

# Chapter 1

## The Place of Trust in the Political Culture of Democracy

**T**HE CONCEPT of trust has been rediscovered of late by students and theorists of democracy. They have revived the idea that civic participation generates trust, and that trust among citizens is crucial for democracy to function well. But an equally long, if currently less fashionable, tradition views democracy (or representative government) as functioning best if citizens retain a sense of the fallibility of their leaders and hence the importance of constraining institutions. Distrust is good for democracy. And this latter tradition places rather more weight on the delegation of political involvement from the citizenry to its elected representatives than on civic participation. On the first view, the political culture of democracy is a culture of activism and trust; on the other, it is one of delegation and skepticism.

In the discussion that follows we examine critically the civic culture theory of democracy. Before turning to empirical tests of the theory's causal propositions, in this chapter we raise several theoretical objections to it. We then turn briefly to traditions in democratic theory that suggest that well-functioning democracy requires skeptical citizens, rather than trusting ones. We also outline a trajectory of change from poor and class-divided democracies, which feature clientelism and a culture of personal trust in politicians, to wealthier and more equal democracies, which feature accountability and a political culture of skepticism toward politicians and conditional trust in political institutions.

### **Trust, Social Capital, and the Civic Culture**

Citizens trust one another more if they are actively engaged in civic associations, and democracy works better if citizens trust one another. So contends a growing number of theorists of democracy. According

to this neo-Tocquevillian line of thought, not only is it good for democracy that citizens trust each other, but this trust should be of the strongest possible sort. Rather than discrete *quid pro quos* (you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours), interpersonal trust should take the form of a generalized expectation of mutual aid (you scratch my back today, I'll help you with some yet to be determined task at some future date).

Forty years ago, Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba's *The Civic Culture* (1963) explored the idea that a nation's civic life shaped the quality of democratic governance. They wrote that democracy is sustained by a certain political culture—a set of attitudes and beliefs regarding the self, politics, and government. The civic culture was one with “high frequencies of political activity, of exposure to political communications, of political discussion, of concern with political affairs” (1963, 31). Their explorations of beliefs and activities of citizens in five countries (Britain, the United States, Germany, Italy, and Mexico) revealed mixtures of parochial culture (in which citizens have little knowledge of political process or policy and little sense of self as an active participant), subject culture (in which they have more knowledge of system), and participant culture (in which they are knowledgeable and participate actively; 1963, 16–24). But, in general, Almond and Verba discovered a trend from subject to participant to an emerging civic culture as their study shifted from more autocratic to more democratic systems.

Recent incarnations of the civic culture tradition are intimately linked to the concept of social capital. Social capital, according to Robert Putnam, “refers to . . . social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (2000, 19). Similarly, Pamela Paxton writes that social capital requires two dimensions: “objective associations among individuals, and . . . associations of a particular type—reciprocal, trusting, and involving positive emotion” (2002, 256). In places rich in social capital, people form many civic associations, participate frequently in these associations, and develop bonds of trust. The central claim of social capital theorists is that social capital makes democracy more likely to arise and better able to function well. In the tradition of Tocqueville, Mark Warren writes that a “multifaceted” associational life “provides a dense social infrastructure enabling pluralistic societies to attain a vibrant creativity and diversity within a context of multiple but governable conflicts” (2001, 3).<sup>1</sup>

Why, according to these theorists, does social capital enhance democracy? One reason is that civic associations are schools of democracy, teaching participants how to pursue collective goals (Warren 2001; see also Sandel 1996). According to Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers (1995), democracy grounded in a rich associational life nurtures “civic consciousness,” by which they mean decision making in which the deliberators consider the general good, rather than narrow self-interest.

Another claim of social capital theorists is that a trusting citizenry makes democracy work better by encouraging cooperation with government in the provision of services. In his landmark book *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam writes,

Light-touch government works more efficiently in the presence of social capital. Police close more cases when citizens monitor neighborhood comings and goings. Child welfare departments do a better job of “family preservation” when neighbors and relatives provide social support to troubled parents. Public schools teach better when parents volunteer in classrooms and ensure that kids do their homework. When community involvement is lacking, burdens on government employees—bureaucrats, social workers, teachers, and so forth—are that much greater and success that much more elusive. (2000, 346)

Another slightly different account of why social capital and interpersonal trust produce better-functioning democracy is that interpersonally trusting communities free the government from the need to enforce compliance and therefore allow it to spend time and resources on other activities. Carles Boix and Daniel Posner write: “By giving citizens more optimistic expectations about the behavior of their fellow citizens, social capital can relieve the government from the burden of enforcing compliance and free up resources that can be applied towards increasing the efficiency or expanding the range of the services that it provides” (1998, 691).

A central tenet, then, in the civic culture theory of democracy is that an active civic life encourages interpersonal expectations of cooperation. It encourages the expectation that others will comply with public demands that are burdensome but critical to the functioning of democracy. It also leads to greater accountability among public officials. Putnam writes,

If decision makers expect citizens to hold them politically accountable, they are more inclined to temper their worst impulses rather than face public protests. . . . Where people know one another, interact with one another each week at choir practice or sports matches, and trust one another to behave honorably, they have a model and a moral foundation upon which to base further cooperative enterprises. (2000, 346)

Similarly, in his 1993 account of why democracy works better in parts of northern Italy than in the south, Putnam explains that in the north the “civic community is marked by an active, public-spirited citizenry, by egalitarian political relations, by a *social fabric of trust and cooperation*,” whereas other regions “are cursed with vertically structured politics, a social life of fragmentation and isolation, and a *culture of distrust*” (15, emphasis added).

*Theoretical Criticisms of the Civic Culture*

Whether civic engagement encourages interpersonal trust and whether interpersonal trust improves government performance are ultimately empirical questions. Later we present evidence from Argentina and Mexico that lends little support to the civic culture tradition. Before turning to this evidence, however, we suggest several theoretical objections to the idea that trust improves democracy.

Consider first the proposition that interpersonal trust facilitates the monitoring of government, that if people “trust one another to act honorably,” decision makers will “expect citizens to hold them politically accountable” (Putnam 2000, 346). But, in fact, in all but the smallest polities, and all but the most local levels of government, most government monitoring in contemporary democracies is carried out not by individual citizens but by professional organizations, interest groups, and the press (see Arnold 1993). Most people rely on these institutions to monitor government, not on their personal acquaintances. If you are worried about air pollution, it’s a small comfort that you have a close and trusting relationship with your neighbor—you have no expectation that your neighbor will monitor the government’s environmental policies. More important is whether you trust the Nature Conservancy or the environmental reporting in your newspaper. Civic culture theorists may regret this development (see Putnam 2000, 343–44). But the fact that governments are monitored by professionals and institutions severs the link between trust in one’s neighbors and the quality of democratic governance.

Second, social capital theory deems social networks of reciprocity very important to making democracy work. But reciprocity is not always good for democracy. Democracy in some ways works best if actors are unknown to one another (rather than known and deeply enmeshed in a fabric of organizations), and autonomous (rather than mutually dependent for favors). Consider campaign finance. When candidates receive donations from known benefactors, this knowledge may create pressure for quid pro quo legislative concessions. The benefits to democracy of donor anonymity inspire Bruce Ackerman and Ian Ayres (2002) to envision a donation booth, which recreates the anonymity of the voting booth, where donors anonymously write checks for candidates and parties.

If reciprocity between donor and legislator can vitiate democratic principles, so can reciprocity between voters and parties. Consider the dynamics of vote buying by the old machines of many U.S. cities and in developing democracies today, from Bulgaria to the Philippines to Benin to Mexico. Vote buying does not work if the party attempting to buy the vote cannot punish the voter for defecting and voting for some-

one else. Vote buying does work if the party has enough information about individuals' partisan predilections and likely vote that it can punish defection (Stokes 2005). It is precisely the rich fabric of social networks, associations, and interactions—celebrated by civic culture theorists—that reduces the potential vote seller's anonymity and provides the vote buyer with information indicating likely defections.<sup>2</sup>

To get a sense of the tension between the theory of democracy as resting on reciprocity, and the coercion that this reciprocity can sustain, consider first Putnam's depiction of a community rich in social fabric, and then the reflections of two residents interviewed in a town in Argentina.<sup>3</sup> First, Putnam:

An effective norm of generalized reciprocity is bolstered by dense networks of social exchange. If two would-be collaborators are members of a tightly knit community, they are likely to encounter one another in the future—or to hear about one another through the grapevine. Thus they have reputations at stake that are almost surely worth more than gains from momentary treachery. In that sense, honesty is encouraged by dense social networks. (2000, 136)

Now the couple in Argentina:

Interviewer: When people come and give things out during the campaign, are they people whom you know?

Husband: Yes, they're people from here, they're neighbors. Here everyone knows each other. Small town, big hell. (Pueblo chico, infierno grande.)

Interviewer: Do they know how you voted?

Husband: For many years we've seen, people will say, "So-and-so voted for so-and-so." And he wins, and they come and say, "You voted for so-and-so." I don't know how they do it, but they know.

Wife: We were at the *unidad básica* [a neighborhood Peronist locale] and they say to me, "[Your cousin] voted for Eloy" [the given name of a Radical Party candidate]. And I asked my cousin, "did you vote for Eloy?" And she said "yes"! They knew that my cousin had voted for Eloy!

Husband: The person who didn't vote for them, they discriminate against him a little, he might go ask for a favor, and they say, "He voted for so-and-so."

Regarding civic participation, we will show that, in Argentina and Mexico, people in more democratic regions often retreat from civic participation to more private concerns. Civic activism may, indeed, be self-limiting. People in developing countries collectively press for infra-

structure improvements, economic opportunities, and political rights. If these goals are achieved, civic engagement becomes less pressing. Of course, in the countries we studied, even in the relatively democratic regions the challenges of economic development and political representation are far from resolved. Yet, to the extent that existence becomes less precarious and community development advances, the pressing needs that drew people into the public sphere attenuate.

To summarize, social capital theorists claim that the culture of democracy is, or should be, a culture of civic activism, reciprocity, and trust. We have raised several theoretical objections to this view of democratic political culture. Citizens turn not to their neighbors but to specialized organizations to monitor politicians and governments, raising questions about any link between interpersonal trust and accountable government. Anonymity, and not intense social interaction, enhances some democratic goals, from campaign funding to voting. Social capital theory fails to provide persuasive arguments about why community organizational life is critical to the quality and consolidation of democracy, just as it fails to provide persuasive arguments about why interpersonal trust among citizens enhances democratic governance.

### *The Skeptical Tradition in Democratic Theory*

The seeds of a more skeptical democratic theory lie in the civic culture tradition itself. For all its protestations that citizens need to trust one another for democracy to work—that they must take part in associations that are “reciprocal, trusting, and involving positive emotion”—note that a central reason they must trust one another is that they cannot automatically trust politicians. Even though Putnam finds reasons to despair in light of data suggesting declining trust of Americans in their government, the reason why (Italian) citizens had to trust one another is that only by doing so would they be willing to monitor their government. The belief that government acts in constituents’ interests only as long as it is under constituents’ watchful gaze is a weak form of trust, however, as we shall explain. And we have raised doubts about any connection between citizens who trust one another and the accountability of governments.

To the extent that it views interpersonal trust (among citizens) as necessary to overcoming the untrustworthiness of politicians, the civic culture tradition taps into a more skeptical political theory, one with roots in the eighteenth century. From Montesquieu and Hume, James Madison drew the idea that some elected officeholders would inevitably lack the qualities that would make them trustworthy. In the tenth *Federalist*, Madison explained that most men elected into the “chosen body” of his hoped-for federal republic would have “the wisdom [to]

best discern the true interests of the country," as well as "patriotism" and "love of justice" (1787/1982, 47). Still, Madison continued, "Enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm" (45), and "Men of factious tempers, of local prejudices, or of sinister designs, may by intrigue, by corruption or by other means, first obtain the suffrages, and then betray the interests of the people" (47). The beauty of repeated elections was that they lessened the importance of personal trustworthiness of politicians; even those who, left to their own devices, might act against the interests of constituents, would be constrained to be trustworthy. In the fifty-seventh *Federalist*, Madison sketched a notion that in the twenty-first century would be called accountability:

Before the sentiments impressed on their minds by the mode of their elevation . . . can be effaced by the exercise of power, they will be compelled to anticipate the moment when their power is to cease, when their exercise of it is to be reviewed, and when they must descend to the level from which they were raised; there for ever to remain, unless a faithful discharge of their trust shall have established their title to a renewal of it. (294)

Today, the idea that politicians who face future elections may be held accountable is pervasive in academic and popular understandings of democracy. Perhaps overlooked is the skeptical turn of mind that accountability assumes. Were politicians to be inherently trustworthy—were they all, in Madison's language, wise, patriotic, and justice-loving—we would not need to rely on their baser desire to retain office to keep them in line.

Not all contemporary theorists have lost sight of the centrality of skepticism to democracy. Vivien Hart's *Distrust and Democracy* (1978) opens with an epigraph from Demosthenes: "There is one safeguard known generally to the wise, which is an advantage and security to all, but especially to democracies against despots. What is it? Distrust" (xi). And Hart insists, against the grain of other theorists and some interpreters of public opinion, that "distrust is democratic and thoughtful, not an anti-democratic outburst of emotion, and is potentially constructive, threatening only to vested political interests" (xii).

Just as Hart's distrust is thoughtful and constructive, the skepticism that, we believe, infuses the culture of democracy is an engaged skepticism. And it is an active skepticism. Citizens of the more democratic regions we studied were not driven by skepticism to cynicism or inaction. Indeed, they sought more information about politics, voted more regularly, and discussed political matters more readily than did their counterparts in less democratic regions. (But, as we shall see, they were less active in civic associations.) Too much skepticism about politics

might lead to aloof detachment; but this was far from the posture of the citizens in the mature democratic regions we studied.

Some contemporary theorists lead us to expect that, as democracy develops, accountability increases, and therefore the trustworthiness of government also grows, displacing personal trust in politicians with institutional trust in government.

If it were never in politicians' interests to be constrained by institutions, then voters who believed in their accountability might simply be deluded. Yet trustworthiness may in fact be in politicians' interests. John Ferejohn (1999) posits that the more accountable (and hence trustworthy) politicians are, the more power voters are willing to grant them. Voters are willing to empower institutionally constrained politicians because voters know that, should the politicians abuse this power, they can be discovered and punished. By analogy, a building contractor who is constrained by an enforceable contract will be more successful in soliciting projects than one who works without contracts because his clients know that, should something go awry, they can turn to a court for help. Therefore, even though the contract in a sense constrains the contractor, it also empowers him. It is in the interest of both parties that an enforceable contract can be signed.

By the same logic, institutional constraints can work in the interest of both officeholders and constituents. For this reason, under some conditions they have a shared interest in building mechanisms of accountability and institutional trust. As evidence that growing institutional accountability and growing scope of government action go hand in hand, Ferejohn points to a general correspondence in time between the widening policy range of the U.S. government and congressional reforms that made government more accountable. These reforms included recorded teller votes, opening of the committee markup sessions, and changes in how campaigns are financed (139).

Drawing on Ferejohn's insight, we posit the following stylized scenario. A poor and class-divided society democratizes. Poverty and inequality tempt political parties to deploy a strategy of clientelism: the trading of votes and political support in return for small, private payoffs to voters. Clientelism functions only when both voters and political brokers are tightly enmeshed in personal networks, networks that allow the brokers to punish individual voters who defect from their implicit contract—to hold them "perversely accountable" for their votes (Stokes 2005). Clientelism is then, by necessity, a highly personalized form of politics. It also requires that voters take actions that cannot be fully monitored by the patron party, such as voting for their candidates in exchange for handouts. To improve compliance, parties cultivate relations of friendship and trust with their clientele.

If the society travels a path toward economic development and—



eventually—a more equal distribution of income, clientelism becomes a less effective strategy for parties in search of votes.<sup>4</sup> Instead, it becomes attractive for parties and political leaders in this more developed and more egalitarian society to forge relations of accountability with voters, for the reasons we have just reviewed. Hence a belief in accountability or institutional trust—a belief that does not imply personal trust in politicians but, quite to the contrary, a certain skepticism about their motives and unchecked actions—displaces the personal trust of the earlier era.

There is nothing inevitable about this process. Economic development and social leveling are by no means bound to occur in poor democracies. But they may, and indeed sometimes do, occur. That countries, and regions within countries, do sometimes follow the path we have described means that we expect to find an elective affinity between low-quality democracy, clientelist strategies, and personal trust in politicians on one side, and high-quality democracy, programmatic or performance-oriented mobilization of voters, and institutional trust in government on the other. In later chapters, we discover just such patterns of political culture in Mexico and Argentina.

Does civic activism generate trust? Does trust improve the quality of democracy? Are politicians who operate in more active polities more trustworthy and accountable? Does development undercut personal trust in politicians and encourage trust in the institutions of government? One can answer all these questions with empirical data. In later chapters we translate many of these questions into causal hypotheses, and test them with data from two new democracies. We hope that this discussion leaves readers predisposed to doubt that trust, rather than skepticism, informs the political culture of democracy.

### Conceptualizing Trust

The belief that a politician acts in one's interests because he or she is monitored and will be held accountable is, we have asserted, a weak—some might even say a strange—form of trust. Here we explain what we mean by concepts such as trustworthiness and distrust, weak and strong trust, trust in people and trust in institutions, and trust in one's fellow citizens versus trust in politicians.

First, trust. Trust involves a relationship between actors regarding an action. If A and B are actors and X is an action that is in A's interest, then if A believes that B will do X, A trusts B.<sup>5</sup> Trust then is someone's (A's) belief about the likely action (X) of someone else (B). Theorists of trust are quick to observe, and rightly so, a distinction between trust and trustworthiness. Trust is a belief (that is, A's belief that B will do X). Trustworthiness is a quality or predisposition (that is, B's predispo-

sition to do X). And trust may therefore be ill-founded: A may trust B to do X even though B is in fact unlikely to do X and, hence, is untrustworthy.

Distrust can be stated as the contrapositive of trust: A distrusts B if A does not believe that B will do X. (X, again, is an action that A wishes B to undertake).

But we need to say more about the concept of trust. There are many circumstances in which A believes B will take an action X that is in A's interest, and yet the belief falls short of common language usages of trust. Our purpose here is not to parse definitions, but rather to show how common understandings of trust vary along a dimension (from weak to strong) that we find theoretically important.

Consider, first, an example of spontaneous coincidence of interests. Farmer B lives next door to an orchard owned by Farmer A. Farmer B, with an eye on her bottom line, installs beehives on her farm. The bees fly into Farmer A's orchard and help pollinate his trees. Farmer A experiences better harvests and increased profits. Farmer B's profits also improve. Looking forward to next year, Farmer A expects Farmer B to keep her hives. This scenario seems to conform to our preliminary definition of trust. Yet if Farmer A were to say that he "trusts" Farmer B to continue with her hives, we would find the expression awkward. The two actors happen to have converging interests, but the convergence is not the result of any institutional arrangement or mutual consideration. Thus, we exclude such situations of spontaneous coincidence of interests from our conception of trust (see Hardin 1998, 2002).

Consider next punishment for noncooperation. For instance, two opposing parties are negotiating after the fall of a long-standing dictatorship. Each can either stick with an agreement to hold elections, or it can instigate a coup. If both stick with the agreement for elections, the result is a democracy in which each party will win some future elections and lose some others. If one party defects and the other sticks with the agreement, the coup-maker gets all power for a delimited period. If both attempt coups, a civil war will erupt, which both parties consider a worse outcome than either becoming the new authoritarian rulers or entering into a democracy. Their preference order from first to last is: become new authoritarian, share power in a democracy, civil war, and become subject to opponent's authoritarianism. Knowing that they will face one another and similar decisions into the indefinite future, they institute a democracy that lasts for many years.

According to our generic definition, the two parties trust each other not to instigate coups. Yet the usage of the term trust strays from common usage. Here, A expects B to do X because both know that if B does

not do X, A will sanction B, and the sanction makes carrying out X more attractive to B than not carrying it out.

The situation is a prisoner's dilemma. Cooperation produces payoffs (democracy) for both that are higher than the payoffs when they both defect (civil war) but not as high as when one defects and the opponent cooperates, in which case the defector gets all power (and the cooperator gets no power). In a one-shot game, the Nash equilibrium is civil war. But in the repeated game we assume the parties are playing, they can sustain the cooperative equilibrium of democracy. Both may cooperate as long as they anticipate being punished by the other if they defect, and both anticipate that the cost of future punishment—a period of civil war—outweighs the current gain from defection (see Axelrod 1984). Each party then trusts the other in the sense that each knows that his credible threat of punishment forces the other to sustain democracy. We consider this instance of trust sustained by direct punishment for noncooperation to be a form of weak trust.

Punishment for noncooperation can also be imposed by third parties. For instance, in the new democracy just described, voters know that politicians are under the ongoing scrutiny of the courts, and believe, therefore, that their elected officials will act honestly. Institutional accountability induces them to be responsive. In this case, A (voters) trusts B (elected officials) to do X (act honestly and efficiently) because they believe that, if B does not do X, institutional arrangements provide for third parties to punish B, and B prefers to do X than to endure the punishment. These are situations of trust sustained by third-party punishment for noncooperation. Trust sustained in this manner is a stronger form of trust than is trust by direct punishment: the former does not have the gun-to-the-head, coercive sense of the latter. Still, the reliance on punishment makes this a weaker sense of the term than those considered next.

Other examples can be marshaled that better get at what is commonly meant by trust. For instance, voters in a small community elect as mayor a neighbor who is known as honest and frugal, and expect him to be a good mayor. Or a leader proposes that his country go to war, claiming to have private information that justifies the action. Some citizens believe him and support the war. In this example, unlike in the previous two, A's trust in B does not rely on external sanctions, wielded either by A or by a third party. A's trust relies on some inherent quality of B. B's honesty, efficiency, or good judgment will induce him to do X. They are subtly different from the first example in that here, if B did not have the inherent quality on which A's trust rests, B might act against A's interests. If dishonest, the mayor would stand to gain by diverting funds to his personal account or shirking on the job. If lacking

in judgment, the leader might initiate a war that is not really in his country's interest. As is frequently the case in common usage, trust sustained by the trustee's (perceived) inherent qualities connotes some willingness on the part of the trustee to sacrifice his own interests. B could hurt A and get away with it, but A trusts B and therefore expects him not to. This is the understanding of trust most consonant with common usage. We call this personal trust: in contrast to the previous examples in which trust was based on institutional incentives or fear of punishment, personal trust is based on the inherent qualities of the trustee. Personal trust is a strong form of trust.

To summarize, we exclude from our definition instances in which A's belief that B will do X rests on spontaneous (rather than engineered, reflexive, or future-oriented) coincidence of interest. We accept beliefs that rest on direct punishment of the trustee by the truster, or on third-party punishment for noncooperation. Both of these are, however, weak senses of trust. A trusts B to do X in a strong sense when his belief that B will do X is sustained by B's inherent qualities, qualities that induce B to do X even though he would gain from not doing X.<sup>6</sup>

A central claim of this book is that political accountability requires at most a weak form of trust, one that rests on second- or third-party enforcement. Belief in accountability implies institutional trust: the belief that institutional constraints induce officeholders to act in the interests of their constituents. But accountability implies distrust of officeholders: the belief that, without institutional constraints, they are prone to disregard the interests of constituents. Institutional trust is deeply in tension with personal trust in politicians, the latter the belief that their personal qualities leave them disposed to act in constituents' interests even when they would benefit from disregarding these interests. Personal distrust, accompanied (in the best of circumstances) by institutional (weak) trust, enhances the quality of representative government. Or, perhaps, institutional trust allows citizens the luxury of not needing to evaluate a politician's personal trustworthiness. Institutions increase the range over which trust is possible; when one has to rely only on personal trust, the likely result is less trust overall. Our perspective is therefore far from that of social capital theorists, for whom democracy rests on strong trust.

## Methods and Plan

What sort of evidence might one find to test these theoretical propositions? The remainder of this book is an effort to test them against the experiences of two new democracies in Latin America: Argentina and Mexico. If the theory gives us any good guidance about how to think

about trust and the political culture of democracy, we should find the following:

- In places where democracy is relatively consolidated and works relatively well, we should find institutional trust in government to be the more common form of trust. In places where it is unconsolidated or functions badly, to the extent that we find political trust it should be of a personal sort.
- In regions where democratic practices are marred by political clientelism and vote buying, we expect to find a political culture of personal trust in politicians, and relatively little awareness of the possibility of institutional trust or accountability. Indeed, clientelism may rely on a personalization of political relations and on personal trust in politicians and in party operatives.
- We should not find systematic differences in the quality of associational life, or the prevalence of social capital, in places where democracy works relatively well and in places where it works badly. And we should not be able to predict people's levels of institutional trust in government from their levels of personal trust in their neighbors.

### *Methods and Data*

Our strategy in the book is comparative. We make comparisons at multiple levels and across multiple units. These include:

*Comparisons Across Countries* Most of our cross-national comparisons are based on data we gathered in two countries that lie at the geographic extremes of Latin America: Mexico in the north and Argentina in the south. The two countries have different histories and different trajectories of democratization and they face different challenges in the consolidation of democracy. Their histories also contrast starkly. Mexico was a center of colonial life beginning in the sixteenth century; Argentina was a backwater until well into the nineteenth century. Mexico has a large indigenous and mestizo population; Argentina is largely a nation of European immigrants. Mexico's proximity to the United States deeply shaped its history; Argentina is geographically remote from the hemispheric hegemon. Mexico underwent a transformative social revolution; Argentina did not. The most recent processes of democratization had sharply different dynamics. In Mexico democratization happened when a party that had maintained hegemonic control for seven decades finally lost power in a peaceful presidential election. In Argentina democratization meant ousting a brutal military regime and reinitiating elections. In Mexico democratization took decades, in Argentina it took but a few months. Democratization in Mexico started

with reforms undertaken by a ruling party that was embarrassed by the weakness of its electoral opponents, and bubbled up slowly from below, from municipalities and states to the presidency. Democratization in Argentina relied on a backdrop of economic failures by the regime but happened, in large part, because of a bungled military adventure. It took place simultaneously at all levels of government. What varied from region to region in Argentina was not democratization but the quality of subsequent democratic governance.

Despite these many differences, our general expectation is that we will find similarities between the two countries. Indeed, our primary purpose in studying the political culture of democracy in two countries rather than one is to suggest that our results are likely to hold for many new democracies in the developing world. The difficulties that citizens face in ascertaining the trustworthiness of governments and of politicians grow out of the very workings of democracy. Clientelism is a strategy of mobilization that makes sense in all democracies in which many voters are very poor, and it may generate personal trust wherever it is deployed.<sup>7</sup> The theory linking politicians' bids for more power and authority with greater self-imposed accountability, and hence greater institutional trust, is general.

We recognize, however, that our research strategy precludes us, in a strict sense, from using survey data to compare Argentina and Mexico. This is because the sample surveys on which much of our analysis rests were not national, but instead were drawn from particular regions in each country (see the appendix for more details). The reader will find that when we do make such two-country comparisons, we add the caveat that apparent differences (or, for that matter, similarities) would have to be confirmed with national samples.

Our original plan was to complement our Mexico-Argentina comparisons with large-N cross-national analysis, drawing from publicly available surveys. Yet, to our dismay, our conceptualization of trust as A's belief that B will do X rendered many survey questions on trust unhelpful to us.<sup>8</sup> Given these shortcomings, we have not made extensive use of these more broadly cross-national surveys.

*Comparisons Across Regions* Comparisons across regions within each of the countries we study are at the heart of this book. We undertook two kinds of cross-regional analyses. One was cross-state or cross-provincial comparisons across the full range of subnational units. We gathered certain kinds of information from all thirty-one states in Mexico and all twenty-three provinces in Argentina.<sup>9</sup> These data allow us to make comparisons and draw inferences about, for example, the causes of variation in efficiency of elected state or provincial governments. The second set of comparisons consisted of cross-regional ones across a sub-

set of regions. In both countries we gathered data from a subset of regions to characterize the quality of democracy in each. Ultimately we selected four regions (four states in Mexico, three provinces and one region within a province in Argentina) that represented a range from better to worse functioning regional democracy. The quality of democracy is then the explanatory variable, and we are able to compare the nature of trust, strategies of electoral mobilization, and endowments of social capital, as a function of the quality of regional democracies.

Some of the data we collected in these regions were qualitative. We interviewed political leaders and drew from secondary accounts of regional politics. Some of the data were ecological. We gathered information about the social structure and electoral dynamics of each of the selected regions. And some of the data were individual, drawn from our own sample surveys. But these individual data also allow us to make cross-regional comparisons, and these cross-regional comparisons represent the core of our analytical strategy. By recording in which of the four regions in each country individual respondents lived, we were able to use statistical analysis to study the effect of region and, behind it, the quality of democracy, on phenomena of theoretical interest. Hence, for example, we were able to estimate the effect that living in the province of Buenos Aires (rather than, say, Misiones) had on an Argentine's likelihood of trusting her neighbors, or the effect of living in Chihuahua (rather than, say, Puebla) had on a Mexican's perceptions that his neighbors were influenced by clientelism in deciding how to vote.

*Comparisons Across Municipalities* The political dynamics that interest us theoretically often unfold at more local levels than the state or province. In Mexico, for example, opposition victories in important municipalities in the north gave a stimulus to national democratization. In Argentina, municipal governments could either encourage or stifle mechanisms of accountability. We use qualitative research (our own and others') into local politics to assess the quality of democracy across regions. And we use quantitative ecological data that we and others have gathered at the municipal level to compare, for example, the effect of municipal poverty rates on whether, and in what ways, individual residents trusted government.

*Comparisons Across Individuals* Trust, as we have defined it, is a belief that individuals hold about other individuals' likely actions. In theories linking trust (personal, institutional, interpersonal) to the quality of democracy, trust is sometimes a cause and sometimes a consequence of democracy. Hence to study political cultures of trust and skepticism, we need to compare people who hold a variety of beliefs, and we need to compare people who are different in other ways—the wealthy ver-

sus the poor, the well educated versus the little educated, a resident of one region versus a resident of another—and observe the levels and types of trust that they evince. Data most relevant for these cross-individual comparisons come from our sample surveys.

### *Plan of the Book*

The central objective of part II, chapters 2 and 3, is to rank a subset of regions within Mexico and Argentina, respectively, according to the quality of regional democracy. Part II draws on a wide range of sources: interviews with citizens and political leaders, qualitative municipal and regional studies in the secondary literature, and ecological databases with measures at state, provincial, and municipal levels. Part III, chapters 4 and 5, exploits this cross-regional variation in the quality of democracy to test causal hypotheses about the political culture of democracy. In chapter 4 we explore whether cross-regional differences in the quality of democracy have counterparts in regional differences in political culture, particularly in beliefs about accountability and the trustworthiness of politicians. In chapter 5 we test propositions concerning the effect of social capital, development, and inequality on the political culture of democracy. Last, in chapter 6 (part IV), we reexamine questions about the political culture of democracy in light of our theoretical and empirical findings. Having started by assessing theories that link democracy with trust, we end by suggesting that a healthy democratic culture is as much a culture of skepticism as it is of trust.