finding that Japanese participants engaged in less trustworthy behavior than (northwestern) U.S. participants in a study of trust and cooperation between strangers. The question for future research is whether analogous differences hold within the United States. A cross-regional experiment would allow controlled comparisons of trusting and trustworthy behavior.

In addition to the effects of ego's region, future work should consider the effects of an interdependent *alter's* region on whether ego engages in trusting behavior. Especially interesting in this regard is the possible effect of stereotypes about Southerners on whether actors place trust in Southerners vs. non-Southerners. For example, important aspects of the southern stereotype are politeness and honor (Nisbett and Cohen 1996). These stereotypes may interact in interesting ways with the possibility, suggested in the previous paragraph, that Southerners are less trustworthy partners in exchanges between strangers. We might expect perceptions of Southerners as more honorable to lead actors to expect more trustworthy behavior from Southerners than non-Southerners. If so, and if it is *non-Southerners* who are more trustworthy, a tendency to trust Southerners over non-Southerners would be a (relative) misplacement of trust. (For more on the relationship between trust, trustworthiness and social categories in general, see Orbell et al. 1994). These arguments could also be tested using cross-regional experiments.

Conclusion

The research reported here integrates two streams of research. The first stream shows that collectivist social relations generate lower levels of trust than do individualist social relations. Previously, researchers in this tradition have focused on the differences in collectivist and individualist nations, with the majority of studies comparing Japan and the United States. The second line of research shows that social structures in the U.S. South are more collectivist than those in non-southern regions. At the confluence of these two research lines is the prediction that Southerners are less trusting than non-Southerners. As expected, this argument was supported for whites but not blacks.

Beyond its empirical implications, the current application extends the scope and increases the precision of an existing theory of trust. The paper extends the scope by moving beyond the typical comparison between nations to the investigation of intranational differences. At the same time, the theoretical and empirical demonstration that trust varies across regions of the United States leads to a more precise account of how differences between nations compare to differences within. In so doing, this may help overcome recent criticisms that the large literature on international differences in collectivism obscures variation within nations (e.g., Conway et al. 2001; Voronov and Singer 2002).

In sum, researchers have recently called for more intranational studies of "cross-cultural" differences (Conway et al. 2001; Vandello and Cohen 1999, 289-290), a primary benefit of

which is that many of the factors that vary between nations (such as language and government) are held constant within. For this reason, as well as those outlined in the preceding paragraphs, the current findings increase our confidence in arguments previously used to explain international variation in trust.

Perhaps more importantly, intranational variation in trust is worth considering for precisely the same reason as trust differences between nations: the array of (personal and social) benefits of trust. Of course, the current work was just an initial step and many questions remain about the causes and consequences of regional differences in trust. Future research should focus on more directly assessing intranational variation in social relations and trust, and the consequences of this variation. Given the far-reaching consequences of trust, such efforts should be well worth our while.

Notes

1. While a few scholars (Putnam 2000; Alesina and La Ferrara 2002) have suggested that trust or other aspects of “social capital” may vary by region, the investigation of regional differences in trust was not the goal of that work. Thus, previous research does not offer an explanation of regional differences in trust, nor does it investigate whether regional differences in trust persist after controlling for regional differences in other variables related to trust (e.g., income, education and community size). Finally, I show that regional differences in trust occur net of other community-level variables previous work uses to explain geographical variation in trust.
2. Rousseau et al.’s (1998) interdisciplinary review of the trust literature shows that this conception of trust is common across a wide range of disciplines.
3. Similarly, Fukuyama (1995) explains how strong family ties can inhibit the development of trust in non-family members, and Malhotra and Murnighan (2002) demonstrated the negative effects of contracts (a type of sanctioning system) on interpersonal trust. Malhotra and Murnighan argue that the presence of contracts negatively affect trust because actors attribute cooperation to the contract (the sanctioning system), rather than to each other’s trustworthiness. These arguments and findings are consistent with the theory of trust just reviewed.
4. Arguably, individualist relations increase general trust only if the placement of trust is honored more than it is exploited. Previous work on the positive relationship between trust and trustworthiness suggests this is a reasonable assumption. For example, Orbell and Dawes (1993) show that in social dilemmas with an option to “play” (go into the market) or “exit” (go it alone), high trusters are more likely than low trusters to play. Then, given the positive relationship between trust and trustworthiness, the market will contain a disproportionate number of trustworthy actors. If so, the placement of trust outside group boundaries will tend to be rewarded.
5. A reviewer correctly noted that a large number of southern whites also migrated to Northern and Midwestern cities around the same time period, and that many of them established ethnic enclaves (Fligstein 1981). However, the migration of blacks was of much greater magnitude (Fligstein 1981). Tolnay (2003: 221) notes that “between 1910 and 1980 ... the percentage of [Chicago’s] black population jumped from 2.0% to 32.7%.” He goes on to point out that “similar transformations occurred in virtually all major

northern and western metropolitan areas." Thus, compared to white non-Southerners, a much greater proportion of blacks in the data considered below are first- or second-generation non-Southerners. As a result, we should expect the responses of the average Southerners and non-Southerners to be more similar for black respondents than for white respondents.

6. Michael Macy (personal correspondence) proposes another reason not to expect lower levels of trust among blacks in the South compared to those in the non-South. He notes that Yamagishi's theory of low trust in collectivist Japan refers to a system of lateral social control that relies on peer monitoring, not centralized social control by formal institutions. He agrees that assurance is promoted by the knowledge that others are being closely monitored, but he argues that this is not what lowers trust. Rather, it is the responsibility for monitoring others that attenuates trust by promoting suspicion. In addition to Japan, close mutual monitoring characterizes many societies with "honor codes," including Corsica (Gould 2000) and the southern United States (Nisbett and Cohen 1996). However, southern blacks were not part of the southern honor code. Southern blacks have historically been closely monitored and sanctioned, but by an outside oppressive regime (i.e., vertically, rather than laterally by ingroup members). If low trust in Japan and the South is due to the peer monitoring characteristic of honor codes, he concludes, this may explain why we observe lower levels of trust among southern whites (compared to non-southern whites), but not southern blacks (compared to non-southern blacks). Macy's hypothesis differs from the theory I propose in that the focus is on the effects of peer monitoring rather than collectivist social relations. We are planning a lab experiment with which to adjudicate this theoretical difference.
7. Research on regional differences in collectivism typically compares southern vs. non-southern whites. I am unaware of any research that investigates regional differences in collectivism for blacks. The theory of collectivism and trust suggests that if blacks are, on average, more collectivist than whites, blacks should also be less trusting than whites. Many scholars have documented blacks' lower level of trust, and researchers have offered a number of plausible accounts of this pattern. To my knowledge no one has investigated the possibility that blacks' lower level of general trust may be traceable in part to a tendency for blacks' social relations to be more collectivist than whites' social relations. These issues should be investigated in future work.
8. There are a few "special case" states in terms of how they compare to other states with which they are categorized on various measures of collectivism. For example, Vandello and Cohen (1999, Table 1) show that the social structures of Hawaii are more collectivist than other Western states, while Oklahoma is more individualist than other southern states. However, for simplicity and ease of replication, I follow the Census Bureau classification. If anything, this classification results in a more conservative test of the argument linking region, collectivism and trust.
9. Unfortunately, the GSS does not contain measures of collectivist social relations. It is important to note, however, that when coupled with the previous research reviewed above, the analyses reported below strongly support the argument linking regional differences in trust to regional differences in collectivist social relations. Of course, future work should attempt to measure region, collectivist social relations and trust simultaneously. A number of suggestions for future research relevant to this issue are made below.

10. Once again, supplementary analyses with alternative measures yielded the same conclusion.
11. I thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this possibility.

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