

**When in Rome, Do as the Romans Do?  
An Analysis of the Acculturation of Generalized  
Trust of non-Western Immigrants in  
Western Europe**



Peter Thisted Dinesen

PhD Dissertation

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Although I study the ‘thin’ type of trust in people that we don’t know personally, which might be what benefits society as a whole, the ‘thick’ trust in our friends and family is indispensable in my own life. I owe my deepest gratitude to my parents, whose unconditional support remains a mainstay in my life. Likewise, I am blessed with truly extraordinary friends, who have been an endless source of encouragement and help during the process of writing the dissertation. I am very grateful to them all. In particular, I want to thank my cousin Søren Dinesen Østergaard. While only cousins by kin, we are indeed brothers in arms in many ways of life. Having known him for more than thirty years, Søren remains the person to whom I turn to discuss not only abstract scientific puzzles, but also the quantum mechanics of real life.

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Copenhagen, October 2010

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

This report is part of the PhD dissertation 'When in Rome, Do as the Romans Do? An Analysis of the Acculturation of Generalized Trust of non-Western Immigrants in Western Europe', written at the Department of Political Science, Aarhus University.

The dissertation concerns the process of acculturation of generalized trust in other people among immigrants. That is, the question of how trust of immigrants develops in the destination country they have migrated to (see Berry, 1997 about acculturation). In this regard the objective of the dissertation is to answer the following research question(s): To what extent do non-Western immigrants adapt to the level of trust of the country they have migrated to, and what accounts for this (lack of) adaptation? The two research questions have been investigated in the following seven papers:

- Dinesen, Peter Thisted (2010). 'A Note on the Measurement of Generalized Trust of Immigrants and Natives', forthcoming in *Social Indicators Research*. (Subsequently referred to as 'The Measurement of Trust').
- Dinesen, Peter Thisted & March Hooghe (2010). 'When in Rome, Do as the Romans Do: The Acculturation of Generalized Trust among Immigrants in Western Europe', *International Migration Review*, 44(3), pp. 697-727. (Subsequently referred to as 'When in Rome').
- Dinesen, Peter Thisted (2010). 'Does Generalized (Dis)trust Travel? Examining the Impact of Cultural Heritage and Destination Country Environment on Trust of Immigrants', forthcoming in *Political Psychology*. (Subsequently referred to as 'Does Trust Travel?').
- Dinesen, Peter Thisted (2010). 'Where You Come From or Where You Live? Examining the Cultural and Institutional Explanation of Generalized Trust Using Migration as a Natural Experiment', under revision. (Subsequently referred to as 'Where You Come From').
- Dinesen, Peter Thisted (2010). 'Parental Transmission of Trust or Perceptions of Institutional Fairness? Explaining Generalized Trust of Young Non-Western Immigrants in a High-Trust Society', forthcoming in *Comparative Politics*. (Subsequently referred to as 'Parental Transmission or Institutional Fairness').
- Dinesen, Peter Thisted (2010). 'Upbringing, Early Experiences of Discrimination and Social Identity: Explaining Generalized Trust among Immigrants in

Denmark', *Scandinavian Political Studies*, Vol. 33(1), pp. 93-111. (Subsequently referred to as 'Upbringing, Early Experiences of Discrimination and Social Identity').

- Dinesen, Peter Thisted (2010). 'Me and Jasmina Down by the Schoolyard. An Analysis of the Impact of Ethnic Diversity in School on the Trust of Schoolchildren', forthcoming in *Social Science Research*. (Subsequently referred to as 'Me and Jasmina').

The first paper considers the fundamental question of whether survey measures of generalized trust refer to the same phenomenon for natives and immigrants. Given that the survey measures of trust prove to be comparable for natives and immigrants, the analyses in this paper provide a necessary precondition for the validity of the subsequent analyses using these measures. The second to the fourth paper concern acculturation of trust among non-Western immigrants in their new countries in Western Europe. Specifically the papers examine the extent to which immigrants adapt to the level of trust of natives in their new country or retain the level of trust of their home country. Finally, based on the results about the acculturation of trust of immigrants, the fourth to the seventh paper examine what contributes to the (lack of) immigrant adaptation to the level of trust of natives in the destination country by analyzing the causes of generalized trust among non-Western immigrants in Western Europe and, in greater detail, Denmark.

This report connects the individual papers by presenting the overarching theoretical arguments and research design of the dissertation and summarizing the main empirical results. In addition, the report will go into more detail with some of the general conceptual and methodological issues that go beyond the individual papers as well as discuss the implications of the findings.

The report is structured as follows: Chapter 2 presents the two research questions that the dissertation seeks to answer and motivates why exploring trust, and specifically trust of immigrants, is likely to contribute to our knowledge about the roots of trust more generally and to our understanding of the integration of immigrants. Chapter 3 concerns the conception of the key concept of the dissertation, generalized trust in other people. Chapter 4 presents the theoretical framework of the dissertation. It contrasts two diverging perspectives on the roots of trust, which yield different predictions about how trust of immigrants from low-trust non-Western countries develops upon migrating to a high-trust Western destination country. Additionally, for each of the two perspectives on the roots of trust, it describes the key micro level mechanisms examined in the dissertation. Chapter 5 lays out the overall research design of the dissertation. First the units and the context of analysis are accounted for be-

fore the primary data sources are introduced. Then the analytical strategy of the empirical analyses is presented followed by a discussion of the operationalization of the dependent variable, generalized trust. The chapter concludes with an overview of the seven papers, which, along with this report, comprise the dissertation. Chapter 6 summarizes the results of the empirical analyses in the papers. Chapter 7 discusses potential reasons for the divergences in the results compared to previous analyses in the United States, and reflects on the potential for generalizing the results to other contexts and immigrant groups. Chapter 8 sums up the main conclusions of the dissertation and discusses their implications for the future research agenda as well as public policy.



# Chapter 2

## Research questions

This dissertation explores non-Western immigrants' generalized trust in other people (trust in unknown others); more specifically, the acculturation of trust of non-Western immigrants from low-trust countries of origin living in high-trust destination countries in Western Europe (see Chapter 5 for a definition of this group). The dissertation seeks to answer the following two questions:

- To what extent do non-Western immigrants adapt to the level of trust of natives in the country they have migrated to?
- What explains the degree of adaptation of non-Western immigrants to the level of trust of natives in the country they have migrated to?

In other words, do non-Western immigrants take over the level of trust of natives in their new country in Western Europe, and why does this adaptation (not) take place? Examining the two research questions is of theoretical importance because they provide an empirical test of two contrasting perspectives on the roots of trust as I will describe in detail below and in the theoretical section. In terms of public policy, answering the two research questions contributes to our knowledge about how the important civic value of trust develops among immigrants upon migrating to a new country, which is of use to policy makers working to improve integration of immigrants.

In the following I shall briefly sketch the arguments in favor of analyzing generalized trust more generally, before clarifying why specifically studying trust of non-Western immigrants offers some more general insights about the roots of trust as well as knowledge, which may contribute to the integration of immigrants into the host societies.

### Why study trust?

Since Putnam's (1993) groundbreaking work on Italy in which he showed the importance of civic traditions (of which generalized trust is considered a part) for governance and economic performance, the causes and consequences of generalized trust have attracted massive attention. Following Putnam's book much empirical work has focused on how generalized trust is related to desirable societal outcomes. While there has been a misguided tendency to portray generalized trust as a cure-all for societal ills of all sorts in some early con-

tributions, it is clear that trust is robustly correlated with desirable democratic and economic outcomes at the societal level. Trust has consistently been shown to be positively related to important outcomes such as government performance and the well-functioning of democracy (Bjørnskov, 2010; Cusack, 1999; Keele, 2007; Knack, 2002; Paxton, 2002; Tavits, 2006) as well as economic growth (Beugelsdijk et al., 2004; Knack & Keefer, 1997; Uslaner, 2002; Zak & Knack, 2001). Moreover, at the individual level, generalized trust is related to democratic citizenship in terms of political confidence and satisfaction with democracy (Zmerli & Newton, 2008), tolerance, volunteering and donating to charity (Uslaner, 2002), joining common interest associations (Nannestad, 2007), and pro-social behavior (Sønderskov, 2008). Although far from all studies adequately address the issue of potential reverse causality between trust and these outcomes, some analyses engage in estimating the causal effect of trust and they generally provide reasonably strong evidence that trust furthers economic and governmental performance at the societal level and democratic citizenship at the individual level. Moreover, recent research has demonstrated that trust is strongly related to individual level measures of well-being such as life satisfaction (Bjørnskov, 2008; Helliwell, 2003), optimism (Uslaner, 2002) and subjective health (Rostila, 2007). While definitive evidence about the direction of causality between trust and well-being does not exist, the strong relationship between the two phenomena at least suggests that trust is a part of the desirable general phenomenon of subjective well-being. In other words, there is considerable evidence that generalized trust furthers desirable democratic and economic outcomes at the societal level and democratic citizenship at the individual level, while at the same time being an indicator of personal well-being. For this reason it should be evident that examining how trust is formed and develops is an important topic for social science research. As I shall explain below, studying trust of immigrants provides some leverage in this regard.

## Trust of immigrants

Theoretically, the most important reason for studying trust of immigrants in this dissertation lies in contrasting two of the main perspectives on the roots of trust; what Uslaner (2008a) has termed the *cultural* and the *experiential* perspective. As I shall discuss in detail in the theoretical section, the former perspective focuses on trust as a stable trait, part of an enduring political culture passed on from one generation to the next through parental socialization early in life, while the latter emphasizes how trust is formed by contemporary experiences and subject to change according to the environment. Distinguishing between



these two theories about the formation and development of trust is often problematic in research focusing on the general population/natives. The problem is that the environment (and the concomitant experiences) and the culture of the country in which natives live are likely to predict the same level of trust (e.g. trustful cultures coincide with experiences that influence trust positively), which renders it difficult to determine where the foundations of trust lie. However, the situation is different for non-Western immigrants in Western countries, who are socialized into the low-trust culture of their country of origin before migrating to a high-trust Western country, which is considered to be an environment conducive to trust. In that sense non-Western immigrants in Western destination countries constitute a natural experiment for examining whether trust has primarily cultural or experiential roots by contrasting the importance of the culture of the home country and experiences in the environment in the destination country. Hence, the analysis of trust of immigrants provides a valuable input to the general debate in the literature about the foundations of trust.

In addition to providing leverage with regard to the theoretical debate about the causes of trust, analyzing trust of immigrants illuminates the formation and development of trust for a distinct group for which relatively few empirical studies exist. Consequently, analyzing trust for this special group provides new insights about whether the dynamics underlying trust are similar for natives and immigrants in the destination countries.

Finally, a third argument in favor of studying trust of immigrants pertains to integration of immigrants in their new countries. While traditional indicators of immigrant integration such as labor market participation and educational achievement can be considered representations of the structural part of integration, generalized trust can be viewed as the cultural or normative/attitudinal side of integration (Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006). If the civic virtues of immigrants differ markedly from those of natives in high-trust destination countries, this may pose problems for the immigrants as well as the host country as a whole. On the part of immigrants, lack of trust is likely to have consequences, not only for their quality of life, but also for their economic opportunities as well as political and social integration in the host society. Trust lowers transaction costs (Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 2000) and hence low levels of trust are likely to result in lost economic opportunities in a high-trust context. Trust is also likely to further political integration in the new country. Nannestad (2007) thus shows that trusting immigrants are more likely to join common interest organizations and hence better articulate their preference in the political system. Finally, high levels of trust are likely to further socializing with people in general – and natives in particular – and hence promote social integration. On the part of the host society, non-Western immigrants and descendants from low-trust cultures

may ultimately pose a threat to social cohesion and the well-functioning of democracy and the welfare state. If immigrants and descendants, who make up an increasing share of the population, hold on to the low levels of trust of their (or their parents') country of origin and do not adapt to the high levels of trust of natives, they are likely to contribute to the erosion of trust in the host society.<sup>1</sup> This may have important consequences, as trust at the societal level is related to better economic and governmental performance as argued above. In addition, the consequences may be especially dire in highly democratic countries such as those of Western Europe as recent research suggests that the democratic utility of trust is highest in the most democratic contexts (Jamal & Nooruddin, 2010). Similarly, trust is likely to constitute an important cultural underpinning of the expansive tax-based Nordic welfare states as trust is positively related to tax payment (Scholz & Lubell, 1998) and considered a part of public spiritedness, which secures that citizens do not take advantage of the system by cheating on the government to obtain higher benefits (Algan & Cahuc, 2006). In other words, trust of immigrants is likely to have important normative consequences for their integration into the host society as well as for the well-functioning of this society in general and as such it should be of obvious interest to policy makers.

In sum, studying the development of generalized trust of immigrants is important for three reasons. First, it provides leverage in the general debate within the trust literature about whether the roots of trust are primarily cultural or experiential. Second, it contributes to our knowledge about the formation and development of trust for a distinct group of increasing size in the destination countries. Third, it provides valuable knowledge to policy makers who aim to improve integration of immigrants into the host society.

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<sup>1</sup> This would be a purely compositional effect stemming from immigrants and descendants with low levels of trust making up an increased share of the population. There may be an additional negative effect from ethnic conflict between immigrants and natives, as discussed widely in the trust literature, but this would not – at least in principle – be related to the initial low levels of trust of immigrants as such.

# Chapter 3

## The conception of trust

Generalized trust concerns people's beliefs about the trustworthiness of the generalized rather than the specific other.<sup>2</sup> While trust in specific others is based on specific information about these people (obtained from reputation, prior experiences etc.), generalized trust reflects the default expectation about the trustworthiness of others when no other information is available (Rotter, 1980: 4; Sønderskov, 2008: 17-18; Yamagishi, 2001: 123-24, 144). Consequently, people displaying high levels of generalized trust have a positive outlook on the trustworthiness of others in general. In real-world terms this means that people displaying high levels of generalized trust will tend to trust most strangers that they meet. In the following, I discuss the main conceptions of generalized trust found in the literature before presenting the conception of trust employed in this dissertation. Subsequently, I discuss generalized trust in relation to particularized trust in other people or groups as well as the related concept of social capital of which generalized trust is often taken to be a part.

### Conceptions of trust

The conception of generalized trust has been the object of considerable debate in the literature and various accounts of the nature of generalized trust exist. A central distinction is that between rational accounts and accounts focusing on the moralistic/norm-based nature of trust (Nannestad, 2008). Central among rational accounts stands Hardin's (1993; 2006) 'encapsulated interest' account, which is based on two essential elements: 'the incentives of the trusted to fulfill the trust and knowledge to allow the truster to trust (or to recommend distrust)' (Hardin, 1993: 505). People trust others if they have adequate reason to expect them to be trustworthy and such expectations are typically formed by the future incentives of the trusted to act trustworthy and past experiences of the truster (Hardin, 1993, 2002: Ch. 5). When judging the trustworthiness of another person (including her incentives to behave trustworthily),

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<sup>2</sup> As generalized trust refers to trust in other people in general and thus is inherently social, I agree with Sønderskov (2008) that 'generalized social trust' is a more apt term. However, in keeping with the terminology of the literature I have used the term 'generalized trust' throughout the papers of the dissertation. It should be noted, however, that the terms 'social trust', 'interpersonal trust' and 'thin trust' have been used interchangeably to refer to the same phenomenon in the literature.

people use past experiences from encounters with other people to form their expectations (Hardin, 1993: 508; Offe, 1999: 56). These experiences accumulate to form the 'Bayesian evidence on trustworthiness for future occasions' (Hardin, 1993: 507). In that sense, trust is learned from experiences and continuously updated according to these experiences.<sup>3</sup> Hence, this rational account is essentially an experience-based account of trust that regards past experiences as the information from which people form their expectations about the trustworthiness of others.

The encapsulated interest account has been challenged by moralistic/norm-based accounts of trust. Yamagishi & Yamagishi argue that '*Trust is based on the inference of the interaction partner's personal traits and intentions, whereas assurance is based on the knowledge of the incentive structure surrounding the relationship*' (emphasis in original) (1994: 132). In this account, the encapsulated interested conception is about assurance not trust. Yamagishi & Yamagishi instead define (general) trust '*as a bias in the processing of imperfect information about the partner's intentions*' (emphasis in original) (1994: 136), which plays a role 'when sufficient knowledge of the partner is lacking' (1994: 139). They go on to state that 'general trust is a belief in the benevolence of human nature in general and thus is not limited to particular objects' (1994: 139). This conception of trust falls rather close to that of Uslaner (2002: Ch. 2), who also emphasizes the moral-based nature of trust. In contrast to rational accounts (what he calls 'strategic trust') Uslaner argues in favor of the concept of 'moralistic trust' of which generalized trust is the real world manifestation (2002: 26-28) (see also Mansbridge, 1999 for the related distinction between predictive and altruistic trust). Moralistic trust is 'a general outlook on human nature and mostly does not depend upon personal experiences or upon the assumption that others are trustworthy, as strategic trust does' (Uslaner, 2002: 17). Trust reflects a fundamentally optimistic view of the world and the people living there, and works as a general moral dictate that we should treat others as trustworthy although we are sometimes deceived (Uslaner, 2002: 21-23). In the moralistic account, trust is a moral sentiment about the trustworthiness of others, which is largely independent of personal experiences.

As should be evident from the diverging conceptions of trust presented above, the roots of trust are to a considerable extent embodied in these conceptions. The encapsulated interest account is essentially experience-based as

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<sup>3</sup> It may be added that Hardin (1993: 513-16), somewhat contrary to the rational account of trust, argues that parents probably play an important role in instilling trust priors in their children and that these priors may be ingrained to an extent that substantial subsequent experience is required to update the assessment of trust of the children.

it focuses on how earlier experiences provide information about the trustworthiness of others. Conversely, the moralistic account emphasizes how trust is a deep held outlook on human nature, which is largely unaffected by personal experiences (but by early socialization as I shall explain shortly). The roots of trust are thus implicitly embodied in the different conceptions of trust, which is important for the second research question of the dissertation concerning the roots of trust among immigrants. This is unfortunate in the sense that the roots of trust should be an empirical rather than a conceptual issue. In other words, the conception of trust should not a priori define the roots of trust, but instead be sufficiently broad to be open to multiple potential influences. Keeping this in mind, I think – contrary to the encapsulated interest account – that it makes sense to speak of trust in others independently of the perceptions about the incentives of the trusted to behave trustworthily generated by past experiences on the part of the truster. Hence, trust may to some extent reflect the truster's deep held moral outlook on others as posited by the moralistic account of trust. However, unlike this account of trust, I see no reason to assume that trust is largely independent of personal experiences. As such I agree with the encapsulated interest account that past experiences mold our trust in other people through a Bayesian process. While priors about the trustworthiness of other people are likely to be somewhat persistent, people tend to update their beliefs about the trustworthiness of others according to their personal experiences with other people and institutions.<sup>4</sup> In sum, I see generalized trust as a general, moral outlook on others, which is the result of our accumulated experiences throughout life.<sup>5</sup>

Other forms of trust:

Particularized/in-group trust and out-group trust

In addition to generalized trust, which is abstract trust in the unknown generalized other, two more specific forms of trust also deserve mentioning in the context of trust among immigrants; particularized/in-group trust and out-group trust. Particularized/in-group trust is a 'thicker' form of trust that 'entails deeper ties to a closer circle such as family members, friends and others with similar backgrounds' (Bahry et al., 2005).

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<sup>4</sup> See Freitag & Traunmüller (2009) for a related conception of trust, which they argue to be founded on both experiences and predispositions.

<sup>5</sup> This is rather close to the conception employed by Sønderskov (2008: 17), who perceives trust 'as the outcome of her social experiences throughout life as well as the overall institutional surroundings in which she currently finds herself'.

In other words, this form of trust is based on familiarity, either through personal relations or through a shared background (e.g., ethnic, religious or regional groups) from which common values (and hence trustworthiness) are inferred (Uslaner, 2002: 26-32). Out-group trust concerns trust in groups of a different – often ethnic – background than the truster. Consequently out-group trust has been considered a measure of interethnic attitudes and prejudice (Putnam, 2007). While in- and out-group trust (and the relationship between them; see Bahry et al., 2005 and Putnam, 2007) are arguably interesting phenomena with important implications for interethnic attitudes and relations, they are somewhat more conditional and less abstract and wide-ranging in nature than generalized trust in unknown others. Due to its general and abstract nature, the concept of generalized trust can be said to be the form of trust with the greatest potential for promoting cooperation in general and furthering the various desirable outcomes mentioned in the introduction (Uslaner, 2008b). For this reason generalized trust is the (primary) form of trust investigated in this dissertation.<sup>6</sup>

## Trust and social capital

In discussions about generalized trust, the concept of social capital is ubiquitous. In spite of earlier formulations, social capital came to the fore of political science with Putnam's (1993) classic study of the importance of civic culture (or social capital) for democratic governance in Italy and his subsequent analysis of the decline in social capital in the United States (Putnam, 2000). In the wake of Putnam's work, social capital has become an immensely popular concept, now a part of the mainstream political science discourse (Woolcock, 2010). While social capital and generalized trust are used more or less interchangeably in the early literature, the distinction between the two concepts appears to have been acknowledged in later work.

In his original definition, Putnam (1993: 167) referred to social capital as 'trust, norms and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions' and while other definitions of social capital have been employed (see Woolcock, 2010 and Grootaert, 2001 for a discussion),

this remains the most frequently used definition in political science. This definition of social capital has been criticized, though. A frequent critique of Putnam's definition of social capital is that it is defined by its function, i.e. it only encompasses features of social organization that improve the efficiency of so-

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<sup>6</sup> In 'Me and Jasmina' I examine both generalized trust and out-group trust with regard to the role of interethnic exposure and contact in primary school in shaping the two types of trust.

ciety (van Deth, 2003; Portes, 1998). Social capital thus risks becoming a tautological phenomenon; when people cooperate to solve collective action dilemmas, social capital exists; when they do not, it does not exist. A second critique relates to the breadth of the concept of social capital. From Putnam's definition it is clear that social capital is a very broad concept encompassing a diverse set of phenomena. However, subsequent work has refined the concept by distinguishing between a structural and an attitudinal or cultural dimension (van Deth, 2003; Hooghe & Stolle, 2003). The structural dimension refers to social networks, while the attitudinal/cultural dimension covers trust and norms of reciprocity and thus relates to the attitudes and values of individuals. Building on this distinction, it is clear that generalized trust pertains to the attitudinal/cultural sub-dimension of social capital.

A more fundamental issue in the relationship between social capital and generalized trust concerns the level of analysis. In this regard, the two concepts differ as social capital, in Putnam's and most other accounts, is defined as a property pertaining to aggregate social entities as it refers to connections *among* individuals (Putnam, 2000: 19). In other words, social capital is a collective resource, from which all individuals in a group or society benefit collectively. The collective nature of social capital differs from that of generalized trust, which is an individual level phenomenon as individuals in a group or society can display trust (or distrust) independently of others in this context. Hence, social capital is found in the aggregate, while generalized trust is a trait or value of individuals. However, as suggested by Sønderskov (2008), this does not mean that the two concepts are necessarily at odds as a high density of generalized trusters in a group or society is a collective resource, which may be termed social capital. In that sense the individual level phenomenon of generalized trust (possibly along with civic engagement) may be said to be the individual level foundation of social capital in the aggregate as highlighted by Brehm & Rahn (1997).

Whether aggregate generalized trust should be considered a form of social capital is less important for the purpose of this dissertation. The important thing is that generalized trust is a resource in its own right at the individual as well as the societal level (as argued above) and therefore further investigation of its roots is important. The following chapter outlines the two contrasting perspectives on the roots of trust, which are examined in the dissertation.





# Chapter 4

## Theory

The main theoretical reason for examining the question of acculturation of trust among immigrants is that it yields insights into the foundations of trust by providing a test of whether the roots of trust are mainly cultural or experiential. In the following, I describe in more detail the two perspectives on trust before situating them in theories about the development of political and social attitudes more generally. Subsequently, I explain the main mechanisms at the micro level, which are expected to underlie the development of trust in the two perspectives.

### Cultural and experiential theories of trust

The discussion about whether or not immigrants adapt to the level of trust of the destination country is a reflection of the discussion in the trust literature about whether trust has mainly *cultural* or *experiential* foundations (Uslaner, 2008a). The cultural perspective draws a line back to Almond & Verba (1963) and Putnam (1993) by arguing that generalized trust is part of an enduring political culture (Rice & Feldman, 1997; Tabellini, 2008; Uslaner, 2008a). It claims that trust is transmitted from parents to their children through early-life socialization and remains largely stable throughout life and over generations (Uslaner 2002, 2008a). In contrast to the cultural perspective that considers trust to be determined from early on in life, the experiential perspective emphasizes how trust is experience-based and shaped by the characteristics (and the concomitant experiences) of the environment in which the individual presently lives and hence subject to change with experiences throughout life (Glanville & Paxton, 2007; Hardin, 1993, 2002; Offe, 1999; see also 'When in Rome').

The two perspectives on trust yield diverging predictions about whether immigrants will tend to adapt to the level of trust of their new country. The cultural perspective predicts that the culture of the country of origin is so strong that migrating to a new environment – whether conducive or adverse to trust – should not affect trust. Despite a shift in environment, immigrants retain the level of trust of the country of origin 'rather than simply adapting to the new realities of their adopted environment' (Uslaner, 2008a: 726). Moreover, as the culture is mainly passed on through parental socialization, even trust of second generation immigrants and subsequent generations will continue to reflect the level of trust of their (grand)parents' country of origin. This has most strongly

been substantiated in the United States where studies have shown that the level of trust of descendants of immigrants having lived in the US for several generations still tends to reflect the level of trust of their ancestors' home country (Rice & Feldman, 1997; Tabellini, 2008; Uslaner, 2008a), while this is to a lesser extent the case in Canada (Soroka et al., 2007). In opposition to the cultural perspective, the experiential perspective predicts that migrating to a new country with an environment conducive or adverse to trust should affect trust in other people accordingly. *Ceteris paribus*, this means that migrating to a high-trust country, which holds characteristics conducive to trust, will result in an adaptation among immigrants to the level of trust of natives in the new country.

The debate about the foundations of trust reflects the more general discussion in the fields of political behavior and political psychology about the formation and persistence of political and social attitudes. Sears & Levy (2003) present alternative models of the development of political and social attitudes, which vary in the extent to which they consider attitudes to be persistent or susceptible to change (see also Sapiro, 1994 and Sears, 1990). At one end of the continuum, the *persistence* model predicts that 'the residues of preadult learning persist throughout life' (Sears & Levy, 2003: 78) and hence political and social attitudes become 'relatively immune to change in later years' (Sears, 1990: 77). This perspective is consistent with the cultural explanation of generalized trust emphasizing how trust is learned early in life and subsequently remains essentially stable over the life course. At the other end of the continuum, the *lifelong openness* model posits that attitudes of individuals remain open to influences throughout life and hence continue to develop and change during adulthood (Sears, 1990: 77; Sears & Levy, 2003). This is essentially in accordance with the experiential perspective on trust emphasizing how experiences throughout life continue to mold our trust in other people. Occupying an intermediate position between the two ends of the continuum (and hence the cultural and experiential perspective on trust) is the so-called *impressionable years* model, which argues that 'attitudes are particularly susceptible to influence in late adolescence and early adulthood but tend to persist thereafter' (Sears & Levy, 2003: 78-79, 83). In this perspective, trust is not determined by preadult learning (i.e. parental socialization), but still open to change during late adolescence and early adulthood, where experiences with other people and institutions are likely to take place. Experiences in later stages in life are not likely to affect trust, however.<sup>7</sup> Hence, from the above it should be clear

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<sup>7</sup> Sears & Levy (2003) also mention a *life cycle* model, which emphasizes how individuals are likely to adopt particular 'dispositions at certain life stages' (Sears, 1990: 77). Although the idea of the development of trust in certain life stages has been dis-

that the question about whether generalized trust has primarily cultural or experiential foundations taps into the more general discussion within the fields of political behavior and political psychology about the development and persistence of political and social attitudes.

While both the cultural and the experiential perspective offer clear predictions about the acculturation of trust among immigrants at the macro level, they build on underlying micro level processes at the individual level, which should be examined in order to understand why immigrants adapt (or do not adapt) to the level of trust of natives in their new countries. This constitutes the second aspect of the research question of the dissertation. Below, I describe in more detail how the parental transmission of trust, which is the central mechanism underlying the cultural perspective, is expected to take place. Subsequently, I specify which experiences in the destination country environment I consider to be most important in forming the level of trust of immigrants.

## The cultural perspective:

### The role of parental transmission of trust

For the cultural perspective on the formation of trust to hold up, a mechanism explaining the intergenerational stability of trust should be established. While other socialization agents may also play a role, it is fair to say that parents, through the transmission of trust to their offspring, are generally considered to be the main socialization agent in this regard (Uslaner, 2008a). For that reason I focus on the parental transmission of trust to their children as the key mechanism behind the cultural perspective on trust. Multiple channels of parental influence on trust of their children have been presented in the literature. Building on Dohmen et al. (2006) I argue in 'Upbringing, Early Experiences of Discrimination and Social Identity' that at least four potential channels for parental transmission of trust to their children exist: deliberate efforts by parents to shape the trust of their children, child learning by imitation, unintended consequences of parent-child relationships and/or child rearing practices, and genetic transmission.

The first channel appears to implicitly underlie many accounts of how trust is passed on from parents to their children. Parents teach their children to trust or distrust based on what they see as the morally 'right thing' (Uslaner, 2002) and in response to the outside world and the dangers it holds (Guiso et al.,

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cussed in the literature (Robinson & Jackson, 2001), this applies less straightforwardly (at least with the data at hand) to the question about whether and why immigrants tend (not) to adapt to the level of trust of natives in the destination country.

2008; Stolle & Nishikawa, 2009). The second channel, although not the subject of much scrutiny in the political science literature, involves children mimicking their parents' behavior. Hence, the children of trustful parents also end up being trustful. Contrary to the first channel of transmission, which clearly involves a conscious effort by parents to form trust of their children, the third channel concerns the – at least in principle – unintended consequences of relations within the family and/or child rearing practices on trust of the children.<sup>8</sup> In 'Upbringing, Early Experiences of Discrimination and Social Identity' I argue that a restrictive upbringing in terms of parents restricting their children from interacting with others, which is predicted to reduce trust of their children, may reflect this channel of influence.<sup>9</sup> While parents may not give their children a restrictive upbringing with the purpose of making them mistrusting, this form of child-rearing is likely to send negative signals about the trustworthiness of others, to reinforce negative stereotypes about others, and to instill authoritarian values, all of which tend to depress trust of their children (see 'Upbringing, Early Experiences of Discrimination and Social Identity'). In a similar vein, a number of authors note the negative impact of strong family ties on trust. Ermisch & Gambetta (2008) argue that strong family ties limit outward exposure and hence reduce motivation to trust others as well as opportunities for forming trustful relationships with others through interaction (see also Alesina & Giuliano (2009)). Strong family ties and the high degree of monitoring and sanctioning they embody may also affect trust negatively as these mechanisms are unavailable in social situations in the world outside of the family and as a consequence may cause insecurity in these situations with lower levels of generalized trust as the outcome (Yamagishi et al., 1998). Hence, modes of upbringing and parent-child relations may also affect children's trust in other people, but typically as an unintended side effect.

While the first three channels of parental transmission of trust are the results of socialization processes, the fourth and final channel is biological as it concerns genetic transmission, either of trust directly or (personality) traits related to trust. While genetic transmission of social and political attitudes was considered close to unimaginable only a few years back, this perspective has attracted massive attention after the publication of a number of remarkable results from twin studies showing quite high levels of genetic heritability (typically around 50 percent) of an array of political attitudes and behavior (see e.g. Al-

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<sup>8</sup> The second channel of parental transmission of trust to their children may reflect both intended and unintended consequences of parental actions.

<sup>9</sup> Giving their children a restrictive upbringing may, of course, also be a deliberate effort of the parents to form the trust of their children. If so, it would fit into the first channel of transmission.

ford et al., 2005; Fowler et al., 2008). Recently, three twin studies have shown that generalized trust also displays a degree of genetic heritability (Cesarini et al., 2008; Hirashi et al., 2008; Sturgis et al., 2010), although there is disagreement about the extent of this heritability with estimates ranging between 16 to 66 percent depending on the context and the trust measure used. While the evidence about how much of the transmission of trust from parents to children that can be attributed to genetic and environmental factors (parental socialization is considered the part of the latter called 'common environment' [as opposed to unique environment]) is still inconclusive, it is clear that the genetic channel of transmission of trust should be taken seriously. As highlighted in 'Upbringing, Early Experiences of Discrimination and Social Identity' this is problematic as it makes it impossible to distinguish parental socialization from genetic transmission of trust (or correlated traits) without twin studies (or, alternatively, adoption studies), none of which are currently at hand for immigrants, the population studied in this dissertation.<sup>10</sup> In line with the literature, I have interpreted persistence and intergenerational stability in trust as the result of cultural transmission (i.e. evidence in favor of parental socialization and hence the cultural theory of trust), but as I point out in 'Parental Transmission or Institutional Fairness' this may, admittedly, reflect genetic transmission of trust. This indistinguishability between genetic transmission and parental socialization should be kept in mind when observing a parental transmission of trust.

Parental transmission of trust – whether direct or indirect – is the central mechanism expected to produce stability in the level of trust of immigrants in the cultural perspective and hence what is expected to account for the lack of adaptation of non-Western immigrants to the level of trust of natives in the high-trust destination countries in Western Europe in this perspective. Consequently, the parental transmission of trust should be demonstrated empirically in order to establish the micro level foundation of the cultural perspective on trust. As described above, there are multiple channels for parental transmission of trust and while I cannot make a detailed distinction between these channels with the data available, I have examined the overall transmission of trust (in 'Parental Transmission or Institutional Fairness') as well as how a restrictive parental upbringing affects trust of their children (in 'Upbringing, Early Experiences of Discrimination and Social Identity').

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<sup>10</sup> The existing twin studies have all been conducted in highly developed countries (United States, Sweden, Australia and Japan) and it cannot be assumed that findings from these countries readily generalize to the non-Western home countries of the immigrants studied in this dissertation as the countries differ both in terms of the environment and the genetic makeup of the population.

## The experiential perspective: The role of institutional fairness

As the experiential perspective in principle includes a very broad range of experiences, it would be close to impossible to examine this explanation of trust of immigrants in detail. Instead, I have focused on the branch of experiential theories emphasizing the role of institutional quality, which has emerged as one of the main explanations of trust in the literature (see Freitag & Bühlmann, 2009; Kumlin & Rothstein, 2005; Levi, 1996; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008a, 2008b; Rothstein & Eek, 2009; You, 2005). While it is not possible to fit the institutional explanation exclusively under the label of experiential explanations of trust as institutional influences on trust may be non-experiential (see below), experience-based perceptions of institutional quality are considered the key mechanism linking institutional quality to trust of individuals in many institutional accounts. Various aspects of institutional quality have been emphasized as important for the generation of trust, most importantly institutional efficiency and institutional fairness (Rothstein & Stolle, 2008a, 2008b). As emphasized by Rothstein & Stolle (2008b), institutional efficiency can only generate generalized trust when accompanied by institutional fairness. Hence, institutional fairness appears to be the core aspect of institutional quality promoting trust, and consequently it is the institutional mechanism examined in this dissertation.

More specifically, the institutional fairness account of trust emphasizes how procedural fairness, incorruptibility and impartiality of state institutions regulating the life of citizens form the basis for trusting other people (Delhey & Newton, 2005; Freitag and Bühlmann, 2009; Levi, 1996; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008a; Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005; You, 2005). Conversely, corrupt institutions – the opposite of fair institutions – erode trust in several ways. First, corrupt institutions are less credible as enforcers of law and order and hence provide weaker incentives for trustworthy behavior. Knowing that the expected costs of engaging in untrustworthy behavior are lower will raise the costs of trusting other people and hence erode the basis for trusting relationships between people (Levi, 1996; You, 2005). Second, representatives of institutions exhibit important behavioral norms that citizens are likely to follow. If institutional representatives, who are supposed to administer and implement the law in an unbiased way, do not follow the rules themselves, it sends the signal that they cannot be trusted. As people tend to infer from institutional representatives to people in general, this implies that people generally are not to be trusted (Rothstein & Stolle, 2008a; Rothstein & Eek, 2009). Third, and related to the second mechanism, institutions provide information about the moral standard of society in

general and when corruption is wide-spread and perceived as the way the system works, this sends the message that most people do not play by the rules and hence are not to be trusted (Rothstein & Stolle, 2008a).

Corrupt institutions are manifested at the individual level in the behavior of street-level bureaucrats, and people's perceptions of institutional fairness are formed through experiences with these officials including policemen, public school teachers, and tax officials.<sup>11</sup> When people have negative experiences of discrimination and unfair treatment by street-level bureaucrats they will reason according to the logic presented above and conclude that institutional fairness is low and hence that most people cannot be trusted. However, as noted above, the institutional explanation of trust cannot exclusively be seen as an 'experiential' account of trust as perceptions of institutional fairness may come from other sources besides experiences of being treated fairly by street-level bureaucrats. The most obvious influence on perceptions of institutional fairness not rooted in experience appears to be parental socialization (Rothstein & Stolle, 2008a), e.g. that children learn from their parents that public institutions work in an impartial and fair way (or the opposite).<sup>12</sup> In this case, the effect of perceptions of institutional fairness on trust would indirectly reflect the cultural rather than the experiential perspective on the roots of trust. In order to assess this possibility, I examined the extent to which immigrants' perceptions of institutional fairness are mainly formed by experiences with street-level bureaucrats or rather through parental socialization.

While the argument about the role of institutional fairness in forming trust applies in general, it seems likely that perceptions of the fairness of state institutions are of special importance for ethnic minorities including immigrants – and especially with regard to the treatment of natives versus immigrants (Nannestad & Svendsen, 2005; Kumlin & Rothstein, 2008). In the words of Kumlin &

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<sup>11</sup> While the causal reasoning of the dissertation is in line with recent research suggesting that perceptions of institutional fairness (or institutional trust) is mainly the cause of generalized trust for immigrants (Nannestad & Svendsen, 2005; Kumlin & Rothstein, 2008) and the population in general (Rothstein & Stolle, 2008a), which has also been substantiated by causal analyses (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Dinesen & Sønderkov, 2010), it is difficult to rule out the reverse or a bidirectional relationship altogether with the data at hand. However, examining how perceptions of institutions are rooted in concrete experiences with street-level bureaucrats, which are less likely to be endogenous to trust, is an attempt to examine how the causal mechanism causing institutional fairness to affect generalized trust would plausibly operate (see Rothstein (2005) for a similar argument) and potentially provides an indication that perceptions of institutional fairness are the cause rather than the effect of generalized trust.

<sup>12</sup> Like the transmission of trust from parents to children, this influence may, in principle, also be genetically based.

Rothstein (2008) 'fairness variables may exercise a greater effect among minorities because minorities are evaluating institutional structures that have been created by, are supported by, and affect the majority group.' For immigrants, perceiving state institutions to be fair and treating everyone equally (independent of ethnic background or any other characteristic) is likely to reduce perceptions of social conflict and give way to feelings of acceptance and of having the same opportunities as the majority (and everyone else) with a resulting increase in generalized trust in other people. Conversely, when state institutions appear to work in the interest of the majority (natives) against minorities (immigrants), it is likely to breed mistrust in other people among the latter group in particular. Earlier research supports the claim that perceptions of institutional fairness and equal treatment matter for the trust of immigrants (Nannestad & Svendsen, 2005) and even more so than for ethnic majorities (natives) (Kumlin & Rothstein, 2008). In sum, immigrants' perceptions of state institutions being impartial and fair with regard to equal treatment of immigrants and natives are expected to be important for their level of generalized trust in other people – and more so than for natives.

### The role of other experiences

As noted above, the experiential perspective on trust encompasses a very broad range of experiences far from confined to those stemming from interacting with representatives of institutions. While a full test of alternative experiential theories of trust would be close to impossible, the dissertation examines one of the main alternative experiential perspectives on trust emphasizing interaction with people of different ethnic background. This is primarily done to get an indication about how much these alternative experiences matter for trust of immigrants and to grasp to which extent they may confound the impact of institutional fairness on trust of this group.

Interacting with natives/ethnic majorities in the destination country, who constitute by far the largest share of the population (at least in Denmark and in Western Europe in general), is expected to affect trust of immigrants for two reasons. First, given the size of the native group, members of this group are likely to be viewed as representative of 'most people' on which immigrants base their inferences of trust of the generalized other. Second, natives being the majority group in a dominant position in society, immigrants' trust in other people may be especially sensitive to the experiences they gain from interacting with members of this group. While interaction with natives in the destination country is expected to affect trust of immigrants, it is unclear what to expect with regard to the direction of this relationship. Based on Allport's more general ar-



gument about the role of contact in reducing prejudice and promoting interethnic tolerance in his classic work *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954), we may expect generalized trust, which we know is related to tolerance towards minorities (Uslaner, 2002; Herreros & Criado, 2009), to rise with interethnic contact. Conversely, Forbes (1997, 2004) and Putnam (2007) claim that interethnic exposure and contact promote ethnic conflict, which in turn is likely to reduce trust in other people. Disregarding the direction of the impact of interethnic contact on trust, I examine how contact in school – a context in which children of different ethnicity cannot refrain from interacting with each other – affects generalized trust of immigrant (and native) pupils in order to get an indication about the importance of interaction with people of different ethnic background in generating trust.



# Chapter 5

## Research design

In the following, I first present the units of analysis, non-Western immigrants, explain how this group relates to other groups and draw some central distinctions within the group. Next, I present the setting of the study, Western Europe, and introduce the data used in the empirical analyses, before presenting the analytical strategy employed to answer the two research questions of the dissertation. Finally, I discuss in detail the issue of measurement of the dependent variable of the dissertation, generalized trust, before I provide a brief overview of the empirical studies in the dissertation.

### The units of the analysis: Non-Western immigrants

The population of this study is immigrants, specifically from non-Western countries, which is defined as immigrants from countries outside of Western Europe (the EU-15 plus Norway, Switzerland, Iceland and the European micro states), North America, Australia and New Zealand. As already outlined, there are theoretical reasons (i.e. contrasting the cultural and the experiential perspective on trust) as well as more policy-related reasons (i.e. issues of integration of immigrants) for looking at non-Western immigrants from countries characterized by low levels of trust. When relevant and when data permit it, I also include natives in the country of origin of the non-Western immigrants and natives of the immigrants' new countries in the analyses. Including these two groups is necessary to provide benchmarks against which the level of trust of non-Western immigrants can be compared in order to examine the extent to which immigrants retain the level of trust of their home country or adapt to the level of trust of natives in their new country. Moreover, comparing the determinants of trust among immigrants and natives in their new countries provides an indication of whether the factors affecting trust (and hence promote or inhibit immigrants' adaptation to the level of trust of natives) are equivalent across the two groups.

Within the group of immigrants a further distinction is made between first and second generation immigrants in some of the analyses. While first generation immigrants have migrated personally (either alone, or, in the case of children, with their parents), second generation immigrants are not migrants as such, but descendants of immigrants. However, for ease of presentation I will refer to second generation immigrants as 'immigrants' although this label may

be somewhat misleading. As I shall explain shortly, differentiating between the two generations of immigrants offers some important insight about the dynamics of acculturation of trust among immigrants and the factors underlying this acculturation. Generally, the expectation is that second generation immigrants, having stayed for another generation in the destination country, have adapted to the level of trust of natives to a greater extent than first generation immigrants. In addition to the overall distinction between first and second generation immigrants, a further distinction among first generation immigrants is possible by differentiating by length of residence in the new country. While I have tried differentiating by length of residence for first generation immigrants when possible, this generally yielded either non-significant or less meaningful results. This may reflect the fact that length of residence in the destination country is unimportant for the acculturation of trust of first generation immigrants, but I suspect that it also has to do with the fact that the available measures of length of residence are rather imprecise and/or quite noisy. For that reason – and given the less than promising results – I have chosen not to pursue the distinction between lengths of residence in the destination country for first generation immigrants further in the dissertation. However, further investigation of this variable in future research may be fruitful given the availability of better data.

## The setting: Western Europe

The dissertation follows two complementary strategies in terms of the choice of destination countries of non-Western immigrants: a broad comparative perspective comparing non-Western immigrants across a range of countries in Western Europe and a more detailed analysis focusing on non-Western immigrants in Denmark.

In the comparative analysis, I focus on non-Western immigrants in a range of countries in Western Europe defined as the EU-15 plus Norway, Switzerland and Iceland to map the overall trend in acculturation of trust of non-Western immigrants across Western Europe. The Western European countries are very common destinations for many non-Western immigrants and are on average characterized by quite high levels of trust and generally considered contexts conducive to trust. Hence they provide a clear contrast to the countries of origin of non-Western immigrants.<sup>13</sup> This allows for a test of whether the level of

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<sup>13</sup> In one analysis I narrow down the range of destination countries to only the North-western European countries, where trust is most widespread in Western Europe (and the world in general), in order to create an even sharper contrast to the country of origin of the non-Western immigrants.

trust of non-Western immigrants changes when they migrate to a context conducive to trust. That is, whether non-Western immigrants adapt to the level of trust of natives in their new countries in Western Europe. Moreover, while the Western European countries share a number of characteristics, they still vary substantially in the level of trust as well as in terms of other features of the context such as the level of corruption and income inequality, which are related to the level of trust. This variation is used to examine how immigrants acculturate in terms of trust across Western European destination countries and to scrutinize if this acculturation is related to features such as institutional fairness of the destination country context. In addition to the broader comparative perspective, I follow a second strategy of focusing specifically on Denmark as destination country context. Given the extensive Danish data on non-Western immigrants, the in-depth country analysis allows for a more context-specific analysis of the acculturation of trust of this group and – in particular – the mechanisms underlying the (lack of) adaptation to the level of trust of natives proposed by the cultural and the experiential perspective on trust.

## Data

The cross-national individual level survey data used in the comparative study of Western European destination countries come from the European Social Survey (ESS). The ESS is generally considered a highly valid and reliable data source for comparative individual level data on political and social values in Europe (Stoop et al., 2002) and contains a number of questions on trust as well as it correlates. Moreover, compared to other cross-national surveys, most notably the World Value Survey (WVS), the ESS contains information about the specific country of origin of first generation immigrants (and from the second wave also on the parents of second generation immigrants). This allows a differentiation of immigrants from different countries of origin, which is necessary for taking the specific cultural background of the country of origin of immigrants into account. Moreover, knowing the immigrants' country of origin allows for linking aggregate data on trust from the country of origin to each immigrant thereby enabling an examination of how the culture of the country of origin affects immigrants' present-day level of trust. I explain the intuition behind this approach in more detail below.

The Danish survey data on non-Western immigrants come from two different surveys: the Survey of Schoolchildren in Denmark (SSCD) and the Danish Panel Survey of Immigrants (DPSI). By means of a very generous grant from the VELUX Foundation I had the opportunity to conduct my own large-scale survey specifically designed for examining the causes of trust among young immi-

grants in Denmark (the SSCD). The survey was collected by Statistics Denmark and consists of young first and second generation immigrants from Turkey, the former Yugoslavia, Iraq and Lebanon/Palestine (and their Danish peers) in the final years of primary school in Denmark. The young immigrants were sampled in Danish schools with various levels of ethnic diversity and subsequently a subsample of the immigrants was matched with native Danish matches of the same gender, in the same school and in the same grade. This secures a very high degree of comparability between immigrants and natives and hence provides a strong basis for studying the adaptation of young immigrants to the level of trust of their native Danish peers as well as the differences in the causes of trust between the two groups. In addition to the schoolchildren, the survey includes one parent of each of the children, who answered many of the same questions as their children, including those concerning trust in other people. Hence, I have data on the level of trust of both children and parents, which allows me to examine the parental transmission of trust to their children, which is the central mechanism causing trust to be a highly stable trait according to the cultural perspective on trust. This is a unique feature of the SSCD as data on trust for parent-child dyads among immigrants do not to my knowledge exist in any other survey. Moreover, the survey also includes a range of questions intended to tap immigrants' experiences with and perceptions of Danish institutions including the Danish primary school. The SSCD is therefore also very well suited for examining the experiential explanation of trust emphasizing the role of institutional fairness.

The Danish Panel Survey of Immigrants (DPSI) was directed by the late Lise Togeby and collected by The Danish National Centre for Social Research and is a panel survey of young immigrants from the former Yugoslavia, Turkey and Pakistan conducted in 1988 and again in 1999. The most important advantage of this survey is that the time lag between the two waves of the survey allows for an examination of whether parental upbringing and experiences in adolescence exert a lasting influence on immigrants' level of trust later in life.

## Analytical strategy

In the following I discuss the research design for studying the two research questions of the dissertation; whether immigrants tend to adapt to the level of trust of natives in their new country, and which factors contribute to this (lack of) adaptation. The designs for answering the two questions are described in turn.

## The acculturation of trust of immigrants

Studying the acculturation of trust among immigrants, the basic task is to examine whether the level of trust of immigrants changes accordingly when they migrate to a new country with a different level of trust and different qualities expected to affect trust. In the context of this dissertation this means that we would expect trust of immigrants from low-trust non-Western countries of origin to rise when they migrate to high-trust Western European countries, which hold qualities conducive to trust. As pointed out in 'Does Trust Travel?' the ideal research design for examining the acculturation of trust among immigrants would be a random assignment of individuals in the country of origin to either emigrate or stay. By virtue of randomization we would – given that differences in trust and qualities conducive to trust exist between the home country and the destination country – be able to attribute any difference in the level of trust of migrants and non-migrants to having migrated. However, conducting such a randomized experiment of migration is clearly not possible, so we have to resort to alternative means for examining whether immigrants adapt to the level of trust of natives in their destination country.<sup>14</sup> I use two different strategies for examining the acculturation of trust of immigrants.

First, using the natural/quasi experiment of immigration, I compared the level of trust of migrants and non-migrants from the same country of origin while controlling for potentially confounding factors. If migrants residing in high-trust countries (which are generally considered to be environments conducive to trust) are found to have significantly higher levels of trust than non-migrants in their low-trust home countries, it is seen as an indication of an adaptation to the level of trust of natives in their new countries. I pursued this research strategy in 'Does Trust Travel?' in which I analyze the impact of migrating to high-trust Northwestern Europe for immigrants coming from three low trust countries of origin (two non-Western and one Western). In the paper I employ the method of matching, which has been shown to yield estimates of causal effects close to that of randomized experiments using cross-sectional data (Dehejia & Wahba, 1999, 2002). Given the cross-sectional nature of data it is difficult to ascertain that migrants and non-migrants do not differ in some unobserved way that is likely to affect their generalized trust and hence confound any findings with regard to the acculturation of trust (i.e. self-selection of immigrants). However, the method of matching is also useful in this regard as it provides an indication of the robustness of the findings by estimating how

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<sup>14</sup> A second best option would be panel data containing information about trust of migrants and non-migrants before and after migration. To my knowledge such data do not exist.

large the effect(s) of the potentially unobserved confounding variable(s) should be to render the effect of the destination country on trust of immigrants insignificant. In addition to the comparison of migrants and non-migrants from the same country of origin, I provide an implicit comparison of trust of four non-Western immigrant groups in Denmark against a benchmark of the mean level of trust in the country of origin in 'Parental transmission or institutional fairness'. Moreover, the data used in this paper include both children and their parents and allow for differentiating between first and second generation immigrants among the children. This enables a more fine-grained analysis of the dynamics of acculturation of trust of immigrants by comparing children growing up in the destination country to their parents as well as first and second generation immigrants.

The second strategy for examining the acculturation of trust among immigrants involves examining the relationship between the trust of immigrants and the aggregate/mean level of trust in their old and new country respectively. The intuition behind this approach is the following: If immigrants' trust increases proportionally with the mean level of trust of natives in their destination country (while controlling for the level of trust of their home country) this is evidence that an adaptation to the level of trust of natives in the destination country has taken place.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, if the relationship between immigrants' present-day trust and the mean level of trust of natives in the destination country is stronger than the equivalent relationship between immigrant's trust and the mean level of trust in their country of origin, there is a clear indication that trust is not determined by the culture of the country of origin and that immigrants tend to adapt to the level of trust of natives in the new country. I follow this second approach in 'When in Rome' in which I look at non-Western immigrants in Western European destination countries (a similar approach is followed in 'Where You Come From', but with a somewhat different purpose cf. below). The data used in this analysis allows for a differentiation between first and second generation immigrants and hence an examination of whether the adaptation to the level of trust of natives is stronger with the second generation staying in the destination country. If the relationship between the mean level of trust of natives in the destination country and trust of second generation immigrants is stronger than the equivalent relationship between the mean level of trust of

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<sup>15</sup> Another way to see this analysis is to consider the relationship between immigrant trust and the mean level of trust in the new country as a measure of the adaptation of immigrants to the level of trust of natives in this country, while simultaneously taking the potential self-selection of immigrants into the various destination countries into account by including the mean level of trust in the country of origin (see 'When in Rome' for further explanation).



natives in the destination country and trust of first generation immigrants – and vice versa for the level of trust of the country of origin (of the parents for second generation immigrants) – we would have a clear indication that the adaptation is strengthened with the second generation staying in the destination country.

## The causes of trust of immigrants

After having looked at the first research question, the acculturation of trust among non-western immigrants in Western Europe, the next research question concerns why immigrants (do not) adapt to the level of trust in their new countries. This is examined in the last four papers of the dissertation.

In 'Where You Come From' I take a comparative perspective on the causes of trust of immigrants by comparing how the culture of the homeland and the institutional quality of the destination country affect present-day trust of first generation immigrants across a range of Western European countries. The paper is an extension of 'When in Rome' and also examines how the culture of the country of origin, in terms of the level of trust in this country, and the context of the destination country affect the present-day level of trust of immigrants. However, in 'Where You Come From' I move one step further by examining which aspects of the destination country context that affect the present-day level of trust of immigrants. In line with the experiential perspective emphasizing the role of institutional fairness, it is examined how freedom from corruption in the destination country affects trust of immigrants. In order to scrutinize further the impact of freedom from corruption in the destination country I conduct a number of analyses. First, I control for various other factors in the destination country context (religious heritage, ethnic diversity and income inequality) to determine whether it is specifically freedom from corruption and not other characteristics of the destination country context that affects trust of immigrants. Second, and as an extension of the results in 'When in Rome', I examine the extent to which freedom from corruption in the destination country can explain immigrants' adaptation to the level of trust of their new country. This is done by examining how much the correlation between the mean level of trust of the destination country and trust of immigrants is reduced when freedom from corruption in the destination country is included. The larger the reduction in the relationship, the better freedom from corruption is considered to explain the adaptation to the level of trust of the destination country among immigrants. Third, I consider whether freedom from corruption in the country of origin influences the present-day trust of immigrants. While a significant influence of freedom from corruption in the destination country would substantiate the

contention that contemporary experiences of institutional fairness influence trust in others as suggested by the experiential perspective, finding that freedom from corruption in the country of origin has an impact on trust of immigrants would imply that early experiences of institutional fairness have a lasting impact on trust, which would be in line with the *impressionable years* model and hence more of a hybrid between the cultural and experiential perspective on trust as argued in the theory section. Finally, the analysis in 'Where You Come From' differentiates between Western and non-Western immigrants to examine whether cultural or institutional factors work in the same way for the two immigrant groups.

After the comparative analysis comparing immigrants across a range of Western European countries, I turn to three in-depth analyses building on Danish data on non-Western immigrants. In 'Parental Transmission or Institutional Fairness' I examine the fundamental mechanism explaining the stability and persistence of trust according to the cultural perspective on trust; the transmission of trust from parents to their children. As a contrast to the parental influence on trust of their children posited by the cultural perspective on trust, I examine how young immigrants' trust in other people is formed by their perceptions of institutional fairness in Denmark, which is in line with the experiential perspective on trust. Moreover, I also examine whether these perceptions are in fact rooted in concrete experiences with fairness of street-level bureaucrats, specifically primary school teachers, or rather the result of parental socialization. The former would substantiate the contention that the institutional perspective on trust is experientially based, whereas the latter questions whether perceptions of institutions are also based on parental transmission of values and hence that there is an indirect cultural influence on trust via parental socialization of perceptions of institutional fairness. Finally, I differentiate between first and second generation immigrants and native Danes in the analyses in 'Parental Transmission or Institutional Fairness'. This serves to examine the extent to which the impact of parental transmission of trust and perceptions of institutional fairness differ in their influence on trust between the three groups.

The second analysis on Danish data is mainly concerned with the long-run consequences of parental upbringing and experiences in school for the trust of immigrants later in life. If parental upbringing affects trust later in life for immigrants, it substantiates the cultural perspective on trust as the effect of the culture transmitted from parents to their children – intentionally or unintentionally – tends to persist into adulthood. Similarly, if experiences of discrimination by teachers in school earlier in life still affect trust eleven years on, it indicates that early life experiences of institutional fairness are formative for trust later in life in line with the *impressionable years* hypothesis. Conversely, finding that early life

experiences of institutional fairness do not matter for trust of immigrants indicates that either experiences matter little for trust of immigrants or that subsequent experiences have muted the influence of the early experiences in school (the latter would be in line with the *lifelong openness* perspective on the development of trust).

In the seventh and final paper of the dissertation I examine how experiences with native Danes in Danish primary schools affect trust of young first and second generation immigrants. The objective is to examine to what extent other types of experiences than those related to institutional fairness affect trust of immigrants and hence provide an indication of the importance of such experiences and the extent to which they can be expected to confound experiences of institutional fairness.

## The operationalization of the dependent variable: Measuring generalized trust

A discussion of the measurement of the dependent variable of the dissertation, generalized trust, is in place as this issue has received considerable interest in the literature and is especially pertinent when comparing trust of immigrants and natives. Most fundamentally, generalized trust can be measured using different methods ranging from surveys, experiments and qualitative interviews. In accordance with most previous work on trust in political science and sociology, this dissertation builds on the survey methodology, which has the advantage of high external validity (i.e. potential for generalizations) compared to experiments and studies building on qualitative interviews.

In the following I will discuss in some detail the measurement of generalized trust in survey-based research, which has been the object of debate. In the dissertation I rely on the following standard survey question on trust:

- 'Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?'

The question comes in different versions with the number of response categories varying between two and 11, but with the extremes remaining the same: 'Most people can be trusted' (high trust) and 'You can't be too careful' (low trust).<sup>16</sup> While the single-item trust question was the only available trust meas-

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<sup>16</sup> The question of the measurement scale of the standard trust question has also been discussed in the trust literature. Conventional wisdom would suggest that using more fine-grained measures such as the 11-point scale would be preferable to using

ure in some of the surveys employed in the dissertation, other surveys also include the following two questions, which are frequently used to form a three-item trust scale along with the trust question:

- *'Do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?' with the extremes being 'Most people would try to take advantage of me' (low trust) and 'Most people would try to be fair' (high trust).*
- *'Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves?' with the extremes being 'People mostly try to be helpful' (high trust) and 'People mostly look out for themselves' (low trust).*

The use of the standard single-item trust question versus the three-item scale has been discussed in the literature. Conventional wisdom would suggest that a construct based on multiple indicators would be preferable as this is likely to yield a more valid and reliable measure of trust allowing for greater differentiation (Miller & Mitamura, 2003; van Deth, 2003). While he does not deny that the three items are rather strongly related, Uslaner (2002) argues against using the three-item scale as he claims the two additional items in the scale regarding the helpfulness and fairness of others are different in nature from trust as they are less stable and more likely to reflect personal experiences. As noted by Sønderskov (2008: 42), this stands in contrast to Uslaner's own conception of trust as a stable moral outlook on others, but it is in accordance with conceptions of trust – such as the one employed here – which expect trust to be affected by experiences. Moreover, Reeskens & Hooghe (2008) show that the three-item scale generally works well across European countries (with a few exceptions) and Zmerli & Newton (2008) show that this scale is more strongly related to various correlates of trust including satisfaction with democracy and confidence in government than the single trust item. For this reason I have used the three-item trust scale whenever possible except in 'Where You Come From'. However, I also conducted the analyses in that paper with the three-item scale, which yielded results essentially similar to those reported for the

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the dichotomy, but Uslaner (n.d.) argues that the former is more prone to 'clumping', the phenomenon that most people center around the middle categories and hence do not really discriminate between how trusting people are. Zmerli & Newton (2008), however, show that using the 11-point scale yields stronger correlations than using a dummy for trust and thereby argue in favor of using the more fine-grained measure, which is considered more reliable and accurate. For this reason, I have employed the more fine-grained trust questions whenever they were available in the surveys.

single trust item. In 'Parental Transmission or Institutional Fairness' I explicitly compare the results for the two trust measures in a model of trust of children in Denmark and again the results are rather robust to the measure used. In other words, there is good reason to be confident that the results in the dissertation are not an artifact of the trust measure employed.

Apart from the more technical question about the use of the single or the multiple item trust measure, two additional, partially overlapping issues have been raised about the measurement of trust; the transferability of the concept of trust (and hence the trust question) from one context and/or language to another, and what the survey question on trust in fact measures. I discuss these issues in turn.

The first issue concerns the fundamental question of whether the concept of trust refers to different things in different cultural contexts and/or languages. If the meaning of trust differs between cultures or languages then no survey question will provide a valid basis for comparing trust between different cultural and linguistic groups. This issue seems particularly pertinent when comparing trust of natives in the destination country to that of immigrants who have been socialized in a different cultural context. If immigrants to some extent tend to carry with them the cultural frame of reference from their country of origin, there is a risk that their concept of trust diverges from that of natives in their new country and hence that any survey measure of trust would refer to different phenomena for natives and immigrants even if they reside in the same country. This would render an assessment of the acculturation of trust among immigrants very difficult if not impossible. I have examined the comparability of the trust measure for immigrants and natives in detail empirically in 'The Measurement of Trust' looking at immigrant and native Danish children and parents. Tests of measurement equivalence of the three-item trust scale (both metric and scalar invariance) and construct validity of this scale showed that the trust construct indeed appears to refer to the same thing for native Danes and all four immigrant groups for both children and parents. In other words, generalized trust – at least as measured by the three-item trust scale – refers to the same thing for immigrants and natives in the Danish context. Moreover, two studies confirm that both the standard trust question and the three-item trust scale generally measure the same phenomenon across countries (Reeskens & Hooghe, 2008; Jamal & Nooruddin, 2010). Hence, the standard survey measures of trust generally seem to refer to the same phenomenon for immigrants and natives as well as across countries.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> However, as I explain in detail in 'When in Rome' and 'Where You Come From' I exclude immigrants from specific countries of origin in the cross-national analyses as

The second measurement issue concerns what the trust question in fact measures. Combining a trust experiment and a survey among Harvard undergraduates, Glaeser et al. (2000) show that the standard trust question measures trustworthiness in the trust game rather than trust. In other words, when respondents state that 'most people can be trusted' this is in reality a reflection of them behaving trustworthily in the trust game. Conversely, Fehr et al. (2003) find that survey measures akin to the standard trust question are positively correlated with trusting behavior (and not trustworthiness) in an experiment integrated in a representative survey of German households. These apparently contradictory findings are reconciled by Sapienza et al. (2007), who argue that the cause of the different results is found in the degree of heterogeneity and mutual knowledge between subjects in the experiment. When subjects are very homogenous and have high knowledge about each other as in the Harvard undergraduate sample, their behavior in the trust game will not tend to reflect what they call expectation- or belief-based trust, but rather altruism and risk aversion. Hence, standard measures of trust and behavior in the trust game will be uncorrelated in this situation. Conversely, in a very heterogeneous pool of subjects like the nationally representative German sample, where knowledge of the other players is very low, players have to rely on their expectations about other people when playing the trust game, and hence survey-based trust measures are found to be correlated with behavior in the trust game in this situation. Consequently, Sapienza et al. (2007) conclude that standard survey measures of trust generally capture expectations and beliefs about the trustworthiness of others when no other information is available and this is in line with the definition of generalized trust employed in this dissertation (see also Sønderskov (forthcoming) for a related argument).

Miller & Mitamura provide a related critique of the meaning of the standard trust measure focusing more on the semantics of the question. They argue that – instead of contrasting trust and mistrust – the trust question contrasts the two distinct concepts of trust and caution and go on to show that the question tends to measure the differences in caution in terms of risk aversion rather than trust. However, they also argue that trust and caution are related phenomena that can have similar implications (Miller & Mitamura, 2003: 63-64). In other words, while the standard question may not be a precise measure of trust it is at least likely to measure closely related phenomena about the outlook on

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the trust estimates for these countries appear very unreliable (e.g. trust being very high in repressive, authoritarian regimes or fluctuating greatly between two points of measurement).

others such as caution and still have real-world implications and hence be of interest.

If we accept that the standard trust question measures some aspect of trust (or closely related phenomena), the issue remains what 'most people' refer to in this question as this is left for the respondents to specify. As Nannestad (2008) points out, this may vary among individuals or between ethnic (or other) groups, which is particularly relevant for this dissertation (see also Hardin, 2006: 62-63). For instance, if immigrant groups have different trust radii in terms of having different scopes of whom 'most people' refer to (e.g. due to variation in how tight-knit their ethnic community is or how many natives they are exposed to in their daily life) it obviously has implications for a comparison of the levels of trust as well as its causes and consequences for these groups. Two studies using verbatim responses to 'think aloud' questions have been carried out to examine what people refer to when asked the standard survey question. Uslaner (2002: Ch. 3) reports that 58 percent of the respondents refer to a more general worldview and 23 percent refer to personal experience (20 percent of the responses have 'no content'). Similarly, Sturgis & Smith (2010) report that 28 percent refer to 'known others' and around 55 percent draw on general frames of reference, not related to specific, known others. While not directly comparable, both studies show that most respondents refer to unspecific others when asked the standard trust question, so this question generally appears to measure a generalized belief about whether other people can be trusted or not rather than trust in specific, known others (particularized trust). However, Sturgis & Smith (2010) add the important caveat that the quarter of the respondents who do refer to 'known others' tend to be more trustful than people who refer to 'unknown others'. This implies that it may be people's frame of reference rather than differences in trust that to some extent accounts for different answers to the standard trust question, which is obviously a threat to the validity of the question. This reiterates the point that the standard trust question is not perfect and somewhat noisy, but at the same time generally seems to tap a generalized belief about the trustworthiness of others.

In sum, I agree with Nannestad (2008) that in spite of its underspecification and somewhat noisy measurement, the standard trust question – either in itself or as part of the three-item trust scale – is a reasonably valid and reliable measure of generalized trust. Moreover, the results in 'The Measurement of Trust' show that the three-item trust scale taps the same underlying phenomenon for immigrants and natives and hence validly measures trust across the two groups.

## Overview of studies

Finally, after having described the main elements in the overall research design of the project, I give an overview of the objective and design of the seven papers of the dissertation in Table 1 below.



Table 1: Overview of the empirical studies

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4	Study 5	Study 6	Study 7
Abbreviated title	The Measurement of Trust	When in Rome	Does Trust Travel?	Where You Come From	Parental Transmission or Institutional Fairness	Parental Upbringing, Experiences of Discrimination and Social Identity	Me and Jasmina
Main object	Establish measurement equivalence and construct validity of trust for natives and non-Western immigrants	Examine acculturation of trust of non-Western immigrants across Western European destination countries	Examine the impact of the destination country environment on trust of three groups of non-Western immigrants in Northwestern Europe	Examine the role of trust in the country of origin and freedom from corruption in the destination country in forming trust of non-Western immigrants	Examine the role of parental transmission of trust, and perceptions of institutional fairness in forming trust of young non-Western immigrants	Examine the role of parental upbringing, experiences of discrimination and social identity in forming trust of non-Western immigrants	Examine the role of inter-ethnic contact in school in forming trust of non-Western immigrants
Context	Denmark	15 Western European countries	Germany; 13 Northwestern European countries	18 Western European countries	Denmark	Denmark	Denmark
Unit of analysis	First and second generation immigrants; native Danes	First and second generation immigrants; natives	First generation immigrants and non-migrants	First generation immigrants	First and second generation immigrants; native Danes	First generation immigrants	First and second generation immigrants; native Danes
Age group	Adolescents; adults	Adults	Adults	Adults	Adolescents	Adults	Adolescents
Measure of generalized trust	Summated scale of three trust items	Summated scale of three trust items	Summated scale of three trust items	Single trust item	Summated scale of three trust items	Single trust item	Summated scale of three trust items
Main independent variable(s)	Level of trust among natives in the destination country; level of trust in the country of origin	Level of trust among natives in the destination country; level of trust in the country of origin	Living in destination country or country of origin	Level of trust in the country of origin; level of corruption in the destination country	Parental trust; perceptions of institutional fairness in Denmark	Restrictive upbringing; experiences of discrimination; national identity	Fragmentation index of ethnic diversity in school
Data source(s)	SSCD	ESS, wave 2-3; MIPEX	ESS, wave 1-4; SSCD	ESS, wave 1-3; WVS; TPI; various sources (control variables)	SSCD	DPSI	SSCD
Data year	2008-2009	2004-2007	2001-2007 (ESS); 2008-2009 (SSCD)	2002-2007 (ESS)	2008-2009	1988; 1999	2008-2009
Method	Confirmatory factor analysis; correlation	OLS regression with cluster robust standard errors	Propensity score-matching; ANOVA	Multilevel analysis with crossed random effects	OLS regression with cluster robust standard errors	Ordered logit regression	OLS regression with cluster robust standard errors

Note: SSCD: Survey of Schoolchildren in Denmark; WVS/EVS: World Value Survey/European Value Survey; ESS: European Social Survey; DPSI: Danish Panel of Immigrants; MIPEX: Migration Policy Index; TPI; Transparency International. Data year refers to the year the dependent variable, generalized trust, was collected.



# Chapter 6

## Results

The following chapter is an overview of the results regarding the two research questions concerning the acculturation of trust of immigrants and the potential reasons for the adaptation (or lack thereof) of trust of immigrants to the level of trust of natives.

### The acculturation of trust of immigrants

The results of the analyses in the three articles ‘Does Trust Travel?’, ‘When in Rome’ and ‘Parental Transmission or Institutional Fairness’ display a rather uniform picture of widespread adaptation to the level of trust of natives among non-Western immigrants in the destination countries in Western Europe. Hence, migrating to a high-trust destination country with various characteristics conducive to the development of trust has a marked impact on trust of immigrants, who – despite coming from low-trust countries of origin – to a large extent adapt to the level of trust of their new country.

In ‘Does Trust Travel?’ I used the natural experiment of immigration and compared the level of trust of Turkish, Polish and Italian immigrants in their destination countries in Northwestern Europe to their former compatriots in their home countries and the results show a massive impact of migrating to a context conducive to trust. The main results from this analysis are reproduced in Table 2 below.

Table 2: The impact of migration on trust

	Immigrants in Northern Europe	Residents in home country	A.T.T. (S.E.)	Immigrants in Germany	Residents in home country	A.T.T. (S.E.)
Turks	4.846 (255)	3.362 (1,511)	1.484 (0.154)	4.801 (67)	3.590 (1,511)	1.211 (0.287)
Poles	5.368 (224)	4.483 (5,294)	0.885 (0.140)	5.109 (98)	4.294 (5,294)	0.815 (0.208)
Italians	5.031 (303)	4.438 (2,061)	0.593 (0.120)			

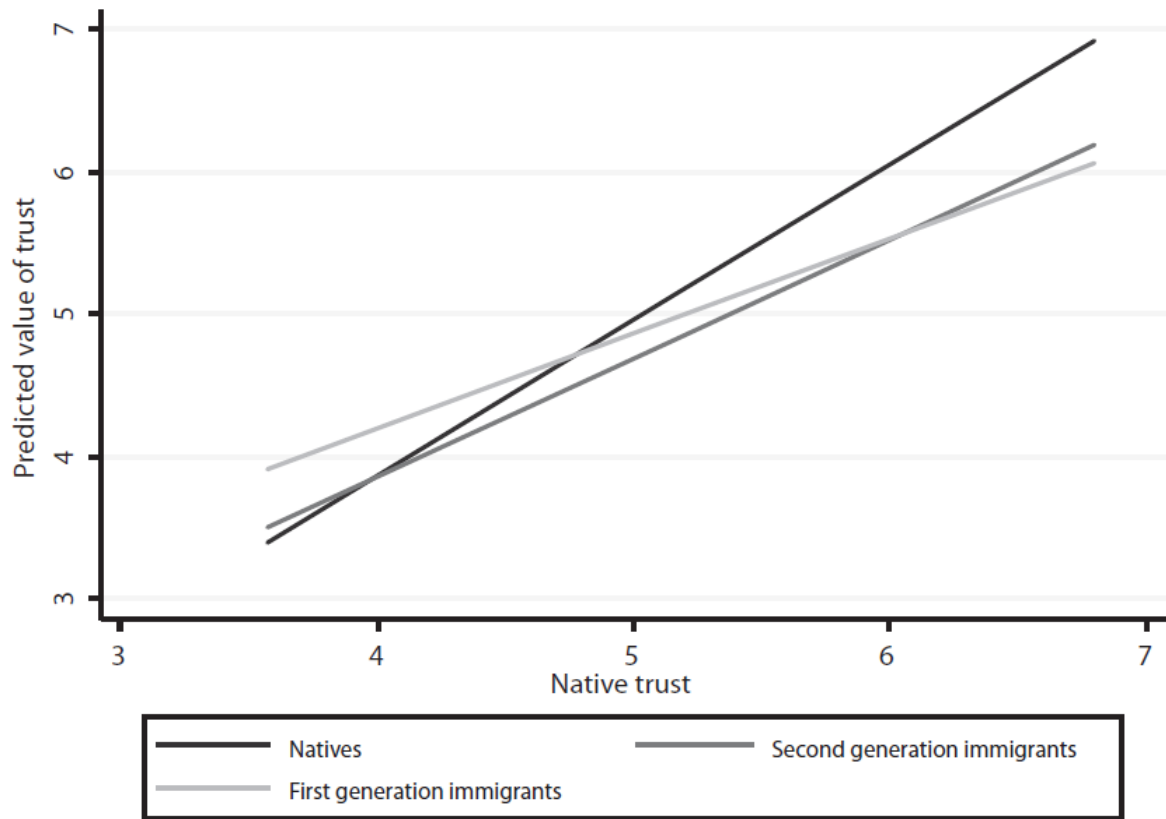
Note: Entries in columns 2, 3, 5 and 6 are the level of trust on a scale from 0-10 with numbers of observations in parentheses. Entries in columns 4 and 7 are the Average Treatment effect on the Treated (A.T.T.) with Standard Errors (S.E.) in parentheses. In this analysis, the A.T.T. is an expression of the average difference in trust (on the scale from 0-10) between immigrants in Northern Europe and residents in their home country. All differences are significant at the 0.0001 level. See ‘Does Trust Travel’ for specific details.

As reported in detail in 'Does Trust Travel?' the migrant and non-migrant groups are balanced on a long list of control variables in order to render the two groups comparable and isolate the impact of migrating on trust. As is evident from Table 2 all three immigrant groups have much higher levels of trust than their former compatriots in their country of origin (all differences are highly significant). The results remain robust to looking exclusively at one destination country (Germany) instead of a range of countries. In a subsequent analysis I also examined whether differences in the language of the response of the survey – the fact that migrants responded in the language of the new country and non-migrants in the language of the old country – could account for this apparent effect of the destination country context. Comparing Turkish immigrants responding in Turkish in Denmark to Turkish non-migrants in Turkey showed that this was not the case as the former group is much more trustful than the latter (and the difference is highly significant). Another strong indication of the adaptation of immigrants to the level of trust of natives in the destination country is the fact that the destination country context – despite substantial variation in the level of trust in the countries of origin of immigrants – has an equalizing effect on the level of trust of immigrants as the differences in trust between various immigrant groups are reduced in the destination countries. In other words, the level of trust of Turks, who come from the country of origin with the lowest level of trust, increases more than trust for the other two groups. This is an indication that the destination country context dictates a certain level of trust among natives as well as immigrants, and the latter group, irrespective of country of origin, almost catches up to the level of trust of natives (see 'Does Trust Travel?' for a comparison of the level of trust of immigrants and natives in the destination country).

'When in Rome' takes a broader perspective on the question of adaptation of immigrants to the level of trust of natives in their destination country by looking at the acculturation of trust among both first and second generation non-Western immigrants in destination countries across Western Europe. Figure 1 reproduces the graph from 'When in Rome' showing the relationship between the aggregate/mean level of trust of natives in the destination country and the level of trust of natives, first and second generation immigrants at the individual level in that country. A positive relation between the mean level of trust of natives and trust at the individual level for each of the two generations of immigrants is taken as an indication of adaptation of immigrant to the level of trust of natives (i.e. trust of immigrants tends to resemble the level of trust of natives in the destination country). The relationship between the mean level of trust of natives and trust of natives at the individual level is included in the fig-

ure as a point of reference for the extent of the adaptation of immigrants to the level of trust of natives.

Figure 1: The relationship between the mean level of trust of natives and trust at the individual level for natives and immigrants



Note: Predicted values of trust for natives, first and second generation immigrants plotted against the mean level of trust of natives. Trust is measured on a scale from 0-10.

Source: European Social Survey, wave 2 (2004-2005) and 3 (2006-2007). Figure from 'When in Rome' in which details about the model from which the predictions in the graph were obtained can be found.

Again the results show a clear pattern of immigrants adapting to the level of trust of natives in their new country as immigrants having migrated to countries with higher levels of trust prove to be more trustful than immigrants having migrated to countries with less trusting natives, which is evident from the positive relationship between the mean level of trust of natives and trust of immigrants at the individual level. Consistent with this pattern, immigrants in the Scandinavian countries, which have the most trusting natives in the world, display the highest levels of trust among immigrants, but unlike immigrants in countries with lower levels of trust they do not fully catch up to the level of trust of natives in these countries. Hence, a trust gap between natives and immigrants remains in the countries with the highest levels of trust among natives. It is also worth

noting that second generation immigrants appear to have adapted to the level of trust of natives in the destination country to a greater extent than first generation immigrants as the relationship between the mean level of trust of natives and trust of second generation immigrants at the individual level is stronger than the equivalent relationship between the mean level of trust of natives and trust of first generation immigrants. In order to ascertain that the findings with regard to the acculturation of trust of immigrants are not confounded by self-selection of immigrants (i.e. immigrants with high levels of trust migrating to countries with high trusting natives), I conducted an analysis taking into account the level of trust of the country of origin of immigrants.<sup>18</sup> However, the finding about the acculturation of trust of immigrants still holds up after controlling for the level of trust in the country of origin, so self-selection of high-trust immigrants into high trust destination countries does not appear to be driving the results. The analyses including the level of trust in the country of origin provide some interesting insights into how trust of immigrants develops across generations in the destination country. Despite the overall pattern of adaptation, the results show that second generation immigrants tend to adapt to the level of trust of natives in the destination country to a larger extent than first generation immigrants, whose trust – perhaps quite expectedly – are more strongly affected by the level of trust of the country of origin (in fact there is no effect of the level of trust of the parents' country of origin for second generation immigrants).

In 'Parental Transmission or Institutional Fairness', I specifically focus on the Danish case comparing the level of trust of native Danes, first and second generation immigrants for both adolescents and their parents. The results again show that immigrants tend to adapt to the level of trust of natives in the destination country, but the extent of the adaptation varies significantly between adolescents and their parents. While the young immigrants (independent of being first or second generation immigrants) nearly catch up to the level of trust of their native Danish peers, their parents – though still much more trusting than people in their home country – indicate having substantially lower levels of trust than native Danish parents. Hence, the factors in the Danish environment contributing to the near catch-up of young immigrants to the level of trust of their Danish peers appear to work uniformly for first and second generation immigrants, and to be rather 'instant' in the sense that they work independently of being born in Denmark or not. That is, rather than being born in the destina-

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<sup>18</sup> The level of trust of the country of origin was stratified by educational groups to take the potential differential composition of immigrants with different educational

tion country, growing up (and likely going to school) here appears to be what matters for the extent of young immigrants' adaptation to the level of trust of natives. This may also explain the contrast of the finding of uniform adaptation for first and second generation immigrants in this paper to the finding of the somewhat differential adaptation for first and second generation immigrants in 'When in Rome'. The latter analysis includes first generation immigrants of all ages and this is a likely reason for the divergent findings in the two papers.<sup>19</sup>

In conclusion, the accumulated evidence from the three papers clearly shows that immigrants to a wide extent adapt to the level of trust of their new country. Not only do immigrants who have migrated to high-trust destination countries conducive to trust display much higher levels of trust than non-migrants in their low-trust home countries, their level of trust is also proportional to the mean level of trust of natives in the country they have migrated to across a range of Western European destination countries. This is clear support for the experiential perspective on trust positing that trust is likely to change according to the environment in which the individual lives, while the cultural perspective on trust, predicting trust to be stable independent of the environment, has received considerable less support. The widespread adaptation of immigrants to the level of trust of natives in their new country raises the question about which factors can account for this phenomenon; which concrete experiences contribute to this adaptation? At the same time, the less than full catch-up to the level of trust of natives – particularly in the destination countries with the highest levels of trust such as Denmark – begs the question which factors account for this persistent trust deficit. The findings about the factors related to the causes of trust of immigrants are reported below.

## The causes of trust of immigrants

I first focus on the findings concerning the factors contributing to the adaptation of immigrants to the level of trust of natives in their new countries and then look at the factors inhibiting a full catch-up to the level of trust of natives.

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attainment (and pre-migration levels of trust) in the destination countries into account (see 'When in Rome' for more details).

<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately this explanation cannot be assessed empirically as the European Social Survey, on which 'When in Rome' is based, contains too few first generation immigrants whom we – based on their indicated length of stay in the destination country – can be sure grew up in the destination country from an early age.

## The role of institutional fairness

In 'Where You Come From' I examine the impact of institutional fairness of the destination country, in terms of freedom from corruption, on trust of immigrants in Western Europe. The analysis shows that immigrants who have migrated to countries with lower levels of corruption tend to have higher levels of trust than immigrants who have migrated to more corrupt countries. This result is robust to controlling for confounders at the individual level and the level of trust in the country of origin of immigrants (to rule out self-selection, cf. the argument on acculturation above)<sup>20</sup> as well as differentiating between Western and non-Western immigrants (although the effect of freedom from corruption is stronger for the former group). Adding control variables at the destination country level to the model (income inequality, ethnic heterogeneity, and religious heritage) freedom from corruption proves to be the most important aspect of the destination country context for trust of immigrants, and additional analyses show that it to a substantial extent explains the adaptation to the level of trust of the new country among immigrants. Finally, I considered whether the institutional context of the country of origin of immigrants shapes their present-day trust, which was not the case. Hence, trust of immigrants is not influenced by formative experiences of institutional fairness (or lack thereof) in the country of origin as the *impressionable years* model would predict, but rather formed by contemporary experiences of institutional fairness in the destination country. This is in line with the *lifelong openness* perspective and underlines the experiential foundations of the institutional explanation of trust.

In order to examine the micro level causal mechanism underlying the detected effect of incorrupt institutional structures at the macro level on trust of immigrants, I examined the effect of various institutional variables on trust of immigrants at the individual level. In 'Parental Transmission or Institutional Fairness' I look at the importance of perceptions of institutional fairness (with regard to immigrants and native Danes being treated equally by Danish institutions) in shaping the trust of young first and second generation immigrants as well as native Danes. The results show that perceptions of Danish institutions treating immigrants and native Danes evenhandedly have a strong impact on trust of both first and second generation immigrants – and stronger for immigrants than for native Danes. Moreover, no difference in the impact of perceived institutional fairness is found for first and second generation immigrants. When seen in conjunction with the finding that first and second generation adolescent immigrants tend to adapt to the same degree to the level of trust of

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<sup>20</sup> As in 'When in Rome', the level of trust of the country of origin was stratified by educational groups.



their native Danish peers, this may indicate that perceptions of institutional fairness at an early age contribute to the general adaptation of immigrants to the level of trust of natives independent of being born in the destination country or not. It may be questioned, however, whether perceptions of institutional fairness are in fact a reflection of experiences of being treated equally by street-level bureaucrats and not a matter of parental socialization (i.e. implicitly a cultural argument). This possibility was tested in an additional analysis of whether perceptions of institutional fairness of young immigrants were mainly rooted in experiencing fair teachers in primary school or rather the result of parental transmission of values. The results show that having experienced fair teachers has a much stronger impact on trust than parental socialization of values for first and second generation immigrants. In other words, immigrants' perceptions of fairness of Danish institutions appear to be primarily rooted in concrete experiences with teachers – some of the first street-level bureaucrats that children encounter – treating everyone equally. This further substantiates the experiential perspective on trust.

As a supplement to the analyses in 'Parental Transmission or Institutional Fairness' I examined the relationship between alternative indicators of institutional fairness and trust of immigrants at the individual level in 'When in Rome', 'The Measurement of Trust' and 'Upbringing, Early Experiences of Discrimination and Social Identity'. In the former paper I looked at the relationship between a summated scale of trust in institutions (parliament, politicians, the judicial system, and the police) and generalized trust for immigrants in Western European countries. The results showed a strong positive relationship, uniform across first and second generation immigrants. Equivalently, in 'The Measurement of Trust' I examined the relationship between generalized trust and trust in various public institutions (in parliament, politicians, the judicial system, the police, and public employees) and found a strong relationship for young immigrants in Denmark. I make no assumptions about the causal relationship between institutional trust and generalized trust in the two studies, but to the extent that institutional trust can be seen as a micro level manifestation of institutional fairness at the macro level, the results at least provide an indication that experiencing fair institutions positively affects immigrants' trust in other people.

The results in 'Upbringing, Early Experiences of Discrimination and Social Identity' show that having experienced discrimination by teachers in primary school does not have an impact on trust of immigrants 11 years later. Hence, there is no negative effect of early experiences of discrimination by representatives of public institutions, which go against the *impressionable years* perspective on the development of trust. Based on the analysis we cannot know whether the lacking effect of early life experiences of discrimination is due to

subsequent experiences muting this effect, which would be in line with the *life-long openness* model (and hence the experiential perspective on trust). However, as I note in the article, the basis for drawing inference about the importance of early life experiences is quite weak as the variable tapping discrimination by teachers is only measured as a dummy with a minor fraction of the respondents indicating having experienced discrimination at all. Given the rather weak basis for drawing inference about the role of early experiences of discrimination by teachers in school for trust later in life, a future follow-up to the Survey of Schoolchildren in Denmark, on which many of the analyses in the dissertation are based, would provide more definitive evidence on the impact of early experiences of institutional fairness on trust in adulthood.

Finally, the alternative experiential theory of trust of immigrants emphasizing the role of interaction with natives was examined in 'Me and Jasmina' in which I analyzed the impact of interethnic exposure and contact in school on generalized trust of immigrants and natives in Denmark. The results showed that interethnic contact in school does not affect trust of immigrants and as such this type of experience is not likely to be a factor that potentially confounds the role of institutional fairness. The latter is also confirmed in 'Parental Transmission or Institutional Fairness' in which perceptions of institutional fairness have a strong impact on trust of first and second generation immigrants despite controlling for interethnic friendship. While further examinations of if and how interethnic contact affects trust of immigrants are clearly of value, the important thing for this dissertation is that such experiences do not appear to confound experiences of institutional fairness, which further strengthens our confidence that the latter have an impact on trust of immigrants.

In conclusion, the analyses in the various articles depict a strong relationship between institutional fairness and trust of immigrants. The results can be interpreted as showing a causal sequence underlying the relationship between institutional fairness and trust of immigrants as indicators of institutional fairness at both the societal and the individual level are closely related to trust. At the destination country level, incorrupt institutional structures have a positive impact on the level of trust of immigrants in the sense that immigrants who have migrated to more incorrupt countries have higher levels of trust than immigrants who have migrated to more corrupt countries. At the individual level, indicators of perceptions of institutional fairness, which are rooted in concrete experiences with fairness of street-level bureaucrats, are intimately connected with trust and testify to the micro level mechanisms, which link living in an environment of fair institutions to higher levels of trust of immigrants. Hence, there is a clear indication that fair institutions at the macro level and experience-based perceptions of these institutions at the micro level have a strong impact on trust

of immigrants and thus help account for the widespread adaptation of immigrants to the level of trust of natives in their new country.

### The role of culture and parental transmission of trust

The papers in the dissertation also provide evidence of the cultural factors influencing the acculturation of trust among immigrants and inhibiting the catch-up of immigrants from low-trust countries of origin to the level of trust of natives in the high-trust destination countries. As mentioned with regard to the first research question concerning the extent of adaptation of immigrants to the level of trust of natives in the destination country, the results from 'When in Rome' show that trust of first generation immigrants is significantly affected by the level of trust in their country of origin (and this is confirmed in 'Where you Come from'), but that this effect disappears for second generation immigrants. In other words, in line with the predictions by the cultural perspective, immigrants to some extent carry with them the culture of trust from their country of origin, but this culture is less persistent than what this perspective suggests as the impact of the culture of the country of origin vanishes for second generation immigrants.

For the cultural perspective to be able to explain the (limited) persistence of the level of trust of the country of origin of immigrants, the underlying mechanism at the individual level should be established. As argued earlier, this implies showing how parents – as the central agents of socialization – pass on trust to their children; either through the direct transmission of trust or indirectly through other practices – primarily the form of upbringing – that shape the trust of their children. In 'Parental Transmission or Institutional Fairness' I examine the direct transmission of trust from parents to their children, while the indirect parental influence on the trust of their children through the mode of upbringing is examined in 'Upbringing, Early Experiences of Discrimination and Social Identity'. The results in 'Parental Transmission or Institutional Fairness' show that while there is a significant direct transmission of trust from parents to their children for both first and second generation immigrants, this transmission is rather weak. This is especially clear when comparing the parental transmission of trust of immigrants to that of native Danes. The transmission is two times stronger for native Danes than for first generation immigrants and three times stronger for native Danes than for second generation immigrants. The tendency for the parental transmission of trust to be stronger for first than for second generation immigrants may tentatively be seen as evidence of the micro level mechanism explaining the finding that second generation immigrants are no longer affected by the level of trust of their parents' country of origin mentioned above.

Parents of second generation immigrants less strongly transmit trust to their children, whose trust, as a consequence, will be independent of the culture of their parents' country of origin. The fact that the trust transmission is quite a bit stronger for native Danes than for immigrants may be seen as support for the experiential theory of trust as this may reflect that the trust of native Danish parents is more in line with what the children experience in the surrounding society, than what is the case for immigrant parents. As shown in 'Transmission or Institutional Fairness', the immigrant parents, who are all first generation immigrants coming from non-Western countries of origin, hold much lower levels of trust than native Danish parents and the relatively low level of trust of immigrant parents may be in discordance with what their children experience in the Danish context and hence not as easily passed on to their children. Put differently: If there is discordance between what children learn from their parents at home and what they experience in the surrounding society outside the home, they may be more likely to make up their minds about the trustworthiness of others more independently of their parents.

While the direct trust transmission from parents to children among immigrants is rather weak, there appears to be a substantial indirect parental influence on the trust of their children through the mode of upbringing. In 'Upbringing, Early Experiences of Discrimination and Social Identity' I examine how a restrictive parental upbringing limiting their children's interaction with native Danish peers during adolescence affects the level of trust of three groups of non-Western immigrants in Denmark later in life. Controlling for a number of other variables, the results show that a restrictive parental upbringing during adolescence has a significant negative impact on trust 11 years later in life. Moreover, a restrictive parental upbringing emerges as the only significant predictor of trust along with having a high school education. This is a quite clear demonstration that parents mold the trust of their children in more indirect ways than through a direct transmission of trust. While not necessarily aimed at making their children mistrusting, the type of upbringing parents give their offspring has a long-lasting impact on how much they trust others.

In conclusion, there is evidence in favor of the cultural perspective on trust as immigrants carry with them the culture of their country of origin in the sense that immigrants' present-day trust is correlated with the level of trust of their home country. However, the fact that the culture of trust does not persist over many generations in the destination country, as trust of second generation immigrants in Western Europe is not related to the level of trust of the country of origin of their parents, runs counter to the cultural perspective emphasizing the intergenerational stability of trust. Moreover, this finding is in opposition to the empirical results from the United States and I discuss potential explanations

for the difference in the results between the two contexts at length in the next chapter. At the micro level I do find a transmission of trust from parents to children, which is central in the cultural perspective. This transmission is a combination of a relatively weak direct transmission and a relatively strong indirect transmission through child rearing practices in the form of a restrictive upbringing. Hence, there is some support for the cultural perspective on trust, but trust does not appear to be stable over generations as emphasized by this perspective.

## Summary of the findings in the empirical analyses

In conclusion, while a complete catch-up does not occur, the general picture is a clear tendency for non-Western immigrants to adapt to the level of trust of natives in the country they have migrated to. Hence, while the results provide some evidence in favor of the cultural perspective on trust, the experiential perspective on trust – positing that trust is likely to change according to the environment in which the individual lives – has generally received most support in the analyses. Institutional fairness found strong support as an important experiential factor contributing to the adaptation of immigrants to the level of trust of natives in their new country as freedom from corruption at the societal level in the destination country and individual level perceptions of institutional fairness, formed by experiences of being treated fairly and equally by street-level bureaucrats, are strongly related to trust of immigrants. The remaining impact of the culture of the country of origin seems to be the result of parental transmission of trust (primarily indirectly through a restrictive upbringing), but this effect appears to be further muted with the second generation in the destination country.



## Chapter 7

# The external validity of the findings

Given the international migration patterns and the heated debate about how trust and social cohesion in the high-trust destination countries are affected by the influx of immigrants, focusing on non-Western immigrants migrating from low-trust countries of origin to high-trust destination countries in Western Europe is well-founded. However, one may ask whether the results generalize to other immigrant groups in other destination countries. A case in point is the fact that the present results with regard to the acculturation of trust among immigrants in Western Europe differ quite markedly from the other context in which this phenomenon has been examined, the United States. This is somewhat puzzling, as both destination contexts are Western and characterized by rather high levels of trust. Apart from the question about generalizations across geographical boundaries, one may also ask whether the results generalize to the next immigrant generations. Below, I first discuss potential explanations for differences in the acculturation of trust among immigrants in the United States and Western Europe. I then discuss whether the acculturation of trust among immigrants is symmetrical in the sense that the results from the dissertation can be generalized to immigrants from high-trust countries of origin having migrated to low-trust destination countries. Finally, I discuss whether or not we can extrapolate the findings about the acculturation of trust among first and second generation to third generation immigrants in the future.

### Why do immigrants in the US and Europe differ in the acculturation of trust?

The findings of the dissertation showing that immigrants from low-trust countries to a considerable extent adapt to the high trust levels of natives in their new countries in Western Europe stand in contrast to previous findings in the United States showing that trust of immigrants to a large extent is stable and enduring over multiple generations. As discussed in 'Does Trust Travel?', one of the analyses in the present study diverges from earlier research in comparing trust of migrants directly to that of comparable non-migrants and this may partly explain the divergent findings in the two contexts. However, it is also possible that a real difference exists in the extent of immigrant adaptation to the level of trust of natives in the two contexts and this calls for potential explanations for these divergences.

Focusing specifically on the high-trust Northern European countries, which are most similar to the United States (at least historically) with regard to the level of trust of natives, it is obvious that the list of potential explanations of the different patterns in the acculturation of trust among immigrants is long given that the countries differ in many ways including size, history of immigration and ethnic heterogeneity. However, two differences between the United States and Northern Europe come to mind as potential explanations like discussed in 'Does Trust Travel?'. First, immigrants may be more likely to hold on to the culture of their home country – be it high or low trust – in a more ethnically heterogeneous setting like the United States where levels of trust of other ethnic groups vary considerably. Alternatively, migrating to more ethnically homogenous countries, particularly in Northern Europe where the majority has fairly high levels of trust, may exert a more uniform positive influence on trust of immigrants and hence be conducive for immigrants from low-trust countries of origin to adapt to the higher level of trust of their new countries. Second, and in accordance with the support for the experiential perspective emphasizing the role of institutional fairness found in the present analysis, divergent experiences with representatives of institutions may hold some potential for explaining differences in the stability of trust of immigrants in the United States and Northern Europe. Immigrant groups in the two contexts may have had quite different experiences of institutional fairness. Some immigrant groups in the United States, most obviously immigrants of African descent, have historically faced systematic institutional discrimination – the very opposite of institutional fairness – quite likely leading to low levels of trust for one generation after the other (cf. Rohtstein, 2005: Ch. 5). Indeed blacks show systematically lower levels of trust than other ethnic groups in the United States (Putnam, 2007; Uslaner, 2002). That is not to say that institutional discrimination of immigrants does not take place in Northern Europe, but recent research actually shows that immigrants in Scandinavia not only have the highest levels of generalized trust as shown in 'When in Rome', but also trust in political institutions (Strömblad & Adman, 2010), which has been shown to be a reflection of perceptions of institutional fairness (Nannestad & Svendsen, 2005). Hence, experiencing higher levels of institutional fairness in one of the high-trust Northern European countries than in the United States may explain why immigrants to a large extent tend to adapt to the high levels of trust in the former, but not in the latter context.



## High-trust immigrants in low-trust destination countries: Is the adaptation to the level of trust of natives symmetrical for different immigrant groups?

Having shown that non-Western immigrants from low-trust countries of origin to a wide extent adapt to the level of trust of natives in the high-trust destination countries in Western Europe, the question is whether the process of acculturation works similarly for immigrants from high-trust countries of origin living in low-trust destination countries. The analyses in 'When in Rome' and 'Where You Come From' provide some evidence in this regard. In 'When in Rome' it is shown that non-Western immigrants in low(er) trust countries in Western Europe tend to have lower levels of trust than similar immigrants in destination countries with higher levels of trust taking into account a number of confounding factors including the level of trust in the country of origin. Given that some of the non-Western immigrants in this analysis actually come from countries with somewhat higher levels of trust than their destination countries (compare levels of trust for the countries in Table A1 in 'Where You Come From'), this finding of adaptation to the level of trust in low-trust destination countries speaks in favor of the process of acculturation working similarly when migrating from a higher to a lower-trust destination context. Moreover, first generation immigrants in low-trust destination countries have higher levels of trust than natives, whereas second generation immigrants appear to have adapted completely to the level of trust of natives. This is an indication that immigrants in low-trust destination countries gradually adapt to the level of trust of natives and hence that the same process of acculturation seems to work across immigrant groups migrating from and to countries with different endowments of trust. Another indication of this phenomenon is found in 'Where You Come From' in which one of the analyses differentiates between non-Western and Western first generation immigrants (cf. the definition in the research design section). The results show that the level of trust of the country of origin does not vary in its impact on present-day trust of immigrants for Western and non-Western immigrants. In other words, the tendency for Western immigrants, of which some are migrants from high-trust countries of origin in low-trust destination countries, to carry with them the level of trust of their home country, is not different from that of non-Western immigrants. Again, this can be seen as an indication that the process of acculturation works universally regardless of whether migration is from low- to high-trust countries or vice versa.

While the analyses in the dissertation provide tentative evidence in favor of symmetry of acculturation of trust of immigrants in high- and low-trust destina-

tion countries, a more thorough examination is needed before firm conclusions can be drawn about whether the findings of the dissertation generalize to immigrants from high-trust countries of origin in low-trust destination countries. However, examining this issue is rather difficult, first and foremost because migration flows generally go from low-trust to high-trust countries (i.e., from non-Western countries to Western countries). In addition, the few immigrants from high-trust countries living in low-trust destination countries are likely to differ substantially from people in both their former home country and their new country of residence. In contrast to 'traditional' labor and marriage migrants in Western countries, many of these 'immigrants' are likely to be highly educated members of the elites in the destination country (possibly expatriates who may only stay in the destination country for a limited period of time). In other words, immigrants from high-trust countries of origin living in low-trust destination countries are likely to be a rather select group based on which it is difficult to draw any inference about the general dynamics of trust when migrating from a high- to a low-trust country. In that regard, it seems promising to follow the approach of a number of scholars in the context of the United States, and look at descendants of immigrants from countries with high and low-trust cultures, but instead in destination countries with low levels of trust. Some South American low-trust countries such as Brazil and Argentina, which have historically been the home of immigrants from high-trust countries in Northern Europe (as well as immigrants from low trust countries), seem like a fruitful context for testing whether descendants of immigrants from countries with high levels trust have retained this level of trust or adapted to the lower levels of trust of natives in these countries.

## What about the third generation?

Finally, one may ask how the acculturation of trust evolves for the third generation of immigrants. Having observed the gradual adaptation to the level of trust of natives among first and second generation immigrants one may predict that the third generation will make a complete catch-up to the high trust levels of natives even in the destination countries with the highest levels of trust such as the Nordic countries. Third generation immigrants are likely to have a strong attachment to the host society and less so to the country of origin of their ancestors and hence the level of trust of the latter country is likely to play a marginal role in forming their trust in other people. Moreover, third generation immigrants do not face many of the barriers to inclusion into mainstream society (e.g. language and customs) that their parents and grandparents have been confronted with. In line with the results of the dissertation, the strong attach-

ment to the host society and the extended opportunities in this context are likely to lead to even more pronounced perceptions of institutional fairness of the host society with a concomitant increase in trust and a full adaptation to the level of trust of natives as a logical consequence. However, the story may be more complicated than that. With the strong attachment to the host society and the lack of barriers to inclusion into this society probably also follow greater expectations, and third generation immigrants may judge experiences in this country against higher standards than their parents and grandparents have done. If these expectations are not rewarded – due to discrimination or for other reasons – there is a risk of a backlash for third generation immigrants in the sense that this group may end up feeling marginalized in the destination country with little in common with neither the native population nor the earlier generations of immigrants from their ancestors' country of origin. This is in turn likely to result in widespread alienation with concomitant low levels of trust in other people in general. Ultimately, the question about acculturation of trust among third generation immigrants is an empirical one, which remains unanswered until we have more detailed data on future generation of immigrants.



## Chapter 8

# Conclusion and implications

In the following I conclude this report by summarizing the main conclusion of the dissertation and by discussing the implications of the findings for the future research agenda on the roots of trust as well as for public policy.

### What have we learned?

This dissertation has examined the two-tiered research question about the extent to which non-Western immigrants tend to adapt to the level of trust of natives in their new country in Western Europe, and the factors accounting for this (lack of) adaptation. The research questions tap into the general debate about the causes of trust and the theoretical objective of the dissertation has been to test the experiential and the cultural perspective on the roots of trust by examining how trust of non-Western immigrants from low-trust countries of origin is formed by migrating to high-trust countries in Western Europe. The general picture is a clear tendency for non-Western immigrants to adapt to the high levels of trust of natives in the country they have migrated to and this is strong evidence in favor of the experiential perspective on trust positing that trust is likely to change according to the environment in which an individual lives. It was argued that institutional fairness is likely to be one of the main experiential factors contributing to this adaptation and the empirical analyses demonstrated that this indeed seems to be the case. The analyses revealed that non-Western immigrants from low-trust countries of origin tend to adapt to the higher levels of trust in the destination countries in Western Europe because these societies are characterized by fair (incorrupt) institutions, which also give rise to experiences of being treated fairly by street-level bureaucrats, which in turn further perceptions of institutional fairness and ultimately promote generalized trust in other people. Although more limited, there is also some evidence in favor of the cultural perspective on trust emphasizing how trust is a persistent trait passed on from one generation to the next. Non-Western immigrants in the destination countries with the highest levels of trust do not fully adapt to the level of trust of natives, apparently due to the residue of the culture of the country of origin, which is transmitted from parents to children at the individual level. However, this impact of the culture of the country of origin is further muted with the second generation in the destination country. At a more general level, the findings provide an input to the debate about the formation and

development of political and social attitudes within the fields of political psychology and political behavior. Finding that trust to a large extent appears to be malleable and subject to change with the context in which one is situated, is evidence in favor of the *lifelong openness* perspective on the development of political and social attitudes. Conversely, while some continuity and stability in trust is found, the *persistence* perspective on attitude formation has received considerably less support.

## Implications for future research

In the dissertation it has been argued that examining trust of immigrants is a strong way of contrasting the experiential and the cultural perspective on the roots of trust given the two perspectives' different predictions about how trust of immigrants would evolve upon migrating to a new country. In the following I discuss how further scrutiny of trust of immigrants may advance the study of the roots of trust in future research. While I have argued that the research design and the data employed in this dissertation are the best available, further analyses should be encouraged given the availability of stronger research designs and better data allowing for more sophisticated assessments of this issue. Given the advent of better data I see three potential avenues for further scrutiny of the roots of trust analyzing trust of immigrants: one building on a twin study, a different type of survey data than employed in the dissertation, and two building on extensions of the existing survey data used in the dissertation.

As mentioned earlier, twin studies represent a strong research design for separating familial socialization (cultural), environmental (experiential) and genetic influences on generalized trust. Hence, adding to the existing twin studies (cf. the theory section) about the foundations of trust by conducting twin studies among the general population in new contexts and using the conventional survey measures of trust would contribute to our knowledge about the roots of trust. However, a twin study of trust of immigrants should be of special interest in itself because immigrants, when contrasted to the native population in the destination country, may offer new opportunities for analyzing so-called gene-environment interactions in which the interplay between genetic and environmental factors are analyzed (e.g. how genetic dispositions to be more or less trustful are expressed in a given context). Given the finding of some degree of genetic heritability of trust of non-Western immigrants in Western Europe, it may be examined how genetic predispositions to display low levels of trust are expressed in the high-trust destination country environment conducive to trust. This would be a contribution to both the literature on the roots of trust

and to studies trying to separate environmental and genetic sources of social and political attitudes more generally.

Although the method is becoming increasingly popular, twin data on social science phenomena such as trust are still relatively rare and the number of immigrants is likely to be quite small in the existing surveys. For that reason, it is fruitful to consider alternative research designs for examining the roots of trust looking at immigrants. Given that data in which migrants and non-migrants are randomized are not likely to come into existence in the near future (although migration lotteries may – at least hypothetically – provide an interesting opportunity in this regard), more elaborate panel data on migrants (and preferably also non-migrants in the country of origin and natives in the destination country) would be a way to track the development of trust over time. Follow-up surveys to the Survey of Schoolchildren in Denmark (SSCD) employed in this dissertation would allow for a strong test of the cultural and experiential perspective on trust by analyzing whether trust of parents and children is affected over time by experiences in the Danish context. In line with the results of this dissertation, we would expect trust of immigrants to be affected by experiences in the Danish context, especially those with street-level bureaucrats, which, according to this analysis, form perceptions of institutional fairness. Moreover, comparing the stability of trust of the children in the survey provides some leverage into the discussion about whether growing up and going to school in Denmark leaves a lasting impact on trust of immigrants in line with the *impressionable years* perspective. Or, alternatively, whether immigrants' trust in others continues to be formed by the Danish environment including experiences later on in the educational system as well as in the labor market as the *lifelong openness* perspective would predict.

Finally, in terms of comparing immigrants in multiple destination countries, the European Social Survey (ESS), the primary comparative data source used in this context, seems most promising. The continued expansion of the ESS through a biennial collection of another round of data provides an increasing number of immigrants in different destination countries (and from countries of origin), which would allow further examination of some of the analyses concerning the acculturation of trust of immigrants conducted in this dissertation. One – perhaps rather immodest – wish would be for the ESS to include a special module for immigrants concerning more information about their home country (to scrutinize the importance of the culture of the country of origin for their level of trust), their motives for migrating (to assess potential self-selection of migrants compared to non-migrants) and their experiences in the destination country (to examine in greater detail the role of the experiences in this environment in forming trust). This would allow for further assessment and qualifi-

cation of the results in this dissertation by providing a more nuanced picture of the cultural background and experiences of non-Western immigrants in Western Europe.

## Policy implications

The results of the analyses in this dissertation provide an input to the pertinent discussion of integration of immigrants into their host societies. If non-Western immigrants from low-trust countries of origin, who constitute an increasing share of the population in many Western countries, bring the low trust culture to the high-trust destination country where they presently live, and subsequently pass it on to their offspring, it may to some extent pose a threat to the well-functioning of democracy and social cohesion in the host countries. The analyses have shown that with regard to one important civic virtue, generalized trust in other people, non-Western immigrants only to a limited extent retain the level of trust of their low-trust country of origin. Experiencing fair treatment by institutions in the destination country plays a key role in breaking culturally established patterns of mistrust and furthering the adaptation of non-Western immigrants to the higher level of trust of natives in their destination country – and the effect is even more pronounced for children of immigrants. This widespread immigrant adaptation to the level of trust of natives in the destination country conveys a positive message about the potential for the normative integration of non-Western immigrants in Western host countries. For the Western destination countries, there seems to be a logic of ‘you get what you give’ in the sense that the normative integration of immigrants seems to take place because immigrants experience fair treatment by institutions (in general and relative to natives) in the destination country environment.

With regard to the normative integration of immigrants in terms of the acculturation of trust, it is interesting to note that the analysis in ‘When in Rome’ indicates that integration policy has little impact on this process. Hence, it is concrete experiences with street-level bureaucrats rather than official policy that matter for the normative integration of immigrants. However, other forms of policy may influence immigrants’ perceptions of institutional fairness and trust in other people. For instance, increased targeting of specific social policies towards immigrants (e.g. the ‘introductory’ and ‘start’ benefits introduced in Denmark) may leave the impression among immigrants that they are ‘second-class’ citizens, who are treated very differently than natives. This is in turn likely to erode trust in other people among both the targets of these policies (immigrants) and the rest of the population (Kumlin & Rothstein, 2005; Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005).



While the general message of the dissertation with regard to the normative integration of immigrants and its potential consequences for social cohesion in the host society is generally optimistic, it is important to keep in mind that the attitudes of immigrants only constitute one side of acculturation. The process also involves a reaction to immigration on the part of the native population. Independent of whether immigrants largely adapt to the level of trust of natives or not, this reaction may be one of reduced trust due to perceptions of ethnic conflict – be it real or engendered by the media and political entrepreneurs. The analyses in 'Me and Jasmina' suggest that interethnic exposure and interaction in Danish primary schools do not undermine generalized trust of natives or immigrants (and may even promote out-group trust [trust in immigrants] among native Danes). Hence, there is an indication that contact with immigrants in the important context of primary school does not undermine trust among natives or immigrants, but further analyses of this issue in other contexts are clearly needed.

In conclusion, as long as the government of the destination country ensures that institutions are generally fair and work even-handedly for immigrants and natives alike, immigrants will to a large extent take over the level of trust of the native population in this country. This is good news for citizens and policy makers in high trust societies because it implies that the valuable resource of trust is not jeopardized by non-Western immigrants holding on to the low levels of trust of their country of origin.



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## Summary

This dissertation explores the process of acculturation of generalized trust in other people (trust in unknown others) among non-Western immigrants from low trust countries of origin living in high-trust destination countries in Western Europe. The objective of the dissertation is two-fold: to examine the extent to which non-Western immigrants adapt to the level of trust of natives in the country they have migrated to, and to scrutinize what accounts for this (lack of) adaptation. In other words, the dissertation asks whether non-Western immigrants take over the level of trust of natives in their new country in Western Europe, and why this adaptation takes place (or does not take place).

The theoretical motive for examining the two research questions is that they provide new insights into the theoretical discussion about whether the roots of trust are mainly *cultural* or *experiential* – a fundamental question in research on trust. The cultural perspective focuses on how trust is a trait transmitted from parents to their children through early-life socialization, which remains largely stable throughout life and over generations, while the experiential perspective emphasizes how trust is formed by contemporary experiences and subject to change throughout life according to the environment in which the individual lives. The two perspectives on trust yield diverging predictions about whether immigrants from low-trust countries of origin will tend to adapt to the higher levels of trust of natives in their new country: The cultural perspective predicts that the culture of the country of origin is persistent and that migrating to a new environment would leave trust unaffected at low levels, while the experiential perspective predicts an adaptation to the higher level of trust of natives in the new country in response to living in a context conducive to trust.

The analyses demonstrate clear evidence in favor of the experiential perspective on the roots of trust as non-Western immigrants to a wide extent adapt to the higher levels of trust of natives in the country they have migrated to. Institutional fairness is argued to be a likely experiential factor contributing to this phenomenon. The analyses revealed that this is indeed the case as non-Western immigrants from low-trust countries of origin tend to adapt to the higher levels of trust in the Western European destination countries because these societies are characterized by fair (incorrupt) institutions, which give rise to experiences of being treated fairly by street-level bureaucrats, which in turn further perceptions of institutional fairness and ultimately promote generalized trust in other people.

Although more limited than the experiential perspective, the cultural perspective on the roots of trust also received some support in the empirical analyses. A full adaptation to the high levels of trust of natives does not take place among non-Western immigrants living in the destination countries with the highest levels of trust and this continued trust gap appears to be due to the residue of the culture of the country of origin, which parents transmit to their children at the individual level – either through a direct transmission of trust or more indirectly through the mode of upbringing. However, the impact of the culture of the country of origin is further muted for second generation immigrants in the destination country.

The dissertation concludes by discussing the implications of the results for future research on trust as well as public policy with regard to the integration of non-Western immigrants into Western destination countries.

## Dansk resumé

Hvad sker der med den generaliserede tillid til andre mennesker, når man migrerer fra et samfund præget af lav tillid til et samfund, hvor tilliden er udbredt? I hvilket omfang tilpasser indvandrerne sig det højere tillidsniveau i deres nye lande, og hvad forklarer denne tilpasning eller mangel på samme? Det er de grundlæggende forskningsspørgsmål, som søges besvaret i denne afhandling ved at undersøge den generaliserede tillid blandt ikke-vestlige indvandrere i vesteuropæiske samfund.

Den teoretiske baggrund for at undersøge tilliden blandt indvandrere skal findes i, at dette bidrager til at besvare et meget omdebatteret spørgsmål i litteraturen om generaliseret tillid: Hvad er tillidens rødder? I afhandlingen kontrasteres to grundlæggende forskellige perspektiver på, hvordan tilliden formes og opstår: det *kulturelle* og det *erfaringsbaserede* perspektiv. Det kulturelle perspektiv fokuserer på tilliden som en værdi, som forældre giver videre til deres børn gennem tidlig socialisering, og som forbliver stort set stabil hen over livet og på tværs af generationer. I modsætning hertil fokuserer det erfaringsbaserede perspektiv på, hvordan individets tillid formes gennem de oplevelser, som individet har i de omgivelser, hvori hun befinder sig. I dette perspektiv er tilliden ikke uforanderlig, men opdateres derimod til stadighed på baggrund af de erfaringer, individet gør sig. De to perspektiver giver anledning til vidt forskellige forudsigelser om, hvordan tilliden udvikler sig blandt indvandrere fra samfund med lav tillid, når de migrerer til samfund med høj tillid. Det kulturelle perspektiv forudsiger, at den lave tillid fra hjemlandet medbringes til det nye land og forbliver uændret på et lavt niveau. Det erfaringsbaserede perspektiv forudsiger derimod, at indvandrerne vil tilpasse sig det højere tillidsniveau i det nye land, fordi omgivelserne giver anledning til erfaringer, som fremmer tilliden til andre mennesker.

Resultaterne af de empiriske analyser i afhandlingen støtter i overvejende grad det erfaringsbaserede perspektiv på tillid, idet de ikke-vestlige indvandrere i vidt omfang tilpasser sig det højere tillidsniveau i de samfund, hvor de nu bor. Analyserne viser endvidere, at institutionel fairness – det forhold at de statslige institutioner opfattes som retfærdige – er en væsentlig kilde til denne tilpasning. Ikke-vestlige indvandrere tilpasser sig det højere tillidsniveau i de vesteuropæiske lande, som de har migreret til, fordi de statslige institutioner i disse samfund er karakteriseret ved lav korrupsion, hvilket manifesterer sig i opfattelsen af disse institutioner som værende grundlæggende fair baseret på erfaringer med at blive behandlet retfærdigt når man interagerer med repræsentanter for de statslige institutioner.

Det kulturelle perspektiv på tillid finder også – i mere begrænset omfang – støtte i de empiriske analyser. Selvom de ikke-vestlige indvandrere i vid udstrækning tilpasser sig det højere tillidsniveau i de lande i Vesteuropa, som de har migreret til, så er de dog mindre tillidsfulde end majoritetsbefolkningen i de samfund, hvor tilliden er mest udbredt, såsom Danmark og de øvrige nordiske lande. Årsagen til denne vedvarende tillidsforskel synes at skulle findes i forældrenes transmission af hjemlandets kultur – enten i form af en direkte transmission af tilliden eller mere indirekte gennem opdragelsesform. Effekten af hjemlandets kultur reduceres dog yderligere for andengenerationsindvandrere i destinationslandet.

Afslutningsvis diskuteres implikationerne af afhandlingens resultater for såvel den fremtidige forskning i generaliseret tillid som for spørgsmålet om integration af ikke-vestlige indvandrere i vestlige samfund.