



**Working Paper No. 96**

**SOCIAL CAPITAL AND POLITICAL  
TRUST IN WEST AFRICA**

by Michelle T. Kuenzi

**A comparative series of national public  
attitude surveys on democracy, markets  
and civil society in Africa.**



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TRUST IN WEST AFRICA**

by Michelle T. Kuenzi

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# **Social Capital and Political Trust in West Africa<sup>1</sup>**

## **Abstract**

It is widely believed that efforts to overcome the collective action problem are more likely to succeed when the level of social capital is high. The analysis in this paper is based on Afrobarometer survey data gathered for Ghana and Nigeria. The statistical analysis explores the variables that influence social capital and political trust. The most important determinant of interpersonal trust in Nigeria and Ghana is trust in political institutions. The findings also suggest that the dimensions of social capital do not form a syndrome as organizational membership has a negative association with interpersonal trust in Nigeria. Thus, the results of this study support the institutional explanation of social capital, while they fail to support Putnam's civil society explanation. Several demographic variables, such as education, age and ethnicity, also affect social capital and political trust. Contrary to other studies, this study finds a significant negative relationship between education and interpersonal trust.

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## Introduction

Social capital is theorized to facilitate cooperation and therefore allow people to overcome the collective action problem (Coleman 1990; Putnam 1993). Social capital is thought to explain variations in the performance of institutions and policies across different settings, and there is evidence of a relationship between trust and economic prosperity (Fukuyama 1995; La Porta et al. 1997). In the developing countries, efforts to improve the quality of life may depend fundamentally on small scale, cooperative efforts to develop economic infrastructure, provide education, clean drinking water, and social services. Because social capital can play such a valuable role, it is important to understand the factors that give rise to social capital.

A great deal of research has been reported on social capital in the advanced industrialized democracies, but not very much is known about the factors that influence social capital in the developing countries, particularly those of Africa. What are the factors that give rise to social capital? Do the factors that give rise to social capital vary across contexts? In order to address these questions, I analyze the Afrobarometer survey data collected in Nigeria and Ghana. The results of this study suggest that the dimensions of social capital do not form a syndrome as organizational membership has a significant negative association with interpersonal trust in Nigeria and only a weak positive relationship with interpersonal trust in Ghana. Not surprisingly, different factors appear to give rise to trust and membership. The most important determinant of interpersonal trust in Nigeria and Ghana is trust in political institutions (here called “political trust”). Several demographic variables also affect social capital. Contrary to other studies, this study finds a significant negative relationship between education and interpersonal trust, although education is positively related to organizational membership. Ethnicity has significant effects on the dimensions of social capital and political trust, especially in Nigeria. Those who belong to the largest ethnic groups are less likely to belong to a voluntary organization than those in minority ethnic groups. In contrast, those in the largest ethnic groups tend to have higher levels of interpersonal and political trust. Media consumption has a strong positive relationship with organizational membership but has little effect on the trust variables. The variables that influence political trust appear to have somewhat greater contextual and temporal stability than those that influence interpersonal trust. Satisfaction with the economy, identification with the ruling party, and perceptions of government performance all have consistent, positive effects on political trust in both Nigeria and Ghana, findings which are in line with those of studies done around the globe.

## Theoretical Framework

In his seminal work on governance in northern and southern Italy, Putnam claims that social capital is “the key to making democracy work” (1993, 185). There has been lively debate concerning the role that various factors play in what Francis Fukuyama (1995) has referred to as “spontaneous sociability” and Robert Putnam has referred to as “social capital.” Notwithstanding the many attempts to clarify this term, “social capital” has proven to be an elusive concept. Fukuyama defines social capital as “a set of informal values or norms shared among members of a group that permits cooperation among them” (1999, 16). Similarly, Putnam defines social capital as “. . . features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions . . .” (1993, 167). Cooperation appears to be the ultimate end of social capital. Involvement in community organizations is thought to produce social capital and to be an indicator of the level of social capital in the community. Through face-to-face interaction, people learn to trust each other. They also develop “the habit of cooperation” in these organizations. Interpersonal trust is considered a core component of social capital, and many see social capital and interpersonal trust as being essentially synonymous (e.g., see Frietag 2003).

However, the “radius of social trust” appears to be an important consideration (Fukuyama 1999). Even the social capital enthusiasts acknowledge the “dark side” of social capital (e.g., see Putnam 2000; Fukuyama 1999, 2003), and they, among many others, note that high levels of social capital can be found in uncivil groups. Moreover, a society in which trust is restricted to one’s family, clan, or other limited group and those on the other side of the line of demarcation are approached with distrust, incivility, and hostility, is likely to be filled with dysfunction.

Nevertheless, to say that trust in a tight-knit community is the wrong kind of interpersonal trust and generalized trust to wide-ranging groups of people is the right kind is also misguided. Interpersonal trust within a community allows those of the community to overcome social dilemmas and behave in ways that maximize the well being of the individuals therein. Several studies show that a sense of “we-ness” contributes to overcoming “social dilemmas” (e.g., see Kramer and Goldman 1995). In-group solidarity need not always produce out-group hostility, and there is no reason why there must be a negative relationship between trusting those in a small community and trusting those in a wider community.

Despite the complex, ambiguous nature of social capital, the link between social capital and democracy has been studied extensively (e.g., Putnam 1993, 2000; Norris 2000; Booth and Bayer Richard 1998). The “face-to-face” interaction/civil society explanation has come under attack. In her study of 47 countries, Norris (2000) finds that while interpersonal trust has the hypothesized positive relationship with democracy, involvement in voluntary organizations does not. Numerous studies fail to find a strong relationship between voluntary group membership and interpersonal trust. For example, Freitag (2003B) finds no relationship between participation in voluntary organizations and interpersonal trust in Switzerland, and Newton (1999) finds no relationship between participation in voluntary organizations and interpersonal trust in four Western countries, and only weak associations between these phenomena in three other Western countries (172). In the context of Africa, Widner (1998) finds no relationship between voluntary associational membership and interpersonal trust in Botswana and Uganda.

Indeed, many find that early background factors and socialization are the most important determinants of social capital (e.g., see Freitag 2003B). Education has consistently been found to have a strong, positive effect on social capital in the form of interpersonal trust in Western countries (e.g., see Brehm and Rahn 1997; Freitag 2003A; Freitag 2003B). In their study of 44 countries from the different regions of the world, Anderson and Paskeviciute (2006) note that “the most highly educated individuals and those with higher incomes exhibit the highest levels of all attitudes and behavior associated with both structural and cognitive indicators of citizenship,” including interpersonal trust and organizational membership (793). Newton (1999) finds that the social “winners” in society, that is men, members of social majorities and those with higher socio-economic status, tend to have higher levels of interpersonal trust than do others. On the other hand, in their study of seven societies based on survey data, Delhey and Newton (2003) find little support for the link between demographic factors and interpersonal trust.

Until recently, however, the influence of ethnic identity has often been neglected in studies of social capital. Although there are a few exceptions (e.g. see Dowley and Silver 2002; Bahry et al. 2005; Anderson and Paskeviciute 2006), most studies have not considered fully the role of ethnicity in shaping levels of social capital. There are indications that the lines of political debate can substantially affect the formation of social capital and that the impact of ethnicity is triggered by political fault lines.

Different claims have been made about the relationship between political trust and social capital. One stream of the literature argues that because political institutions determine the framework in which individuals interact, the quality of institutions will largely determine the extent to which social trust is likely to flourish in a particular context. For example, Rothstein (2000) argues that people’s perceptions of the fairness and efficacy of political institutions are critical determinants of interpersonal trust. As many scholars have noted, if people believe that the institutions are fair and effective in punishing

dishonest, exploitative behavior, they are more likely to trust others (Rothstein 2000; Levi 1996). The logic behind this relationship is that fair and effective institutions create a disincentive to engage in dishonest, unlawful behavior because individuals engaging in such behavior are likely to be punished. Thus, an individual has good reason to believe that most people will behave in an honest manner in a context where the institutions in place support such behavior (Rothstein 2000). Similarly, individuals are more likely to follow the rules if they believe that other people are likely to do so as well. Numerous studies find support for the notion that the institutional environment affects social trust and cooperation. The importance of monitoring and sanctioning for maintaining cooperative behavior among Japanese subjects was demonstrated in an experiment reported by Yamagishi (1988). Brehm and Rahn (1997) find confidence in the federal institutions of government to have an “enormous” effect on interpersonal trust in the United States. Rothstein and Uslaner (2005) argue that economic equality and equality of opportunity cause interpersonal trust.

On the other hand, at the level of the individual, Newton (1999) found almost no relationship between political trust and interpersonal trust in several western democracies. Newton (2001) argues that the evidence based on the accumulation of individual survey data “shows that social trust between citizens is not at all closely related to political trust between citizens and political leaders” (201).

Apart from its relationship with interpersonal trust, trust in political institutions (“political trust”) is considered critical for the viability of a democratic government. In order for the government to be able to take the initiative necessary to produce effective governance, a certain level of regime confidence must exist (Mishler and Rose 1999, 78; Hetherington 1998). Some scholars argue that, eventually, low levels of trust in governmental institutions are likely to negatively affect regime support. Low levels of political trust are thought to especially pose threats to emerging democracies.

### **Case Selection: Ghana and Nigeria**

Ghana and Nigeria are ideal contexts in which to investigate these issues. First, Ghana and Nigeria are particularly important countries to understand. Ghana is seen as a model of successful democratization in Africa and has always been a leader in Africa. Ghana was the first sub-Saharan African country to gain independence in 1957. Not only has Ghana been path breaking in terms of political reform, but also in terms of economic reform. With a population of around 124 million, Nigeria is the most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa. Its large population and strong influence in regional politics partly explain the adage “As go Nigeria and South Africa, so goes Africa.” Unegbu observes that if democracy succeeds in Nigeria, “...it will dramatically improve the chances for democracy elsewhere in the region” (2003, 41). In short, the political dynamics in Ghana and Nigeria have implications for the region as a whole.

Second, although this is a “large n” study which focuses on identifying the individual level variables that influence social capital and political trust in Ghana and Nigeria, studying these two countries confers some of the advantages of a “most similar systems” design. Ghana and Nigeria share many similarities emanating from their colonial history, geographic proximity, ethnic fractionalization, history of military rule, level of development, and recent transitions to democracy, but their macro political characteristics differ in some important respects. Comparing Ghana and Nigeria allows us to speculate about how some macro level factors affect the relationship between individual level variables and social capital and political trust.

Ghana and Nigeria are both West African countries and former British colonies with a history of military rule. Despite its rich endowment of oil, Nigeria ranks lower than Ghana on the human development index (HDI). Ghana ranks 136 out of the 177 nations assessed in the UN’s 2006 *Human Development Report*, which puts it at the low end of the “medium human development” category. Nigeria ranks 159, which puts it toward the middle of the “low human development” category.<sup>1</sup>

Although both Ghana and Nigeria have relatively high levels of ethnic fractionalization, levels of ethnic salience and conflict have been higher in Nigeria. Ghana has not been free of civil strife, but it has been much more successful at containing conflict than Nigeria. Gyimah-Boadi (2003) notes, "...under both military and elected civilian administrations, ethnic, regional, religious and other social conflicts have been held in check" (120). In contrast, Nigeria has been plagued by lethal ethno-religious conflict since it achieved independence in 1960. Attempts by Biafra, populated mostly by Igbo, to secede from the Hausa-dominated state in the late 1960s resulted in the deaths of over one million Igbo citizens. Ethnic identity has tended to drive political life, and the largest ethnic group, the Hausa-Fulani, largely dominated the government until Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba from the Middlebelt, was elected president in 1999.

The political trajectories that Nigeria and Ghana have followed since their transitions to democracy have also been different. Ghana has followed an upward trajectory in terms of democracy. In Ghana, each election subsequent to the 1992 founding election has improved in quality. Ghana has just achieved the status of "free" based on Freedom House scores for the seventh year in a row. Moreover, primordial identities have appeared to decline in political salience, especially following the alternation of executive power in the 2000 election.

In contrast, Nigeria has followed a downward trajectory with reference to democracy. Nigeria's best Freedom House Score (since 1983) was for the year of its founding election in 1999. Each of the two elections subsequent to the founding election has declined in quality. Moreover, well over 10,000 people have died in ethno religious and sectarian conflicts since the transition, and ethnic militias abound. Many people actually associate the rise in ethno-religious conflict with democratization (Ukiwo 2003).

Further, the selection of Ghana and Nigeria allows one to examine the variables affecting social capital and political trust in countries with a set of societal characteristics different from those on which the bulk of social capital studies have been conducted. Delhey and Newton (2005) find that "High trust countries are characterized by ethnic homogeneity, Protestant religious traditions, good government, wealth (gross domestic product per capita), and income equality" (311). Anderson and Paskeviciute (2006) find that ethnic and linguistic diversity decrease levels of trust, and, in less democratic countries, heterogeneity increases participation in voluntary organizations. Given the characteristics of the countries of study, it is not surprising that Nigeria and Ghana fall into the category Norris (2000) calls "joining mistrusters." That is, participation rates in civil society are high but levels of interpersonal trust are low. This selection of cases allows one to examine the factors that affect social capital and political trust in countries that are poor and ethnically heterogeneous, have struggled and continue to struggle with high levels of corruption (especially in Nigeria) and that fall into this category of "joining mistrusters."

## Methods

The empirical analysis is based on surveys administered by the Afrobarometer (AB) project in Ghana and Nigeria.<sup>2</sup> This study covers all of the surveys publicly available for these two countries. Thus, for Nigeria, it covers Round 1, which was conducted in 2000 and will be abbreviated as NR1; Round 1.5, which was conducted in 2001 and will be abbreviated as NR1.5; and Round 2, which was conducted in 2003 and will be abbreviated as NR2. For Ghana, the study covers Round 1 which was conducted in 1999 and will be abbreviated as GR1; Round 2, which was conducted 2002 and will be abbreviated as GR2; and Round 3, which was conducted in 2005 and will be abbreviated GR3. The sample sizes for NR1, NR1.5 and NR2 are 3,603, 2,210, and 2,428, respectfully. The sample sizes for GR1, GR2, and GR3 are 2,004, 1,200, and 1,197 respectfully. The AB uses "National probability samples that represent an accurate cross section of the voting age population. Random selection is used at every stage of sampling and the sample is stratified to ensure that all major demographic segments of the population are covered."<sup>3</sup>



Unfortunately, I was unable to simply replicate the analysis across the different AB survey rounds for Ghana and Nigeria. The Round 1 and Round 2 surveys for the countries of study are substantially different. None of the interpersonal trust questions is included on the Round 1.5 or Round 2 surveys. Thus, only the models for organizational membership and political trust could be estimated for NR1.5, NR2, and GR2. In addition, the wording of other questions differs. Questions that were as close as possible to those used in Round 1 were identified in the Round 1.5, 2 and 3 surveys (the Round 1 surveys for Ghana and Nigeria are not identical but they generally contain the same questions). While not always identical, the measures used are very close in meaning (Appendix). Although this situation is not ideal for comparison across time and countries, the AB datasets constitute the best source of public opinion data on Africa and they are an enormously rich and useful source of information.

I conduct cross-sectional analysis for each round of survey data for the countries of study instead of pooled cross-sectional analysis for a number of reasons. First, each round of the AB survey provides a snapshot of the attitudes of Ghanaians and Nigerians as democracy takes shape in these countries. Examining each round allows one to discern whether relationships change across time, perhaps because of changes in the macro political environment. Second, drawing comparisons between Ghana and Nigeria is of interest. Third, because of the differences in some measures between the survey rounds, it would be very hard to pool the data, even simply by country. In fact, the response categories for some of the dependent variables change across survey rounds. (The consistency in some of the relationships in both Ghana and Nigeria despite slight differences in question wording across survey rounds points to their robust nature.)

## CONCEPTUALIZATION AND OPERATIONALIZATION

Question wording used in each AB survey and a detailed description of the operationalization of the variables used in the analysis is covered in the appendix.

### Dependent Variables

Social capital is measured at the individual level by membership in a voluntary organization and interpersonal trust. Political trust (also often referred to as institutional trust) and social capital are integrally linked concepts as both are related to support for and commitment to social and political institutions. Nevertheless, social capital is located in the social sphere while political trust is located in the political sphere.

### Organizational Membership

The questions in the surveys allow the compilation of a dichotomous indicator of membership in a voluntary organization for respondents in Ghana and Nigeria. The survey administered in GR1 asked only a simple “yes or no” question about membership, while the other survey rounds collected more detailed information.

### Interpersonal Trust

#### *The Social Trust Index*

The NR1, GR1 and GR3 surveys included a battery of questions about social trust in various social groups. Respondents were asked about the degree to which they trusted their relatives, their neighbors, people of their own ethnic group and people of other ethnic groups. The scores for each of these items were added to create “social trust index.”

The creation of an index is justified because factor analysis reveals that all of the questions about social trust load highly onto one dimension. Interestingly, saying that one trusts people of *other* ethnic groups is highly and significantly correlated with saying one trusts one’s relatives (for NR1, the correlation is  $r = .41$ ), one’s neighbors ( $r = .54$ ) and the members of one’s own ethnic group ( $r = .65$ ). The corresponding

correlations are very similar for GR3; they are .44, .58, and .67. The scale reliability coefficient for NR1 is .85 while that for GR1 is .77 and that for GR3 is .86. These findings call into question the notion that thick trust must come at the expense of thin trust.<sup>4</sup>

Although thick trust does not appear to come at the expense of thin trust, Ghana and Nigeria are still countries of thick or particularized trust. Bratton et al. (2005) note with regard to these social trust indicators in the Round 1 surveys, “Interpersonal trust declines in a step-by-step fashion from a high level for one’s relatives, to progressively lower levels for neighbors, the member’s of one’s own ethnic group, and fellow nationals of other ethnic groups” (p.195). In Round 1, 44% of Nigerians and 65% of Ghanaians report that they trust their relatives a lot. In contrast, only 11% of Nigerians and 19% of Ghanaians report that they trust people of other ethnic groups a lot. The response categories for the social trust questions changed in Round 3, but the results for GR3 are similar; 49% of Ghanaians report trusting their relatives a lot, compared to 17% who report trusting those of another ethnic group a lot. Overall, levels of social trust appear perhaps slightly higher in Ghana than in Nigeria. In Round 1, when the question wording is identical for NR1 and GR1, 8% of Nigerians had the highest social trust score possible (i.e. answered “I trust them a lot” when asked about each reference group) compared to 15% of Ghanaians. (In GR3, 13% had the highest social trust score, but, as noted, the response categories were different.)

### *Generalized Trust*

The NR1 and GR3 surveys included a forced choice question that allows the creation of a second indicator. Respondents were asked the standard interpersonal trust question: “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you must be very careful in dealing with people?” This question is used in many studies as a basic measure of interpersonal trust and is, as others have noted, the “standard trust question.” The correlation between the standard trust measure and the social trust index for NR1 is .30, and the correlation between these two variables for GR3 is .26, indicating that the variables are measuring a similar but not identical phenomenon. The standard trust question is thought to measure “generalized” trust, and it appears to do so. In the case of Nigeria, among the social trust indicators used in the index, this measure of generalized trust is most strongly correlated with trusting someone from “another tribe” ( $r = .30$ ,  $pr < .000$ ) and most weakly correlated with trusting a relative ( $r = .19$ ,  $pr \leq .000$ ).<sup>5</sup> Both Ghanaians and Nigerians have low levels of generalized trust with 15% of Nigerians and 16% of Ghanaians offering the trusting response to the standard trust question, findings consistent with the observations concerning the indicators of the social trust index.

To simplify matters, the broad category of trust among individuals will be referred to as interpersonal trust. Interpersonal trust as measured by the social trust index will be referred to as social trust. Interpersonal trust as measured by the standard trust question will be referred to as generalized trust.

### **Political Trust**

Political trust is measured by an index that incorporates questions on the degree of trust one has in the primary institutions of government: the national assembly, local government authorities, police, courts of law, political parties, and army. Creation of an additive index is justified as the political trust items are highly correlated with each other and the scale reliability coefficients for the index are high, ranging from a high of .89 for NR1 to a low of .75 for GR3. (See the appendix for all of the scale reliability coefficients and a detailed description of the political trust indicators and index.) Although political trust is a dependent variable in this study, as noted, it can also be considered an independent variable with reference to interpersonal trust. Political trust is expected to have a positive relationship with interpersonal trust.

Levels of political trust are somewhat low in both Nigeria and Ghana. Because the response categories for the political trust questions are different in each survey round, it is hard to assess changes in political

trust levels across time (see the appendix). When one compares political trust levels for Ghana and Nigeria for the same survey round, however, when the question wording is identical, political trust levels are higher in Ghana than Nigeria. In NR1, 5% of Nigerians had the highest political trust score of 4 (i.e., answered “trust them a lot” with regard to all of the political institutions) and 25% percent had scores falling in the highest two categories with scores of 3 or above (3=I trust them somewhat). In GR1, 8% of Ghanaians had the highest political trust score of 4 and 41% percent had scores falling in the highest two categories with scores of 3 or above. In Round 2, the response categories for the political trust questions were changed in such a way very likely to affect the distribution of responses. In NR2, 0% of Nigerians had the highest political trust score possible and only 2% percent had scores falling in the highest two categories.<sup>6</sup> In GR2, 1% of Ghanaians had the highest political trust scores possible and 20% percent had scores falling into the highest two categories. In Round 3, the response categories were again changed. In GR3, 8% of Ghanaians had the highest political trust scores and 53% percent had scores falling into the highest two categories.

### **Independent Variables**

Satisfaction with one’s life and quality of life have been linked to interpersonal trust. The questions in this survey allow for a measure of satisfaction with one’s quality of life to be included in the analysis. A positive relationship between satisfaction and interpersonal trust is expected.

Civic engagement and media exposure have also been linked to social capital. Brehm and Rahn (1997) find that civic engagement has a positive effect on interpersonal trust, and I expect to find a positive relationship between civic engagement and social capital. Discussing politics with friends and neighbors is the measure of civic engagement used in this study. This measure is very good since it is precisely those types of political activities that involve interactions with people that are likely to affect one’s trust in others as well as one’s propensity to work with others in voluntary organizations. The frequency with which one listens to news on the radio is the measure of media consumption. Because of the relatively low literacy rates in rural areas and relatively high cost of newspapers, only a small percentage of people in rural areas read the newspaper. In addition, access to a radio is much more common than access to a TV. Listening to the radio is the most important indicator of media consumption in rural Africa and is likely to facilitate individuals’ participation in community life.

Many of the demographic and socioeconomic variables have been found to be related to social capital, and thus they are included in the analysis. The surveys did not collect identical information about all of these characteristics, but each did obtain sufficient information so that a variable measuring the phenomenon of interest could be created. The income question, however, was not asked as such in GR3. I therefore use the poverty index as a substitute for income in the models for GR3. This index is very similar to the lived poverty index developed by Bratton et al. (2005), which measures the extent to which people are deprived of meeting their basic needs. (See the appendix for a description of the index.)<sup>7</sup>

In general, the variables associated with modernity, such as education, income, and urban residence are expected to have a negative relationship with interpersonal trust. Increases in these social attributes are associated with a decline in the strength of traditional affiliations. Education is thought to hone critical thinking skills, which is likely to make one more discerning in evaluations of both government and individuals.

The instruments used in the first two rounds of the AB in these countries did not have a question on ethnicity, but they did have a question on language. Although one’s primary language and ethnic identity are not always consistent due to the use of lingua franca, language has often been used as a proxy for ethnic identity, and many of those using AB data have followed this procedure (e.g., see Bratton *et al.* 2005; Norris and Mattes 2003). In the GR3 survey, respondents were asked to identify their home language and then, much later in the survey, their ethnicity. The correlation between home language and

ethnicity is .999, indicating that home language is an excellent proxy for ethnicity, at least in Ghana. Only three respondents out of 1,197 gave a different home language than that associated with their ethnic group.

Ethnicity in Nigeria is measured by four variables that indicate whether or not the respondent speaks a particular language. These language variables, Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo, and Other, are coded “0” and “1” to indicate that the respondent speaks the relevant language. In the tables, the largest ethnic group corresponds to the Hausa, Minority Group 1 corresponds to the Yoruba, and Minority Group 2 corresponds to the Igbo. A similar procedure was used to measure ethnicity in Ghana for Rounds 1 and 2. In the tables, the largest ethnic group corresponds to the Akan, Minority Group 1 corresponds to the Ewe, and Minority Group 2 corresponds to the Ga.<sup>8</sup>

As noted, previous research has found that those in social majorities tend to be more trusting. Luhiste’s (2006) study of Baltic states reveals that, on average, Russian-speaking minorities have lower levels of political trust than those in the titular ethnic groups. In neither Nigeria nor Ghana, however, is there a majority ethnic group. The largest ethnic group in Nigeria, the Hausa, dominated political life there for most of the post-independence period. In contrast, although the Akan tended to dominate political life for a couple of decades after independence, the Ewe were seen as the politically privileged group in Ghana after Flight Lieutenant Jerry Rawlings came to power through a military coup in 1981. This situation came to an end in 2000 when there was an alternation of executive power through elections. As Gyimah-Boadi notes, the government that came to power in the 2000 election has made ethnic and regional inclusiveness a priority (2003, 135). Thus, the situation is not like that found in many of the post-communist countries where there is a titular majority ethnic group and much smaller minority groups. Nonetheless, those in the largest ethnic groups are expected to have higher levels of interpersonal and political trust than those in the smaller minority groups. In contrast, those of the largest ethnic groups are expected to be less likely to belong to a voluntary organization. Those belonging to minority ethnic groups are likely to feel more of a need to organize to achieve their goals than those of the largest groups, who tend to feel empowered in the social and political spheres as a result of their numbers.

Religion and ethnic identity tend to be heavily overlapping cleavages in Nigeria.<sup>9</sup> Thus, it would be impossible to include both the religion and ethnicity variables in the same equations. In addition, the question on religion was not included in the GR1 survey.

Most of the factors in the equations for interpersonal trust have been found to be related to political trust. Identification with the ruling party and subjective assessments of satisfaction with the economy and government performance are also thought to influence political trust. A question about the performance of government, in general, was included on the Round 1 surveys but not the Round 1.5, 2 and 3 surveys. For these survey rounds, respondents’ evaluation of the performance of parliamentary representatives is used as the measure of government performance. The parliament is a key democratic national institution, and evaluations of the members of parliament are highly correlated with evaluations of other public officials and institutions.

## RESULTS

### Membership in Voluntary Organizations

What affects people’s membership in voluntary organizations in Nigeria and Ghana? Because it is a dichotomous variable, binary logit is used to estimate the effects of the explanatory variables of interest on membership in voluntary organizations.

**Table 1: Binary Logit Estimates of Participation in Civil Society  
Dependent Variable: Membership in a Voluntary Organization**

	Model 1: Nigeria R1 Organizational Membership <b>Logit</b>	Model 1: Nigeria R1.5 Organizational Membership <b>Logit</b>	Model 1: Nigeria R2 Organizational Membership <b>Logit</b>	Model 1: Ghana R1 Organizational Membership <b>Logit</b>	Model 1: Ghana R2 Organizational Membership <b>Logit</b>	Model 1: Ghana R3 Organizational Membership <sup>2</sup> <b>Logit</b>
<b>Est. Method</b>						
News from Radio	.12*** (.02)	.12*** (.05)	.13*** (.05)	.10*** (.03)	.15*** (.06)	.19*** (.07)
Discuss Politics	.31*** (.06)	.26*** (.05)	.16*** (.05)	.24*** (.07)	.06 (.05)	-.11 (.11)
Largest Ethnic Group	-.98*** (.10)	-.25* (.14)	-.28** (.14)	-.35*** (.12)	-.14 (.19)	-.53*** (.20)
Minority Ethnic Group 1	-.14 (.10)	-.61*** (.13)	-.03 (.14)	.18 (.17)	-.16 (.29)	-.26 (.27)
Minority Ethnic Group 2	1.05*** (.14)	.52*** (.17)	.77*** (.19)	-.35 (.23)	-.40 (.32)	-1.33*** (.31)
Education	.14*** (.02)	.02 (.03)	.05* (.03)	.05*** (.01)	.18*** (.05)	.13*** (.05)
Income	.05* (.03)	-.01 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.10*** (.04)	-.03 (.04)	.006 (.09)
Age	.02*** (.003)	.02*** (.005)	.02*** (.004)	.01*** (.003)	.02*** (.01)	.009* (.005)
Gender	-.19** (.08)	-.03 (.11)	.06 (.11)	-.02 (.10)	.42*** (.16)	.06 (.16)
Urban	-.001 (.09)	-.06 (.11)	-.20* (.11)	-.36*** (.11)	-.29* (.16)	-.26 (.17)
Constant	-1.20*** (.19)	-.40 (.26)	-1.01*** (.30)	-1.54*** (.21)	-.53 (.34)	.62 (.39)
# obs	3543	2173	1678	1971	996	1108
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.13	.05	.04	.06	.04	.04
LR chi <sup>2</sup>	608.89	123.26	82.37	152.92	39.08	39.46
Prob > chi <sup>2</sup>	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Notes: \*\*\* $p \leq .01$  for two tailed test; \*\* $p \leq .05$  for two tailed test; \* $p \leq .1$  for two tailed test

<sup>2</sup> As noted, the poverty index is the proxy measure being used for income for GR3. Higher scores correspond to higher levels of poverty.

In concordance with the original hypothesis, Nigerians and Ghanaians who listen to news on the radio are significantly more likely belong to a voluntary organization than those who do not (Table 1). The coefficient for radio is positive and significant across all of the models estimated for the different survey rounds in both Ghana and Nigeria. Nigerians who discuss politics with friends and neighbors are significantly more likely to belong to a voluntary organization than those who do not. The coefficient for discussing politics is positive and significant at the .01 level in all of the models for the different survey rounds in Nigeria. The effect of civic engagement on Ghanaians' propensity to join a voluntary organization is not very consistent.

Ethnic identity appears to have a significant impact on membership in voluntary organizations. In both Nigeria and Ghana, those in the largest ethnic group appear less likely to belong to a voluntary organization than those in other groups. In the models for both countries, the coefficient for the largest ethnic group is negative, and it is significant in all models except for GR2. This finding supports the view that members of the largest groups may not see as much need to mobilize and organize as those in minority groups. In the case of Nigeria, the coefficient for "Minority Group 2" (Igbo) is positive and highly significant across the three survey rounds. Given the history of the Igbo in the post-independence political era, it is not hard to see why members of this group would see a greater need to organize and cooperate with each other to pursue their interests. Forty years after the tragic Biafran war, there are some Igbo who still see the need for a separate state to house Igbos as evidenced by the existence of groups such as Movement for the Actualisation of the Sovereign State of Biafra (Massob). These findings are consistent with those of Dowley and Silver (2002) based on data from the post-communist countries.

The results are not as clear for the other minority groups. In the model for NR1.5, the coefficient for Minority Group 1 (Yoruba) is negative and significant. In the model for GR3, the coefficient for Minority Group 2 (Ga) is negative and significant. Thus, while members of the largest ethnic groups seem less likely to have group memberships in these two countries, the level of civil society participation among the minority groups seems much more variable, probably reflecting the social and political situation each group perceives it faces as well as other factors not captured in the model. These results point to the importance of context in mediating the relationship between ethnicity and participation in civil society.

Formal education has a positive effect on organizational membership in Nigeria and Ghana, although the relationship between education and membership appears to be stronger for Ghana than Nigeria. The coefficient for education is positive in all of the rounds of the survey in Nigeria, and it is significant in the models for NR1 and NR2, but only at the .10 level for NR2. The coefficient for education is positive and highly significant across all of the survey rounds for Ghana. The results for income are weak and inconsistent: the signs of the coefficients change across survey rounds and they only reach significance in two of the models. The coefficient for age is positive in all six of the model estimations covering the different rounds of the survey, and it is highly significant in five of estimations and significant at the .10 level in the remaining one (GR3). That age is associated with community involvement is not surprising given the way prestige and responsibilities increase concomitantly with age in traditional culture.

The effect of gender on organizational membership is not clear from the results (Table 1): the sign and the significance of the coefficient for gender vary across the model estimations. In fact, the relationship between gender and organizational membership varies across ethnic groups. Model 1 was run separately for each ethnic group across the different survey rounds for Nigeria (results not shown). When the analysis was restricted to the Hausa, the relationship between female and organizational membership was negative and significant across all of the survey rounds. However, when the analysis was restricted to the Igbo, the relationship between female and membership was positive and significant across all of the

survey rounds, although only at the .10 level for NR1. Among the Yoruba, gender appears unrelated to membership.<sup>10</sup> Neither ethnicity nor religion had an appreciable effect on the relationship between gender and membership in Ghana.

In general, Nigerian and Ghanaian urban dwellers appear less likely than rural dwellers to be joiners. The coefficient for urban residence is negative in all six of the equations, although it is highly significant only in the estimation of Model 1 for GR1 and significant at the .10 level in the estimations for NR2 and GR2. Those living in urban areas are more likely to be living among strangers than those in rural areas, and it is probably more difficult to cooperate in groups with strangers than with those with whom one has a prior connection. Some of the associations highlighted in the questions in most survey rounds, however, such as professional associations and unions, are likely to be much more plentiful in urban areas. Perhaps it is for this reason that the relationship between urban residence and voluntary membership is not stronger.

### **Interpersonal Trust**

What factors influence interpersonal trust? In Model 2 (Table 2), the standard trust question is the measure of generalized trust for NR1 and GR1. Again, this question was posed only in these two survey rounds. Since generalized trust is a dichotomous variable, logit is used as the estimation method. In Model 3, the social trust index is used as the measure of interpersonal trust for NR1, GR1 and GR3. OLS regression is used to estimate the effects of the variables of interest on the index of social trust. Again, the social trust questions were posed only in these three survey rounds.

<b>Table 2: Estimates of Social Trust Models</b> <b>Dependent Variables: Generalized Trust, Social Trust Index</b>					
	Model2 Nigeria R1 Generalized Trust	Model 3 Nigeria R1 Social Trust Index	Model 3 Ghana R1 Social Trust Index R1	Model 2 : Ghana R3 Generalized Trust	Model 3: Ghana R3 Social Trust Index <sup>3</sup>
<b>Estimation Method</b>	<b>Logit</b>	<b>OLS Regression</b>	<b>OLS Regression</b>	<b>Logit</b>	<b>OLS Regression</b>
Political Trust	.72*** (.08)	.49*** (.01)	.34*** (.02)	.34** (.15)	.36*** (.04)
Satisfaction Own QOL	-.19*** (.06)	.004 (.01)	.03** (.02)	.02 (.08)	.01 (.02)
Organizational Membership	-.19* (.12)	-.06*** (.02)	-.02 (.03)	.49* (.28)	.14** (.07)
News from Radio	.03 (.03)	-.01* (.01)	-.02* (.01)	-.09 (.09)	-.02 (.03)
Discuss Politics	.23*** (.08)	.002 (.02)	.10*** (.02)	-.03 (.14)	-.03 (.04)
Largest Ethnic Group	.87*** (.14)	.26*** (.03)	.08* (.04)	.04 (.23)	-.18*** (.07)
Minority Ethnic Group 1	-.42** (.18)	.11*** (.03)	-.16*** (.06)	.05 (.32)	-.18** (.09)
Minority Ethnic Group 2	-.53** (.23)	.13*** (.03)	-.25*** (.08)	-.39 (.56)	-.39*** (.12)
Education	-.16*** (.03)	-.02*** (.01)	-.01*** (.003)	-.11** (.06)	-.03** (.02)
Income	.12*** (.04)	.01 (.01)	-.02* (.01)	-.01 (.12)	.02 (.04)
Age	.003 (.004)	.001* (.001)	.002** (.001)	.01 (.01)	.003 (.002)
Gender	-.13 (.12)	-.04* (.02)	.01 (.03)	-.19 (.21)	-.09 (.06)
Urban	.38*** (.12)	-.01 (.02)	-.07** (.04)	-.21 (.21)	-.09 (.06)
Constant	-3.45*** (.37)	1.66*** (.07)	2.10*** (.09)	-2.41*** (.66)	1.20*** (.18)
<i>Number of observations</i>	3330	3328	1681	922	913
<i>Pseudo R<sup>2</sup>/Adj R<sup>2</sup></i>	.17	.40	.22	.04	.14
SE		.575	.633		.790
$\chi^2/F$	493.28	172.37	36.44	29.21	11.97
Prob > $\chi^2/F$	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.006	0.000

Notes: \*\*\* $p \leq .01$  for two tailed test; \*\* $p \leq .05$  for two tailed test; \* $p \leq .1$  for two tailed test

<sup>3</sup> As noted, the poverty index is the proxy measure being used for income for GR3. Higher scores correspond to higher levels of poverty.



The results displayed in Table 2 are striking. Political trust is the variable most strongly associated with interpersonal trust across all of the models. Its coefficients are positive, large, and significant in all of the models. For NR1, it explains about 22% of the variance in the social trust index; when political trust is included in Model 3 for NR1, the Adjusted  $R^2$  is .40 and when political trust is dropped from the model the Adjusted  $R^2$  is .18. The same type of analysis for GR1 and GR3 reveals that political trust explains about 14% of the variance in social trust in GR1 and 8% in GR3. These results support the notion that effective political institutions create an environment where social trust can flourish. Based on data from the 1990 *World Values Survey*, Newton (1999) reports a correlation of -.03 between social trust and trust in government (180). In contrast, in Nigeria, the correlation between the social trust index and political trust is .61 ( $p = .000$ ). The correlation between generalized trust and political trust is .30 ( $p = .000$ ). In GR1, the correlation between political trust and the social trust index is .41 ( $p = .000$ ). These are very strong correlations for survey-type data. In GR3, the strength of the relationship appears to have declined: the correlation between political trust and social trust is .33 ( $p = .000$ ), while the correlation between political trust and generalized trust is only .11 ( $p = .000$ ).

The effect of the other attitudinal variable, satisfaction with one's quality of life, is hard to interpret as it appears to have a significant negative effect on generalized trust for NR1 and a significant positive effect on social trust for GR1. It is, however, related to political trust, and when political trust is dropped from the interpersonal trust models, satisfaction's negative coefficient in Model 2 for NR1 is insignificant and its coefficients are positive and significant in the social trust models (Model 3) at the .01 and .10 levels for NR1 and GR3 respectively.

In contradiction to social capital theory, the coefficient for membership in a voluntary organization is negative and significant at the .10 level the model of generalized trust for NR1 and negative and significant at the .01 level in the model of the social trust index for NR1, while the coefficient is negative but not significant in the model of social trust for GR1. This finding is at odds with the expectation derived from the social capital literature that voluntary associations are the crucibles of interpersonal trust. Numerous studies fail to find a relationship between associational membership and interpersonal trust, but this study actually reveals a negative relationship in the case of Nigeria. This result certainly undermines the notion that social capital is a syndrome comprising associational membership and interpersonal trust. It may be the case that those most likely to mobilize in Nigeria are those most dissatisfied with the current social system.

The estimate of Model 2 for GR3 reveals a positive, significant relationship at the .10 level between organizational membership and generalized trust. The estimate of Model 3 for GR3 reveals a positive relationship, significant at the .05 level between membership and the social trust index. Although the results for GR3 are more consistent with social capital theory, they provide little support for the idea of a voluntary membership-social trust syndrome. An examination of the correlations among these variables for GR3 furthers the point. The correlation between membership and generalized trust is .09,  $p \leq .03$ , while that between membership and social trust is .10,  $p \leq .000$ . One would expect tighter relationships among variables that form a syndrome.

In general, the effects of listening to the radio and discussing politics do not seem strong or consistent. Ethnic identity, however, has a significant impact on interpersonal trust. Membership in the largest ethnic group generally appears to have a positive effect on this dimension of social capital, especially for Nigeria. We can see in Model 2 for NR1 that those in the largest ethnic group (the Hausa-Fulani) are more likely to manifest generalized trust than those in the other groups. The coefficient for the largest ethnic group is positive and highly significant while the coefficients for membership in the two minority groups (Yoruba and Igbo) are both negative and significant at the .05 level. With reference to the standard trust question, the Hausa respondents were much more likely to opt for the trusting response than the members of other ethnic groups. Thirty-two percent of Hausa respondents answered that most people

can be trusted while only six percent of Yoruba respondents and six percent of Igbo respondents opted for the trusting response.

Although the coefficients for Minority Group 1 (Yoruba) and Minority Group 2 (Igbo) are positive and statistically significant in Model 3 for NR1, in which the social trust index is the dependent variable, the coefficient for the largest ethnic group (the Hausa) is much larger. Indeed, the positive and significant coefficients for the Yoruba and Igbo are partly a function of the excluded group, which, in this case, comprises all of the other minority groups in Nigeria, and partly a function of the fact that the ethnicity variables are related to political trust, which is included in the model. An examination of the correlations helps clarify the relationships: Hausa has a strong, positive correlation with the social trust index ( $r = .38$ ,  $p = .000$ ) while Yoruba ( $r = -.18$ ,  $p = .000$ ) and Igbo ( $r = -.10$ ,  $p = .000$ ) have significant, negative correlations with social trust. Investigation of the percentages makes the relationship even more apparent. Twenty-one percent of the Hausa had the highest possible score of 4 on the social trust index, compared to 1% of Yoruba respondents and 2% of Igbo respondents. In fact, those in the largest ethnic groups are not only more trusting of those of other ethnic groups, but they are more trusting of those in their own ethnic group, their neighbors, and their relatives compared with those in the minority ethnic groups in both NR1 and GR1. Thus, thick trust and thin trust do not appear at odds with each other in Ghana and Nigeria.

In the case of Ghana, Model 3 for GR1 shows that the coefficient for the largest ethnic group (Akan) is positive and significant at the .10 level, while the coefficients for Minority Ethnic Group 1 (Ewe) and Minority Ethnic Group 2 (Ga) are both negative and significant at the .01 level. These results conform to what was hypothesized about the relationship between ethnicity and interpersonal trust. Ethnicity appears, however, to be unrelated to generalized trust in Model 2 for GR3. In addition, the coefficients for all of the ethnicity variables are negative and significant in the model of social trust for GR3. An examination of the correlations among the ethnicity variables and social trust reveals that neither Akan nor Ewe are significantly related to the social trust index, while the correlation between Ga and the social trust index is  $-.11$ ,  $p = .000$ . This finding is interesting; the importance of ethnicity as an organizational principle has declined in Ghana since democratization and the executive alternation of power in 2000, and perhaps that decline is reflected in these survey results.

The results displayed in Table 2 support the contention that the factors that give rise to social capital vary across contexts. The coefficients for formal education are negative and significant at least at the .05 level in all of the models for Nigeria and Ghana. These findings contrast sharply with those studies reporting a positive relationship between education and interpersonal trust based on data from the developed countries. Why does this difference exist? Bratton and van de Walle describe the neopatrimonial regimes of Africa as being characterized by “relationships of loyalty and dependence” (1997, 62). Perhaps “loyalty and dependence” are captured somewhat in the measures of trust. Thus, those with education may be questioning these relationships and are therefore more skeptical about trusting others.

Neither age nor gender appears to exercise a strong influence on interpersonal trust. That the coefficient for gender (1 = woman) is negative across four out of the five models is consistent with Newton’s (1999) findings that trust is higher among men and social majorities. The coefficient for gender, however, never reaches statistical significance.

The effects of income and urban residence are variable, depending on either the country or measure of interpersonal trust. A negative relationship between urban residence and interpersonal trust was hypothesized. In Model 2 for NR1 (the model of generalized trust), this expectation is not borne out as the coefficient for urban is positive and highly significant. The coefficient for urban, however, is negative in all of the other estimates of the interpersonal trust models and significant at the .05 level for GR1. In fact, urban is correlated with political trust, and when political trust is not included in the social trust

models for NR1 and GR3, the coefficients are negative and significant at the .01 levels. Perhaps urban is differently related to generalized trust than it is to other types of interpersonal trust.

### **Political Trust**

Political trust appears to be an important determinant of interpersonal trust, but what factors give rise to political trust? Table 3 shows that the coefficients for government performance, satisfaction with the economy, and identification with the ruling party are almost all positive and significant across the political trust models, a finding consistent with research carved out in the developed countries.<sup>11</sup> The coefficients for government performance are positive and highly significant across all six of the estimations of Model 4. The coefficients for satisfaction with the economy are positive and significant at the .01 level in all of the models except that for GR2. The coefficients for identification with the ruling party are positive and significant in all of the models except that for NR1.5, in which case it is negative but not significant.

**Table 3: Political Trust Models**  
**Dependent Variable: Political Trust Index**

	Model 4: Political Trust Nigeria R1	Model 4: Political Trust Nigeria R1.5	Model 4: Political Trust Nigeria R2	Model 4: Political Trust Ghana R1	Model 4: Political Trust Ghana R2	Model 4: Political Trust Ghana R3 <sup>4</sup>
<b>Est. Method</b>	<b>OLS Regression</b>	<b>OLS Regression</b>	<b>OLS Regression</b>	<b>OLS Regression</b>	<b>OLS Regression</b>	<b>OLS Regression</b>
Government Performance Satisfaction with Economy	.11*** (.02)	.28*** (.02)	.22*** (.02)	.14*** (.02)	.19*** (.02)	.20*** (.03)
Ruling Party	.12*** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	.06*** (.01)	.13*** (.02)	.01 (.02)	.07*** (.02)
Organizational Membership	.07** .03	-.01 .03	.07** .03	.09** (.04)	.15*** (.04)	.17*** (.04)
News from Radio Discuss Politics Largest Ethnic Group	-.04 (.03)	-.05* (.03)	-.02 (.03)	-.06 (.04)	.07 (.05)	.05 (.05)
Minority Ethnic Group 1	.00004 (.01)	.03** (.01)	.05*** (.01)	-.003 (.01)	-.003 (.02)	.02 (.02)
Minority Ethnic Group 2	.08*** (.02)	.02 (.01)	.03*** (.01)	-.02 (.03)	-.01 (.01)	.01 (.03)
Education	.37*** (.03)	.10*** (.04)	.17*** (.03)	.03 (.05)	.05 (.05)	-.01 (.05)
Income	-.25*** (.03)	-.08** (.03)	-.11*** (.03)	-.03 (.06)	-.22*** (.08)	-.02 (.07)
Age	-.13*** (.04)	-.01 (.04)	-.15*** (.04)	.05 (.09)	.01 (.09)	-.17* (.10)
Gender	-.04*** (.01)	.002 (.07)	-.02** (.01)	-.01*** (.004)	-.005 (.01)	-.03** (.01)
Urban	-.01 (.01)	.01** (.005)	.01*** (.004)	-.003 (.01)	.01 (.01)	-.01 (.03)
Constant	.004*** (.001)	.001 (.001)	-.0005 (.001)	.001 (.001)	.003** (.001)	.002 (.001)
# obs	-.11*** (.03)	-.03 (.03)	-.01 (.03)	-.04 (.04)	-.07* (.04)	-.04 (.04)
Adj R <sup>2</sup>	-.15*** (.03)	-.06** (.03)	-.01 (.03)	-.09** (.04)	-.04 (.04)	-.16*** (.04)
SE	1.7*** (.09)	-.05 (.08)	-.08 (.08)	2.08*** (.09)	.71 (.11)	1.17*** (.15)
F	3317	1810	1426	1731	725	891
	.28	.23	.29	.15	.15	.15
	.685	.509	.467	.727	.524	.613
	92.68	39.33	43.26	21.97	10.46	12.15

<sup>4</sup> As noted, the poverty index is the proxy measure being used for income for GR3. Higher scores correspond to higher levels of poverty.

Organizational membership appears to have little relationship with political trust. The frequency with which one listens to the radio appears to have a positive effect in the case of Nigeria but essentially no effect in Ghana. Those who discuss politics seem to have higher levels of political trust in Nigeria, but not in Ghana. The coefficients for discussing politics are positive in all of the models for Nigeria and significant at the .01 levels in the models for NR1 and NR2. In contrast, they are negative in two of the models for Ghana, but significant in none.

Ethnic identity seems to affect political trust in the ways hypothesized, especially in Nigeria. The coefficient for the largest ethnic group is positive in all but one of the equations for Nigeria and Ghana (that for GR3), but it is highly significant in all of the equations for Nigeria while it fails to achieve statistical significance in the equations for Ghana. The coefficients for Minority Ethnic Group 1 are all negative and significant in all of the models for Nigeria and one for Ghana (GR2). The coefficients for Minority Ethnic Group 2 are negative in four of the six models, and significant at the .01 level for NR1 and NR2 and significant only at the 0.1 level for GR3. If we look at the results separately for Ghana and Nigeria, in the case of Nigeria, the relationship between the ethnic variables and political trust conform almost perfectly to what was hypothesized. The results for Ghana generally seem consistent with the expected pattern, but the relationship between political trust and ethnicity is much weaker. This outcome makes a good deal of sense given how much more salient ethnicity has been in the politics of Nigeria than Ghana. At the time the Nigeria surveys were being conducted, Olusegun Obasanjo, a Yoruba from the Middlebelt, was president. Nonetheless, the Hausa-Fulani dominated the state throughout most of Nigeria's post-independence political life. Thus, it is not surprising that those who are Hausa are significantly more trusting of Nigeria's political institutions than are those who are Yoruba or Igbo.

As with interpersonal trust, education has a negative relationship with political trust. The coefficient for education is negative in all of the estimations of Model 4, except that for NR1.5, and it is significant at the .01 level for NR1 and GR1 and significant at the .05 level for NR2 and GR3. This finding is consistent with the notion that education hones critical thinking. As for the other demographic variables, income and age do not appear to have much effect on political trust, and the overall effect of urban residence appears negative.

All of the model estimations displayed in the tables are significant. Although we see some similar results for Ghana and Nigeria, the models for Nigeria generally seem to perform better than those for Ghana, and the models for NR1 perform especially well.

### **Implications and Conclusion**

Several implications can be drawn from this study. The factors that give rise to social capital vary across contexts. For example, in contrast to the advanced industrialized democracies, formal education has a negative influence on interpersonal trust in Ghana and Nigeria. Trust in political institutions ("political trust"), however, is tightly linked with interpersonal trust in Ghana and Nigeria, while this is not the case in some other contexts. Moreover, the results between Ghana and Nigeria differ in a few instances. Organizational membership is positively associated to interpersonal trust in Ghana but negatively associated with it in Nigeria. Ethnicity has a much greater effect on social capital and political trust in Nigeria, where ethnicity has been extraordinarily salient, than in Ghana.

By noting the contextual and temporal instability of some of the relationships involving social capital and political trust, I do not mean to argue that there are no common causal factors across contexts. In their study of seven societies, Delhey and Newton (2003) find that the performance of different theories of the determinants of social capital varies depending on the type of society under study. Contrary to their initial expectations, Delhey and Newton (2003) find that "societal variables of a contextual nature" have a stronger influence on interpersonal trust than individual-level variables in low trust societies. The results

of this study are consistent with their findings; although individual-level variables do influence interpersonal trust in Nigeria and Ghana, political trust is by far the most important determinant.

This study supports an institutional explanation of interpersonal trust. Individuals who feel that the institutions of government are trustworthy are likely to feel more confident in their interactions with others. They believe that political institutions are governing as they should, which means individuals do not need to be as vigilant as they would have to be without such political institutions. In addition, political institutions can serve as important symbols. If people see the political institutions that govern society as trustworthy, that perception is likely to trickle down to the individuals that make up society.

Of course, the causal arrow may run in the opposite direction: individuals who trust other people are more likely to trust the institutions that comprise their fellow citizens. From this perspective, interpersonal trust gives rise to political trust. Although the relationship between interpersonal trust and political trust might be reciprocal, I argue that political trust generally precedes interpersonal trust. It is the political institutions that determine the context in which social interactions occur. When the context seems to support fair, honest behavior, people are more likely to feel comfortable engaging their fellow citizens, especially those with whom they lack close ties.

Comparing Nigeria and Ghana has allowed us to begin to discern the relationships that seem to vary according to a country's specific contextual environment, those that appear to vary according to more macro considerations, such as type of society, and those that have a great deal of external validity. Although some of the relationships involving political trust appear to have a high level of external validity, the influence of certain factors on political trust varies across contexts. Additional cross national studies that examine how societal characteristics influence the relationship between sets of variables and social capital and political trust are in order.

This study also highlights the differences between the relationships among variables at the cross-national level and those at the individual level. For example, the socio-economic context appears to have a separate effect from individual-level socioeconomic status. Many studies have found a positive relationship between level of wealth and development and interpersonal trust at the cross-national level. In contrast, income has a weak influence on interpersonal trust in Ghana and Nigeria and, as noted, the effect of education on trust is negative.

Another implication is that ethnic identity should be considered in studies of social capital. Further, the dimensions of social capital do not form a syndrome as organizational membership appears to have a negative association with interpersonal trust in some instances.

What are the implications of these findings for political development in Africa? Social capital is thought to be critical to "making democracy work." Do the indicators of social capital affect democratic development in terms of attitudes? In fact, in Nigeria (R1), membership in a voluntary organization has a very moderate, significant positive relationship with support for democratic values ( $r = .12, p \leq .000$ ). In contrast, the correlation between support for democratic values and generalized trust is  $-.19 (p \leq .000)$ , and the correlation between democratic values and the social trust index is  $-.14 (p \leq .000)$ . In Ghana (R1), the social trust index and support for democratic values appear unrelated.<sup>12</sup> These findings contradict those of Norris (2000), who finds that it is primarily social trust not participation in voluntary organizations that is positively related to indicators of democratic development in her aggregate level study of 47 countries.

In addition, there is a significant negative relationship between political trust and support for democratic values. In Nigeria, the correlation between political trust and support for democratic values is  $-.16 (p$

$\leq .000$ ). In Ghana, the correlation between these variables is negative and significant, albeit very small ( $r = -.05$ ,  $p \leq .03$ ).

Political trust is considered critical for democratic government to be able to survive and thrive. At the same time, scholars point out that a certain amount of skepticism can be healthy for democracy when that skepticism is based in realism as opposed to cynicism (Holmberg 1999). Putnam (2000) observes that trusting when there is no good reason to trust is gullibility. In addition, as Norris notes, “Too much blind trust by citizens and misplaced confidence in leaders, for good or ill, can be as problematic for democracy as too little” (1999, 27).

Given the macro political and economic environments faced by Nigerians and Ghanaians, it is not surprising that levels of interpersonal trust and political trust are low. If expressions of interpersonal trust also capture “loyalty and dependence” in Nigeria, as was speculated earlier, then the negative relationship between interpersonal trust and democratic values makes sense. Similarly, in Nigeria, where the state’s democratic credentials and efficacy are weak, those trying to affect change through horizontal, cooperative efforts in voluntary organizations may be more supportive of democratic values. Social and political conflicts generally have a negative effect on trust. In Ghana, the trend since democratization has been toward resolving conflicts and increasing inclusiveness. If the positive political and economic trends in Ghana continue, perhaps we will see changes in levels of social capital and political trust and the factors that influence them. Tracking changes in social capital and political trust as democratic development proceeds in Ghana and Nigeria will help illuminate these phenomena more fully.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/pdfs/report/HDR\\_2006\\_Tables.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/pdfs/report/HDR_2006_Tables.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The datasets for Ghana and Nigeria were downloaded from: <http://www.afrobarometer.org/data.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.afrobarometer.org/methods.html>. Please see this website for additional sampling information.

<sup>4</sup> Bahry et al. 2005 and Bratton et al. 2005 make a similar point.

<sup>5</sup> In the case of GR3, generalized trust is most weakly associated with trusting one's neighbor ( $r = .16$ ,  $pr < .000$ ), but its level of correlation is quite similar across the remaining three indicators of the social trust index.

<sup>6</sup> The response categories in NR1.5 are very close to those in NR2. In NR1.5, 1% of Nigerians had the highest level of political trust and 6% percent averaged in the highest two political trust categories. Thus, it appears that there was perhaps a decline in political trust between NR1.5 and NR2.

<sup>7</sup> The income variable also poses a bit of a problem in the NR2 survey. When asked about their level of household income, 21% of the NR2 respondents answered "Don't know" and nine percent refused to answer. When income is excluded from the models, the results are very similar, although the significance levels of the other variables tend to increase.

<sup>8</sup> One of the four variables representing ethnicity is, of course, always excluded from the models as including it would create a situation of perfect multicollinearity and estimation would be impossible. In all of the analyses, it is the "other minority group" category, which comprises all of those ethnic groups other than the three largest, which serves as the comparison group.

<sup>9</sup> Based on the NR1 data set, 88% of those who are Hausa also identified themselves as Muslims, while 98% of Igbos identified themselves as Christians.

<sup>10</sup> When the model was estimated only for those respondents who said their religion was Islam, the relationship between female and membership was negative and significant at the .01 levels for NR1 and NR1.5 and negative and significant at the .10 level for NR2. When the analysis was restricted to those who said they were Christian, the coefficient for female was positive but not significant for NR1 and positive and significant at the .05 level for NR1.5 and NR2.

<sup>11</sup> Satisfaction with one's quality of life was originally included in the political trust model, but it was so highly correlated with economic satisfaction that it was dropped from the model. The correlations between these two variables for GR1, GR2, and GR3 are .64, .69 and .73, respectfully. The correlations are also very high for the different rounds of the Nigeria survey.

<sup>12</sup> GR3 did not have the questions used to make the democratic values index, the operationalization for which is in the appendix. These questions were also not included in the Round 1.5 and Round 2 surveys.

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## APPENDIX: QUESTION WORDING IN THE AFROBAROMETER

### Dependent Variables

#### **Membership in a Voluntary Organization**

**NR1:** Now I am going to read out a list of voluntary organizations. For each one, could you tell me whether you are an active member, an inactive member, or not a member of that organization?: A. Church, Mosque, or religious organization. B. Sport or recreation organization. C. Art, music, or educational organization. D. Trade union/farmers organization. E. Professional or business organization. F. Development association. G. Women's organization. H. Pro-democracy or human rights organization. I. Environmental association. J. Charitable Organization. K. Other (Specify)

Response set: 0=Not a member, 1=Inactive Member, 2=Active Member

Variable coded as a 1 if respondent answered that she or he was an active member of any of the organizations listed above.

**GR1:** Are you a member of any organization such as a club, union, cooperative, or some similar group?

Response set: 0 = No, 1 = Yes

**NR1.5, NR2, GR2, GR3:** Let's turn to your role in the community. Now I am going to read out a list of groups that people join or attend. For each one, could you tell me whether you are an official leader, an active member, an inactive member, or not a member: A religious group (e.g. church, mosque)? A trade union or farmers association? A professional or business association? A community development or self-help association? **In NR2 only:** Any other organization, like a women's group, environmental association, or democracy or human rights group? Response set: 0=Not a Member, 1=Inactive Member, 2=Active Member, 3=Official Leader

Respondents who answered that they were either active members or official leaders of any of these groups were coded as "1." All others were coded as "0."

#### **Interpersonal Trust**

##### **Generalized Trust**

NR1 and GR3: Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you must be very careful in dealing with people? 1=Most people can be trusted, 0=You must be very careful

##### **Social Trust Index**

NR1 and GR1: "I am now going to read you a list of people. I would like to know whether, generally speaking, you trust them to do what is right." Do you trust the following people? Your relatives? Your neighbors? Someone in your own tribe? Nigerians/Ghanians from other tribes? Response set: 1=I do not trust them at all, 2=I distrust them somewhat, 3=I trust them somewhat, 4=I trust them a lot

GR3: How much do you trust each of the following types of people? Your relatives? Your neighbors? People from your own ethnic group? Ghanaians from other ethnic groups? Response set: 0=Not at all, 1=Just a little, 2=I trust them somewhat, 3=I trust them a lot

Scores for each category were added and then the sum was divided by four to create the social trust index. Dividing the sum by four allows one to interpret scores based on the The scale reliability coefficient for NR1 is .85 while that for GR1 is .77 and that for GR3 is .86.

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### Political Trust

NR1 and GR1: Do you trust the following institutions? Local Government authorities/district assemblies? The police? Courts of law? Political parties? The army? The National Assembly/Parliament?

1=I do not trust them at all, 2=I distrust them somewhat, 3=I trust them somewhat, 4=I trust them a lot

NR1.5: How much do you trust each of the following: NR2, GR2, GR3: How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The National Assembly/Paliament? Local Government? The Ruling Party? Opposition Political Parties? The Army/Military? The Police? Courts of Law?

NR1.5: 0=Not at all, 1=A little bit, 2=Quite a lot, 3=A lot

NR2, GR2: 0=Not at all, 1=A little bit, 2=A lot, 3=A very great deal

GR3: 0=Not at all, 1=Just a little, 2=Somewhat, 3=A lot

Scores for each category were added and then divided by six to create the political trust index for NR1 and GR1. Scores for each category were added and then divided by seven to create the political trust index for NR1.5, NR2, GR2, and GR3. (The surveys for NR1 and GR1 asked about trust in political parties generally whereas those for NR1.5, NR2, GR2, and GR3 had two separate questions, one about trust in the ruling party and the other about trust in opposition parties. Thus, the index for NR1 and GR1 is the sum of six items while that for NR1.5, NR2, GR2, and GR3 is the sum of seven.)

The scale reliability coefficients are: NR1: .89; GR1: .83; NR1.5: .83; Nigeria 2: .85; GR2: .76; and GR3: .75

Variable	Afrobarometer Question Wording and Operationalization
RULING PARTY	NR1, GR1: Do you feel close to any political party? Which one? NR1.5, NR2, GR2, GR3: Do you feel close to any particular political party or political organization? If so, which party or organization is that? Coded 1 if felt close to the ruling party.
DISCUSS POLITICS	NR1, GR1: How often do you discuss politics and government with other people? NR1, GR1: 0=Never, 1=Sometimes, 2=Often NR1.5, NR2, GR2: For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year. Discussed politics with friends or neighbors. 0=No, would never do this, 1=No, but would do if had the chance, 2=Yes, once or twice, 3=Yes, several times, 4=Yes, often GR3: When you get together with your friends or family, would you say you discuss political matters? 0=Never, 1=Occasionally, 2=Frequently
RADIO-NEWS	NR1, GR2, GR3: How often do you get news from: Radio? GR1: How often do you listen to a news bulletin on the radio? NR1.5, NR2: How often do you get news from the following sources: Radio? NR1, GR1: 0=Never, 1=Less than once a month, 2=About once a month, 3=About once a week, 4=Several times a week, 5=Every day NR1.5, NR2, GR3: 0=Never, 1=Less than once a month, 2=A few times a month, 3=A few times a week, 4=Every day

GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE	<p>NR1: What is your overall assessment of the performance of the current government? 1=Very bad, 2=Bad, 3=Neither bad nor good, 4=Good, 5=Very good</p> <p>GR1: What is your overall assessment of the performance of the present NDC government? 1=Very Bad, 2=Bad, 3=Fair, 4=Good, 5=Very Good</p> <p>NR1.5, NR2, GR2: Do you approve or disapprove of the way the following people have performed their jobs over the past twelve months: Your Representative to the National Assembly/Your Parliamentarian? 1=Strongly Disapprove, 2=Disapprove, 3=Approve, 4=Strongly Approve</p> <p>GR3: Do you approve or disapprove of the way the following people have performed their jobs over the past twelve months, or haven't you heard enough about them to say: The Members of Parliament? 1=Strongly Disapprove, 2=Disapprove, 3=Approve, 4=Strongly Approve</p>
SATISFACTION WITH ECONOMY	<p>NR1, GR1: How satisfied are you: with the general state of the Nigerian economy today? 1=Not at all satisfied, 2=Not very satisfied, 3=Somewhat satisfied [GR1 3=Fairly satisfied], 4=Very satisfied</p> <p>NR1.5, NR2, GR2, GR3: In general, how would you describe: The present economic conditions of this country? 1=Very bad, 2=Fairly bad, 3=Neither good nor bad, 4=Fairly good, 5=Very good</p>
SATISFACTION WITH QUALITY OF LIFE	<p>NR1, GR1: How satisfied are you with your own living conditions today? 1=Not at all satisfied, 2=Not very satisfied, 3=Somewhat satisfied, 4=Very satisfied</p> <p>GR3 In general, how would you describe your own present living conditions? 1=Very bad, 2=Fairly bad, 3=Neither good nor bad, 4=Fairly good, 5=Very good</p>
ETHNICITY	<p>NR1, GR1: Which Nigerian/Ghanian language do you speak most often?</p> <p>NR1.5, NR2, GR2: Which Nigerian language is your home language?</p> <p>GR3: What is your tribe? You know, your ethnic or cultural group.</p>
EDUCATION	<p>NR1: How much education have you had? /NR1.5, NR2, GR2, GR3: What is the highest level of education you have completed? 1= No formal schooling, 2 = Some primary schooling, 3 = Primary school completed, 4 = Some secondary school, 5 = Secondary school completed, 6 = Post-secondary qualifications, other than university, 7 = Some university, college, 8 = University, college completed, 9 = Post-graduate</p> <p>GR1: How many years of education have you had?</p>
INCOME	<p>NR1/GR1: Roughly how much money do you (and your spouse together) earn per month? NR1: 0= none, 8= over 50,000 naira/over 5 million cedis</p> <p>NR1.5, NR2, G2: Before taxes, how much money do you (and your spouse together) earn per month? 0= none, 10= over 50,000 naira/1,500,000 and over</p>
POVERTY	<p>GR3: Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or your family gone without: Enough food to eat? Enough clean water for home use? Medicines or medical treatment? Cooking fuel? Cash income?</p> <p>1=Just once or twice, 2=Several times, 3=Many times, 4=Always (added together and then divided by 5)</p>
FEMALE	Coded by interviewer. Recoded: male (code=0) and female (code=1)
AGE	Value corresponds to actual age of respondent

SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC VALUES	<p>An additive index was created for support for democratic values based on the following two forced choice questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) It is dangerous and confusing to allow the expression of too many different points of view.</li> <li>2) If people have different views than I do, they should be allowed to express them.</li> </ol> <p>AND</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The President of [Ghana/Nigeria] should be able to change the Constitution whenever he chooses.</li> <li>2) In [Ghana/Nigeria], even the President should obey the Constitution.</li> </ol>
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