

# **The Empirical Relevance of Bonding and Bridging Social Capital An East-West German Comparison**

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## **Abstract**

The main focus of the presented paper is to investigate whether the concept of bonding and bridging social capital can be reasonably specified by categorizing voluntary associations according to their constitutive goods, i.e. purposes, and whether this conceptualization will also hold for empirical analysis in the realm of political participation. The empirical findings both for East and West Germany show that memberships of voluntary associations which are conducive either to bonding or bridging social capital indeed affect generalized trust, norms and some forms of political participation differently. By this means, underlying causal structures are revealed. In the future, we might be better able to answer systematically which associations account for which effects on different aspects of social capital and on political participation by applying this concept to empirical research. However, we must concede that the application of the presented concept does not always yield consistent East-West German results. Besides, empirical analyses reveal that norms, as another component of social capital, exert comparably deviating effects on generalized trust and on the inspected scopes of political action, thus stressing the need for differentiation, too. Moreover, an impressive linkage of political trust to some components of social capital can be disclosed.

## 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Do all voluntary associations have benevolent aspects for democratic decision-making? Until recently, convinced social capitalists who consider social networks as crucial components of their concept would have agreed upon it as long as those associations were horizontally structured and on a real voluntary basis. One of their main concerns would only have been decreasing patterns of membership in voluntary associations. But increasingly they become aware of phenomena like for example religious organizations that show clear sectarian tendencies, status groups that aim primarily at social exclusion or highly organized and efficient criminal networks. These developments have been introduced into the literature as the dark sides of social capital that do *neither* enhance procedures of collective action *nor* increase generalized trust but rather undermine both aspects which are considered to be vital for effective democracies. Thus, either one has to reject the idea of the importance of voluntary associations for social capital building altogether or enlarge the concept of social capital. Social scientists have definitely decided for the latter. These concessions mark a fundamental shift in the social capital debate since academics become more reluctant about the previously assumed exclusive positive effects of social capital. They currently attempt to integrate these findings into the former notion of social capital by differentiating between the bonding and bridging societal effects of voluntary associations.

The focus of this paper will therefore be on the analysis of different potentials of voluntary associations to build bonding or bridging social capital and on possible relationships to some forms of political participation. Firstly, it is expected that these associational differences should have a divergent impact on the cultural components of social capital, such as generalized trust and norms. Secondly, the strength and the kind of influence of social involvement on political action should reflect the associational criteria of bonding and bridging social capital as well. The research interest is based on recent theoretical elaborations as well as on empirical assumptions claiming that voluntary associations are not at all always causing the same effects, thus stressing the need for further empirical clarifications of this topic.

Germany, as a European country with a high level of social participation, allows for some crucial insights since it demonstrates the importance of a vibrant voluntary sector for the sustainable development of democratic attitudes and behavior, especially after the persistent experiences of life under dictatorship and in conditions of war. Since clear differences between the levels of social participation in East and West Germany exist<sup>2</sup> we are also interested in empirically testing our conceptualization on the basis of both East and West German data.

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to express my special gratitude to Prof. Jan W. van Deth who provided precious support and constructive criticism.

With newly available German data based on a representative population survey which was collected within the Europe-wide coordinated project “Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy” thorough empirical investigation into this field of research is now possible for the first time.<sup>3</sup> The data offers a considerable amount of information that is linked to different aspects of social capital and political involvement, such as membership and activities in more than thirty different voluntary associations, activities in networks, social and political trust, norms, political orientations and behavior, etc. On this basis, assigning voluntary associations either possible bonding or bridging capacities looks very promising and first empirical results already underline its relevance. In the following sections, we will, firstly, present the theoretical framework of our concept of bonding and bridging social capital. After categorizing the available types of voluntary associations according to the theoretical requirements, the concept will be introduced into the analyses of the causal effects on the cultural components of social capital. Subsequently, the concept will be applied to the realm of political participation. Finally, an overview and a discussion of the most relevant empirical results with regard to the importance of the theoretical concept as well as to East-West German particularities will be presented.

## 2. Theoretical framework

Networks, norms and trust are said to form the constitutive components of social capital, a concept to which considerable scientific attention has been paid during the last decade. For political scientists its theoretical relevance refers mainly to the thereby acquired possibility of revealing mechanisms of collective and co-ordinated action. Puzzles about deviating political, societal and economic effectiveness of different societies are promised to be solved by understanding the composition of social capital and its consequences. Since the famous introduction of this concept into the narrower sphere of political science by Robert D. Putnam (1993)<sup>4</sup> the notion of social capital has developed considerably. Especially, well formulated doubts about the alleged exclusively positive effects of social capital have contributed to the elaboration of a useful differentiation.<sup>5</sup> Scientific political research has actually reached a point where the importance of differentiating between bridging (inclusive) and bonding (exclusive) social capital is stressed.<sup>6</sup> Putnam (2000) argues that depending on the

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<sup>2</sup> See Rosenblatt (2000).

<sup>3</sup> The collection of the German data was completely financed by the German National Science Foundation (DFG), (Grant DE 630/7-1). This generous support is gratefully acknowledged here.

<sup>4</sup> For an overview of the chronological development of the concept of social capital in sociology together with differing definitions see Haug (1997). For a short overview of different definitions applied in sociology and political science see Woolcock (1998: 189).

<sup>5</sup> See for example Levy (1996), Portes and Landolt (1996).

<sup>6</sup> For first elaborations on bonding and bridging social capital see Gittel and Vidal (1998), Putnam (2000), Warren, M.R. (2001), Narayan (1999), Woolcock and Narayan (2000).

characteristics of the available social capital one can either expect co-operations, generalized trust and institutional effectiveness or sectarian tendencies, corruption and ethnocentrism.

While he assigns positive societal effects to both forms of social capital, he considers the relevance of bridging social capital to be more important for the ability of modern societies to co-operate. On one hand, networks with bridging social capital are “better for linkage of external assets and for information diffusion” (Putnam 2000: 22) because they are outward-orientated and their individual composition can be more heterogeneous. They can enhance broader identities and reciprocity. Examples of these networks are civil rights movements and ecumenical religious organizations.

Bonding social capital, on the other, can foster specific reciprocity, solidarity, in-group loyalty and the narrower self. It also supports exclusive group identities and reinforces homogeneous groups. These tendencies, furthermore, enlarge the risk of strong out-group antagonisms. As examples of networks with bonding social capital Putnam mentions fraternal organizations or church-based women’s reading groups (Putnam 2000: 22ff.).

But, at the same time, he reminds us that many formal and informal networks “bond along some social dimensions and bridge across others” (Putnam 2000: 23). Churches, for instance, bond along religious lines and bridge across social classes. The use of the Internet importantly bridges across regions, age, gender and religion but unites, simultaneously, people with comparable levels of education. Accordingly, he comes to the understanding that “bonding and bridging are not ‘either-or’ categories into which social networks can be neatly divided, but ‘more or less’ dimensions along which we can compare different forms of social capital” (Putnam 2000: 23).

So far, we conclude that it is strongly advisable to closely inspect formal and informal networks, not only with regard to their members’ socioeconomic composition but also with regard to their purposes, e.g. fostering exclusive group identities. But in most cases, we shouldn’t expect to be able to draw clear lines between bonding and bridging groups.

Given these theoretical difficulties in assigning organizations potentials of bonding or bridging social capital, we, now, draw on Mark Warren’s theoretical elaborations on the broad range of democratic effects of associations (see Warren, M.E. 2001). His basic assumptions will be presented in the following which will give us another clue as to how reasonably categorize voluntary associations into bonding and bridging groups.<sup>7</sup>

At the outset of his book, Warren defines the areas which he considers to be crucial for the existence of democratic societies. Thereby, he underlines the importance of individual and political autonomy as well as institutional resources that act as supporter of the two aforementioned spheres of autonomy.

According to Warren, individual autonomy relies on capacities which contribute to critical self-reflections and reflections about others, to participation in decision-making processes and

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<sup>7</sup> In the following, we will refer to the terms of bonding and bridging voluntary associations which are used as synonyms for voluntary associations fostering either bonding or bridging social capital. Furthermore, it is

to reasonable judgments that individuals are able to defend in public (Warren 2001: 63). Associations are relevant for this sphere of autonomy since they influence their members' sense of efficacy, political skills, civic virtues, critical skills and ease the flow of information (Warren 2001: 71ff.). These processes are also referred to as developmental effects.

Political autonomy can be considered as an extension of the conditions of individual autonomy to the public sphere. The importance is to note that it is now *collective* judgments that should be autonomous and "be the result of a process of public reasoning and justification" (Warren 2001: 65). Associations contribute to political autonomy by communicating information into the public sphere, by developing issues or by representing marginal or excluded members of society. These effects are referred to as public sphere effects (Warren 2001: 69).

The democratic dimension of institutions is based on the ability to develop, foster and sustain individual and political autonomy in institutionalized processes (Warren 2001: 69). In this regard, associational effects comprise representation, resistance, subsidiarity, coordination and democratic legitimization (Warren 2001: 82ff.).

This short description gives a rough idea about the spectrum of Warren's research but we are primarily interested in the associational democratic effects on the sphere of individual autonomy. It is especially with regard to his theoretical conception about civic virtues that the application of those theoretical findings promises to be a useful tool for our own empirical analyses.

By describing the field of civic virtues, Warren mainly refers to reciprocity, trust and recognition which present rather "civil" than civic virtues "in the sense that they are not immediately (or merely) civic, but.." (Warren 2001: 75) nonetheless support democratic principles. The importance of these three factors stems from their property of facilitating collective action and cooperation as essential characteristics of democratic societies. In this respect, associations, as long as they are voluntary, offer an important field of experiencing reciprocity, trustworthy behavior, recognition and finally collective and co-ordinated actions and their outcomes.

Interestingly, Warren differentiates between trust which is built out of reciprocity, and trust based on group identity or ascription. Ascriptive trust is not related to trustworthy behavior but to the belonging to either the same "race, ethnicity, family, religion, and so on" (Warren 2001: 74). Its strong inward-orientation is furthermore complemented by a strong distrust of outgroups which is not in the least related to their performance (Warren 2001: 74). Therefore, it is only associations with the propensity to build reciprocal trust that contribute to robust cooperative relationships which are conducive to democracy.

At this point, the intersection with the Putnamian social capital concept becomes obvious, although Warren is very well able to mention this term surely not more than four times during the length of his detailed theoretical elaborations on associations and democracy. But both

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important to note that our empirical analyses are based on individual data from which we make assumptions about the associations themselves.

Putnam and Warren recognize that voluntary associations can be closely related to trust and reciprocity. Likewise, both concede that trust based on group identities creates antagonisms and prevents collective action outside the respective groups. Assuming the justification of these theses, we can conclude that members of bridging organizations are characterized by trust built out of reciprocity whereas ascriptive trust prevails in bonding associations.

In order to analyze potential associational democratic effects on civic virtues as one of the many parts of the sphere of individual autonomy, Warren introduces three units of further analysis that serve as explanatory factors. These are the ease of exit of an association, the media of embeddedness and the constitutive goods, i.e. purposes, of an association. Each factor is likewise subdivided into several categories. For the ease of exit of an association Warren assumes different degrees depending on the individual relevance of resources which associations offer to their members. He differentiates between a high, medium and low ease of exit. As to the media of embeddedness of an association he differentiates between power, money and social resources as bases for associations. The last identified explanatory factor refers to the classification of the countless purposes the broad range of associations pursues. This category is the most relevant for our own conceptualization and will be used and explained in detail in the following. But it is important to note that *every* mentioned category with its subdivisions causes different democratic effects and that the interaction of these effects produces different outcomes. The impressive variety of associational impacts on democracy can therefore be attributed to the combination of the associations' respective positions held in the three described analytical dimensions.

As already mentioned, for our own analysis we will exclusively refer to the so-called constitutive goods of associations. We first and foremost must rely on the labels, i.e. names, of our associations by which we will try to infer their purposes. Unfortunately, inference with regard to ease of exit and media of embeddedness is not possible on the basis of our available data which does not mean that they should be neglected in further research all the same.

Warren classifies constitutive goods which are relevant for associations into individual material goods, public material goods, inclusive social goods, interpersonal identity goods, status goods and exclusive group identity goods (Warren 2001: 133). Each type of good together with its specific impact on the sphere of civic or civil virtues will be shortly described in the following.

*Individual material goods* are characterized as individual, scarce, and excludable, such as food, clothing, shelter, and other material consumables which individuals or small groups enjoy. While "there is no *inherent* requirement for collective action to gain them" (Warren 2001: 126, italics in original) associations pursuing these goods are perceived to have only a small impact on their members' civic virtues (Warren 2001: 133). Business lobbies, unions, professional associations are assigned to this category when they are involved in wage demands or in securing other advantages for their clientele (Warren 2001: 127).

*Public material goods* refer to goods which are individual, material, scarce and nonexcludable, such as “public radio and television, clean air and water, environmental integrity, and territorial security. Included in this category are rights to individual security, insofar as they are publicly guaranteed.” (Warren 2001: 128). The fact that these goods are scarce and that they are also open to free-riders requires co-operation and collective action, on one hand, and persuading or coercing potential free-riders, on the other (Warren 2001: 128). Because of this required extensive cooperation and their broadly beneficial character associations devoted to public material goods “are most likely to cultivate civil virtues” (Warren 2001: 152). All in line with the Tocquevillian argument, they remind their members of individual interdependencies and draw them out of their narrower self. As examples, civic and environmental groups as well as political parties are mentioned (Warren 2001: 136).

Accordingly, the same positive effects on the sphere of civic virtues can be ascribed to associations pursuing *inclusive social goods*. They are characterized as social, symbolic, nonscarce, and nonexcludable. Common resources such as language, knowledge, and culture belong to this category “as well as the identities and recognitions that attach to the goals, ideals, activities, and dialogues that constitute membership in a society” (Warren 2001: 132). These goals can be pursued by associations as different as e.g. educational societies, cultural groups, charitable foundations or associations devoted to securing basic civil rights (Warren 2001: 132).

*Interpersonal identity goods* are individual, symbolic, nonscarce, and excludable and comprise goods like “identities that emerge out of close interpersonal relations such as love, family, friendship, and primary group attachments” (Warren 2001: 129). Though interpersonal identity goods are private by nature and encompass the closest relationships individuals depend on, they also offer the terrain to learn empathy and develop confidence. Neighborhoods, social and sport clubs can be assigned to this category and they are also expected to contribute to the constituents of civic virtues (Warren 2001: 153).

*Status goods* are social, symbolic, scarce and excludable and refer to goods such as degrees, titles, exclusive club membership, expensive cars, houses, etc. or other goods with an attached symbolic value (Warren 2001: 130). They are not equatable with other goods and the possession of exclusive privileges cannot be defended in the name of common interest. Therefore, associations pursuing and securing status goods are very unlikely to contribute to civic virtues. Trust and empathy that might emerge therein are restricted to fellow members or like-minded individuals. Elite social clubs, private schools, elite political and professional groups belong to this category (Warren 2001: 136f.).

The last category refers to *exclusive group identity goods*. They are characterized either by group distinctions defined by religion, gender, language, ethnicity or age or by distinctive interests, hobbies or lifestyles (Warren 2001: 130). Exclusive group identity goods can therefore be pre-determined by birth, be the response to external domination or marginalization, or emerge for other specific purposes. With regard to these goods shared interests with fellow members are identity-based and exclusive and automatically submerge

interests with others. Associations which are devoted to this kind of goods can even undermine civic virtues. They foster their members' propensity only to trust each other and to distrust any outsider (Warren 2001: 131). As associational examples Warren enumerates fraternal orders, groups dedicated to cultural tradition, parochial churches, ethnic identity groups, patriotic groups, organized crime groups and other separatist groups (Warren 2001: 136f.).

Agreeing to Mark Warren's arguments and relying on the validity of inferring associational constitutive goods by the labels of associations<sup>8</sup>, we can now enlarge our notion of bonding and bridging voluntary associations.

We conclude that associations devoted to status goods or exclusive group identity goods will be most likely to create bonding social capital. Trust and reciprocity should, here, rather exclusively refer to members of the own associations and should not be generalized towards outsiders. Thus, collective action might be possible within these groups but its spread across the associational borders should be highly unlikely. The exclusive character of bonding voluntary associations could, furthermore, be enhanced by a relatively high socioeconomic homogeneity of their members. We also expect that groups striving for individual material goods can be assigned to our category of bonding associations, too. Their propensity to have positive effects on their members' civic virtues is also very low although they probably do not explicitly cultivate exclusive group identity as much as the two other groups.

Bridging associations, on the other hand, are characterized by their devotion to inclusive social, public material or interpersonal identity goods. The socioeconomic composition of their members should, moreover, reflect a considerable heterogeneity. Due to the inclusive character of their constitutive goods, bridging groups should importantly enhance trust and reciprocity to spread across associational borders.

We have now presented the theoretical basis of our conceptualization, and will apply it in the following in order to test its empirical relevance.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, we will continue our research by addressing our attention to the description of the data used and the applied statistical methods and, finally, to the presentation and discussion of our empirical findings.

### **3. Data and Research Design**

The empirical findings presented in this paper are based on data of a representative German population survey (West Germany N=1,991, East Germany N=1,013) having been conducted in summer 2001.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> At least with regard to the German data.

<sup>9</sup> The theoretical grounding presented above is already supported and supplemented by some empirical evidence. See for example Stolle and Rochon (1998), Billiet and Cambré (1999) who conclude that differentiating voluntary associations is an important issue.

<sup>10</sup> The collection of the data was carried out as part of the internationally organized project "Citizenship, Involvement, Democracy" whose participants have established a likewise called network which functions as an officially recognized European Science Foundation Network. The main scientific objective of this project that covers more than a dozen European countries consists of gathering a broad range of individual data which

The research strategy presented in this paper will consist of several components. The first step will be to evaluate the whole range of our available voluntary associations with regard to their theoretical bridging and bonding capacities and categorize them according to our theoretical assumptions. Where this procedure doesn't seem to be appropriate because of a lack of further information on the specific constitutive goods of the organization an a priori categorization will not be undertaken and the respective organization will be excluded from further empirical testing.

Since our conceptualization of bonding and bridging should not only hold for the analysis of social capital itself but also for its application to the realm of political participation it seems advisable to differentiate our bonding group even further. As described above, mainly associations devoted to status, exclusive identity and individual material goods will be assumed to invoke bonding social capital. However, we esteem unions, farmer organizations, business organizations and professional associations, as being conducive to individual material goods, to be politically highly motivated and active.<sup>11</sup> Thus, we should assign them to the introduced bonding sub-category of 'interest group'.

Assuming that both, bridging and bonding effects, can only emerge when there is a minimum communication between the members taking place, we will, furthermore, exclude every association that shows a lower average activity level than one activity out of four measured, or even none at all.<sup>12</sup>

Besides, we will exclude every voluntary association whose members represent less than 1 per cent of the respective German sub-samples. In the light of reliable multivariate results, this step seems to be appropriate.<sup>13</sup>

On the basis of the assigned associational constitutive goods, we will categorize the remaining voluntary associations into bonding and bridging groups.

We will, then, continue to examine the empirical usefulness of this concept in the broader context of social capital, where trust<sup>14</sup> and norms form the two other undisputed components.

encompass the most important aspects of social capital and political involvement. New insights are expected into the relationships of these different areas of social science research. The content of the data ranges from memberships and kinds of voluntary associations as well as the individual degree of activity within the associations to activity in networks and neighborhoods, frequency of contact with family members, friends and colleagues and the personal satisfaction with these contact frequencies, norms, value orientations, issues of social and political trust, political orientations and behavior, personal mobility and the standard variables covering the socioeconomic status of the respondents.

<sup>11</sup> These associations aim primarily at unfolding political impact in order to secure or obtain economic advantages for their members. They do so by organizing strikes, demonstrations, signing petitions or lobbying.

<sup>12</sup> The four activity items, measured for every single voluntary association, include a) participation in an activity, b) doing unpaid work for the association, c) donate money to the association, d) having friends within the association. For the wording of the questions see appendix. The excluded associations are automobile clubs, consumer associations and business associations for West Germany and automobile clubs for East Germany.

<sup>13</sup> Excluded voluntary associations comprise peace organizations, lodges, investment clubs, consumer associations, housing associations, immigrants' associations, veterans' associations, associations for displaced persons for West Germany and youth organizations, environmental associations, animal associations, peace organizations, humanitarian associations, associations for disabled persons, lodges, farmers' organizations, investment clubs, consumer associations, immigrants' associations, women's associations, veterans' associations, and associations for displaced persons for East Germany.

We will introduce the associational categories as explanatory terms into linear regression analyses with trust as well as norms serving as dependent variables.

Since our data set contains several items of norms<sup>15</sup> we apply the principal component method, as a data reduction technique, in order to identify different dimensions of orientations. For our East-West German comparison, however, we are not interested in constructing identical but equivalent measures of norms.<sup>16</sup> We start by analyzing the German data set as a whole with the East and West German data as natural subsets. This analysis yields two distinct dimensions of orientations which can be reproduced both on the basis of the East and West German data.<sup>17</sup> In the following, we use these identical identified dimensions for each sub-set and repeat the principal component method by successively adding the remaining norm items without changing the structure<sup>18</sup> of our original results. By this means, we can benefit from the amount of available norm items and construct equivalent measures for the East and West German data sets.<sup>19</sup>

Since we are, moreover, interested in exploring the usefulness of this concept with regard to political participation, political trust as a further explanatory term is also taken into consideration. In order to identify equivalent political trust dimensions in East and West Germany the same procedure is applied as described for the realm of norms and orientations.<sup>20</sup> Firstly, because we expect political trust to exert a considerable impact on the

<sup>14</sup> Our applied term of generalized trust is measured on a Lickert scale. For the wording of the question see appendix.

<sup>15</sup> The included norms measured on a Lickert scale are 1) the importance to obey laws, 2) not to evade taxes, 3) to think of others more than of oneself, 4) to be self-critical, 5) to form one's own opinion independently from others, 6) to be active in organisations, 7) to show solidarity, and 8) to vote. For the wording of the questions see appendix. Since these norms are also to be included as explanatory terms into the analysis of political participation we excluded the norm tapping voting behavior from our factor analysis.

<sup>16</sup> See van Deth (1998) for extensive instructions on the construction of equivalent measures in comparative empirical social research.

<sup>17</sup> The two dimensions contain 1) not to evade taxes, to obey laws and 2) to be self-critical and to form own opinion. Varimax rotation is applied and the explained variance accounts for 76 per cent for the whole German sample.

<sup>18</sup> and not necessarily the content

<sup>19</sup> Factor analysis of the West German data results in two dimensions which are based on 1) to be self-critical, to show solidarity, to form own opinion, and to be active in organizations and 2) to obey laws and not to evade taxes. The results are based on varimax rotation.  $R^2$  amounts to 60 per cent. These factor scores will be used for the linear regression analyses. The analysis of the East German data results also in two dimensions which consist of 1) to be self-critical, to think of others more than of oneself, to show solidarity and 2) not to evade taxes, to obey laws and to be active in organizations. Here, also varimax rotation is applied.  $R^2$  amounts to 59 per cent. In the following, we will refer to these dimensions as the first encompassing social and opinion related norms and the second representing norms of public duties. A comparison of the East and West German dimensions yields a striking insight. While being active in organizations is assigned to the social and opinion-related norm dimension in West Germany, it clearly belongs to the public norm dimension in East Germany. This East German finding still reflects the legacy of experiencing forty years under socialism where many forms of the alleged social involvement were highly political in nature and appealed to the citizens' orientations of public duty. At the same time, this East German finding suggests that the world of social involvement still suffers the burden of the past which might actually seriously hamper its diversity and vibrancy, too.

<sup>20</sup> At the outset, one dimension of political trust is identified based on the whole German sample. This dimension includes trust in political parties, in the parliament, in the cabinet, in politicians and in the EU. A varimax rotation is applied and  $R^2$  amounts to 71 per cent. Identical structures can be detected both for East and West Germany. The final construction of equivalent measures results in one dimension for East Germany and two dimensions for West Germany. Besides the already identified items for the whole German sample, the East German political trust dimension comprises trust in civil service, in courts, in the police and in the municipal

propensity to be politically active. Secondly, we should also assume political trust to be related to a certain extent to the components of social capital. We will, therefore, be able to observe either parallels or deviating structures when it comes to political action.<sup>21</sup> In this respect, we will also examine the influence of the components of social capital on political trust.

Based on the analysis of the standard socioeconomic variables, membership categories, generalized trust, norms and also political trust as explanatory terms and partly as dependent variables, we will present, compare and discuss the empirical results of the different East and West German regression models.

Finally, we will focus our examination on the effects of bonding and bridging groups on several types of political action. Similarly to the regression analyses of the components of social capital, we will include standard socioeconomic variables, membership categories, generalized trust, norms, political trust, and, additionally, organizational skills into our models. After the presentation, an intra- and inter-regional comparison as well as a discussion of the empirical results of the different regression models will follow.

We will conclude by evaluating and summarizing our empirical findings mainly with regard to our concept of bonding and bridging voluntary associations, while other relevant results will also be subject to discussion.

#### **4. Specifications on the relevant bonding and bridging voluntary associations**

Based on our theoretical arguments for the relevance of differentiating between voluntary associations and the criteria of selection, we now turn to specifying our available set of organizations. During this process of categorization, we will exclusively be guided by the inferred constitutive goods of voluntary associations. Where straightforward assignments are not possible on the basis of our information, we will refrain from categorizing and exclude those voluntary associations from our analyses. Furthermore, it is important to note that membership of political parties, as a means of social *and* political participation, will not figure in our bonding/bridging categories since those will also be used as explanatory terms in regression analyses on political behavior.

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board. Varimax rotation is applied and the  $R^2$  amounts to 60 per cent. Analysis of the West German data set, however, identifies two dimensions which consist of 1) the same items as in the whole sample and of 2) trust in the police and in the courts. Varimax rotation is applied and the explained variance accounts for 73 per cent. Another East German particularity is revealed by these factor analyses. While West Germans clearly differentiate between the sphere of political actors and institutions, on the one hand, and the political but not democratic independence of courts and police, on the other hand, East Germans evaluate courts and the police as equally political as some other forms of executive political bodies. Again, this finding could be the reflection of life under a socialist regime. In the following regression analyses, the first dimension is specified as political trust whereas the second exclusive West German dimension is called political trust in judicial body and police. For the wording of the questions see appendix.

<sup>21</sup> See Rahn et al. 1997 for an empirical confirmation of the causal effects of political trust on generalized trust and vice versa.

Table 1 presents a detailed overview of the associations taken into consideration, their assignments to the bonding, interest and bridging category, their constitutive goods and their members' total share in percentage. As already indicated, the constitutive goods of our voluntary associations were inferred by the labels but, obviously, this procedure bears considerable risks, especially when it would come to cross-country analyses. In most cases, however, decisions about the respective associational constitutive good were straightforward and led to a direct assignment to one of the three group categories. However, parents' associations and religious groups can presumably be devoted to interpersonal identity goods as well as to inclusive social goods. Since both constitutive goods are supposed to foster trust and reciprocity we could, nevertheless, directly assign them to the bridging group category. The same refers to housing associations whose purpose is based on public material goods and interpersonal identity goods, respectively. With regard to the constitutive good of youth clubs the decision for the interpersonal identity good wasn't straightforward since one might also suppose that youth clubs are based on exclusive identity goods. However, youth is a period in one's lifetime and no irreversible personal trait. Therefore, one could expect that young adults, being active in those clubs, might do so even when they get older, thus undermining the development of exclusive group identities.<sup>22</sup> Besides, exclusive identity goods as well as individual material goods were assigned to patients' associations as well as to associations for disabled persons. Again, there is no contradiction with regard to the expected effect on civic virtues. Therefore, both kinds of associations are comprised in the category of bonding groups.

## **5. Introducing the concept of bridging and bonding voluntary associations into the analysis of social capital**

At the outset of our examination, we start with the description of the relationships between our group categories, as the structural aspect, and generalized trust as well as the available set of norms, as the cultural aspects of social capital. Table 2 discloses a very interesting picture which suggests that differentiation is indeed necessary. With regard to the relationships between trust and the group categories the West German results reveal deviating patterns. The interest group category doesn't show *any* relationship with trust at all, whereas members of the bonding group reveal at least a significant but small positive correlation coefficient.<sup>23</sup> Members of bridging groups, however, clearly show a highly significant and considerable positive relationship with generalized trust. The East German findings underline the relevance of group categorization even further. Accordingly, only belonging to bridging associations discloses a yet small but significant positive relationship with generalized trust.

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<sup>22</sup> The considerable share of members of higher age supports this thesis. This result is not presented here.

<sup>23</sup> „Interest groups“ and „members of interest groups“ are used as synonyms; the same refers to the two other group categories. See also footnote 7.

When we now turn to their relationships with our public norm dimension some further interesting intra- and inter-regional differences can be detected. Based on the West German results, only the group comprising bonding associations without clear cut interest groups reveals a significant positive coefficient. The two other associational categories even depict *negative* though insignificant coefficients. The East German data, however, provide different results. Besides a positive relationship with bonding groups, public norms are also to a similar extent related with members of bridging associations. Only interest groups don't reveal any significant relationship.

Inspecting the relatedness with the social and opinion related norm dimension, we again ascertain a deviating strength of the correlation coefficients. The West German findings remarkably underline the exceptionally strong relationship between members of bridging voluntary associations and this norm dimension. Being member of bonding associations also discloses a significant and positive relationship but its coefficient lags far behind the one of bridging groups. For the first time, interest groups are positively and significantly related yet only marginally. The empirical results based on the East German data, however, do not depict these distinct differences. Although membership of bridging associations accounts for the highest and positive correlation coefficient, bonding groups disclose a comparable positive relationship with social norms. As in West Germany, belonging to interest groups discloses a significant positive though weak relationship with the inspected norm dimension.

Summing up, we perceive that our assumption of a remarkably distinct and stronger positive relationship between bridging associations and generalized trust is especially supported by the West German data. Though the same thesis also holds for East Germany, the strength of the detected relationship is far from convincing. With regard to the inspected norm dimensions our applied concept of bonding and bridging social capital provided additional insights into deviating relational patterns. However, it disclosed more important differences in West than in East Germany.

Based on these supporting empirical results, we will now proceed to examine in greater detail and by means of linear regression analyses the causal effects of our categorized voluntary associations on generalized trust and norms as equally important components of the social capital concept.

### **5.1 Applying the concept to the analysis of generalized trust**

The East German empirical results of the regression analysis of generalized trust do not disclose any independent effect of the structural components of social capital (table 3). Although this finding rather points to the overall insignificance of membership of voluntary associations for generalized trust it, simultaneously, rejects the idea of the relevance of differentiating between bonding and bridging voluntary associations. Moreover, contrary to the expectation that norms in general should foster generalized trust we observe a deviating

pattern among our two norm dimensions. While social and opinion related orientations account for some independent impact on the dependent variable, public norms even exert a *negative* though insignificant effect. Within the range of socioeconomic factors, a considerable relevance of higher education can be revealed. Besides, generalized trust is also significantly affected by being a man. Rather unexpectedly, the identified political trust dimension accounts for the strongest beta coefficient in the East German model. However, the modest explained variance of 6 per cent doesn't really support the presented model of generalized trust and its causal effects.

The empirical results of the West German regression model, on the other hand, convincingly prove the necessity of group differentiation at least when it comes to the explanation of generalized trust. According to our assumption, only members of bridging associations significantly and positively influence the dependent variable. Similar to the East German findings, we observe that also in West Germany only social and opinion related norms positively affect generalized trust though to a greater extent. The same holds true for higher education but cannot be extended to the relevance of gender. Additionally, the two political trust dimensions are comparably influential in West Germany as in the eastern German part. The difference in the amount of the explained variance which accounts for more than 8 percentage points and attains nearly 15 per cent in West Germany, however, provides a considerably stronger argument for the appropriateness of the presented model specification than the East German model did.

Evaluating the empirical relevance of our concept of bonding and bridging social capital we find interesting evidence about the differing structures inherent in the East and West German society. The East German result suggests that this differentiation is not relevant. But this should not immediately lead to the assumption that the concept doesn't suit East German realities at all but rather that belonging to voluntary associations doesn't *directly* contribute to the explanation of generalized trust. At the same time, the important and positive effects of social and opinion related orientations in East Germany are stressed. Therefore, we should also consider how being a member of either bonding or bridging groups affects this norm category and should, then, take these results into account for a final evaluation of our concept in terms of the analysis of generalized trust. The West German findings, however, underline the exclusive impact of bridging groups and stress, therefore, the justification and need of differentiation. As to the deviating effects of the included norm dimensions we conclude that especially the relevance of public norms and duties for the general concept of social capital should be carefully re-inspected.

Furthermore, both German models prove that generalized trust as one of the cultural components of social capital is also remarkably affected by our identified dimensions of political trust. In the following, we will therefore have to observe carefully their effects on the norm dimensions as the remaining cultural elements of social capital.

Thus, as the analysis of generalized trust, at least based on the West German data, has shown, there exists a clear cut difference between the impact of bridging organizations, on the

one hand, and of bonding ones, on the other. We, therefore, estimate that the realized categorization proves to be a meaningful tool in order to grasp different influential effects. Whether this finding refers to the explanation of trust only or can even be extended to norms and to other fields of political research will be discussed subsequently. The disappointing East German results, however, seriously raise the question about the applicability of this concept to societies in state of transition. Therefore, special attention will be subsequently paid to inter-regional comparisons.

## **5.2 Applying the concept to the analysis of different norm dimensions**

In the following, two linear regression models for every norm dimension as dependent variable based on the East and West German data will be presented. Table 4 depicts the empirical findings related to the explanation of norms towards the public sphere and civic duties. The East German model specification seems to tap the explanation of this specific norm dimension quite well. Its explained variance nearly amounts to 22 per cent which is, clearly, a remarkable improvement as compared to the explanation of generalized trust. In addition, the concept of bonding and bridging social capital provides some meaningful insight into the causal effects on the dependent variable. Although both bonding and bridging organizations disclose positive and significant beta coefficients, a difference in strength can be detected. Accordingly, bridging groups exert a higher impact on this specific norm dimension. However, generalized trust is not influential which stands in line with the first regression analysis and stresses the assumption that at least these two cultural components of social capital are not meaningfully related with each other. The considerable positive effect of political trust, on the other hand, once again underlines its relatedness to the concept of social capital. Additionally, we ascertain that the range of socioeconomic variables contributes to the explanatory power of the model, too. Higher age, higher income and being a woman enhance the public norm dimension in East Germany.

For West Germany and in contrast to the East German findings we must observe that none of our group categories shows significant coefficients nor does the term of generalized trust. The explained variance of 16 per cent is solely based on two socioeconomic factors, namely sex and age as well as on the two political trust dimensions. Besides, both political trust terms show by far the highest positive coefficients. Based on these West German findings, we conclude that this norm dimension cannot be linked in a meaningful way to the overall concept of social capital, unless if one was ready to enlarge it by political trust.

As with the analysis of generalized trust the aforementioned results once again lead us to divergent conclusions with regard to the evaluation of our concept of bonding and bridging social capital. This time, however, it's the East German results that confirm the relevance of our concept whilst the West German findings do not support it at all. But this fact could also be due to the assumption mentioned above that public norms are, at least in West Germany, if

at all only loosely interrelated with the other components of social capital. The following analysis of the second norm dimension should contribute to further clarify this issue.

For both East and West Germany, however, our political trust terms account for the strongest beta coefficients which, once again, impressively stresses their relatedness to the cultural components of social capital.

The findings of the analysis of social norms and orientations towards individual opinion building processes (see table 4) not only vary remarkably between East and West Germany but also significantly contrast the results of the presented public norms' dimension. Organizational differentiation in East Germany only matters to a limited extent. But still the results disclose that members of bridging groups exert a stronger and more significant impact on the social and opinion related norm dimension than members of interest groups. Belonging to a bonding group, however, doesn't affect the dependent variable at all. A positive impact of generalized trust can be disclosed as well as the relevance of higher age. This time, the so far remarkably influential term of political trust doesn't affect the dependent variable. Furthermore, a low explained variance of nearly 5 per cent points to a certain insufficiency of the model specification.

The West German results disclose powerful causal effects on our social and opinion related norm dimension exerted by most of the included explanatory terms. As the model shows, differentiating between bonding and bridging organizations delivers meaningful insights into their remarkably varying effects. Membership of bridging groups accounts by far for the strongest and positive beta coefficient whereas the impact of being a member of bonding or interest groups, though significant and positive, lags far behind. Similar to the East German result, generalized trust affects this specific norm dimension also in West Germany. The significant and positive effects of both political trust dimensions, however, oppose the East German findings and underline again the relatedness of political trust to the concept of social capital. Amongst the socioeconomic variables, it is only higher education which significantly and positively influences our response variable. Most strikingly, however, appears the explained variance of this West German regression model which nearly amounts to 22 per cent. On the one hand, it ranges on a satisfactory level with regard to model specification concerns. On the other, it clearly contrasts the very low equivalent East German coefficient and underlines the assumption that important societal differences still exist.

The evaluation of the relevance of our concept for both East and West Germany leads, for the first time, to a satisfactory conclusion for either region. In both German parts it is membership of bridging organizations which always contributes the most to the presented explanatory models. For East Germany, however, we observe that political trust doesn't affect this cultural component of social capital. Furthermore, higher age figures as the only positive and significant socioeconomic variable whereas only higher education is relevant for the West German society. But still the apparent similarities mustn't conceal the astounding difference of explained variance of sixteen percentage points between East and West Germany. The

comparably low explained variances of the models of generalized trust as well as of social norms in East Germany seriously lead us to raise the question about the general appropriateness of the social capital concept for explaining social cohesion and its consequences for societies in transition.

As the empirical results of our analyses proved political trust both in East and West Germany exerts a remarkable influence on the cultural components of social capital. In order to disclose a potential mutual relationship we, now, turn to the inspection of effects on political trust caused by the structural and cultural components of social capital, respectively.

### **5.3 The effects of bonding and bridging social capital on political trust**

Table 5 presents our linear regression models for East and West Germany with one political trust dimension for East Germany and two for West Germany. Our East German example attains a convincing explained variance of about 15 per cent although we detect only two explanatory terms that account for this value. These are the parts of the cultural components of social capital which figure prominently for the explanation of political trust. Especially norms towards public duties reveal an impressive positive coefficient while social norms do not even reach a significant value. This finding, again, should make us suspicious about treating all norm dimensions as equally conducive to social capital. The considerable impact of generalized trust on political trust, once again, underlines the mutual dependency of political trust and the overall concept of social capital. However, the insignificant effects of all membership variables which represent the structural component of social capital rather contrast the aforementioned assumption.

The West German model for the dimension of political trust in executive bodies presents a comparable picture. Although its explained variance only accounts for 8.6 per cent, the membership terms all turn out to be insignificant. Generalized trust also attains a value which is in accordance with the East German finding. The different norm dimensions, however, are not only both positive and significant but the coefficient of public norms ranks considerably lower than the East German one. In contrast, the West German socioeconomic terms provide some additional information to the model. Age and income reveal to be positively influential. On the basis of these empirical results and according to the East German model, we ascertain a striking relatedness of political trust to some important components of social capital although our especially interesting structural terms do not exert any independent impact.

The West German dimension of political trust in the police and the judicial body, however, is nearly in every respect affected by the terms representing social capital. Differentiating between bonding and bridging organizations contribute some important information. Clearly, membership of bridging groups significantly and positively enhances this specific political trust dimension whereas being member of an interest group as a bonding sub-category significantly but *negatively* adds some explanatory power to this model. Membership of

bonding groups, however, remains insignificant. All three cultural components of social capital disclose considerable positive effects on the response variable with the coefficient of norms towards public duties ranking by far the highest. The results of the socioeconomic variables reveal slightly different significant coefficients than the explanatory model of political trust in executive bodies. Higher age, undoubtedly, is conducive to political trust. This model, however, reveals the importance of being a woman rather than disposing of higher education which contributes some information to the explanation. The respective explained variance of 14.2 per cent lets us assume that the combination of structural and cultural components of social capital is much more appropriate, at least on the basis of the West German sample, for the explanation of political trust in the judicial body and the police than in executive bodies and that especially the differentiation between bonding and bridging organizations matters to it.

The presented findings based on the analyses of the causal effects on generalized trust, norms and political trust give some interesting insights into the empirical relevance of our concept of bonding and bridging social capital. Although we couldn't detect consistent inter-regional patterns, we identified deviating effects of bonding and bridging associations within different frames of analysis. Furthermore, the empirical necessity of differentiation could also be meaningfully extended to norms and even political trust. After having empirically tested our theoretical concept within the narrower sphere of social involvement, we now turn to the inspection of its relevance for political participation.

## **6. Introducing the concept of bridging and bonding voluntary associations into the empirical analysis of political participation**

Research on the relevance of social participation for political action has a long-standing tradition. Inspired by Tocqueville's famous observations on the vitality and importance of America's social life for democracy<sup>24</sup>, social scientists have already started more than 50 years ago to disclose possible relationships. Especially the mobilization function of voluntary associations is considered to be crucial for political participation.<sup>25</sup> Voluntary associations offer the opportunity to experience formerly unknown environments together with fellow members coming from different socioeconomic backgrounds, to establish discussion networks, to develop friendship (van Deth 1997: 10) and they ease the flow of information. As Olsen puts it, voluntary associations draw their members into the public sphere by broadening their interests and concerns, provide them with leadership skills and other resources necessary for political participation (1972: 318).

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<sup>24</sup> See Tocqueville (1961).

<sup>25</sup> See van Deth (1997) for a detailed description of the assumed different relationships between social and political participation and an overview of the relevant literature.

Thus, apart from Hirschman and other adherers of his broadly known model of shifting involvements<sup>26</sup>, many social scientists start from the assumption that social and political participation are positively linked and do not exclude each other. This relationship is, furthermore, very well documented by a large number of empirical studies which disclose positive effects of social activities on conventional and unconventional action as well as on voting behavior (turnout) (van Deth 1997: 11-15). However, reliable empirical evidence is still lacking as to whether social participation directly influences political action or rather indirectly, namely by affecting political orientations.

The standard SES model, assuming an indirect relationship between social and political participation, starts from the socioeconomic individual status which affects an individual's political orientations as well as the ability and willingness to be socially active. Apart from the socioeconomic status, social participation itself influences individual political orientations which are decisive for political action.

The direct impact model, however, not only recognizes the fact that the socioeconomic status is vital and that social participation affects political orientations which, on their part, entail political behavior; but it assumes a direct impact of social participation on political action, too. Both explanatory models are supported by different empirical studies (van Deth 1997: 12-14). Besides, it seems also very reasonable to expect a reinforcing process of social participation on political action and vice versa (Dahl 1961: 299). Given the actual diversity of empirical findings, no clear decision about the model and probable recursions can be taken.

For our own analysis of the causal effects of social participation on political action we have more than twenty items of political participation at our hand. These items comprise different forms of political action such as contacting politicians, signing petitions, wearing badges, striking, boycotting products, illegal protest voting and non-voting out of protest, etc. In order to reduce this amount of information we apply the principal component method which results in the identification of four distinct dimensions of political participation.<sup>27</sup>

Based on these empirical results we differentiate between individual political contacts, collective political action, political consumer behavior and voting versus voting refusal.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> In his theoretical elaborations, Hirschman refers to activities in the private and public sphere which can be easily transferred to the social and political sector. Out of frustration, he assumes, individuals are either active in one sphere or the other (1979: 100ff.).

<sup>27</sup> In order to construct equivalent measures the same procedure is applied as with regard to norms and political trust.

<sup>28</sup> The factor analysis based on the West German data accounts for an explained variance of 54 per cent. The first dimension of individual political contacts includes contacting civil servants, organizations, politicians and working in another organization. The second dimension of political collective action includes participation in demonstrations and strikes, wearing badges and raising funds. The third dimension of political consumer behavior includes buying certain products and boycotting certain products out of political, ethical or environmental reasoning. The fourth dimension represents voting behavior with voting refusal and participation in illegal protest activities loading negatively on the same dimension. The equivalent East German empirical results depict a slightly different pattern. Here, factor analysis attains an explained variance of 50 per cent. As with the West German data, the first dimension represents individual political contacts. However, two further items are included, namely contacting the media and donating money. The realm of political collective action as the second dimension reveals some more differences. Working in a party as well as illegal protest activities are

These four areas of political participation can be detected for both East and West Germany. This finding confirms, once again<sup>29</sup>, the striking overall similarities between these two regional parts although their populations were strictly separated from each other for four decades and exposed to fundamentally different political regimes. The most expressive inter-group differences, however, are reflected by the dimensions of collective political action and voting vs. voting refusal, respectively. While working in a party cannot be unequivocally assigned to any detected dimension in West Germany, it clearly belongs to the repertoire of collective political action in East Germany. Moreover, East Germans even consider illegal protest as another form of collective action while this same type of action loads negatively together with voting refusal out of protest on the West German voting dimension. If we assume that casting a vote not only aims at expressing one's political preferences but also some amount of system support, then, West Germans would participate in illegal protest activities and, simultaneously, express their system discontent whereas the same type of action would only constitute one tool of political action amongst others for East Germans. This finding is in as much surprising as, in 1989, East Germans' only means of expressing massive system discontent was mainly based on illegal protest activities. However, the term of "illegal protest" has to be put under perspective, here, since during the era of the GDR regime demonstrations would have been qualified as illegal, a political act usually perfectly in line with democratic constitutions.

Our factor analyses revealed some remarkable similarities but also differences between the East and West German political behavior. Equally importantly, however, the identified four dimensions of political participation support the notion that the "classical" differentiation between conventional and unconventional political behavior doesn't hold any longer.<sup>30</sup> The former unconventional types of action such as demonstrating, striking, signing petitions or working in political action groups do, firstly, not altogether load unequivocally on one dimension and are, secondly, mixed with conventional actions such as raising funds in West and East Germany and even with working in a party in the eastern part. At the same time, we observe that both East and West German citizens have discovered the political relevance of their behavior as consumers. Additionally, relying on one's own ability and capacities to exert political influence seems to become a more and more distinct form of political action.

During the following linear regression analyses, the same factor score results representing these four dimensions will be used as measures for our dependent variables. In addition, it should be mentioned that in first analyses with a more explorative character being an activist

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also assigned to this dimension. Contrary to the West German findings, however, wearing badges cannot be detected to belong to this type of political participation. The East German dimension of political consumer behavior is represented by the same political action terms as the West German findings. Voting and voting refusal are measured as opposite terms on the fourth dimension. For East Germans, however, illegal protest activities do not belong to this category but rather to political collective action.

<sup>29</sup> Several East/West German empirical studies provide substantial information on strikingly comparable levels of political participation. (see Gabriel 1999)

<sup>30</sup> As a reference see Barnes, Kaase, et al. (1979).

in voluntary associations<sup>31</sup> proved to be more influential than the mere membership variables. We will therefore proceed with dummies measuring the activity in bonding and bridging groups.

For our first descriptive presentation (table 6), however, we construct political participation indices. They include the same item sets and represent the same dimensions which were disclosed by factor analysis. Only voting and voting refusal are calculated and depicted separately since in factor analysis they load on the same dimension yet with opposite signs.

Our theoretical expectations on the diverging effects of bonding and bridging voluntary associations on political participation can be summarized as follows:

1. According to a variety of empirical findings, we expect members of any of the defined group categories to be more numerous in participating in political action than non-members.
2. The realm of individual political contacts represents a well directed form of exerting political influence. The public is usually not involved in and often not aware of these political processes. Moreover, its exclusion can be a desired side-effect or even the actor's reason for choosing this specific type of political behavior. This might mainly be the case when benefits which are being aimed at should only be reserved to selected individuals or to specific groups. We, therefore, hypothesize that individual political contacting should be especially relevant for members of bonding groups who are predominantly concerned with obtaining *exclusive* goods. As an effective means of political influence, however, establishing political contacts should also be attractive for the bonding sub-category of interest groups as well as for members of bridging groups. Furthermore, we expect a higher relevance of political contacts for the eastern part of Germany. Considering the legacy of a forty years enduring socialist regime where political participatory rights were severely restricted and political influence had mainly to rely on personal contacts we assume that these socialization effects should still be detected.
3. Collective political actions such as demonstrations and strikes are assumed to be an important means of expression of interest groups which seek to exert considerable political pressure and usually dispose of notable organizational abilities. Therefore, we hypothesize that interest groups account for the highest share of percentage amongst our specific group categories. Furthermore, we expect that especially strong public norms exert a negative impact on collective political actions which are often meant to challenge existing laws and regulations. Accordingly, being active in bridging groups should also contribute to a higher propensity for this kind of political action. We base this thesis mainly on the assumption that bridging

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<sup>31</sup> For the measured activity items see footnote 12. For regression analysis we will use dummies, 0= no member or passive member, 1= active member.

memberships considerably broaden one's sphere of self-interest. Subsequently, this should lead to an increasing number of policy domains that affect those members' lives and often contrast or contradict societal realities. This assumption, however, is not applicable to East Germany where members of bridging organizations reveal a significant and positive relationship with public norms (see table 2). Furthermore, based on the notion that generalized trust enhances collective actions we predict that it should also be influential for this type of political action.

4. Our identified dimension of political consumer behavior comprises the boycott of products and buying products out of political, ethical or environmental reasoning.<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, we must recognize that this type of political action can either aim at averting health risks as it was recently the case in Germany with regard to BSE or the foot and mouth disease, at supporting or protecting public material or social goods as for example the environment or human rights especially in developing countries<sup>33</sup> or at exerting economic or political pressure as might be the case with powerful interest groups which seek to maintain a strong position on the market. If it is not for averting immediate individual health risks political consumer behavior is clearly based on individual action which can attain political salience if and only if a considerable number of individuals take part in it. In order to overcome the dilemma of rationally behaving individuals who could also consider free-riding as an appropriate alternative of action we estimate that internal social and altruistic norms should be one of the individuals' driving forces for this type of action. Given the considerable positive relationship between members of bridging groups and the dimension of social and opinion related norms, especially in West Germany, we conclude that this type of group category should exert significant and positive effects. At the same time, however, we must take into consideration that political consumer behavior represents also an attractive political alternative for well organized interest groups which might be reflected by a high percentage of participation or some independent influential effects. Moreover, we expect that political consumer behavior which would mainly rest on preferring products out of political, ethical or environmental reasons should be more widespread in the western than in the eastern part of Germany. This assumption is due to the fact that those products are mostly less competitive and therefore more expensive than comparable ones. Since distinct differences in East and West German societal realities also extends to higher unemployment rates in East Germany which result in significant lower income levels we suppose that out of financial restrictions this

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<sup>32</sup> For the exact wording see appendix.

<sup>33</sup> Only few years ago, one product boycott was supported by large parts of the German population.. The boycott was aimed at Shell which intended to sink its drilling platform „Brent Spar“ into the North Sea. Due to considerable European-wide economic pressure, its management finally decided to dispose it properly. An example of favoring products is presented by the trade company “Transfair” which buys domestic products in developing countries at fair prices.

kind of political action appears to be too cost intensive for considerable parts of the East German population.

5. Considering the influence on the dimension of casting a vote vs. voting refusal<sup>34</sup> we predict that orientations towards public duties should play a major role. This anticipated strong impact could also outweigh the effects of our group categories, especially of those which are closely linked to this norm dimension. We, therefore, do not expect any independent impact being exerted by the different explanatory group terms. Since casting a vote can also be interpreted as an individual expression of system support we rather assume that our included dimensions of political trust importantly influence the citizenry's willingness to exert its elementary democratic right. As to the level of participation we do not expect any important inter-regional differences.<sup>35</sup> Group memberships which are positively related to our public norm dimension, however, should reveal a higher percentage share of voting behavior. Voting refusal, as a specific form of political protest and withdrawn system support, could be highest amongst members of the highly politicized interest groups and non-members who constitute the least integrated part in a society. This should be true for both East and West Germany.

Our descriptive data on the percentages of participation in the four dimensions of political action give some confirming information with regard to our hypotheses (table 6). First of all, we can clearly differentiate between members of either bonding or bridging groups and non-members. In every case, members show a higher level of participation. This finding also holds true for the comparison of these items with the whole sample and members. Except for the realm of political consumer behavior in West Germany, where the percentage of the whole sample considerably exceeds the one of the first bonding group, members rank higher in every respect.

When we closely inspect our three categories of members of voluntary associations only, we also find some deviating patterns. The results for individual political contacts are in line with our arguments. In both East and West Germany, members of bonding groups account for the highest participatory percentage share. Ranking by far highest in the East German part their equivalent share in West Germany reveals only a marginal difference with respect to the two other group categories. Additionally, the results confirm our thesis that in East Germany political contacts represent a much more popular way of influencing political outcomes than in the western part. West German non-members, moreover, hardly consider this type of action at all. The outstanding participatory percentage share of interest groups for the realm of collective political action also corresponds to our expectations. The rather small share of members of bridging groups, however, is quiet disappointing. Although they rank second in West Germany they are closely followed by members of bonding groups. In East Germany,

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<sup>34</sup> See footnote 28 for the respective East/West German factor analysis results of this participatory dimension.

<sup>35</sup> For a description of East and West German levels of voting behavior see Kühnel (2001).

their share is even the smallest amongst all members. Here, this could be due to the relative importance of public norms for members of bridging groups which rather contrasts policy challenging actions. An inter-regional comparison of the acceptance of collective political actions discloses no significant differences. This statement, however, doesn't hold true for political consumer behavior. According to our assumption, we observe a remarkably higher popularity of this kind of political action in West Germany than in the eastern part. This inter-regional difference is nearly identical to the one of individual political contacts yet with exchanged positions. Furthermore, West German members of interest groups as well as of bridging associations take about the same interest in this type of political participation. Members of bonding groups even rank below the West German average. The East German data, however, depict a deviating pattern. Although the lowest overall share of members of bonding groups is in accordance with our expectations and even corresponds to the West German results the comparably small share of members of bridging groups is astounding. We conclude that acting as a political consumer is predominantly the domain of members of interest groups. In contrast to these distinct differences stand the comparable inter-regional findings for voting behavior. As we expected, members who show a significant and positive relationship with public norms account for the highest percentage shares. In East Germany, these are members of bonding groups followed by those of bridging organizations. In West Germany, members of bonding groups also rank highest, the only group category which is positively correlated with public norms. As to the percentage shares of the vote denials we observe some contradictory results. Although, according to our hypothesis, members of interest groups account for the highest significant share at least in West Germany and are followed by non-members, the East German results do not confirm these findings at all. Surprisingly, the percentage share of members of interest groups is outweighed by the one of members of bonding associations. Additionally, East German non-members do even rank *below* the average percentage of overall vote refusals. However, none of the analyzed categories reveals significant differences from the mean.

After having presented differences in the level of political participation, we, similarly to our linear regression models on generalized trust and norms, are now interested in testing whether or not being active in bonding and bridging groups, respectively, causes any effects on political action according to the predicted directions.

### **6.1 Individual political contacts**

Table 7 presents a linear regression model based on each the East and West German data with the identified dimension of individual political contacts as dependent variable. The explanatory terms comprise the standard socioeconomic variables, all relevant structural and cultural aspects of social capital, political trust and a dummy variable for organizational

skills.<sup>36</sup> The same explanatory terms will be included into the analysis of collective political action, political consumer behavior and voting behavior vs. voting refusal. These regression analyses are also depicted in table 7.

The presented East German regression model clearly stresses the importance of social participation for individual political contacts.<sup>37</sup> The activity coefficients, however, do not remarkably differ from one another so that the bonding and bridging criteria do not seem to add any important information. All cultural aspects of social capital also significantly and positively affect our response variable whereby social and opinion related orientations account for the highest coefficient. Amongst the socioeconomic terms, it is higher age and education that reveal significant coefficients. The term representing organizational skills depicts a beta coefficient which ranks by far the highest in the East German model. However, we must acknowledge that political trust doesn't exert any independent influence on this specific form of political action. Overall, the regression model accounts for an explained variance of about 28 per cent which points to the appropriateness of this model specification for individual political contacts at least based on East German data.

The West German findings of the regression model underline the relevance of social participation for this type of political action, too. As in East Germany, all group terms considerably and positively influence the response variable and, therefore, rather reject the idea of the relevance of the bonding and bridging social capital concept as presented here. Analyzing the effects of the cultural components of social capital, however, suits to contrast the East German findings. Only social and opinion related norms considerably and positively affect individual political contacts in West Germany. The range of the socioeconomic variables sheds an interesting light on the underlying structures of the response variable and partly contradicts the East German results. Obviously, higher education is not as comparably influential as it is in East Germany. On the other hand, we observe that disposing of higher income and being male exert an additional significant impact on the dependent variable. As in the East German model, organizational skills reveal the most influential beta coefficient. Clearly, however, its independent impact lags far behind the East German counterpart. Furthermore, the insignificant coefficients of the two inserted political trust dimensions support the East German empirical results and stress, once again, its astounding non-relatedness to individual political contacts. Comparing the East and West German explained variances of the two regression models we observe a difference of more than eleven percentage points. Social capital together with organizational skills and education, therefore, seem to be much more powerful indicators for a stronger predisposition to individually develop and maintain political contacts in the East German society.

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<sup>36</sup> This decision is based on the notion that voluntary associations should primarily act as „schools for democracy“ in as much as they offer their members important opportunities to develop organizational skills which are also crucial for political action. The dummy variable consists of 0 for no member, passive member or hardly active member and 1 for active or very active member. For the wording of the questions see appendix.

<sup>37</sup> Including only socioeconomic variables and membership activities as explanatory terms already provides an explained variance of 17 per cent.

Evaluating the relevance of the concept of bonding and bridging social capital for explaining individual political contacts we conclude that the East German data do not convincingly support this differentiation. Although the regression model stresses the importance of social involvement with all its consequences, no effect of any respective single factor can be meaningfully highlighted. Additionally, this form of political behavior seems to be considerably influenced by higher education and especially organizational skills.

At first sight, the West German empirical results reject the relevance of the specified concept as broadly as the East German ones do. No clear cut differences can be traced by the activities in our three groups. These results both for East and West Germany, however, support our hypothesis that members of any association might choose this apparent highly influential and therefore attractive form of political action. Considering the impact of the cultural components of social capital, however, impressively underlines the unique impact of social and opinion related norms as their only significant contribution to the regression model. As was presented in table 4, it is especially membership of bridging groups which is conducive to this dimension of orientations. We should, therefore, also maintain the importance of theoretically and empirically differentiating norms and orientations and bear in mind how differently they are affected by the membership of bonding and bridging organizations.

Our analyses on individual political contacting, furthermore, disclose the striking importance of organizational skills both for East and West Germany. This finding undoubtedly supports the hypothesis of voluntary associations acting as “schools for democracy” and might particularly for East Germany point to former structures and requirements for effective political participation in accordance with its severely restricted political scope. For both German parts, however, we observe the astounding insignificance of political trust. This result could lead us to the assumption that individuals aiming at political contacts in order to gain some influence over political processes which might affect them personally do potentially not consider their actions to be directly linked to the political sphere. Another explanation, however, points to a potential side-effect of social involvement. This is based on the thesis that a specific amount of individual resources, e.g. organizational skills, increases one’s autonomy of problem solving which, simultaneously, decreases the personal salience of the political sphere (see van Deth 1999). Applied to the findings presented here, we conclude that political trust becomes irrelevant if individuals dispose of sufficient resources as for example organizational skills.

## **6.2 Collective political action**

According to our hypothesis presented above, we expect that especially activities in interest groups and/or bridging organizations enhance collective political behavior. The East German results, however, only partly support our assumptions. Clearly, it is being active in interest groups which accounts for the highest significant and positive coefficient of the

regression model. Activities in bridging associations, however, do not exert any independent impact on the response variable. Another falsification of our hypothesis is provided by the insignificant beta coefficient of generalized trust. Although this kind of political behavior encompasses uninstitutionalized forms of political action which should require, on behalf of the activists, a higher ability and willingness to co-operate, generalized trust is not mandatory. The two other cultural aspects of social capital, on the other hand, significantly contribute to the explanatory power of the model. While *weaker* public orientations enhance collective political action it is *stronger* social and opinion related norms which are conducive to this type of participation. This finding underlines, once again, the relevance of differentiation. Besides, it is surprising that neither younger age nor higher education attain significant coefficients. Both terms have often empirically proved to enhance at least participation in demonstrations which represents one component of this measured dimension (see Barnes et al. 1979). The explanatory term of organizational skills also contributes some significant information to the regression model. This result depicts that the fact of generally being active in any voluntary association obviously does affect this kind of political action. Political trust as the final explanatory variable reveals another significant and positive effect. However, one would rather expect political distrust to result in collective protest activities. Furthermore, the specification of this regression model clearly contrasts the one of individual political contacts. The remarkably low explained variance of about 4 per cent points to pronounced deficiencies of this explanatory model.

The West German findings of the regression model show some striking similarities with the East German empirical results. The highly significant and positive impact of being active in interest groups confirms our hypothesis which is, at the same time, contradicted by the insignificant effect of activities in bridging organizations. The same falsification holds true for the influence of generalized trust which doesn't reveal any significant effect. And again, we must raise the question whether research on the importance of generalized trust for at least collective political action has been overestimated in the past. As to the two other cultural components of social capital we observe some significant and negative impact of both norm dimensions. Therefore, we cannot detect any meaningful additional information provided by the differentiation of norms since both dimensions, moreover, figure as nearly equally important. Although the West German age variable doesn't improve our regression model, higher education, on the other hand, confirms its relevance especially for protest activities. The importance of organizational skills is underlined by their remarkably strong beta coefficient. It nearly doubles the equivalent East German coefficient and accounts for the highest value in the West German model. Finally, the West German model not only underlines the relevance of political trust or better distrust for this type of political action but also the necessity to introduce two distinct trust dimensions. Clearly, only distrust in the police and jurisdiction exerts some significant influence. Similarly to the East German results, however, our model specification provides a rather low explained variance of 7 per cent.

Therefore, conceptualizing collective political action mostly on the basis of indicators of social involvement seems to be insufficient.

On the basis of the described empirical results our hypotheses are only partly met but still the differentiation between bonding and bridging social capital provides some important insights. Interest group activities exert some significant and positive impact on collective political action both in East and West Germany. Contrary to our assumption, however, bridging group activities as well as generalized trust are not independently influential. Given the high and exclusive impact of activities in interest groups we conclude that we might expect a diminishing importance of environmental or other social movements' issues and an increase of protest activities that reflect the actual problems on the employment market or of economic branches. This observation would also have immediate consequences for the visibility and relevance of postmaterialist issues for the actual political agenda.

The same relevance of differentiation can also be extended to the included norm dimensions. The specific causal effects of the different group memberships on the two norm dimensions was already discussed above which allows to infer the indirect membership effects even on collective political action. The justification of norm differentiation for the explanation of collective political action, however, is mainly supported by the East German data which solely reveal some deviating significant effects.

As to the role of political trust we, furthermore, find interesting differences. While political trust in East Germany is conducive to collective political action it is rather a well defined political distrust which enhances this type of political behavior in West Germany.

In addition to this inter-regional difference, the West German model underlines the importance of higher education for this type of political action which is not at all supported by the East German findings. We, therefore, conclude that West Germans must overcome considerably more socioeconomic and social obstacles than their counterparts in East Germany in order to unfold this specific political activity.

### **6.3 Political consumer behavior**

Based on our assumption, we expect activities in interest groups as well as in bridging organizations to independently affect political consumer behavior. The East German regression model only partly confirms this hypothesis. Clearly, only being active in bridging groups exert some significant impact. The two other associational categories do not attain any significant beta coefficient. Another falsification of our thesis is provided by the cultural components of social capital. Social and opinion related orientations are not influential to a significant extent. Instead, we ascertain that weaker orientations towards public duties independently affect one's behavior as a political consumer. With regard to the realm of socioeconomic factors, only younger age can be detected as being significantly influential. Furthermore, we conclude that even for a very simple and individual political act such as the one being described organizational skills significantly contribute to this specific engagement.

Another interpretation could be based on the assumption that individuals are much more incited to act as political consumers when a broad participatory basis is being organized. Similarly to public orientations political distrust also contributes to the explanation of political consumer behavior. Its beta coefficient even ranks highest in the model but is closely followed by being active in bridging organizations. This model specification accounts for an explained variance of nearly 8 per cent which reveals, on one hand, that substantial explanatory terms are not yet included. On the other hand, it suggests the relative importance of some specific elements of social engagement. As an important insight in the causal structures of political consumer behavior which might be understood as a mainly individual act we conclude that social involvement is relevant although the explained variance ranks on a moderate level. However, in East Germany, this type of political participation is most importantly driven by political distrust.

The empirical results of the West German regression model contrasts the East German one in some important respects. At the same time, it confirms most parts of our discussed hypothesis on political consumer behavior. We observe that being active in bridging associations positively and significantly contributes to the explanatory power of the model. However, our assumption on the importance of activities in interest groups is not met. In contrast, unfolding activities in bonding groups even *negatively* affects this type of political action. Besides, we retain that this is the first time a certain aspect of social participation is negatively related to some kind of political action. Another deviation with regard to the East German results is revealed by the coefficients of the cultural components of social capital where the contrasting effects couldn't be more accentuated. According to our hypothesis, we now ascertain a considerable *positive* effect of social and opinion related orientations and even of generalized trust on political consumer behavior. The findings based on the included socioeconomic terms provide some more inter-regional discrepancies. Being a woman and disposing of higher education clearly affect this political act. Age, however, cannot unfold any significant influence. In contrast, the relevance of organizational skills for political consumer behavior is also supported by the according West German beta coefficient. Another inter-regional similarity is provided by the political trust dimensions. Clearly, it is political distrust in the executive bodies which incites West Germans to act as political consumers, however, to a considerably lower extent and degree of significance than in East Germany. Finally, we ascertain a comparable explained variance of more than 8 per cent. According to our evaluation of the East German model, we assume that some explanatory terms are still missing but indicators of social engagement should be absolutely taken into consideration.

Although our hypotheses on political consumer behavior are not entirely met and inter-regional comparisons disclosed important deviating results, our findings support the importance of the presented concept of bonding and bridging social capital. The disclosed opposing significant effects of activities in bonding and bridging groups stress its relevance even further. The same conclusion of the relevance of differentiation can also be applied to the realm of norms and orientations and for political trust in West Germany. Differentiating

norms not only provides meaningful insights into intra-societal latent causal structures, but also, as our comparison underlines, reveals important inter-societal differences. We, therefore, must retain that East and West Germans seem to be driven and motivated by contrasting norms and orientations. This should also result in differing scopes of political consumer behavior. While product boycotts mainly induced by the BSE and foot and mouth disease could prevail in East Germany, West Germans could also be incited by their intention to prefer products of developing countries or to boycott products for other political, ethical or ecological reasons.

#### **6.4 Voting vs. voting refusal and illegal protest activities**

The causal effects on the dimension of voting behavior as one of the preconditions for democratic societies vs. voting refusal are approached in our final analyses. According to our hypothesis, we do not expect any of our included group category to affect the dependent variable but rather public orientations or political trust to figure influential, here. The East German regression model does by and large confirm these assumptions. No specific associational category can be detected as being independently influential. Furthermore, political trust accounts for the strongest beta coefficient in the model. However, public orientations do not exert the expected impact on casting a vote<sup>38</sup> nor does any other variable of social involvement influence it. In contrast, some socioeconomic factors contribute important information to the model which are higher age and *lower* income. Additionally, as we would have expected for voting behavior as an individual political act, the term of organizational skills doesn't add any substantive information to the dependent variable. The explained variance of about 7 per cent suggests that this model specification is lacking substantial explanatory terms. Nevertheless, the value of this adjusted  $R^2$  is based on the independent impact of three variables only and should, therefore, be evaluated accordingly.

Considering the results of the West German regression analysis, we find some important confirmation of our hypotheses.<sup>39</sup> As predicted, we observe that public orientations together with *both* political trust dimensions exert the strongest impact on our dependent variable. Being active in bridging associations depicts the only significant beta coefficient among the group categories. This result opposes our assumption but, simultaneously, points once again to the importance of group differentiation. Among the range of socioeconomic factors it is only higher age which affects one's willingness to vote. Its rather low coefficient, however, importantly contrasts the equivalent East German finding. In accordance with the East German data and with our expectations, on the other hand, also the West German model depicts that organizational skills are not at all relevant for increasing the explanatory power of this regression model. The considerably higher explained variance of more than five

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<sup>38</sup> It should be noted here that the independent effect of public orientations vanishes when the political trust dimension is included as another explanatory term in the regression analysis.

percentage points resulting in nearly twelve per cent suggests that the presented model specification suits West German realities better than East German societal causal structures.

Discussing the relevance of our concept for the analysis of the identified dimension of political participation yields several interesting but deviating results for both the East and West German data. At first sight the presented concept of bonding and bridging social capital doesn't seem to contribute any important information to the explanation of voting behavior or voting refusal in East Germany, nor does the cultural aspect of social capital. However, as the analyses on political trust (table 5) have revealed, especially the cultural components of social capital like public orientations and generalized trust exert a considerable impact on this specific trust dimension. These, in turn, are also affected by our membership variables (tables 3 and 4). Thus, we assume that bonding and bridging aspects of social capital are not directly linked to this dimension of political action but that they become rather effective through their cultural complements. As the analyses of the West German data have shown, differentiating between bonding and bridging social capital contributes to the improvement of the explanatory power of this specific and essential form of political action. However, it is only the positive impact of the activities in bridging organizations which could be detected. The same need for differentiation also holds for the realm of the cultural components of social capital. By this means, the exclusive relevance of public orientations could be disclosed. Not surprisingly, we observed a remarkable impact of political trust which also implies an institutional trust on the citizens' willingness to vote. These findings were consistent across the East and West German data. As described above, political trust is also affected by the different components of social capital. We therefore conclude that the differentiation between bonding and bridging social capital **and** between the norm dimensions is vital for a better understanding of latent social as well as political processes in democratic societies.

## 7. Evaluation

“Voluntary associations are schools for democracy”. Today, Tocqueville's famous summarizing conclusion about America's 19<sup>th</sup> century's societal landscape is as valid for democratic societies as it was more than 150 years ago. The empirical analyses of both the East and West German data proved this case convincingly and added even more to that.

For different realms of political participation different kinds of voluntary associations exert significant influences. Obviously, one could imagine a large variety of criteria that would be helpful for a substantive categorization of voluntary organizations. In this paper, however, we have decided for sound standing theoretical reasons to use the so-called constitutive goods of voluntary associations as selection criteria. This conceptualization led to the differentiation between bonding groups on the one hand and bridging organizations on the other. The focus on the relevance of this concept for political participation required a further specification with

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<sup>39</sup> Factor analysis based on West German data yielded a dimension with voting behavior opposing voting refusal and illegal protest.

regard to interest groups as a bonding sub-category. As the empirical results presented above have shown, these categories not only further the notion about differing potentials of being active in voluntary organizations for political action but they also provide interesting insights into the requirements of organizational skills of the aforementioned four specified spheres of political participation. That not all voluntary associations were alike was already testified by former empirical studies.<sup>40</sup> In a first step, those studies identified single voluntary associations in different countries. Our research has shown that bonding associations, not including interest groups, are the least likely to exert any independent influence on political action. This conclusion is supported by the East and West German data, respectively. Although the impact of interest groups is restricted to two participatory dimensions, their coefficient always ranks highest among the structural elements of social capital. The role of the bridging groups, however, revealed to be quite ambiguous. Except for individual political contacts and collective political action, no consistent cross-regional empirical results could be detected. With regard to the political consumer behavior dimension the coefficients varied remarkably from another. The analysis of voting behavior revealed an even more striking difference of impact.

Thus, with the assignment of voluntary organizations into bonding and bridging groups we might hold an instrument for theoretical generalization in our hand. Whether the discussed supportive empirical findings can be generalized to other democratic societies remains to be seen and will be subject to further intensive investigation.

As to previous theoretical assumptions about the effects of the remaining explanatory terms in our regression models on the presented four forms of political participation, their cross-regional coherence as well as coherence across participatory dimensions, we are now able to formulate the following conclusions:

1. Except for individual political contacts in East Germany and political consumer behavior in West Germany generalized trust does not exert an independent impact on political action. This result stands in contrast to the thesis that trust fosters coordinated actions as we would have supposed particularly for the collective political action dimension. Since this is not the case we must consider that the possible influence of generalized trust on this specific form of participation is outweighed by some more important factors. However, it also tells us that the significance of generalized trust for collective political actions has probably been overestimated in the past. Its irrelevance for collective forms of political actions casts some doubts on the discussion about the relationship between generalized trust and political action as a whole. And it has not yet been empirically tested for less specific collective actions as such.

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<sup>40</sup> See footnote 9.

2. The analysis of the effects of the two identified norm dimensions provides remarkably heterogeneous results. Although, on theoretical grounds, we would have expected every measured norm dimension to enhance any form of political participation, we must now conclude that this is not at all the case. The results especially cast some doubt on the assumed positive impact of public orientations. Only twice, public norms disclose significant and positive effects. More often, however, they significantly and negatively affect at least two forms of political action. The positive impact of social and opinion related norms is less ambiguous. Both East and West German results mainly assign enhancing effects to this norm dimension. Only once, namely in the realm of collective political action on the basis of West German data, a negative impact can be disclosed.
3. The empirical results of this paper, however, not only challenge findings of former studies. Considerable confirmation relates to the importance of the members' acquired organizational skills in voluntary organizations for three out of four participatory dimensions. As to the socioeconomic variables in our models we observe that all terms contribute to their explanatory power. However, their impact varies a lot according to the specific dimension of political action and also with regard to inter-regional comparisons.
4. The role of political trust for political participation in East and in West Germany could be further specified. The results show that only the citizen's willingness to cast a vote is considerably enhanced by every identified dimension of political trust both in the eastern and western part of Germany. Besides, political trust either doesn't affect political action at all or political *distrust* is conducive to political participation. A marginal exception relates to the positive effect of political trust on collective political action in East Germany. For West Germany, moreover, we can observe deviating effects of the two political trust dimension, thus, stressing the relevance of differentiation.

## 8. In Conclusion

The main focus of the presented paper was to investigate whether the concept of bonding and bridging social capital could be reasonably specified by categorizing voluntary associations according to specific theoretical assumptions as well as to empirically test it and whether this conceptualization would also hold for empirical analysis in the realm of political participation. We tried to approach these questions by, firstly, developing meaningful categories on theoretical grounds, secondly, by introducing and applying them to empirical research on social capital, and, finally, by analyzing their significance with respect to several dimensions of political behavior.

The empirical results concerning the components of social capital tell us that our concept of differentiation is worthwhile because it delivers further information on underlying causal structures. However, during our East-West German comparisons we detected important differences. Although the findings of both data sets confirmed the relevance of group differentiation, the causal patterns revealed some considerable inconsistencies and the East German empirical results were not often convincing. We, therefore, assume that distinct cultural differences between East and West Germans are still vital to a certain extent. The analyses based on the East German data also clearly demonstrated that the cultural components of social capital are only marginally affected by membership of voluntary associations. Therefore, we conclude that the general concept of social capital for societies in transition could be much less linked with formal voluntary associations than in societies with longer democratic periods. Accordingly, future research should especially focus on the impact of informal networks and other causal effects. The findings of the relevance of political trust might give some important clues. Additionally, in five out of eight regression analyses, the East German explained variances ranked lower than the West German ones. Thus, we assume that our model specifications do not tap the causal structures in East Germany as well as they do for the West German data.

Furthermore, we were confronted with the finding that norms constitute, as expected, an undisputable component of the concept of social capital. However, orientations towards the public sphere in West Germany cannot be linked to this concept at all. This result clearly opposes one of the most essential statements of social capital theory, namely that expressing trust in strangers, which also implies trust in their lawful behavior, simultaneously fosters one's own willingness to comply with public rules<sup>41</sup>.

Equally striking is the conclusion that political trust considerably affects nearly *every* analyzed component of social capital. Thus, if a policy was to be formulated referring to the conditions of building and sustaining social capital, one would seriously have to consider the relevance of political trust for both East and West Germany.

Our concept of bonding and bridging associations also proved its usefulness when we inspected causal effects on different forms of political participation. We, moreover, ascertained a remarkable variation of the explanatory power of our regression models. But, at the same time, we could also shed more light on the impressively deviating impacts of the cultural aspects of social capital on political action. Introducing generalized trust, several norm and political trust dimensions offered some meaningful insights into the nature of the specific political action and into its functional requirements. We therefore conclude: Differentiation matters, not only with regard to voluntary associations.

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<sup>41</sup> See Putnam 1993 for a discussion.

**Table 1: Constitutive goods of bonding and bridging voluntary associations and their members' population share<sup>a</sup>**

Associations	Constitutive associational goods	East Germany		West Germany	
		N	in %	N	in %
<b>Bonding Group</b>		<b>66</b>	<b>6.5</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>10.0</b>
- pensioners' associations	exclusive group identity	44	4.3	81	4.1
- women's associations	exclusive group identity	n.a. <sup>b</sup>	n.a.	29	1.5
- local traditional associations	exclusive group identity	12	1.2	63	3.2
- association for disabled pers.	exclusive group identity/ind. material	n.a.	n.a.	19	1.0
- patients' associations	ind. material/exclusive group identity	14	1.4	33	1.7
<b>Interest Group</b>		<b>94</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>11.3</b>
- unions	individual material	73	7.2	160	8.0
- farmer organizations	individual material	n.a.	n.a.	20	1.0
- professional organizations	individual material	25	2.5	55	2.8
- business organizations	individual material	14	1.4	n.a.	n.a.
<b>Bridging Group</b>		<b>340</b>	<b>33.6</b>	<b>1,045</b>	<b>52.5</b>
- sports clubs	interpersonal identity	154	15.2	607	30.5
- youth clubs	interpersonal identity	n.a.	n.a.	24	1.2
- other hobby clubs	interpersonal identity	87	8.6	233	11.7
- hobby breeders' associations	interpersonal identity	16	1.6	22	1.1
- parents' associations	interpersonal identity/inclusive social	22	2.2	50	2.5
- religious associations	inclusive social/interpersonal identity	62	6.1	196	9.9
- animal rights associations	inclusive social	n.a.	n.a.	56	2.8
- humanitarian associations	inclusive social	n.a.	n.a.	25	1.3
- charity associations	inclusive social	23	2.3	94	4.7
- cultural associations	inclusive social	39	3.8	255	12.8
- environmental organizations	public material	n.a.	n.a.	37	1.9
- voluntary fire brigades	public material	19	1.9	65	3.3
- housing associations	public material/interpersonal identity	16	1.6	n.a.	n.a.
<b>Members</b>		<b>514</b>	<b>50.7</b>	<b>1,301</b>	<b>65.3</b>
<b>N</b>		<b>1,013</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1,991</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Average Membership</b>		<b>.90</b>		<b>1.40</b>	
<b>Standard Deviation</b>		<b>1.19</b>		<b>1.48</b>	

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001), <sup>b</sup> n.a.= members' overall share less than one per cent

**Table 2: Correlations between group categories, generalized trust and norms, Kendall's tau\_b coefficients**

Membership	Generalized trust		Public norms		Social and opinion related norms	
	East	West	East	West	East	West
Bonding group	.049	.058*	.110***	.087***	.090**	.126***
Interest group	.014	.027	.008	-.039	.057*	.073**
Bridging group	.096***	.243***	.155***	-.031	.131***	.389***
N	1,012	1,988	931	1,898	931	1,898

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001), <sup>b</sup> \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < .001$  (two-tailed)

**Table 3: Effects on generalized trust, standardized (OLS) regression coefficients**

	East	West
Sex	-.092**	-.037
Age	.042	-.030
Income	.000	.000
Education	.140***	.109***
Membership of interest group	-.035	-.013
Membership of bonding group	.049	.034
Membership of bridging group	.030	.127***
Public orientations	-.005	-.036
Social and opinion related orientations	.109**	.174***
Political trust	.172***	.161***
Political trust in judicial body and police		.108***
adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.061	.146
N	826	1,829

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001)

<sup>b</sup> \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$  (two-tailed)

**Table 4: Effects on norm dimensions, standardized (OLS) regression coefficients**

	Public norms		Social and opinion related norms	
	East	West	East	West
Sex	.065*	.044*	.057	-.008
Age	.209***	.143***	.105**	-.024
Income	.087**	-.022	.001	.015
Education	-.018	-.041	.014	.064**
Membership of interest group	.042	.000	.071*	.042*
Membership of bonding group	.069*	.020	.055	.093***
Membership of bridging group	.178***	-.039	.134***	.311***
Generalized trust	-.016	-.039	.111**	.160***
Political trust	.335***	.202***	.014	.063**
Political trust in judicial body and police		.272***		.107***
adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.215	.162	.046	.216
N	826	1,829	826	1,829

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001); <sup>b</sup> \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$  (two-tailed)

**Table 5: Effects on political trust, standardized (OLS) regression coefficients**

	East Germany	West Germany	
	Political trust	Political trust	Political trust in police and judicial body
Sex	.023	.024	.054*
Age	-.063	.052*	.106***
Income	-.028	-.001	.023
Education	-.049	.048*	-.026
Membership of interest group	-.046	-.023	-.047*
Membership of bonding group	-.059	-.014	.022
Membership of bridging group	-.002	.042	.080**
Public orientations	.368***	.196***	.262***
Social and opinion related orientations	.053	.068**	.118***
Generalized trust	.156***	.163***	.093***
adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.152	.086	.142
N	827	1,830	1,830

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001); <sup>b</sup> \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$  (two-tailed)

**Table 6: Political Participation in per cent**

Associations	Political individual contacts		Political collective action		Political consumer behaviour		Voting behavior		Voting refusal		N			
	East	West	East	West	East	West	East	West	East	West	East		West	
											N	%	N	%
Bonding Group	78.8*	43.7*	25.8*	16.1	21.2	26.6*	89.4*	92.5*	18.2	11.1	66	6.5	199	10.0
Interest Group	64.9*	43.1*	34.0*	31.1*	37.2*	41.3*	84.0	90.7*	15.1	19.7*	94	9.3	255	12.8
Bridging Group	58.8*	40.8*	23.5*	20.3*	25.9*	40.7*	87.9*	86.1*	13.5	12.4	340	33.6	1,045	52.5
Non-members	27.5*	6.7*	10.8*	7.7*	10.4*	19.9*	71.9*	70.1*	13.6	13.6	499	49.3	690	34.7
All	42.3	26.6	16.9	15.8	17.3	32.7	79.2	80.6	14.2	12.9	1,013	100.0	1,991	100.0

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001), <sup>b</sup> \* = p < .05 (two-tailed)

**Table 7: Effects on four dimensions of political participation, standardized (OLS) regression coefficients**

	Individual political contacts		Collective political action		Political consumer behaviour		Voting behavior vs. voting refusal	
	East	West	East	West	East	West	East	West
Sex	-.037	-.069**	-.017	.006	.005	.097***	.031	-.012
Age	.081*	.057*	-.041	-.042	-.101*	-.042	.150***	.055*
Income	.022	.076**	.057	.000	.000	-.037	-.085*	.029
Education	.131***	.074**	-.022	.101***	.074	.122***	.072	.047
Activities in interest group	.111***	.111***	.115**	.114***	.040	-.007	.064	-.001
Activities in bonding group	.089**	.095***	-.052	-.002	.004	-.062*	-.021	.005
Activities in bridging group	.089**	.096***	.033	-.011	.115**	.057*	.045	.074**
Public orientations	.104**	-.021	-.086*	-.069**	-.098*	-.026	.037	.165***
Social and opinion related orientations	.124***	.159***	.088*	-.096***	.058	.137***	-.034	.029
Generalized trust	.091**	-.003	-.025	.010	.019	.050*	.012	-.027
Organizational skills	.305***	.179***	.092*	.143***	.093*	.080**	-.016	.006
Political trust	-.060	.015	.076*	-.002	-.119**	-.060*	.201***	.148***
Political trust in judicial body and police (West Germany)		-.015		-.079**		.029		.165***
adj. R <sup>2</sup>	.275	.162	.038	.070	.079	.085	.066	.118
N	785	1,707	785	1,707	785	1,707	785	1,707

<sup>a</sup> Source: CID-project, German population survey (2001), <sup>b</sup> \* = p < .05; \*\* = p < .01; \*\*\* = p < .001 (two-tailed)

## Appendix

### 1) Membership and activities

I will now show you a list of different organisations, which I will read to you one by one.

For each of them please answer yes if you

A. Are a member of the organisation

I now have some additional questions concerning this particular organisation.

B. Have you participated in activities of this organisation at any time during the last 12 months?

C. Have you donated money, apart from membership fees, to this organisation at any time during the last 12 months?

D. Have you undertaken voluntary (unpaid) work for this organisation at any time during the last 12 months?

E. Would you say you have personal friends within this organisation?

### 2) Organizational skills

I will now read out a few things which people sometimes do as part of their activities in organisations and associations. How often do you, as part of your activity in organisations

A. participate in decisions at a meeting

B. B. plan or chair a meeting

C. Prepare or give a speech before a meeting

D. D. write a text other than a private letter at least a few pages long

1 = a few times a week; 2 = a few times a month; 3 = a few times a year; 4 = never or almost never

### 3) Generalized trust

I would now like to ask you some questions about how you view other people. Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can't be too careful in dealing with people?

0 = You can't be too careful; 10 = Most people can be trusted

### 4) Political trust

I will now read out names of different institutions such as the police, government, civil service, etc. Please tell me how strongly you personally trust each of these institutions.

A. The cabinet

B. The political parties

C. The Bundestag

D. The courts

E. The police

F. Politicians

G. The European Union

H. The municipal board

I. Civil service

J. The UN

0 = No trust at all; 10 = Very strong trust

### 5) Norms

As you know, there are different opinions as to what it takes to be a good citizen. I would therefore like to ask you to examine the characteristics listed on the card. Looking at what you personally think, how important is it:

A. Never to try to evade taxes

B. To form your own opinion, independently of others

C. Always to obey laws and regulations

D. To be active in organizations

E. To think of others more than yourself

F. To subject your own opinions to critical examination

G. To show solidarity

H. To vote

0 = not at all important; 10 = very important

**6) Political Participation**

There are different ways of attempting to bring about improvements or counteract deterioration in society. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following?

- A. Worked in a political party
- B. Signed a petition
- C. Taken part in a public demonstration
- D. Taken part in a strike
- E. Attended a political meeting or rally
- F. Contacted a politician
- G. Contacted an association or organization
- H. Contacted a civil servant on the national, regional or local level
- I. Worked in a political party
- J. Worked in a political action group
- K. Worked in another organization or association
- L. Worn or displayed campaign badge/sticker
- M. Boycotted certain products
- N. Deliberately bought certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons
- O. Donated money
- P. Raised funds
- Q. Contacted or appeared in the media
- R. Contacted solicitor or judicial body
- S. Participated in illegal protest
- T. And have you ever abstained from participating in a general election out of protest?

Did you vote in the last election, or was there anything that made you unable or unwilling to vote?

1 = Yes, 2 = No, but was eligible to vote, 3 = No, was not eligible to vote

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