

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Jack K. Day for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Human Development and Family Studies presented on May 30, 2014.

Title: Disengaged and Untrusting? Young Adults' Feelings of Social Integration and Trust During the Great Recession

Abstract approved:

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Navigating the transition to adulthood is fraught with challenges, especially for those coming of age during an economic crisis. Individuals often rely on support from existing social networks, and establish social capital through deepening and expanding social ties, as they establish footholds in roles marking adulthood. Yet investing in social ties likely depends on levels of social trust, and conversely, social trust emerges from social ties. Additionally, social trust and integration are likely susceptible to change during economic recessions.

The aim of this study is to address three research questions related to the relationship between social trust and integration: (1) How does the causal relationship between feelings of social trust and integration fluctuate for young adults amid uncertainty introduced by the Great Recession? (2) How does the relationship between social trust and integration vary in relation to young adults' economic instability? (3) How does the relationship between feelings of social trust and integration vary in relation to entering roles marking adulthood?

Using data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) from 2005 ($n = 728$), 2007 ($n = 638$), 2009 ($n = 634$), and 2011 ($n = 606$), cross-lagged models are utilized to assess the causal relationship between feelings of social trust and social integration among young adults (aged 17-27) before and during the Great Recession. Although most young adults in the study are not engaged in traditional civic activities, which often promote and emerge from social integration, many report feeling that they belong to a community and have something of value to contribute to society. They also report relatively persistent optimistic feelings of social trust over time, indicating that young adults' outlooks on society and their own futures did not become more negative during the economic downturn.

Most importantly, findings in this study provide evidence of a mutually causal relationship between feelings of social integration and trust, with investments in one domain having a positive effect on the other. The relationship between measures of social trust and integration did not, however, vary in predictable patterns in relation to the economic recession or to levels of individual economic instability. Yet both social trust and integration fluctuate in relation to changes in political climate, suggesting that they may be influenced by macro-level factors. Finally, entry into roles marking adulthood in 2007 is negatively, and in 2011 is positively, associated with feelings of social integration and, to a lesser extent, trust. These findings suggest that younger respondents who enter adult roles may be less trusting and connected to communities, though this trend reverses as the sample ages.

The findings from this study have implications for identifying: threats to social trust, and effective means of encouraging and fostering trust through

community engagement; ways in which young adults form connections to communities, and barriers to establishing diverse social networks that strengthen social capital; ways in which young adults take an active role in the political process and informing policy; and why they may opt-out of civic participation, especially if they lack social trust. Recommendations are made for developing more sensitive and clearly defined measures of social integration and trust, and for future research.

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Disengaged and Untrusting? Young Adults' Feelings of Social Integration and Trust
During the Great Recession

by
Jack K. Day

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

Jack K. Day, Author

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Those navigating the transition to adulthood are especially vulnerable to uncertainty in the economy and labor market. As individuals plan for the future and establish—hopefully—enduring social ties that provide connections to the labor market and serve as sources of support throughout life, issues of social integration and social trust are especially pertinent. Times of economic uncertainty may threaten social trust, especially among young adults who are unable to rely on employment or support from the welfare state to weather the storm. This economic instability may encourage young adults to turn to established social relationships for support. Lacking strong connections to others, however, may further threaten social trust, deterring individuals from making investments in social relationships that build social capital. Alternatively, lacking social trust may discourage individuals from forming relationships with others in the first place, also limiting social capital.

The Great Recession, taking hold in 2008 and officially ending in June 2009, though from which the U.S. economy is still slowly recovering (Congressional Budget Office, 2014), disrupted the lives of many. This period of time provides an important opportunity to gain insight into young adults' feelings of social trust and integration amidst widespread economic instability, and the substantial implications this has for: (1) their optimism about the future—an indicator for the strength of social trust and likelihood of civic participation, which bridges social trust and integration; (2) their engagement with and investment in social networks that build social capital; and (3) the development of better informed supports for those navigating an increasingly prolonged and individualized transition to adulthood (Furstenberg, Kennedy,

McLoyd, Rumbaut, & Settersten, 2004; Furstenberg, Rumbaut, & Settersten, 2005; Shanahan, 2000), further complicated by uncertainty introduced by the Great Recession.

Economic recessions and increased uncertainty in the labor market disproportionately affect young adults trying to establish career trajectories, and often results in less stable ties to employment well beyond early adulthood (Staff, Messersmith, & Schulenberg, 2009). Given the relatively weak welfare state for those in their 20s in the U.S., young adults lack secure safety nets that provide support until they establish stronger ties to the labor market. Additionally, young adults' ties to employment are precarious, as they tend to be hired at lower wages, and may be the first to be let go if employers make cutbacks to the workforce. The prolonged transition to adulthood also often places a heavier burden on families, as young adults, even those in their late 20s and early 30s, continue to turn to parents for support (Settersten & Ray, 2010).

Yet according to a recent study by the Pew Research Center (2014), though low on general measures of trust, Millennials (defined as those between the ages of 18 to 33 in 2014 by the Pew Research Center) tend to be more optimistic about the future than other generations, and also feel more connected to friendship networks while simultaneously disengaging from religious and political institutions. Despite striving to enter the labor market during a recession that has greatly changed the economic landscape, many young adults still feel optimistic about their economic well-being in the future. At the same time, they recognize that they may not be able to rely on many of the institutionalized supports available to their parents, such as social security (Pew Research Center, 2014). They are also more likely to believe that others will act in self-interested ways, and therefore in ways that disadvantages others (Pew Research Center,

2014). This descriptive portrait paints a complex, and seemingly contradictory, picture of trust and integration among young adults: They tend to express low levels of generalized trust in others but higher levels of social trust related to optimism about the future of society. They are also less engaged in traditional institutions but have strong connections to peer networks.

In this study, I investigate measures of social integration and social trust against the backdrop of the Great Recession. Using a four-wave panel based on data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) collected between 2005 and 2011, I conduct cross-lagged analyses of the relationship between measures of social integration and trust among 728 young adults, aged 17-27. The sample and timing of this study allows for a unique investigation into how feelings of social integration and trust fluctuate in relation to changes in the economy, individual levels of economic uncertainty, and achieving markers of the transition to adulthood.

Importance of Social Integration for Health and Well-Being of Individuals and Society

Social integration—encompassing connections to communities, social networks, and social support—is an essential component of related, yet distinct, concepts: civic engagement and social capital (Paxton, 2002; Putnam, 2000; Sander & Putnam, 2010). More specifically, being socially integrated may encourage civic participation, and conversely, civic participation may deepen and broaden connections to communities, and to society more generally. Individuals with shared values are more likely to form bonds, and these shared values may serve as a foundation for civic participation. Declines in social integration, and relatedly, participation in civic activities, have thus long been a concern of scholars, as both have substantial implications for the health and well-being of individuals, as well as social institutions, the political system, and the economy.

Durkheim's focus on the rise of specialized roles in modern society offers valuable insight into the importance of social integration for the functioning of society (1933/1997), and as a protective factor for individuals contending with social change and disruption (1951/1979). Concerning the threat modern society poses to traditional tight-knit communities, Tönnies (1887/2002) introduced the concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. These concepts delineate the structure and function of communities that arise from and support different types of societies and social relationships. These formative theoretical frameworks stress the important task of investigating issues related to the benefits of social integration, and the perils of not being so, and how this informs and is informed by social change, connections to communities, civic engagement, and social trust.

The theories also guide interpretations of and reflections on findings from this study, which are based on data collected during a period of significant social change, in which: (1) the structure of and social scripts related to the transition to adulthood are in flux, leaving individuals with loosely defined pathways into adulthood; (2) economic fluctuations destabilize young adults' ties to the labor market, which affects the timing of entering roles associated with adulthood (e.g., completion of education, entering the labor force, childbearing, and marriage or establishing long-term relationships).

Perhaps just as important as actual patterns of social integration are young adult's attitudes and feelings of social connectedness. How close do they feel to those around them? To their communities? To society more generally? Addressing these questions offers insight into individuals' intent to make investments in social networks and their community, and to be civically engaged. Additionally, probing these questions clarifies whether or not fears of

disengagement among young adults are exaggerated. Although younger generations may not be frequenting Elks lodges, playing card games or bowling with others in their community, or participating in traditional civic activities as noted by Putnam (Putnam, 2000; Sander & Putnam, 2010), they may be engaging in new ways within a rapidly changing society and economy. Or, they may feel connected without actually being connected, signaling that they may be searching for ways to establish ties to broader communities and make investments that benefit society, but may lack adequate or desirable outlets for doing so.

Importance of Trust for Social Relationships, Social Capital, and Civic Engagement

Issues related to trust have received much attention across various fields of study, including sociology, psychology, economics, and political science, though conceptualizations and measures of trust are much debated (for example, Cleary & Stokes, 2009; Coleman, 1990; Hardin, 2006; Mizstall, 1996; Nannestad, 2008; Seligman, 2000). I will primarily refer to two types of trust throughout this study: interpersonal trust, and social trust. Interpersonal trust is vital for facilitating interactions between individuals with little knowledge about each other, as it allows for making investments and transactions while knowing little about others' character (Farrell, 2009; Seligman, 2000). Social trust encapsulates general trust in others (Newton, 2001), confidence in society and the government (Delhey & Newton, 2003; Hardin, 2006), and optimism about the future (Helliwell, 2003; Rothstein & Uslaner), and is often discussed in connection with social capital (Coleman, 1990; Helliwell, 2002; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008) and civic engagement (Cleary & Stokes, 2009; Paxton, 1999; Putnam, 2000).

Social trust is of particular relevance to this study, as it probes the relationship between trust and social integration—primarily defined by membership in social groups, social cohesion,

and integration within social networks (Durkheim, 1951/1979; Barnes, 1954; Bott, 1957)—a topic of much debate in recent literature (for example, Nannestad, 2008; Newton, 2001; Putnam, 2000). Social trust is also important for civic engagement—primarily defined by political or social participation that benefits communities and societies—which strengthens social relationships and promotes investments that are necessary for the functioning of society, as emphasized by theorists such as John Stuart Mill (1909/1989), Simmel (1923), Tocqueville (1945), Tönnies (1887/2002), and more recently, Putnam (1995, 2000). While the relationship between trust and traditional measures of social integration, such as participation in social clubs, belonging to social groups, and volunteering, has come under scrutiny (Newton, 2001), there is evidence that social participation is driven by social trust (Kwak, Shah, & Holbert, 2004). Additionally, measures of social trust have not been well studied in relation to economic recessions, especially among young adults.

At the macro-level, the confidence individuals have in the government, or society more generally, is likely associated with how much they rely on or invest in social networks during periods of economic instability. Lacking confidence in the government to enact effective policy to improve the economy, or at the very least to provide a safety net during periods of economic hardship, may encourage increased reliance on social networks. Conversely, having confidence in the government may result in individuals maintaining their current level of social engagement. Increased social connections may also lead to higher levels of social trust, as individuals receive support and security from social networks that promote optimistic views of society and the future. Additionally, having general trust in others is likely to encourage the broadening of supportive social networks.

This study addresses concerns raised in the complex debate about measuring social trust, how it varies within individuals, and its connection to broad social contexts such as fluctuations in the economy and political climate. The PSID allows for an investigation into young adults' attitudes related to social trust before and during the economic recession, as well as across multiple election cycles, deepening understanding about the sensitivity of social trust to broader social forces.

Aims of the Study

In this study, I probe young adults' feelings of trust and integration to provide insight into how social trust, encompassing general trust in others, and confidence in the functioning and future of society, encourages and emerges from connections to communities and roles that facilitate integration, especially in light of the Great Recession. While long-term implications for young adults' trajectories through adulthood should be considered when discussing outcomes related to social trust and social integration, it is not my aim to discern individual pathways with this study. The following research questions guide the study: (1) How does the causal relationship between feelings of social trust and integration fluctuate for young adults amid uncertainty introduced by the Great Recession? (2) How does the relationship between social trust and integration vary in relation to young adults' economic instability? (3) How does the relationship between feelings of social trust and integration vary in relation to entering roles marking adulthood?

These questions provide insight into the key aims of the study, which are to: (1) investigate the causal relationship between measures of social trust and social integration; (2) understand this relationship during a critical life period: the transition to adulthood; (3) assess

how indicators of social trust and integration fluctuate among young adults during the economic recession, and the implications this has for investments in social relationships, which may serve as a buffer against uncertainty introduced by the recession; and (4) inform the development of clearer and more sensitive predictive measures of social integration and social trust.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the following chapter, I first discuss development within the context of social change. Next, I address the importance of the transition to adulthood as a developmental period, especially within the broader context of shaping trajectories through adulthood. I then identify theoretical frameworks that clarify conceptualizations of social integration and trust, articulate the relationship between the two, and emphasize the importance of considering the constructs within a historical perspective. Then, I explore current literature on social integration and trust among young adults, and establish the role both play during the transition to adulthood. Finally, I clarify definitions of both social integration and trust as they apply to this study.

Development Amid Social Change

Prominent theories of social change emphasize two pathways for change: change related to cohort replacement or succession (Alwin & McCammon, 2003; Firebaugh 1992; Ryder, 1965); and change within individuals (Alwin & McCammon, 2003). Individual change can result from aging and development, and in response to historical events or *period effects* (Alwin & McCammon, 2003). I focus primarily on the latter conceptualization by investigating the dialectic relationship between changes in social institutions, especially in relation to the Great Recession, and change related to aging (Riley, 1987). Additionally, I probe how feelings of social integration and trust encourage and emerge from connections to various institutions, such as education, the labor market, and family.

During the transition to adulthood, individuals make crucial decisions about entry into the labor force, forming long-term relationships, and beginning families, which have lasting impacts throughout adulthood and into later life. These choices are informed by opportunities available to

individuals regarding work and education in adolescence through early adulthood, and have significant implications for long-term earnings and connection to the labor market (Staff & Mortimer, 2008). Importantly, individuals both react to and help to create opportunities, which are shaped by the health of the economy (Heinz, 2003). For example, decisions regarding extending education versus entering the labor force influence both individual trajectories and patterns of employment, and therefore the economy more generally, illustrating the dialectic relationship between structure and agency (Berger & Luckman, 1966).

With the increased burden of an ailing economy, and fewer pathways into stable employment, there is a pressing need to better understand how social changes continue to reshape the prolonged period before adulthood. As the transition to adulthood becomes increasingly individualized (e.g., Brückner & Mayer, 2005; Kohli, 2007; Settersten, 2003; Shanahan, 2000) it offers more freedom as to how and when milestones denoting adulthood are reached. Yet this extended period between adolescence and adulthood is also increasingly fraught with uncertainty, and can be particularly perilous for those with little parental support—especially financial (Settersten & Ray, 2010).

Although social forces inform opportunities and constraints, individuals who display competence are better suited to consider their options in order to plan for the future, and plot a course through the transition to adulthood (Clausen, 1991). Congruence or discordance of age identity and psychological maturity, and family and economic contexts also influence identity and trajectories through this transitional period (Benson & Elder, 2011), emphasizing the necessity of understanding individual development within broader social contexts.

In addition to social forces and developmental maturity, two key influences help shape, and are shaped by, young adults' developmental trajectories. First, young adults' social relationships and membership within social networks can serve as valuable resources for some, but can also be detrimental depending on the network and the resources—or lack thereof—associated with the group. Second, young adults' levels of social trust, and their outlook on the future, have significant implications for how they utilize or strengthen their social relationships, especially through the civic and communal investments they are likely to make now and in the future. Additionally, both social integration and social trust establish and utilize social capital (Coleman, 1990; Hyman, 2002), and are influenced by macro-level factors such as attitudes towards the government (Rothstein & Stolle, 2008).

Addressing both micro and macro-level factors related to integration and trust sheds light on whether young adults are disengaged and passively waiting for economic opportunities to improve, or whether they are taking an active role in developing social capital, shaping their future prospects and development through adulthood. This is an especially pertinent line of inquiry given that higher levels of social integration and civic engagement both facilitate and result from fulfilling roles associated with adulthood (Sherrod, Flannagan, & Youniss, 2002; Sherrod, Torney-Purta, & Flannagan, 2010). Social integration and civic engagement are therefore mutually beneficial for individuals, as stronger social relationships and being engaged in communities are associated with better health and well-being (Berkman, Glass, Brissette, & Seeman, 2000; Szreter & Woolcock, 2004), and society, which is strengthened by a connected and engaged citizenry, and by individuals fulfilling roles that integrate them in productive ways.

While both social integration and trust have received considerable attention in recent literature, the focus has primarily been on the role of trust within individual relationships (Hardin, 2006), or how integration and trust, treated separately, relate to civic engagement and the functioning and effectiveness of governments—especially democracy (Delhey & Newton, 2003; Misztal, 1996; Newton, 2001; Putnam, 2000). Additionally, both have been at the forefront of intense theoretical discussions about how each affects and is affected by major social transitions, especially in political or economic structures.

Very little attention, however, has been paid to patterns of social trust and integration during more normative instability, such as fluctuations in the economy or the political climate, especially among young adults. More normative, but nonetheless potentially disruptive, changes in the economy often have significant implications for individuals navigating key transitional moments in their lives. Additionally, young adults' confidence in the government likely influences how, and how actively, they become civic engagement (Levine & Higgins-D'alessandro, 2010; Rahn & Transue, 1998), and also depends on prevalent political ideologies of those holding positions of power within the government. Thus, longitudinal research that encompasses such social changes is critical to gaining a better understanding of their influence on civic development through early adulthood (Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002).

I have primarily focused on social integration up to this point, largely because it encompasses roles associated with adulthood that emerge from, and strengthen ties to, social networks. Yet social trust is important to this discussion, as it is directly related to social capital (Coleman, 1988; Coleman, 1990; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008), and may be predictive of the likelihood and willingness of individuals to make investments in others. Classic theoretical

perspectives, discussed below, offer plausible explanations for the motivations and outcomes of individuals turning to social networks for support, and to better position themselves in the future. Additionally, the theories inform hypotheses about how structural constraints related to a declining or weak economy, and shifts in the political climate, may be an impetus for individuals to expend or build social capital by relying on and making investments in social ties. Before delving into these broader overarching theories, I first consider how the life course perspective emphasizes the importance of studying the transition to adulthood as a developmental period when individuals utilize social networks to find entry into adult roles, and how these roles in turn promote civic engagement.

Life Course Perspective

The life course perspective provides a useful foundation for the ensuing discussion, as it considers developmental trajectories and the timing of transitions throughout life, especially within the context of how historical time and place influences the structure of the life course (e.g., Elder, 1999). Additionally, the concept of linked lives better situates the study within a broader theoretical tradition by emphasizing how relationships inform trajectories of individual life courses.

The study of the life course sensitizes us to how economic instability during the last half-decade introduces uncertainty, especially for those in the midst of transitional periods in their lives, and how this might influence attitudes and behaviors related to social trust and integration. Additionally, the life course perspective situates findings about social integration and trust among young adults within a broader consideration of how this might influence social relationships and civic engagement into later adulthood. Framing this study in the context of the

life course perspective therefore provides a conceptual framework for understanding development in the context of social change.

Structural factors, such as economic instability, changes in the political climate, and historical time and place, influence and are contextualized by “biographical actors” (Heinz, 2009). Thus, lives are structured by historical time and place; how actors interpret and react to opportunities and constraints influences how this structure is integrated into individuals’ lives. Additionally, individuals make decisions about future trajectories based on their biographical experiences up to the point in time from which they are making the decision, as future outcomes cannot be known, but rather are assessed through reflexively examining past decisions and their outcomes (Heinz, 2009).

Social norms, such as the timing and ordering of achieving markers of adulthood, are also challenged and often destabilized by social change, which can alter the rigidity of trajectories throughout the life course. Here, the tension between the institutionalization and standardization of the life course is instructive for considering how the structure of the life course influences the transition to adulthood (Kohli, 2007). To what extent is the life course conditioned by social scripts and norms, and clearly structured and defined by various transitions into and out of roles associated with education, work, and family? Kohli (2007) posited a tripartitioning of the life course defined by education, work, and retirement. However, this conceptualization is challenged by an increasingly individualized life course marked by prolonged transitions into and out of education and work throughout life. Additionally, the structure of the life course is conditioned by welfare states and historical time and place (Mayer, 2004), and thus is susceptible to change from generation to generation.

These theoretical perspectives inform the focus and interpretation of findings for the current study. More specifically, theories related to the life course perspective contextualize discussions about developmental tasks associated with transitioning to adulthood that are dependent on the establishment and maintenance of social ties, such as gaining connections to the labor market, and beginning and supporting families. The investments individuals make in roles and social relationships formed and utilized during the transition to adulthood, and beyond, are intimately related to social trust. Changing social institutions and economic realities shape possible trajectories through the transition to adulthood, and influence confidence in society and optimism about the future. The choices that individuals make at this pivotal point in turn influence social structures, such as patterns of employment within the labor market, and norms around the timing of marriage and parenthood. Thus, individuals' feelings of social trust and integration are instructive as to the investments they are likely to make during the transition to adulthood; in turn, these investments may inform their trajectories throughout their adult lives.

Classical Theories on Implications of Social Change

Overarching and longstanding theoretical treatments of large-scale social change are instructive for identifying and addressing issues related to the study of social relationships and trust across the life course. Theories related to social change propelled by modernity, especially those developed by Durkheim (1933/1997; 1951/1979), Simmel (1923), and Tönnies (1887/2002), are particularly helpful for contextualizing the study of the life course in broader theoretical traditions. As articulated by these theorists, modernity has substantial implications for the nature and function of social relationships, and poses unique developmental challenges for young adults trying to form social relationships and find their way in the world.

Modernization, social integration, and suicide.

Borrowing an analogy from Durkheim (1933/1997), when one part of the social body becomes ill, all other parts are affected. To place this in context of the current study, with an ailing economy comes maladies within other parts of the social structure, such as increased burden and stress on families to support their children, and increased pressure and uncertainty surrounding young adults finding gainful employment (Swartz, Kim, Uno, Mortimer, & O'Brien, 2011). Accordingly, individuals are forced to adapt to adversities presented by an economic downturn, and often face new or shifting roles (Elder, 1999).

Durkheim (1933/1997) effectively argued that as societies become more complex, roles become more specialized, and solidarity among individuals increases as they become more reliant on others to successfully fulfill their specialized roles. While Durkheim's theory is dependent on stability within societies, change and fluctuation within social structures is more often the norm, which disrupts what Durkheim described as the equilibrium of society. These changes in social structures also necessarily influence the roles individuals fulfill, leading to disruptions in the social system. Such disruptions often have negative consequences, such as increased rates of suicide, though social relationships can be important sources of support (Durkheim, 1951/1979).

In his influential study on suicide, Durkheim (1951/1979) theorized that suicide has social determinants which can be identified by observing patterns of suicide, emphasizing the social factors that predict and protect against it. Religious affiliations, families, and alignment with political parties can serve as protective factors, though the relationship between social relationships and patterns of suicide is complicated. For example, Durkheim found that marriage

might not be good for young men, as suicide rates tend to increase for men who “prematurely” marry. Nevertheless, suicide rates are higher for those who remain unmarried—a trend that does not manifest until later in life—and among widows. Thus, according to Durkheim, marriage serves as a protective factor, though this effect varies by age and gender.

As another example, Durkheim noted that religion seems to serve as a protective factor, but this is mitigated by the degree to which the pursuit of knowledge and independent thought is encouraged. That is, as individuals become more independent through the pursuit of knowledge, they become less connected to others through their religion, and therefore religion ceases to protect against suicide. Durkheim argued that Judaism does not follow this trend, as it encourages the pursuit of knowledge in order to be better protected against persecution, as knowledge is a way to fortify cohesion and defend against oppressive forces. These examples suggest that the benefits of group membership depend on the cohesion of the group, and that change and individualization—or the distancing and fracturing of social groups—are associated with higher rates of suicide (1951/1979). The distance between social groups and individuals remains a pertinent theme throughout theories posited by Tönnies and Simmel, discussed below, who also considered the effect of modernity on individuality and connectivity within communities.

Durkheim also proposed a relationship between the density of families (both regarding their size, and the tendency of family members to disperse), and rates of suicide (1951/1979). That is, as families become denser as they grow, there are increased connections among family members, creating a stronger social fabric. Durkheim (1951/1979, p. 202) therefore posited:

But for a group to be said to have less common life than another means that it is less powerfully integrated; for the state of integration of a social aggregate can only reflect the

intensity of the collective life circulating in it. It is more unified and powerful the more active and constant is the intercourse among its members.

This theory about the protective factors of families may, and likely does, extend to other social groups and forms of social integration, though is also challenged by Tönnies and Simmel who argued that communities are weakened when the social group becomes larger and more diverse.

Durkheim found that membership in political societies also influences rates of suicide among the citizenry (1951/1979). Young, vibrant, emerging societies are associated with lower rates of suicide compared to older societies in decline. Somewhat surprisingly, suicide rates are higher before and after periods of “political upheaval,” including war (1951/1979). Though Durkheim tended to focus on major political upheavals, he noted that normative “election crises” are also associated with higher rates of suicide. Notably, suicide rates remain relatively low during periods of conflict, and rise during periods of relative stability directly following periods defined by change and uncertainty. Providing further evidence of this phenomenon, Durkheim found these trends are strongest within cities, where individuals have more opportunities to establish social connections, ready access to information regarding political affairs, and are more sensitized to and directly affected by social changes (1951/1979).

Durkheim also theorized that social change, even normative change such as economic fluctuations, are disruptive, especially to those who are more accustomed to lives of comfort. Economic fluctuations change what is seen as normative, which can force those who are accustomed to a certain amount of wealth to alter their goals and expectations. Those who live in poverty are less likely to be affected by these social changes, and Durkheim thus noted that rates of suicide tend to be lower among this population (1951/1979).

Durkheim's theoretical frameworks illustrate the complex relationship between social integration and social change. Social change introduced by the onset of modernization increased dependence among individuals through the division of labor. Yet social change also results in instability and uncertainty, associated with increases in anomic suicide when individuals feel isolated from social groups. Social integration is therefore beneficial to individuals, in general, as evidenced by the protective factor it serves against suicide demonstrated through Durkheim's studies.

Modernization, individualism, and community.

Tönnies (1887/2002) expresses a more pessimistic view of modernization in his theories related to the tension between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. Tönnies defined *Gemeinschaft* in terms of an organic form of community that naturally arises from close relationships with others, such as those established through kinship or deep personal relationships. *Gesellschaft*, alternatively, is mechanical, arises from the modernization of society, and is defined by artificial ties that often serve as a means to an end (1887/2002).

The tension between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* is reflected in the feelings of disconnect, disenfranchisement, and uncertainty some in the throes of transition to adulthood feel. Additionally, the functional and cold relationships associated with *Gesellschaft* may instill a desire to form deeper connections to communities, especially among young adults who have left education, though have yet to establish ties to the labor market or start families of their own. Tönnies' theories encapsulate why traditional notions of community and feelings of connectedness are often idealized, as he discussed the purest form of *Gemeinschaft* in nostalgic

terms in his early writings, serving to underscore the differences between the organic *Gemeinschaft* and the mechanical *Gesellschaft*.

Tönnies' and Durkheim's theories highlight the importance of social integration in modern societies, and conversely, the dangers of being disconnected from a social system that is so heavily dependent on finding ways to enter into, contribute to, and benefit from active participation in the social structure. Modernity promotes individualization, the pursuit of self-interested goals, and increased specialization of social roles. Individuals become increasingly reliant on others to fulfill social roles, and must put their faith in others whom they often know little about. Yet Simmel seemed to have a more optimistic outlook, especially compared to Tönnies, about the relationship between the individual and modern societies.

Simmel (1923) posited that modern society threatens the autonomy of individuals, while simultaneously creating specialized roles, which makes individuals indispensable to the social system. According to Simmel, individualism is expressed and reinforced as individuals strive to differentiate themselves from others, and to establish their importance and uniqueness (1923). Simmel's conceptualization of social structure and agency emphasizes the importance of recognizing and accounting for individuals and their motivations within social systems.

According to Simmel (1923), the pace of life in urban versus rural areas is greatly accelerated. The faster pace is also accompanied by increased exposure to novel stimuli and decreased familiarity of others within metropolises. This relates to Simmel's conceptualization of the stranger (discussed in more detail below), in which those who are not original members of a social group serve as a valuable resource in terms of novel contributions to the social group, though are never fully integrated members of the group.

More importantly, Simmel's (1923) theories provide an important consideration of how social structures influence individuals' behaviors, and encourage further exploration of individual's position and roles within modern societies. Simmel expanded his theory beyond explaining basic social interactions by considering the implications of modernity and social change for individuality and the nature of social relationships. His theories also provide an important link between sociological inquiries and questions about individual development, such as: How does social change prompt developmental change? How do individuals react to rapid changes associated with modernity, and how does this fundamentally change the nature and functions of social relationships?

Simmel (1923) also argued that both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of a group must be taken into account to understand group functions, individuals' roles within groups, and how the group benefits the individual. That is, larger groups serve different functions than smaller groups, and come with certain costs and benefits, as larger groups provide broader access to information and opportunities, but perhaps at the cost of having close, tight-knit relationships built on trust and familiarity. Simmel's articulate discussions about the role and functioning of social groups offer insights into the importance of considering the levels and quality of social integration, and directly parallels conceptualizations of strong and weak—or diverse—social ties posited by Granovetter (1973).

These theoretical perspectives make it evident that including social change within the conceptual framework for this study helps unite existing bodies of work regarding social trust—which directly relates to the dependence on and confidence in others to fulfill their social roles—and social integration—which directly relates to the argument that solidarity naturally emerges

when societies are structured by increasingly specialized roles. This will be further demonstrated in the ensuing discussion.

Social change as threat to social trust.

The theories discussed above have clear implications for issues related to social trust, especially given that social trust and social integration are both based on the reliance on relationships with others. Tönnies (1887/2002) was particularly concerned by how modernization would erode trust established and fostered in more traditional communities, leading to “impersonal trust,” defined by self-interest dominant in *Gesellschaft*. Tönnies posited that impersonal trust is primarily based on wealth and authority, such as the trust that people put in doctors. Most importantly, Tönnies emphasized that this type of impersonal trust does not promote community and social cohesion that defines *Gemeinschaft*, as it primarily serves to facilitate relationships in which people are dependent on others for society to function, and for personal gain.

In contrast to Tönnies, Durkheim had a more optimistic view of the role of trust in modern societies. While Durkheim (1933/1997) argued that social cohesion is strongly enforced in traditional “mechanical” societies, modern “organic” societies require a *collective conscience* that is supported by moral unity, which is akin to trust in others. That is, individuals are dependent on others who have shared values and goals for the continued functioning of modern societies. Notably, Durkheim did not explicitly address trust, though his theories emphasize that having confidence and faith in others to fulfill their roles is essential for the functioning of modern society. Durkheim also maintained that modern society is dependent on individuals supporting social structures over the self (in contrast to utilitarian theory which stresses that

people act in self-interested ways in order to maximize their own happiness, which may incidentally be to the benefit of society). While Durkheim may have overemphasized the motivating force and commitment to the needs of society over self-interest, and inadequately accounted for diverse groups with differing goals and values within a society, his theories provide a foundation from which to explore how social trust supports and emerges from social integration.

Simmel (1950, p. 318) addressed the importance of trust in modern societies more directly, viewing confidence (which he uses interchangeably with trust) as:

One of the most important synthetic forces within society . . . confidence is intermediate between knowledge and ignorance about a man. The person who knows completely need not trust; while the person who knows nothing can, on no rational grounds, afford even confidence.

Simmel recognized the increased individualization and freedom that accompanies modernity, and stressed that this simultaneously increases individuals' reliance on others. Therefore, individuals must have confidence in others to fulfill their roles, similar to Durkheim's theory regarding the division of labor, and form trusting relationships to support social structures (Simmel, 1978).

The notion of "the stranger" proposed by Simmel (1923) provides a useful framework for understanding trust and the function of social relationships in modern societies. The stranger is defined by four key elements: (1) neither belonging to nor being completely free from a community/society, or specific social groups; (2) distance to/from social groups; (3) the relative objectivity of the stranger; and (4) the degree of commonness and familiarity of the stranger to any given group (closely related to the issue of social distance). This conceptualization of the stranger is instructive for understanding social interactions and relationships in modern society,

as they are largely defined by the degree to which members of society are “strangers” to one another, tied tangentially by their fulfillment of specific social roles and forms of labor.

The stranger also is also informative for investigating social trust. The stranger is able to objectively observe the dynamics of a group, and also introduces new characteristics into the group (Simmel, 1923). The group and stranger form a symbiotic relationship, especially in the form of trade in which the stranger introduces new goods and services to the community. However, because the stranger is not an original member of the community, he/she is met with some distrust, as evidenced in the distance maintained between the group and the stranger. Measuring the “closeness” of the stranger to the social group is therefore indicative of the level of trust each has for the other (Simmel, 1923).

The theories put forth by Durkheim, Tönnies, and Simmel are unified by concern about the increased complexity of social institutions and relationships introduced by modernity. More recent theories regarding trust expand on their important theoretical contributions. Luhmann (1988) argued that the role of trust is to reduce the complexity of social interactions. Lewis and Weigert (1985, p. 968) developed an instructive definition of social trust that unifies the theories discussed above:

From a sociological perspective, trust must be conceived as a property of collective units . . . not of isolated individuals. Being a collective attribute, trust is applicable to the relations among people rather than their psychological states taken individually.

This conceptualization of trust provides a clear and important distinction between interpersonal trust, typically applied within political science and psychological studies, and social trust. Yet social trust is still a rather vague term, and is often used interchangeably with general trust. Thus, the usefulness of studying trust beyond how it relates to interpersonal relationships is sometimes

called into question (e.g., Hardin, 2006). Yet, even when challenging the usefulness of generalized trust, Hardin (2006, pp. 125-126) provided justification for why it matters:

Many, maybe even most, claims for generalized trust can readily be restated as claims that, in contexts in which trust generally pays off, it makes sense to risk entering into exchanges even with those whom one cannot claim to trust in the encapsulated interest sense . . . This is not a claim that one trusts those others, but only that one has relatively optimistic expectations of being able to build successful relationships with certain, perhaps numerous, others.

Knowing something about individuals' optimism and confidence in others offers insight into the likelihood that they will invest in relationships with others, and how wide and diverse of a social network they may develop. That is, whether individuals are likely to make investments in a select few who they are close to, or if they are also likely to invest in relationships with others they know little about.

Reflections on Theoretical Frameworks

The formative theories developed by Durkheim, Tönnies, and Simmel provide compelling theoretical frameworks for investigating the implications of social change for individual development and social relationships. Durkheim contributed important considerations of how the division of labor encourages social cohesion through the dependence of individuals fulfilling specialized roles, and the potential protective support social relationships offer. Tönnies emphasized the potential threat modernization poses to communities and close-knit relationships, and the increased necessity of impersonal trust to the functioning of society. Simmel's theories related to individuals and the metropolis offers an enlightening tension between social integration, trust, and modernity—or social change more generally.

Instability and change threaten the social equilibrium posited by Durkheim, and reshape the structure and rigidity of the life course and individuals' agency by altering the availability of

opportunities (Mayer, 2001). The life course perspective sensitizes us to the interaction between macro-level forces and individual agency in relation to social integration and trust. It also provides a critical framework for contextualizing the findings of this study in a specific historical time and place, and unifies the theoretical perspectives explored in this section.

Being socially connected in early adulthood is largely dependent upon finding stable employment or prolonging education, and forming stable relationships that offer support throughout adulthood. Therefore, the formation and maintenance of both strong and weak ties during the transition to adulthood takes on particular importance, emphasizing the need to better understand how, and in what ways, young adults are becoming socially integrated, the topic to which I now turn attention.

Support and Hindrance of Social Integration During The Transition to Adulthood

Social networks, and the social capital associated with them, serve as valuable sources of support during periods of transition. Both strong and weak social ties produce social capital (Granovetter, 1973), as individuals draw on resources provided through group membership and associations with others (Bourdieu, 1985; Putnam, 2000). Yet not all social networks are created equal. The benefits of being connected to various social networks depend on available resources within groups (Bourdieu, 1985; Putnam, 2000) and the diversity of social networks (DiPrete, Gelman, McCormick, Teitler, & Zheng, 2011).

Diverse friendship networks establish social capital that offers benefits to individuals through increased access to novel information (Granovetter, 1973, 2005) and more diverse connections to the labor force (Aguilera, 2002). While diverse networks are a richer source of social capital, most social networks do not cross boundaries of race, ethnicity, and sexual

orientation (DiPrete, Gelman, McCormick, Teitler, & Zheng, 2011). Additionally, people tend to self-select into networks consisting of others similar to them, which may result in larger social networks, but not necessarily in higher levels of social capital that lead to more opportunities for finding work, or jobs with higher wages (Mouw, 2003). Additionally, associating with a group that tends to engage in risky behavior, especially during adolescence, may lead to more negative outcomes later in life (e.g., Mahoney, Stattin, & Lord, 2004; Sletten, 2010). Nevertheless, there is evidence that popularity during adolescence is associated with better educational and employment outcomes, even if the peer groups engage in risky behaviors (Sletten, 2010).

Beyond obvious potential economic benefits, higher levels of social integration can also be a protective factor in terms of health and well-being. Among individuals with health problems that result in unemployment or financial difficulties, self-rated health tends to be higher for those who report having social support (Gorman & Sivaganesan, 2007; Kawachi, 1999). The importance of the potential protective nature of social integration is underscored when one considers the lack of support and social integration for youth transitioning out of the social service and juvenile justice systems during early adulthood (Osgood, Foster, & Courtney, 2010). Lacking a strong social network is associated with engaging in risky behaviors that may lead to negative health outcomes. For example, being less socially integrated during early adulthood is associated with higher rates of drug use in mid-adulthood (Green, Doherty, Reisinger, Chilcoat, & Ensminger, 2010), emphasizing the potential consequences of lacking a supportive and reliable social network.

Beyond peer networks: Families, neighborhoods, and community.

The most readily available source of social capital is through families (Coleman, 1988; Berlin, Furstenberg, & Waters, 2010; Furstenberg, 2005). Families can therefore be valuable sources of support, and provide avenues for making connections to other social networks. Additionally, higher levels of social integration and neighborhood involvement improve family functioning—communication, trust, and conflict resolution within families—among married and cohabiting parent households (Freistadt & Strochschein, 2012). The mutually beneficial aspects of family and community emphasize the importance of accounting for the dynamic relationships between the broader contexts in which individuals and families exist.

Entering and exiting social roles, such as those associated with adulthood, may support or hinder social integration. For example, becoming a parent can strengthen ties to the labor market in order to better provide for children (Lundberg & Rose, 2002). Although the transition to fatherhood is associated with a decrease in socialization with friends and coworkers, fathers often become more involved with extended family, who also provide more support, and increase the time spent engaged in service-oriented activities, such as fraternal and political groups, and parent-teacher activities (Daly, Ashbourne, & Brown, 2009; Knoester & Eggebeen, 2006). This investment in social activities may be especially beneficial to society and for social cohesion, as increased social activity may also encourage individuals to be more civically engaged and engaged in their community (Kwak, Shah, & Holbert, 2004; Son & Lin, 2008). However, increased civic and community engagement may be moderated by people's trust in others (Kwak, Shah, & Holbert, 2004), a finding that seems to persist across the life course (Jennings & Stoker, 2004).

The timing of entering roles associated with adulthood likely influences individuals' levels of social integration. Making an early transition to parenthood is often a barrier to receiving a college education, which puts young parents at a disadvantage for finding higher paid jobs (Hofferth, Reid, & Mott, 2001). Additionally, youth who work more than part-time while in high school, regardless of socioeconomic status, are more likely to have lower paying jobs and lower levels of education through adulthood (Staff & Mortimer, 2008), signaling that early transitions may significantly disadvantage individuals later in life. Indeed, the timing of transitions, and structural and social supports available to young adults, have significant implications for making a successful transition into adulthood (e.g., Benson & Elder, 2011; Settersten, 2005; Staff, Messersmith, & Schulenberg, 2009; Staff, Schulenberg, & Bachman, 2010).

Despite the limitations and potential negative influences of social networks, the importance and benefits of social integration are clear. Familial and non-familial relationships serve as valuable sources of social capital, especially during transitional periods. Having a diverse social network, even one consisting of weak ties, can lead to more opportunities for employment and better paying jobs, and offer individuals support during difficult times. Entering into roles associated with adulthood can also lead to higher levels of social engagement, especially when individuals transition into roles “on-time.” Individuals who are socially integrated are also more likely to make investments in their community and to be civically engaged. However, as alluded to above and discussed in more detail below, civic and community engagement are at least partially dependent on social trust.

Uncertainty and Social Trust Among Young Adults

Achieving markers of adulthood, such as starting a family, finding long-term employment, and moving out of the parental home are occurring at later ages compared to the Baby Boomer generation (e.g., Berlin, Furstenberg, & Waters, 2010; Fussell & Furstenberg, 2005; Settersten & Ray, 2010). This is largely influenced by a markedly more individualized life course (Mayer, 2001; Shanahan, 2000) and fluctuations in social structures such as the economy (Danziger & Ratner, 2010; Furstenberg, Rumbaut, & Settersten, 2005; Mills & Blossfeld, 2005). One's plans for the transition into adulthood may also be altered in response to societal level insecurities (Hellevik & Settersten, 2012), especially because employment opportunities for young adults are particularly contingent upon the health of the economy (Mayer, 2001; Mills & Blossfeld, 2005). Individuals may, therefore, mark time waiting for opportunities to improve. Conversely, they may make investments in their social capital by establishing stronger social ties, perhaps through prolonged education, that better position them in the future.

Making investments in social ties likely depends, at least partially, on the confidence individuals have in others and their optimism about the future (Helliwell, 2003), or in society more generally (Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005). The choices are also contingent upon perceptions of long-term implications of an economic downturn, such as the prospects for steady employment, and the resources available to individuals through families and social networks (Swartz, Kim, Uno, Mortimer, & O'Brien, 2011); or more generally, by perceptions of uncertainty and vulnerability (Heimer, 2001).

Yet trust is dependent on regularity, normality, and predictability (Hardin, 2002) while transitional periods in societies, and in development, are marked by instability, uncertainty, and

shifts in social roles (Miztal, 1996). Newton (2001) posited, “Trust seems to be less of an expression of an internal and unvarying personality trait, than a response of individuals to the changing external world around them” (p. 203). Miztal (1996, p. 199) elucidated how political and economic structures, such as communist regimes in which people have little control over political or economic dealings versus more democratic societies, inform social trust:

[T]rust on the general societal level is a by-product of behaviour towards others based on the norm of reciprocity and networks of civic engagements, which can be facilitated by the nature of governmental institutions and the level of socio-economic development.

In this model, trust flows from the top down: political and economic structures influence behaviors and interactions based on general levels of trust in others. However, it is important to also consider how trust can emerge from civic engagement, leading to higher levels of generalized trust (as demonstrated by Uslaner’s work on the dialectic relationship between trusting populations and corrupt governments).

Trust organizes and structures social relationships (Parsons, 1951), is a “social lubricant” (Miztal, 1996), and reduces complexity within social relationships (Luhmann, 1988). Without trust, people are less likely to make investments in and rely on various social networks that establish and reinforce social capital. Beyond low social trust possibly hindering social integration, it may also result in decreased civic participation and engagement (Putnam, 2000).

Over the last two decades, theorists and researchers have increasingly turned their attention to issues of declining trust in others and confidence in governments (Hardin, 2002; Putnam, 2000; Putnam, 1995), prompted by the modernization of societies (Miztal, 1996). Declining trust has implications for civic and community engagement (Putnam, 2000; Uslaner & Brown, 2005), the maintenance of social relationships and social capital (Coleman, 1990;

Hardin, 2002), and the functioning of social institutions (Hardin, 2002; Misztal, 1996). Putnam (2000) argued that decreased engagement in civic activities—fostered by and a facilitator of social integration—is detrimental to democracy, and emblematic of a breakdown within communities. Alternatively, Hardin (1998, 2002) maintained that it is confidence in government—akin to conceptualizations of trust among individuals—that influences levels of civic engagement, and has little to do with the health of a democracy. Indeed, low civic engagement may simply be a sign that there is little distrust in or opposition to the government, or actors within the government (Hardin, 2002). Additionally, increased governmental support eases the need for the support of others, leading to a decrease in investments of social capital (Coleman, 1990), offering an alternative perspective to Putnam’s argument that disengagement is propelled by declining levels of trust and social cohesion.

Missing from this discussion, however, is consideration for how other social forces, such as changes in the economy, may also influence the investments people make in their social capital. Where some maintain that trust is most accurately conceptualized at the micro-level (for example, Coleman, 1990; Hardin, 2006; Levi & Stoker, 2000), and as a stable trait (Newton, 1999; Uslaner, 2000), Misztal (1996) emphasized how structural changes can either erode or facilitate trust. For example, policy changes related to immigration may introduce new groups into a community, increasing diversity and resources in the community, or, conversely, increasing distrust and contempt towards migrants. Such considerations are vital for understanding how social trust influences, and is influenced by, social relationships and cohesion, especially during the transition to adulthood.

As there is still much debate about the stability of social and political trust (for example, Hooghe & Wilkenfeld, 2008; Uslaner, 2008), and its sensitivity to macro-level influences (Fairbrother & Martin, 2013; Farell, 2009; Netwon, 2001), I seek to address how patterns of social trust fluctuate among young adults during an economic recession, as well as two presidential elections in which there is a shift in political ideologies among the leaders of the country. The timing of data collection for the PSID allows for an investigation into changes in feelings related to optimism for the future and the direction society is heading during times of substantial social change.

Social Trust, Social Integration, and the Transition to Adulthood: Bridging the Gap

While studies provide conflicting evidence regarding the direction and strength of the relationship between social trust and integration, both concepts share common roots in civic engagement and social capital. Specifically, civic engagement and social capital emerge from and facilitate social integration (Coleman, 1988; Neilson & Paxton, 2010), and are central to the establishment and expression of social trust (Jennings & Stoker, 2004; Kwak, Shah, & Holbert, 2004; Nannestad, 2008; Newton, 2001; Rahn & Transue, 1998; Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005; Uslaner & Brown, 2005). Participating in activities such as volunteering (Oesterle, Johnson, & Mortimer, 2004), and entering into roles marking adulthood (Finlay, Wray-Lake, & Flanagan, 2010; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Flanagan, Levine, & Settersten, 2009), are associated with higher rates of civic participation well into adulthood (Jennings & Stoker, 2004; Oesterle, Johnson, & Mortimer, 2004). Thus, civic engagement helps strengthen connections to communities, and is beneficial to the functioning of a healthy democracy.

Yet there is growing concern about the decreased level of civic engagement among Millennials compared to past generations (Jennings & Stoker, 2004). This is especially troubling because becoming civically engaged in early adulthood is an important developmental task, both for individual development, and for the health of communities and society (Finlay, Wray-Lake, & Flanagan, 2010; Gimpel & Pearson-Merkowitz, 2009; Hart & Kirshner, 2009; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002; Wilkenfield, Lauckhardt, & Torney-Purta, 2010). Though individuals are likely not completely disconnected, as they may be integrated into specific social groups, this does not necessarily lead to increased civic engagement, as some groups tend to be more insular and therefore lack connections to broader communities (Foddy & Yamagishi, 2009).

Investigating how social trust, foundational to civic engagement (Flanagan, Stopa, Syvertser, & Stout, 2010; Putnam, 2000; Uslaner, 2008; Uslaner & Brown, 2005), encourages and emerges from social relationships provides valuable insight into how social integration translates into investments and increased participation in civic activities that are essential to the functioning of a healthy society. Civic participation may also increase feelings of social trust (Delhey & Newton, 2003; Gubbins & MacCurtain; Putnam, 2000), though the direction of the relationship between trust and civic engagement are unclear (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Uslaner, 2002). For example, it is possible that those who are more trusting are more likely to be civically engaged to begin with (Jennings & Stoker, 2004; Rahn & Transue, 1998; Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005; Uslaner & Brown, 2005). Social trust is also sensitive to macro-level factors, such as changes in the political climate and confidence in the government (Richey, 2010; Schyns &

Koop, 2010), making it challenging to identify how and why social trust may increase and decrease, and promote or emerge from civic engagement and social integration.

The current study will provide valuable insight into this complex during a period of substantial, though not completely disruptive and transformative, fluctuations in the economy and political climate. The timing of data collection for the PSID allows for an in-depth consideration of how both micro and macro-level factors may be associated the relationship between social trust and social integration. Additionally, analyzing cross-lagged models based on this panel data will clarify the direction of the causal relationship between integration and trust.

Clarifying Definitions of Trust, Social Integration, and Instability

Current literature provides conflicting evidence regarding the direction and strength of the relationship between social integration and trust (e.g., Delhey & Newton, 2003). The challenge in establishing a clear link, however, may be attributed to inadequate measures and methodologies (Nannestad, 2008). More specifically, research has not adequately addressed how both constructs emerge from and fortify social relationships within peer and familial networks, and across broader social networks, especially during periods of social change. Theorists have primarily focused on how distrust is often heightened during major economic or political transitions (e.g., Cook, Hardin, & Levi, 2005). Yet how does the relationship between confidence in others—and society more generally—and levels and types of social integration fluctuate during periods of instability not resulting in major transitions, such as a completely new economic structure?

Before moving forward, it is necessary to establish definitions of social integration and social trust as they apply to this study, as both lack consistent and agreed upon definitions in the

literature (Berkman, Glass, Brissette, & Seeman, 2000; Hardin, 2006; Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Luhmann, 2000, Seligman, 2000). Social integration broadly refers to belonging to a community with others who have shared beliefs, values, and norms. In this sense, social integration is about feeling a sense of connectedness with others, and belonging to one or more social groups which may provide various forms of social support (e.g., emotional support, or shared information that is beneficial to the members of the group). I therefore include two measures of social integration: one that considers feelings of belonging to community currently; and another that considers the intention of making investments in roles and relationships in the future that are beneficial to communities and society.

Social trust is broadly defined by a general feeling of trust in others. Yet broader conceptualizations of social trust encompass optimism about the future, and confidence that society functions in a way that makes sense to the individual—indicative of feeling society works in a way that is fair, and in a way that does not harm or disadvantage the individual. I am most concerned with social trust, as it is the most susceptible to social change, whereas interpersonal trust is considered a more stable construct (Nannestad, 2008; Uslaner 2002). Thus, I include four measures related to trust: one that considers general trust, or confidence, in others; a second that considers confidence in the functioning of society; a third that considers confidence in the future direction of society (related to optimism for the future); and a fourth that considers interpersonal trust.

Economic and political instability is typically associated with major transitions and social upheavals. The term “instability” is used in this study, however, to refer to the disruption, uncertainty, and change that more normative instability, such as fluctuations in the economy, and

changes related to a shifting of the power of political parties in congress and the presidency, introduces into individuals' daily lives. "Instability" is therefore a general term used henceforth that encompasses relatively normative fluctuations and changes in the economy and political climate.

Figure 1 illustrates the overarching conceptual model for this study. The model consists of three boxes: (1) instability (economic and political); (2) social trust; and (3) social integration. The model emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between social trust and integration, as well as with political and economic instability. Although the data used for this study do not allow for an investigation into how trust and integration influence instability, I assume that behavior related to trust and integration also influences social structures, such as the stability or instability of the economy and political regimes. As suggested by Hardin (2002), for example, those with high levels of social trust related to confidence in society and the government may be less likely to be civically engaged. Additionally, beyond policy changes, patterns of employment and educational attainment during an economic recession are also likely to influence the economic recovery.

In this study, I primarily investigate the relationship between the lower two boxes of Figure 1: social trust and social integration. However, given the timing of data collection for the PSID, the analyses tacitly account for economic and political instability. The theoretical perspectives explored above instruct the development of hypotheses stemming from the overarching model presented in Figure 1:

1. Stronger feelings of social trust, especially related to confidence in society and optimism for the future, will be associated with decreased feelings of social integration, as those

with more confidence in society and its future may be less motivated to utilize the support of, or make investments in, social relationships.

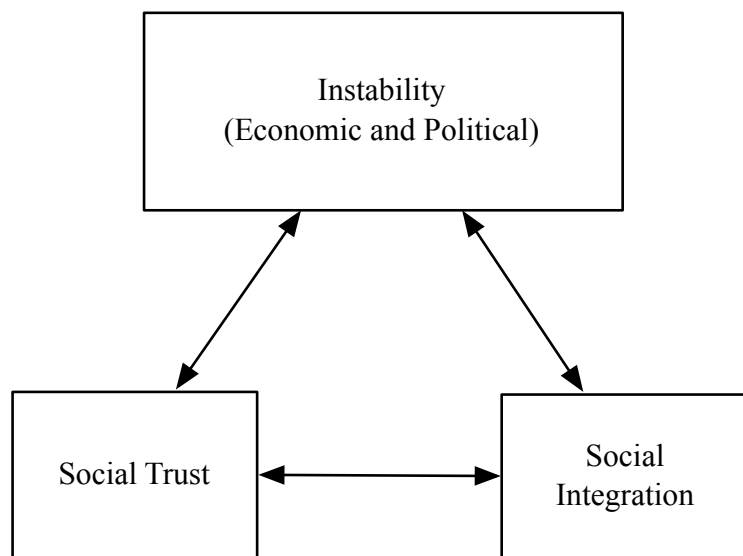
2. Those with stronger feelings of social trust, especially related to general trust in others, will be more likely to make investments in diverse social networks during the economic recession to better position themselves for the future, increasing feelings of social integration.
3. Stronger feelings of social integration may encourage more positive feelings about others and confidence in society, increasing levels of social trust.
4. Young adults navigating the transition to adulthood during the economic recession will have weaker feelings of social trust, as future prospects for employment become more tenuous.
5. Young adults will increasingly rely on social networks as sources of support during the economic recession, increasing levels of social integration.
6. Achieving markers of the transition to adulthood will negatively or positively influence feelings of social trust and integration, depending on the timing of the transition.

Through this study, I seek to further explore the dynamic relationship between trust and social integration. Though these concepts are often treated separately in the literature, as both have differing—though often related—roots, classical theories related to social integration and modernization provide a framework and justification for considering trust and integration together, and for investigating the mutually causal relationship between the two. In the following chapters, I first detail the sample characteristics and analytic approach of the study. I then present comprehensive results based on analyses of multiple cross-lagged models that

account for the relationship between combinations of measures related to social integration and trust. I conclude the paper by discussing substantive findings, and providing future directions for research.

Figure 1

Overarching model illustrating the reciprocal relationship between social trust, social integration, and instability



Chapter 3: Methods

To investigate the causal relationship between social integration and trust, I conduct cross-lagged analyses based on four waves of data from the PSID module on the transition to adulthood (henceforth referred to as the “PSID” for simplicity) collected between 2005 and 2011. In the analyses that follow, I address the research questions presented in Chapter 1. In this chapter, I provide an overview of the analytic approach to this study. I begin by describing the sample characteristics of the panel followed across four waves of data collection. Next, I present the measures related to trust and integration, and the covariates, used in the analyses. Finally, I discuss the specific analytic strategy used for obtaining the results.

The module on the transition to adulthood allows for a longitudinal analysis of the causal relationship between feelings of trust and social integration among young adults (see Figure 2), and how changes in economic situations influence this relationship. More specifically, the PSID allows for an investigation into how economic changes among influence measures of social integration and trust, including general social trust, optimism about the future, and interpersonal trust, and how the relationship between the two fluctuate before and during the economic recession.

Sample Characteristics

Beginning in 2005, the PSID biannually collects data on 17-27 year olds about the transition to adulthood. The first wave of data for the supplemental module on the transition to adulthood included 754 participants. For the current analysis, I use a four-wave panel restricted to those who participated in the study beginning in 2005. The most recent wave of data was collected in 2011 ($n = 606$).

Because 17 of the participants reported still being in high school in 2005, they are not included in the final sample, as this group likely have different patterns of social integration by the very nature of still being high school, leaving a total sample size of 728. Therefore, the panel consists of 728 individuals, between the ages of 17 to 21 (ages reported for the panel throughout the paper are the age of the respondents in 2005), with a mean age of 18.93. As shown in Table 1, of the 728 individuals who participated in 2005, 640 participated in 2007, 634 participated in 2009, and 606 participated in 2011. In 2005, the panel consisted of 393 women and 335 men who predominantly identify as white ($n = 354$) or Black ($n = 293$), with relatively few identifying as Hispanic ($n = 68$), Asian ($n = 8$), American Indian or Alaska Native ($n = 2$), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander ($n = 2$), or other ($n = 1$). The lack of racial diversity beyond those who identify as Black or white is attributable to the initial sampling method of the PSID in the 1960s in which low-income families were over-sampled, resulting in an over-sampling of Black families. Because those who identify as white make up a large percentage of the sample (48.6%), a dichotomous variable of white versus non-white is used in the analyses.

As this study focuses on the transition to adulthood, it is worth conducting a detailed exploration of the sample characteristics related to this period of life. At the time of the first wave of data collection, under half of the participants had completed 12 years of education; 31.9% of the participants had completed 11 years or less of education (this includes individuals who have not completed high school, though did not report being a student at the time of data collection), and 41.6% completed at least 12 years of education. A smaller portion, 24.2% completed 13-14 years of education, and 2.4% completed 15-16 years. In 2009, 9.1% had completed 11 years or less of education, and 34.1% had completed 12 years of education.

Compared to 2005, a larger portion, 28.3%, completed 13-14 years of education, 25.9% completed 15-16 years of education, and 2.7% completed at least some postgraduate work. Participants had an average of 11.9, 12.8, and 13.4, and 13.7 years of education in 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2011 respectively (see Table 1).

Young adults in their early to late twenties often enter into long-term relationships, cohabit with partners, marry, and start families. As demonstrated in Table 2, a substantial amount of the participants, 39.7%, report being in romantic relationships in 2005, with only 9.1% reporting that they were currently cohabiting with a partner. Rates of romantic relationships steadily decline between 2005 and 2011, when only 22.9% of the participants report being in a romantic relationship. Cohabitation, however, follows the opposite trajectory, with rates nearly doubling between 2005 and 2011 to a rate of 18.5%. Table 3 shows that marriage follows a similar trajectory to that of cohabitation, with only 3.3% of participants reporting being married in 2005, increasing to 19.3% in 2011. A surprisingly high proportion of participants, 13.2%, are parents in 2005 (though rates are lowest among 17 and 18 year olds, at 8.8% and 9.9%, respectively), increasing to 39.4% in 2011.

As individuals exit the period of life defined by compulsory schooling, many enter the labor force or continue on to higher education. As shown in Table 4, half of the respondents reported that they were employed or in the military as of 2005. This figure rises to 62.0% in 2007 and 72.1% in 2011. Perhaps reflecting changes in the economy, 13.5% of respondents were unemployed and looking for work in 2005, falling slightly to 10.9% in 2007, and increasing to 17.2% in 2009 before falling to 14.5% in 2011. Unlike rates of unemployment, the percentage of respondents who report attending school steadily falls, starting at 31.5% in 2005, declining to

6.9% in 2011. Table 5 illustrates that patterns related to leaving the parental home follows the opposite trajectory from rates of employment, with most of the participants still living with their parents in 2005 (59.6%), falling to 28.0% in 2011.

Incomes during early adulthood are likely to be variable, as individuals transition into and out of various jobs seeking connections to stable employment. In 2005, the mean annual income of respondents was \$5,345 (with a standard deviation of \$8,345). The mean income nearly doubles in 2007 to \$10,0926 (with a standard deviation of \$10,548), doubling again by 2011 to \$21,027 (with a standard deviation of \$20,588). Because means are influenced by extreme values, it is useful to consider more nuanced descriptive statistics regarding the income distribution among respondents. In 2005, 50% of the respondents made less than \$2,200 in a year, with only 17% making \$10,000 or more (the highest earned income in one year was \$104,000). In 2007, 50% of the participants made \$8,000 or less, and 42% made \$10,000 or more (the highest earned income was \$55,000). Incomes continued to rise among respondents in 2009, with 50% making \$11,375 or less a year. Seventy-five percent (75%) made \$24,000 or more a year, with three individuals (0.03%) reporting making over \$100,000. In 2011, 50% of the respondents made \$18,000 or less in one year, and 25% made \$30,000 or more (5 respondents [1%] made over \$100,000).

The distribution of incomes is quite variable across and within years, though does not necessarily accurately measure economic instability within the sample. More specifically, it is difficult to determine who is actually economically disadvantaged, as incomes often widely vary among those in their 20s, and fewer than 3% of the respondents report receiving any form of public assistance. These rates remain relatively unchanged when family-level data is considered

(whether or not respondents' parents receive any form of welfare), in which fewer than 5% report receiving any form of public assistance.

Measures of Social Trust and Social Integration

In the following analyses, models include measures related to social trust and social integration, and covariates accounting for age, gender, race, educational attainment, economic instability, and achieving markers of the transition to adulthood. Measures of trust probe three distinct aspects of trust: (1) general trust in others; (2) confidence in society, including optimism about the future of society; and (3) interpersonal trust. Measures of social integration probe two aspects of integration: (1) a direct measure of current feelings of belonging to a community; and (2) a measure that taps into the intention and likelihood of individuals making future investments in roles and activities that facilitate and increase social integration. Each of the measures and covariates are discussed in more detail below.

Each of the measures assess how often in the past month respondents have had feelings related to different aspects of trust and integration. Responses are on a scale of 0-5, rescaled from 1-6 to simplify interpretations of the results: 0 = "never;" 1 = "once or twice;" 2 = "about once a week;" 3 = "two or three times a week;" 4 = "almost every day;" and 5 = "every day." For simplicity, the above categories have been collapsed into three categories for the descriptive portrait described below (though un-collapsed covariates are included in the final analyses): 0-1 = "infrequently;" 2-3 = "somewhat frequently;" and 4-5 = "frequently."

Social trust.

The PSID contains measures that allow for a more nuanced investigation of trust that address criticism common to survey data on trust (Nannestad, 2008). Measures of trust that assess if “most people can be trusted” tend to have disproportionately favorable responses, and the interpretation of the definition of trust is open to respondents’ interpretations, leading to random variability; though there is strong test-retest reliability of measures of generalized trust (Nannestad, 2008; Uslaner, 2002). The following measures therefore probe multiple aspects of trust:

1. Frequency of feeling people basically good (“people good”)
2. Frequency of feeling way society works makes sense (“society makes sense”)
3. Frequency of feeling society getting better (“society better”)
4. Frequency of feeling trusting relationships with others (“trusting relationships”)

These measures are better conceptualized as confidence in others (*people good*), confidence in society and optimism about the future (*society makes sense/society better*), and interpersonal trust (*trusting relationships*). Therefore, these measures address both interpersonal trust as well as broader conceptualizations of social trust.

As opposed to providing a detailed account of descriptive statistics for each of these variables, and those discussed below, I highlight key overarching trends (see Table 6 for a more detailed overview of the variables). The responses to *people good* are relatively equally distributed in 2005, with 33.5% of the participants indicating people are infrequently basically good, and 34.7% reporting frequently. However, rates on this general measure of trust become more positive by 2009, with those who infrequently feel people basically good drops to 25.7% in

2009, while frequent feelings increase to 41.2%. The rates remain relatively stable in 2011, though those who frequently feel people basically good decreases to 37.1%.

The two variables that relate to confidence in society and optimism for the future, *society makes sense* and *society better*, follow similar patterns to each other. Rates of infrequent feelings for each of these variables rise and fall between each wave of data collection between 2005 and 2011, fluctuating between 43.0% and 56.7%. Frequent feelings of *society better* remain relatively stable at about 21.5% between 2005 and 2011, though decline to 15.5% in 2007. Frequent feelings of *society makes sense* decline from 26.6% in 2005 to 20.8% in 2007, rising slightly to 21.8% and 21.1% in 2009 and 2011, respectively. Notably, these trends suggest that the participants in this study are not overly high in measures of social trust, and rates of higher social trust tend to remain stable over time. More pessimistic views on social trust do, however, fluctuate more over time, increasing—that is, becoming more pessimistic—between 2005 and 2007, before declining—becoming less pessimistic—in 2009 at the time of the economic collapse, which is surprising. This trend may be more closely associated with shifts in the political climate.

The interpersonal measure of trust, *trusting relationships*, is negatively skewed, and remains relatively stable over time, with 74.9-78.1% reporting “frequently” feeling they have trusting relationships across all four waves of data collection. This is a notable contrast to the three measures of social trust, which tend to be less skewed and vary more over time. Importantly, individuals tend to move in both directions across the waves of data collection, with some reporting more frequent, and others less frequent feelings regarding each of the measures. To find clarity in the data, I focus on changes in measures related to social trust and integration

among those who are 17-18, 19, and 20-21 years old (in 2005) between 2005-2007, 2007-2009, 2009-2011, and 2007-2011—just before and in the midst of the recession. This fine-grained analysis provides a revealing window into the stability and fluctuations within each measure over time.

Changes in feelings of social trust.

The descriptive portrait based on frequencies discussed above suggests that there may be more stability within these measures than is observed when we account for change within individuals over time, as illustrated by Table 7. Specifically, there are changes across age groups and between waves that suggest that feelings related to confidence in people, and confidence in society and optimism about the future are not stable, and may be influenced by social factors, such as changes in the economy and political climate (this is in contrast to the measure of interpersonal trust, *trusting relationships*, in which respondents were less likely to report substantial increases or decreases over time). To investigate change within measures, I focus on substantial increases or decreases in feelings related to the measures. Changes of a decrease or an increase of 2 or more are considered substantial, as this constitutes a change from categories such as “never” to “about once a week,” and “two or three times a week” to “everyday.”

Taking a broad view of *society better* between 2007-2011, individuals were more likely to report a substantial increase in the measure, suggesting that young adults may simply become more optimistic over time (between 20 and 21% of all respondents reported a substantial increase, whereas only 11-15% reported a substantial decrease). Individuals across all ages (17-21) were more likely to report a substantial decrease than an increase in *society better* between 2005-2007. Surprisingly, this trend reverses between 2007-2009, where individuals were more

likely to report increases in *society better*. Only those aged 17-18 and 20-21 were more likely to report increases than decreases on this same measure between 2009-2011, though rates of increased feeling are lower in 2009-2011 than 2007-2009, overall. The trend for *society makes sense* follows much the same pattern as for *society better*, except respondents across all ages were more likely to report a decrease than an increase in this measure between 2009-2011.

People good also varies between age groups and across waves. Respondents 17-19 years old were more likely to report increases in *people good* between 2005-2007 (20.3% reported increases compared to 16.3% of 17-18 year olds, and 11.7% of 19 year olds, who reported decreases), whereas 20-21 year olds were more likely to report decreases (18.3% versus 15.7%). Those aged 17-18 were more likely to report increases in feelings of *people good* across each wave, whereas 19 year olds were nearly evenly split in those who substantially increased or decreased in *people good*. Interestingly, respondents aged 20-21 were much more likely to report increases in *people good* between 2007-2009 (21.4% compared to 8.8%), and decreases between 2009-2011 (15.5% compared to 9.2%). An in-depth exploration of the implications of these changes will be included in Chapter 5.

Social integration.

The objective measures of social integration in the PSID are dichotomous variables, and tend to be positively skewed (see Table 8). Additionally, rates of participation in each of the activities tend to decrease between 2005 and 2009. In 2005, 25.8% of the respondents reported participating in the arts, falling to 10.6% in 2011. This same trend is seen for participation in sports teams and school clubs, with rates falling from 27.5% to 13.5% and 23.8% to 7.4%, respectively. Rates of volunteerism stay somewhat more stable, with 32.4% of respondents

participating in volunteer work in 2005, falling to 18.8% in 2011, though the rates of decline are less drastic than the other objective measures across years. Rates of participation in social action groups are low across all four years, with only 5.8% of respondents taking part in social action groups in 2005, falling to 3.0% by 2011. Because these variables have low variability, and also may not accurately measure non-traditional ways young adults may be socially integrated or civically engaged, subjective measures were deemed more appropriate for this study.

Two measures relate to a subjective measure of social integration:

- Frequency of feeling belonging to community (“*belonging*”)
- Frequency of feeling having something of value to contribute to society (“*contribute*”)

These measures probe social integration from two vantage points. *Belonging* is a more direct measure that accounts for individuals’ feelings of belonging to community, and offers insight into whether or not they feel they have established social ties. *Contribute* is a less direct measure that accounts for possible future investments individuals might make in social relationships and roles that allow them to make contributions to society. Although these measures offer insights into social integration from different perspectives, they are moderately correlated across waves (from 0.430-0.492).

Most participants, 45.6%, frequently feel a sense of belonging to their community in 2005, with 36.7% infrequently feeling a sense of belonging, rates that stay relatively stable across the following three waves (though positive feelings of belonging decrease to 42.4% by 2011). Frequent feelings that they have something of value to contribute to society start at 48.2% in 2005, steadily rising to 66.7% in 2011. Only 18.7% infrequently report feeling that they

contribute to society in 2005, falling to 14.4% in 2007 and 2009, and 11.9% in 2011. As with the variables above, these general statistics mask individual fluctuations in responses to these items across the waves of data collection.

Changes in feelings of social integration.

A surprising trend emerges in which those aged 17-19 (in 2005) were more likely to report substantial increased feelings of *belonging*, whereas 20-21 year olds were more likely to report a substantial decrease between 2005-2007. The trend becomes more complicated with the next two waves of data (2007-2009, and 2009-2011). During these years, those between the ages of 17 to 19 were more likely to report decreased feelings of belonging, while the trend for those aged 20-21 levels off between 2007-2009, and reverses between 2009-2011, suggesting that those achieving markers of adulthood, such as finding stable employment, may find other connections to communities.

The other measure of social integration, *contribute*, which taps into possible future investments that foster connections to broader communities or society at large, also paints a rather complicated picture. Between 2005-2007, 17-19 year olds were much more likely to report an increase in feeling they have something of value to contribute to society. These feelings become more stable between 2007-2009 across all ages, with fewer than 30% reporting substantial increases or decreases in *contribute*. Where this may suggest a developmental, or "threshold," effect in which individuals establish these feelings in their late teens or early 20s, individuals who were aged 17-19 in 2005 are more likely to report a substantial increase in *contribute* between 2009 and 2011 when they are well into their 20s.

Overall, between 15% and 23% of individuals in all age categories report increased feelings of having something of value to contribute between 2007-2011 (as opposed to below 12% reporting a decrease in these feelings). This trend differs from that of *belonging* between 2007 and 2011, where 25% of 17-19 year olds report decreases (only 16% of 17-18 years olds and 13% of 19 year olds report increases), compared to 20% of 20-21 year olds who report increases (as opposed to 16% who report decreases).

These descriptive portraits emphasize two key points: First, there are not universal trends marching upwards or downwards on any of the key measures. Second, while measures related to social integration seem to be more sensitive to developmental or transitional influences, those related to social trust may be more sensitive to broader social forces, such as the political or economic climate.

Individual Economic Instability

The simplest and most direct measure of economic instability is through creating a categorical variable based on the difference in individuals' earned annual income between 2011 and 2005 (subtracting incomes in 2005 from 2011). However, this variable is problematic as individual income is likely to fluctuate among individuals in their early to mid 20s. Therefore, this is likely not a reliable measure of economic security. Additionally, it does not account for support that young adults may receive from their family, which is at least partially dependent on the families' socioeconomic status.

To test for the possible mitigation of economic instability based on support from individuals' families, an interaction term between mothers' years of education and level of economic instability was considered. However, neither individual level data, nor family level

data reveals much variability in terms of economic instability as measured through receiving public assistance. Specifically, fewer than 5% of individuals or families reported having received public assistance in the past 10 years. This may indicate that the module on the transition to adulthood largely consists of individuals from higher socioeconomic statuses that have been more likely to extend their participation, and may have been easier to retain. .

To measure *economic responsibility*, summary variables were constructed for 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2011, consisting of three scale variables, ranging from 0 (“no economic responsibility”) to 5 (“complete economic responsibility”): (1) “earning own living;” (2) “paying own bills;” and (3) “paying rent or mortgage.” The final variables contain values 1 through 15. I assume that those with the highest levels of economic responsibility are the most self-sufficient, and may be more susceptible to economic instability in response to changes in the economy. A dummy variable was therefore created to compare those of low (consisting of summary scores of 1-5) and high (consisting of summary scores of 11-15) versus moderate (consisting of summary scores of 6-10) economic responsibility.

Transition to Adulthood

To assess how achieving markers of the transition to adulthood influences feelings of trust and social integration, a summary index of the transition to adulthood for 2007, 2009, and 2011 is introduced into the models. This index includes a count of the following dichotomous variables: (1) whether or not participant has children; (2) whether or not participant still lives in the parental home; and (3) whether or not participant is cohabiting or married. An indicator related to participation in the labor market is not included in the model, as individual’s work trajectories tend to fluctuate during this period of life. Additionally, a measure related to

economic responsibility, which addresses whether or not individuals are primarily responsible for earning their own living, paying their own bills, and paying their own rent or mortgage, is included in the model.

These variables are introduced into the models as an index to better assess their relationship to social trust and integration. That is, I am most interested in accounting for how cumulative transitions into adult roles influences trust and integration.

Analytic Strategy

Cross-lagged models were run using STATA/IC 13. I ran eight models to test cross-lagged effects between sets of variables related to social integration (presented first in the following list) and social trust (presented second): (1) *belonging* and *trusting relationships*; (2) *contribute* and *society getting better*; (3) *contribute* and *trusting relationships*; (4) *society better* and *belonging*; (5) *belonging* and *society makes sense*; (6) *contribute* and *society makes sense*; (7) *belonging* and *people good*; (8) *contribute* and *people good*.

Time-varying equality constraints were applied for varying levels of economic insecurity (low, moderate, and high), educational attainment (a dummy variable including no degree, high school degree, and college degree versus some college), and objective measures related to achieving markers of adulthood (specifically, moving out of the parental home, establishing long term relationships, and childbearing) in 2007, 2009, and 2011. Equality constraints were also applied for age in 2005 (centered on the mean age of 18.927), gender, and a dichotomous measure of race.

Accounting for the above variables allows for the consideration of differences between men and women, races, varying levels of economic insecurity and education, and those who have

achieved markers of the transition to adulthood in relation to measures of social trust and integration over time. Error terms are also correlated to account for the correlation of unexplained variance (Acock, 2013; Kenney, 1975), and maximum likelihood with missing values was used to account for missing data.

Based on preliminary factor analyses, neither the measures of social integration nor trust load strongly on distinct factors. Therefore, eight separate models are run with single pairings of measures related to integration and trust. This method allows for a more nuanced exploration of how measures that tap into different aspects of integration and trust mutually influence each other over time.

As shown in the correlation matrices included in Tables 9a-9d, the measures are moderately correlated within years, suggesting there is a relationship between the constructs related to trust and social integration. However, the strength of the correlations do not raise concerns of multicollinearity. Items across waves are not highly correlated, suggesting variation within each item across years. Structural equation models are conducted under the assumption of multivariate normal distribution. Tests of normality, presented in Table 10, suggest the models meet assumptions of univariate skewness and kurtosis, as the absolute values of skewness are below 3 and kurtosis below 10 (Kline, 2010). Cross-lagged models are run using bootstrap analysis (using 1000 replications and seeded at 111 to allow for replication of the results), which eases the assumption of normality, and provides less biased estimates of the covariance matrix (Allison 2003; Carter, 2006; Yuan & Bentler, 2000).

Good fitting models tend to have CFIs of over 0.90, or the stricter criteria of 0.95 (Kline, 2010), and RMSEAs under 0.60. As shown in results from goodness of fit tests in Table 11, the

models never achieve CFIs over 0.90, and the RMSEAs are consistently under 0.6, though conflicting evidence between fit indexes is not uncommon (Ullman, 2006). Because model fit estimates may not be reliable when data are not normally distributed (Hu & Bentler, 1998), the measures of goodness of fit may not be providing accurate estimates of the goodness of fit of the models, and therefore I conservatively conclude that the models are of an adequate fit, though the RMSEAs of most models suggest a good fit.

Figure 2

Model of cross-lagged relationship between social trust and social integration over four time points, 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2011

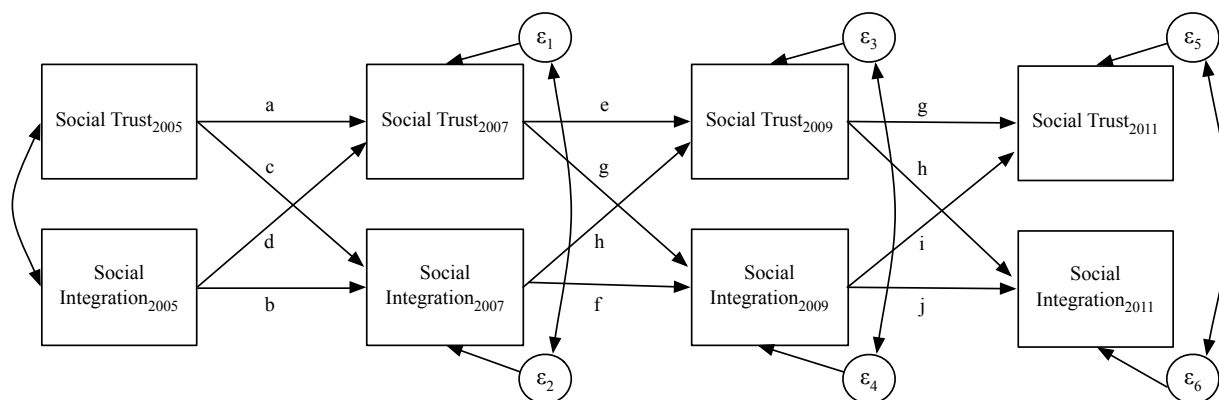


Table 1

Participants' age and years of education in 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2011

	2005		2007		2009		2011	
	<i>M (SD)</i>	Range	<i>M (SD)</i>	Range	<i>M (SD)</i>	Range	<i>M (SD)</i>	Range
Age	18.93 (1.1)	17-21	20.97 (1.1)	19-23	22.91 (1.1)	20-25	24.91 (1.1)	22-27
Respondents' Education (in years)	11.93 (1.4)	1-16	12.83 (1.6)	7-17	13.39 (1.9)	5-17	13.72 (2.0)	8-17

Note. Sample size for variables: Age 2005 ($n = 728$), age 2007 ($n = 719$), age 2009 ($n = 701$), and age 2011 ($n = 701$); Respondents' education 2005 ($n = 640$), 2006 ($n = 563$), 2009 ($n = 584$), 2011 ($n = 632$).

Table 2

Percentage of respondents in long-term relationships, cohabiting, and who are parents in 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2011

	2005		2007		2009		2011	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Romantic relationship	47.8%	39.7%	43.4%	33.6%	37.2%	28.9%	39.4%	22.9%
Cohabiting	87.6%	9.1%	76.9%	15.3%	66.1%	19.4%	62.2%	18.5%
Has children	86.8%	13.2%	77.8%	22.2%	69.2%	30.8%	60.6%	39.4%

Note. Sample size for variables: Romantic relationship 2005 ($n = 728$) (12.5% of the respondents indicated they were either married or cohabiting), 2007 ($n = 640$) (23.0% of the respondents indicated they were either married or cohabiting), 2009 ($n = 634$) (33.9% of the respondents indicated they were either married or cohabiting), 2011 ($n = 606$) (37.6% of the respondents indicated they were either married or cohabiting); Cohabiting 2005 ($n = 727$) (3.3% of the respondents indicated they were married), 2007 ($n = 640$) (7.8% of the respondents indicated they were married), 2009 ($n = 634$) (14.5% of the respondents indicated they were married), 2011 ($n = 606$) (19.3% of the respondents indicated they were married); Has children 2005 ($n = 727$), 2007 ($n = 640$), 2009 ($n = 634$), 2011 ($n = 606$).

Table 3

Respondents' marital status in 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2011

	Married	Never	Divorced	Separated	Widowed
		married			
Marital status (2005)	3.3%	96.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
Marital status (2007)	7.8%	91.6%	0.5%	0.2%	0.0%
Marital status (2009)	14.5%	82.8%	1.3%	1.3%	0.2%
Marital status (2011)	19.3%	75.3%	1.7%	3.6%	0.2%

Note. 2005 ($n = 728$); 2007 ($n = 640$); 2009 ($n = 634$); 2011 ($n = 606$).

Table 4

Respondents' employment status in 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2011

	Employed/ In military	Temporarily unemployed	Unemployed/ Looking for work	Disabled	Keeping house	Student	Other
Employment status (2005)	50.0%	0.6%	13.5%	0.3%	3.2%	31.5%	1.1%
Employment status (2007)	62.0%	0.6%	10.9%	0.3%	3.8%	22.0%	0.3%
Employment status (2009)	66.1%	0.2%	17.2%	0.5%	4.9%	10.9%	0.3%
Employment status (2011)	72.1%	0.5%	14.5%	0.5%	5.5%	6.9%	0.0%

Note. 2005 ($n = 728$), 2007 ($n = 640$), 2009 ($n = 634$), and 2011 ($n = 606$).

Table 5

Respondents' living situation in 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2011

	Live with parents	Apartment	College dorm	College fraternity/ sorority	House or condo parents own	House or condo respondent owns	Other
Residence (Fall/Winter '05)	59.6%	16.9%	15.9%	0.4%	1.9%	1.0%	4.3%
Residence (Fall/Winter '07)	36.6%	39.1%	13.6%	0.2%	1.7%	4.1%	4.8%
Residence (Fall/Winter '09)	31.6%	50.4%	2.8%	0.2%	1.9%	7.1%	6.0%
Residence (Fall/Winter '11)	28.0%	52.7%	0.5%	0.0%	2.7%	11.1%	5.1%

Note. 2005 ($n = 728$), 2007 ($n = 640$), 2009 ($n = 633$), and 2011 ($n = 604$). Because young adults tend to move in and out of the parental home, especially during the summer among those who attend college, summer residence was included as a separate question on the PSID, and is not included in the table.

Table 6

Frequency, in the past month, of feelings related to social integration and trust for 2005, 2007, 2009, and 2011

	2005			2007			2009			2011		
	Infreq	Some- what	Freq	Infreq	Some- what	Freq	Infreq	Some- what	Freq	Infreq	Some- what	Freq
Social Trust												
Society better	51.0%	27.4%	21.6%	56.7%	27.9%	15.5%	48.4%	30.1%	21.5%	50.5%	28.0%	21.5%
Society makes sense	43.0%	30.4%	26.6%	51.2%	28.0%	20.8%	47.4%	30.8%	21.8%	51.0%	27.9%	21.1%
People good	33.5%	31.8%	34.7%	30.3%	33.6%	36.1%	25.7%	33.1%	41.2%	26.9%	36.0%	37.1%
Trusting relationships	7.7%	17.5%	74.9%	8.1%	14.7%	77.2%	6.6%	16.1%	77.3%	8.1%	13.9%	78.1%
Social Integration												
Belonging	36.7%	17.7%	45.6%	34.6%	18.3%	47.0%	35.7%	20.2%	44.2%	37.3%	20.3%	42.4%
Contribute	18.7%	33.2%	48.2%	14.4%	29.5%	56.0%	14.4%	23.7%	61.9%	11.6%	21.8%	66.7%

Note. Responses are based on a 6 point scale, with 0 = never, and 5 = everyday. Categories 0 and 1 have been collapsed into the category of “infrequently,” 2 and 3 into “somewhat frequently,” and 6 into “frequently”. Sample sizes for variables: People basically good 2005 ($n = 726$), 2007 ($n = 637$), 2009 ($n = 634$), 2011 ($n = 606$); Society getting better, 2005 ($n = 726$), 2007 ($n = 639$), 2009 ($n = 634$), 2011 ($n = 604$); Way society works makes sense 2005, ($n = 726$), 2007 ($n = 639$), 2009 ($n = 633$), 2011 ($n = 606$); Trusting relationships with others 2005 ($n = 728$), 2007 ($n = 639$), 2009 ($n = 633$), 2011 ($n = 607$); Belonging to community 2005 ($n = 728$), 2007 ($n = 638$), 2009 ($n = 634$), 2011 ($n = 606$); Contribute to society 2005 ($n = 727$), 2007 ($n = 637$), 2009 ($n = 633$), 2011 ($n = 606$).

Table 7

Percentages of respondents who reported substantial changes in measures across waves

		2005-2007		2007-2009		2009-2011		2007-2011	
		Age in 2005							
		-2 or less	+2 or more	-2 or less	+2 or more	-2 or less	+2 or more	-2 or less	+2 or more
Social Trust									
Difference in people good	17-18	16.26%	20.33%	15.42%	17.18%	15.14%	19.72%	13.70%	18.26%
	19	11.73%	20.37%	14.86%	14.19%	13.19%	13.89%	14.79%	15.49%
	20-21	18.34%	15.72%	8.84%	21.40%	15.53%	9.22%	12.14%	18.93%
Difference in society better	17-18	18.70%	13.82%	14.10%	17.62%	14.29%	17.97%	12.39%	21.10%
	19	16.67%	14.20%	12.84%	18.92%	15.97%	14.58%	15.49%	20.42%
	20-21	20.87%	9.13%	7.83%	22.12%	14.08%	16.02%	10.63%	21.26%
Difference in society makes sense	17-18	22.36%	13.82%	16.30%	18.50%	18.35%	12.84%	15.53%	15.98%
	19	20.37%	16.05%	17.57%	16.22%	15.28%	13.89%	16.20%	14.79%
	20-21	22.17%	14.35%	13.82%	23.96%	16.02%	12.14%	18.36%	20.77%
Difference in trusting relationships	17-18	10.98%	12.20%	10.18%	11.50%	11.98%	7.83%	9.13%	10.05%
	19	8.02%	9.26%	9.46%	6.76%	9.03%	9.72%	13.38%	9.86%
	20-21	11.69%	9.96%	6.91%	9.22%	6.31%	6.31%	8.70%	11.59%
Social Integration									
Difference in belonging	17-18	17.07%	22.36%	21.59%	14.98%	22.94%	18.81%	25.11%	16.44%
	19	17.28%	23.46%	21.62%	12.16%	18.75%	13.89%	25.35%	12.68%
	20-21	21.30%	17.83%	20.83%	19.44%	12.62%	21.36%	16.43%	20.29%
Difference in contribute	17-18	10.61%	21.63%	8.00%	14.67%	11.06%	16.13%	11.47%	18.35%
	19	9.88%	22.84%	14.86%	11.49%	8.33%	23.61%	9.15%	23.24%
	20-21	8.70%	13.91%	11.11%	13.43%	9.71%	11.65%	9.71%	16.50%

Note. 2005-2007: ages 17-18 ($n = 246$); 19 ($n = 162$); 20-21 ($n = 230$). 2007-2009: ages 17-18 ($n = 227$); 19 ($n = 148$); 20-21 ($n = 216$). 2009-2011: ages 17-18 ($n = 218$); 19 ($n = 144$); 20-21 ($n = 206$). 2007-2011: ages 17-18 ($n = 219$); 19 ($n = 142$); 20-21 ($n = 207$).

Table 8

Rates of participation in social activities and activities related to civic engagement

	2005		2007		2009		2011	
	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Arts	74.2%	25.8%	80.0%	20.0%	85.6%	14.4%	89.4%	10.6%
Sports team	72.5%	27.5%	81.4%	18.6%	83.8%	16.3%	86.5%	13.5%
Social action groups	94.2%	5.8%	96.1%	3.9%	96.1%	4.9%	97.0%	3.0%
School clubs	75.6%	23.8%	81.3%	17.3%	89.4%	10.3%	92.6%	7.4%
Volunteer work	67.6%	32.4%	72.7%	27.3%	75.2%	24.8%	81.2%	18.8%

Note. Sample size for variables: Arts 2005 ($n = 725$), 2007 ($n = 640$), 2009 ($n = 632$), 2011 ($n = 606$); Sports team 2005 ($n = 728$), 2007 ($n = 640$), 2009 ($n = 634$), 2011 ($n = 606$); Social action groups 2005 ($n = 728$), 2007 ($n = 640$), 2009 ($n = 633$), 2011 ($n = 606$); School clubs 2005 ($n = 728$), 2007 ($n = 640$), 2009 ($n = 634$), 2011 ($n = 606$); Volunteer work 2005 ($n = 728$), 2007 ($n = 640$), 2009 ($n = 634$), 2011 ($n = 606$).

Table 9a

Correlation matrix of measures in 2005 ($n = 725$)

	Trusting relationships	People good	Society better	Society makes sense	Contribute	Belonging
Trusting relationships	1.000					
People good	0.363	1.000				
Society better	0.319	0.553	1.000			
Society makes sense	0.305	0.540	0.563	1.000		
Contribute	0.340	0.357	0.434	0.311	1.000	
Belonging	0.324	0.374	0.437	0.268	0.481	1.000

Table 9b

Correlation matrix of measures in 2007 ($n = 635$)

	Trusting relationships	People good	Society better	Society makes sense	Contribute	Belonging
Trusting relationships	1.000					
People good	0.357	1.000				
Society better	0.180	0.524	1.000			
Society makes sense	0.241	0.498	0.556	1.000		
Contribute	0.397	0.326	0.359	0.279	1.000	
Belonging	0.307	0.304	0.379	0.307	0.492	1.000

Table 9c

Correlation matrix of measures in 2009 ($n = 632$)

	Trusting relationships	People good	Society better	Society makes sense	Contribute	Belonging
Trusting relationships	1.000					
People good	0.374	1.000				
Society better	0.227	0.503	1.000			
Society makes sense	0.320	0.482	0.573	1.000		
Contribute	0.457	0.328	0.289	0.281	1.000	
Belonging	0.220	0.339	0.440	0.320	0.430	1.000

Table 9d

Correlation matrix of measures in 2011 ($n = 605$)

	Trusting relationships	People good	Society better	Society makes sense	Contribute	Belonging
Trusting relationships	1.000					
People good	0.411	1.000				
Society better	0.306	0.505	1.000			
Society makes sense	0.296	0.511	0.541	1.000		
Contribute	0.395	0.320	0.353	0.289	1.000	
Belonging	0.342	0.333	0.467	0.322	0.474	1.000

Table 10

Descriptive statistics for measures related to social integration and trust

	Min.	Max.	Skewness	Kurtosis	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Social Integration						
Belonging 2005	0	5	-0.172	1.408	2.66	2.00
Belonging 2007	0	5	-0.239	1.492	2.74	1.92
Belonging 2009	0	5	-0.147	1.486	2.61	1.90
Belonging 2011	0	5	-0.11	1.472	2.58	1.91
Contribute 2005	0	5	-0.424	2.080	3.12	1.50
Contribute 2007	0	5	-0.717	2.534	3.38	1.46
Contribute 2009	0	5	-0.864	2.719	3.47	1.48
Contribute 2011	0	5	-1.066	3.300	3.65	1.39
Social Trust						
Society better 2005	0	5	0.503	2.014	1.83	1.61
Society better 2007	0	5	0.723	2.436	1.61	1.54
Society better 2009	0	5	0.416	1.943	1.89	1.61
Society better 2011	0	5	0.446	1.933	1.89	1.64
Society makes sense 2005	0	5	0.273	1.806	2.11	1.66
Society makes sense 2007	0	5	0.466	1.989	1.86	1.58
Society makes sense 2009	0	5	0.352	1.917	1.98	1.57
Society makes sense 2011	0	5	0.446	1.956	1.86	1.58
People good 2005	0	5	-0.085	1.765	2.53	1.59
People good 2007	0	5	-0.172	1.843	2.64	1.52
People good 2009	0	5	-0.303	1.937	2.81	1.53
People good 2011	0	5	-0.236	1.946	2.74	1.50
Trusting relationships 2005	0	5	-1.379	4.271	3.95	1.29
Trusting relationships 2007	0	5	-1.441	4.405	3.99	1.27
Trusting relationships 2009	0	5	-1.455	4.777	4.01	1.18
Trusting relationships 2011	0	5	-1.588	4.892	4.01	1.26

Table 11

Goodness of fit indices for cross-lagged models

	χ^2	<i>df</i>	CFI	RMSEA
Model 1: Trusting relationships and Belonging	281.471	84	0.805	0.057
Model 2: Society better and Contribute	206.187	84	0.873	0.045
Model 3: Trusting relationships and Contribute	214.149	84	0.881	0.046
Model 4: Society makes sense and Belonging	287.065	84	0.798	0.058
Model 5: Society makes sense and Contribute	217.335	84	0.850	0.047
Model 6: Society better and Belonging	259.46	84	0.855	0.054
Model 7: People good and Contribute	194.608	84	0.893	0.043
Model 8: People good and Belonging	266.778	84	0.836	0.055

Note. CFI: Comparative Fit Index, RMSEA: Root Mean Square Error Approximation

Chapter 4: Results

In the analyses that follow, I present eight models that include pairings of each of the measures of trust and integration, which allows for a more nuanced analysis that probes different aspects and of social trust (i.e., confidence in people, confidence in society and optimism about the future, and relational trust) and social integration (i.e., feelings of belonging to a community, and a broader measure that taps into possible future investments that foster social integration).

To simplify the presentation of the results, I organize the results for each model by grouping them based on two emergent patterns. In the first grouping, measures related to social integration tend to predict trust, and, in the second, measures related to social trust tend to predict integration. I first report results for models in which the cross-lagged effects flowing from social integration to trust are more often significant than those flowing from trust to integration: (1) feeling a sense of belonging to community and feeling of trusting relationships with others; (2) feeling of having something of value to contribute to society and feeling society is getting better; and (3) feeling having something of value to contribute to society and feeling of trusting relationships with others.

Then I report results for models in which the cross-lagged effects flowing from social trust to social integration are more often significant: (4) feeling that way society works makes sense and feeling a sense of belonging to community; and (5) feeling that way society works makes sense and feeling of having something of value to contribute to society.

Finally, I report findings for models that do not fall within the above groupings: (6) feeling society getting better and feeling a sense of belonging to community; (7) feeling of

having something of value to contribute to community and feeling people basically good; and (8) feeling a sense of belonging to community and feeling people basically good.

In the figures referenced throughout this section, measures of social trust (i.e., *trusting relationships*, *society better*, and *society makes sense*) flow along the top, and social integration (i.e., *belonging* and *contributing*) along the bottom (see Figure 2 for a simplified illustration). Significant cross-lagged effects are described by the predictor (cause) first and the predicted (effect) second. Summaries of the results for each model are presented in Table 12 to allow for easier comparisons across models.

Social Integration Predicting Trust

In the following models, cross-lagged effects from social integration to trust are more frequently significant. Therefore, these models suggest that social integration more often predicts trust rather than trust predicting social integration.

Feeling belong to community and trusting relationships with others.

In Model 1, the cross-lagged effects between *belonging* are positively associated with *trusting relationships* between 2009-2011 ($\beta = 0.133, p \leq 0.001$). As shown in Figure 3, though no other cross-lagged effects reach significance in this model, the coefficients of the cross-lagged effects decrease between 2007-2009, before increasing again between 2009-2011. The direct effects within *belonging* (2005-2007: $\beta = 0.298, p \leq 0.001$; $\beta = 0.379, p \leq 0.001$; $\beta = 0.401, p \leq 0.001$), and *trusting relationships* (2005-2007: $\beta = 0.317, p \leq 0.001$; $\beta = 0.322, p \leq 0.001$; $\beta = 0.350, p \leq 0.001$), strengthen across waves.

No clear pattern emerges regarding the relationship between covariates and *trusting relationships* across the waves. Identifying with a race other than white is negatively associated

with the measure in 2007 and 2011 ($\beta = -0.144, p \leq .001$; $\beta = -0.092, p \leq 0.05$, respectively), and achieving markers of the transition to adulthood is positively associated with the measure in 2011 ($\beta = 0.115, p \leq 0.01$).

Covariates related to educational attainment are often negatively associated with *belonging*. Specifically, having a high school degree compared to some college is negatively associated with belonging in 2007, 2009, and 2011 ($\beta = -0.140, p \leq 0.01$; $\beta = -0.091, p \leq 0.05$; $\beta = -0.190, p \leq 0.05$, respectively); and having no degree compared to some college is negatively associated with the measure in 2009 ($\beta = -0.149, p \leq 0.001$). Additionally, achieving markers of the transition to adulthood is negatively associated with *belonging* in 2007 ($\beta = -0.126, p \leq 0.001$).

Feeling something important to contribute to society and society getting better.

In Model 2, the cross-lagged effects between *contribute* and *society better* consistently strengthen over time (see Figure 4). Although neither cross-lagged relationship reaches significance between 2005-2007, *contribute* is positively associated with *society better* between 2007-2009 ($\beta = 0.123, p \leq 0.01$), and 2009-2011 ($\beta = 0.133, p \leq 0.01$). Additionally, the cross-lagged effect between *society better* predicting *contribute* is also significant between 2009-2011 ($\beta = 0.124, p \leq 0.01$).

Differing from most of the other models, there is not a steady increase in the coefficients among the direct effects. Instead, the standardized beta coefficients are nearly equivalent between 2005-2007, and 2009-2011 (*society better*: 2005-2007, $\beta = 0.360, p \leq .001$; 2009-2011, $\beta = 0.358, p \leq 0.001$; *contribute*: 2005-2007, $\beta = 0.367, p \leq 0.001$; 2009-2011, $\beta = 0.371, p \leq$

0.001), with an increase in the strength of the coefficient within each measure between 2007-2009 (*society better*: $\beta = 0.380, p \leq 0.001$; *contribute*: $\beta = 0.423, p \leq 0.001$).

Most of the covariates are not significantly associated with the measures in Model 2. There are, however, a few exceptions: identifying with a race other than white positively predicts *society better* in 2007 ($\beta = 0.124, p \leq 0.001$); being male negatively predicts *contribute* in 2009 ($\beta = -0.123, p \leq 0.001$); and having a high level of economic responsibility ($\beta = 0.090, p \leq 0.05$) and achieving markers of the transition to adulthood ($\beta = 0.096, p \leq 0.05$) positively predict *contribute* in 2009 and 2011, respectively.

Feeling something important to contribute to society and trusting relationships with others.

Model 3 provides the clearest example of measures related to social integration predicting trust (see Figure 5). *Contribute* consistently and positively predicts *trusting relationships* across each wave (2005-2007: $\beta = 0.110, p \leq 0.05$; 2007-2009: $\beta = 0.120, p \leq .05$; 2009-2011: $\beta = 0.114, p \leq 0.05$). The cross-lagged effects of *trusting relationships* predicting *contribute* never reach significance.

The beta coefficients related to direct effects of *contribute* increase over time (2005-2007: $\beta = 0.384, p \leq 0.001$; 2007-2009: $\beta = 0.417, p \leq 0.001$; 2009-2011: $\beta = 0.422, p \leq 0.001$), while the direct effects of *trusting relationships* decrease, overall (2005-2007: $\beta = 0.299, p \leq 0.001$; 2007-2009: $\beta = 0.285, p \leq 0.001$; 2009-2011: $\beta = 0.322, p \leq 0.001$).

Covariates sporadically reach significance in Model 3. Not identifying as white is negatively associated with *trusting relationships* in 2007 ($\beta = -0.156, p \leq 0.001$) and 2011 ($\beta = -0.089, p \leq 0.05$). Achieving markers of adulthood positively predicts *trusting relationships* ($\beta = 0.118, p \leq 0.01$) and *contribute* ($\beta = 0.087, p \leq 0.05$) in 2011. Finally, being male negatively ($\beta =$

-0.119, $p \leq 0.001$) and having a high level of economic responsibility positively ($\beta = 0.089$, $p \leq 0.05$) predict *contribute* in 2009.

Social Trust Predicting Integration

In the following models, cross-lagged effects from social trust to integration are more frequently significant. Therefore, these models suggest that social trust more often predicts integration rather than integration predicting trust.

Feeling way society works makes sense and belong to community.

In Model 4, *society makes sense* is positively associated with *belonging* between 2005-2007 ($\beta = 0.124$, $p \leq 0.001$), and 2007-2009 ($\beta = 0.097$, $p \leq 0.05$), though the relationship decreases in significance over time (see Figure 6). In contrast to Model 3, the cross-lagged effects are only significant for measures of trust predicting measures of social integration, though the direct effects follow a similar pattern (*society makes sense*: 2005-2007, $\beta = 0.349$, $p \leq 0.001$; 2007-2009, $\beta = 0.339$, $p \leq 0.001$; 2009-2011, $\beta = 0.400$, $p \leq 0.001$; *belonging*: 2005-2007, $\beta = 0.290$, $p \leq 0.001$; 2007-2009, $\beta = 0.357$, $p \leq .001$; 2009-2011, $\beta = 0.398$, $p \leq 0.001$).

Once again, there is no clear pattern regarding the relationship between the covariates and measure of trust. Only having a college degree positively ($\beta = 0.090$, $p \leq 0.05$) and identifying with a race other than white negatively ($\beta = -0.082$, $p \leq 0.05$) predict *society makes sense* in 2007. Similar to Model 1, covariates related to educational attainment are often significantly related to *belonging*.

Feeling something of value to contribute to society and way society works makes sense.

Unlike Model 4, there is not a steady decline in the strength of the cross-lagged effects across waves in Model 5 (see Figure 7). *Society makes sense* is positively associated with *contribute* between 2005-2007 ($\beta = 0.090, p \leq 0.05$), an effect that strengthens between 2007-2009 ($\beta = 0.099, p \leq 0.05$), and weakens between 2009-2011 ($\beta = 0.084, p \leq 0.05$). Additionally, the cross-lagged effect of *contribute* is positively associated with *society makes sense* between 2007-2009 ($\beta = 0.086, p \leq 0.05$).

The covariates rarely reach significance in Model 4. There are, however, notable exceptions: having a college degree, compared to some college, and identifying with a race other than white being negatively predict *society makes sense* in 2005 ($\beta = -0.091, p \leq 0.05$, $\beta = -0.096, p \leq .01$, respectively); being male is negatively associated ($\beta = -0.122, p \leq 0.001$) and having a high level of economic responsibility being positively associated ($\beta = 0.090, p \leq 0.05$) with *contribute* in 2009; and achieving markers of adulthood being positively associated *contribute* in 2011 ($\beta = 0.086, p \leq 0.05$).

Mixed Trends

The following three models both provide further support for a mutually causal relationship between measures of social integration and trust (Model 6 and 7), and challenge the relationship with the lack of significant cross-lagged effects in Model 8.

Feeling society getting better and belong to community.

In Model 6, *society better* is positively associated with *belonging* between 2005-2007 ($\beta = 0.137, p \leq 0.001$), though the beta coefficient decreases in strength over time (see Figure 8). *Belonging* is positively associated with *society better* between 2007-2009 ($\beta = 0.088, p \leq 0.05$). The beta coefficients of direct effects within *society better* (2005-2007: $\beta = 0.378, p \leq 0.001$;

2007-2009: $\beta = 0.393, p \leq 0.001$; 2009-2011: $\beta = 0.416, p \leq 0.001$), and *belonging* (2005-2007: $\beta = 0.255, p \leq 0.001$; 2007-2009: $\beta = 0.347, p \leq 0.001$; 2009-2011: $\beta = 0.385, p \leq .001$), consistently strengthen over time.

With the exception of identifying with a race other than white positively predicting *society better* in 2009 ($\beta = .0126, p \leq 0.001$), no other covariates reach significance in relation to this measure of trust. The same significant relationships noted in Model 1 for *belonging* are found within this model.

Feeling people basically good and having something of value to contribute to society.

In Model 7, an interesting trend within the cross-lagged effect emerges. Between 2005-2007, *people good* predicts *contribute* ($\beta = 0.091, p \leq 0.05$), whereas between 2007-2009 *contribute* predicts *people good* ($\beta = 0.144, p \leq 0.001$). Both cross-lags reach significance between 2009-2011 (*people good* predicting *contribute*: $\beta = 0.106, p \leq 0.001$; *contribute* predicting *people good*: $\beta = 0.084, p \leq 0.05$). Similar to Model 6, neither the measure of trust nor integration predict the other more frequently, though here both cross-lagged effects reach significance between 2009-2011. Additionally, the direct effect of *people good* consistently strengthens over time (2005-2007: $\beta = 0.331, p \leq 0.001$; 2007-2009: $\beta = 0.374, p \leq 0.001$; 2009-2011: $\beta = 0.451, p \leq 0.001$).

Once again, there is not a clear pattern among the covariates predicting *people good*. Identifying with a race other than white is negatively associated with the measure in 2007 ($\beta = -0.179, p \leq 0.001$), and achieving markers of the transition to adulthood are negatively associated with the measure in 2009 ($\beta = -0.084, p \leq 0.05$). The covariates for *contribute* follow the same pattern identified for Models 2 and 3.

Feeling people basically good and belonging to community.

In the Model 8, none of the cross-lagged effects reach significance (see Figure 10). The covariates related to *people good* follow the same trends described in Model 7, and *belonging* noted in Models 1, 4, and 6. As this model does not demonstrate a causal relationship between these two measures, I will discuss the implication of these non-findings in the following chapter.

Guiding Trends

The results clearly provide evidence for a mutually causal relationship between measures of social trust and integration. Although trends are not consistent across models, and are especially challenged by Model 8, there are important implications for better understanding how social trust and integration emerge from and support each other, which will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

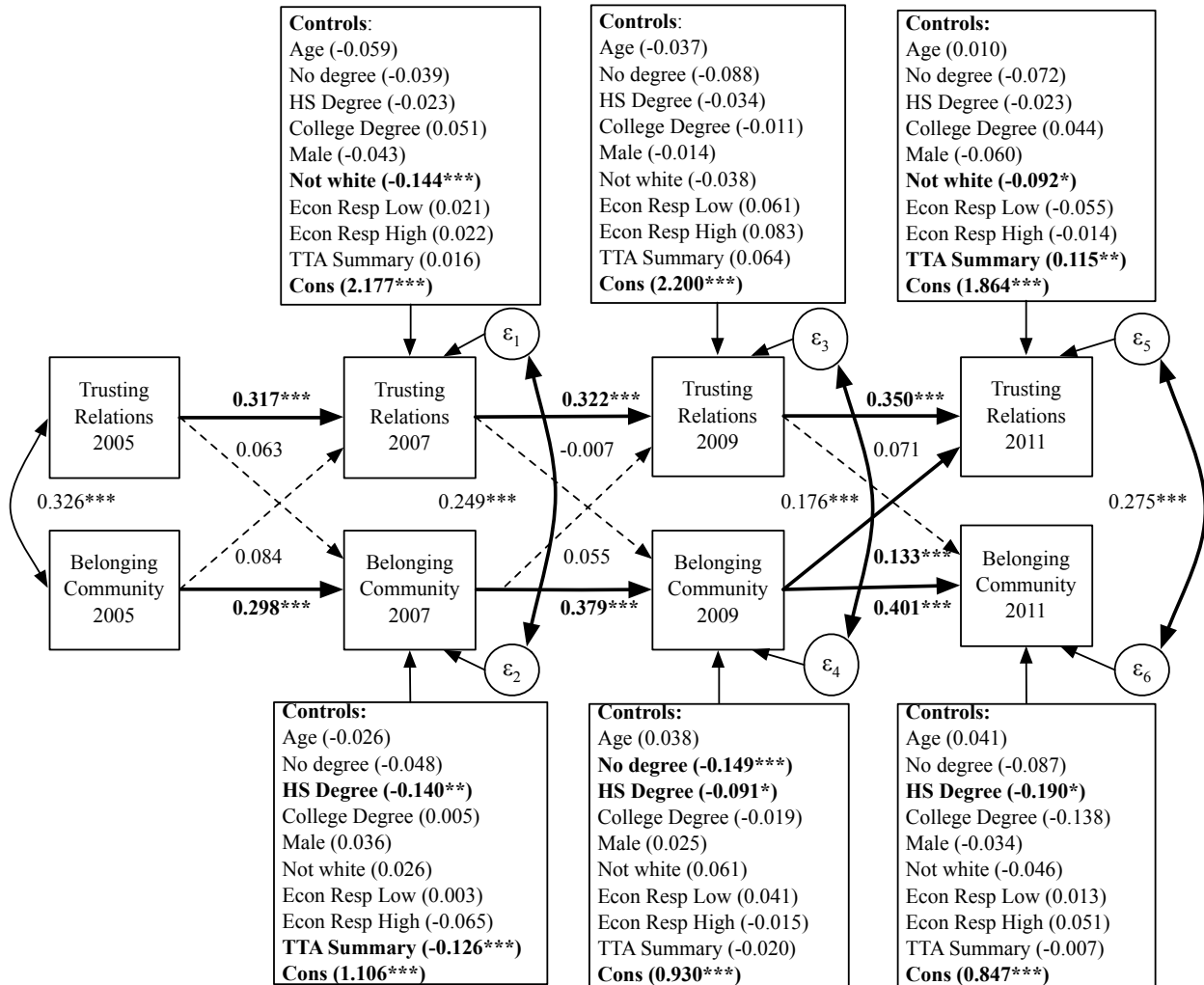
The covariates tell a less coherent narrative. The clearest trend observed is within the measure of *belonging*, in which indicators related to educational attainment are often significant. Compared to having some college, having no degree or a high school degree are frequently associated with a decrease in *belonging* across all waves, and having a college degree negatively predicts *belonging* in Models 4 and 5. Having achieved markers of the transition to adulthood are also negatively associated with *belonging* in all models, though the effect is only significant in 2007, as it decreases in strength across each wave.

In models including *contribute*, being male negatively predicts, and high level of economic responsibility positively and consistently predict, in 2009. In 2011, achieving markers of the transition to adulthood consistently and positively predicts *contribute*.

With the exception of race in 2009, which is positively associated with the measure, no covariates reach significance for *society better*. Similarly, only having a college degree (compared to some college) positively, and race negatively, predicts *society makes sense* in 2007. Race and achieving markers of the transitions to adulthood negatively predict *people good* in 2007 and 2009, respectively.

Figure 3

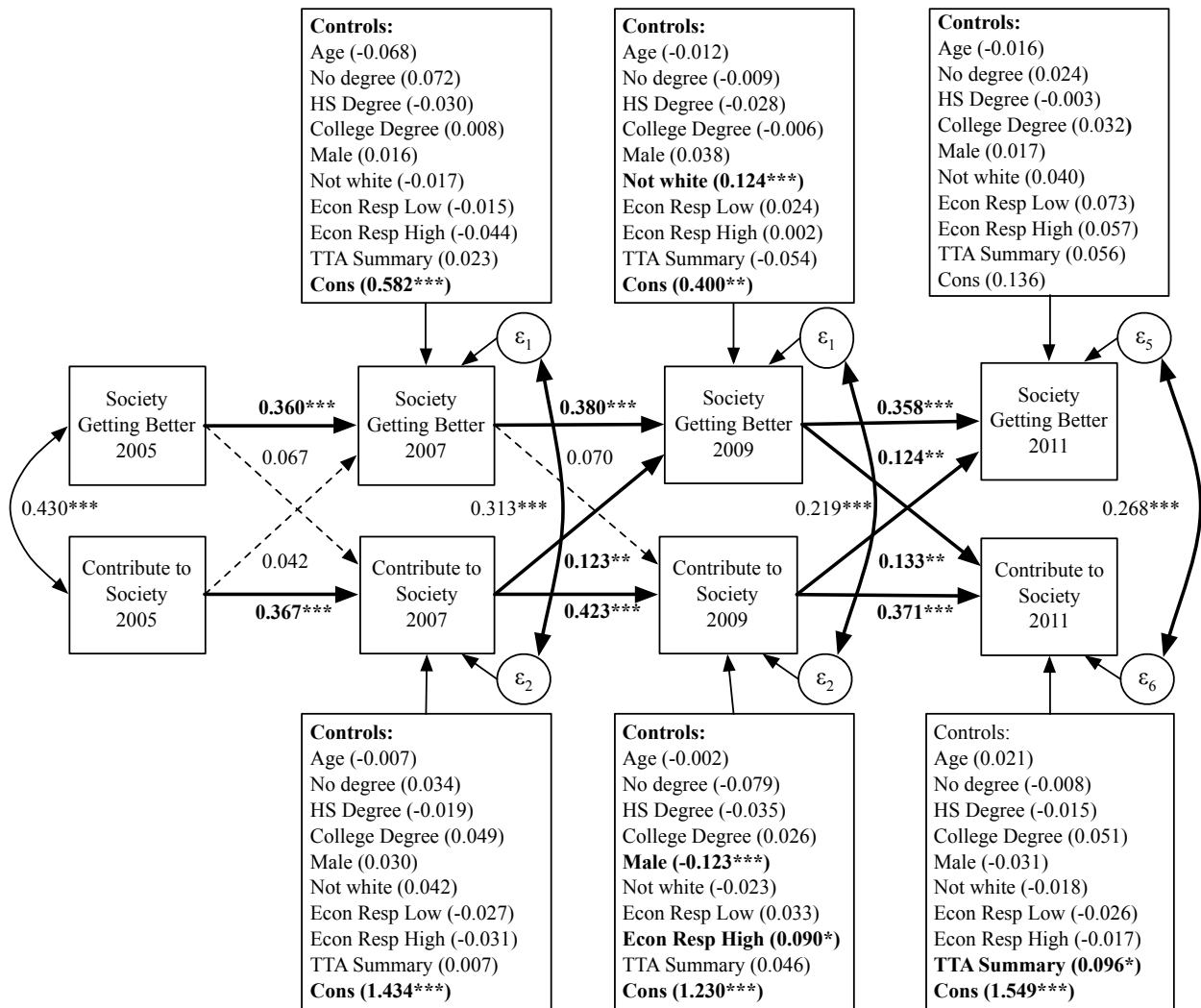
Model 1: Cross-lagged relationships between feeling trusting relationships with others and belonging to community ($n = 725$)



Notes. R^2 : Trusting relationships 2007 = 0.187; trusting relationships 2009 = 0.148; trusting relationships 2011 = 0.212; belonging 2007 = 0.209; belonging 2009 = 0.195; belonging 2011 = 0.204; overall = 0.408. *** $p \leq 0.001$ ** $p \leq 0.01$ * $p \leq 0.05$.

Figure 4

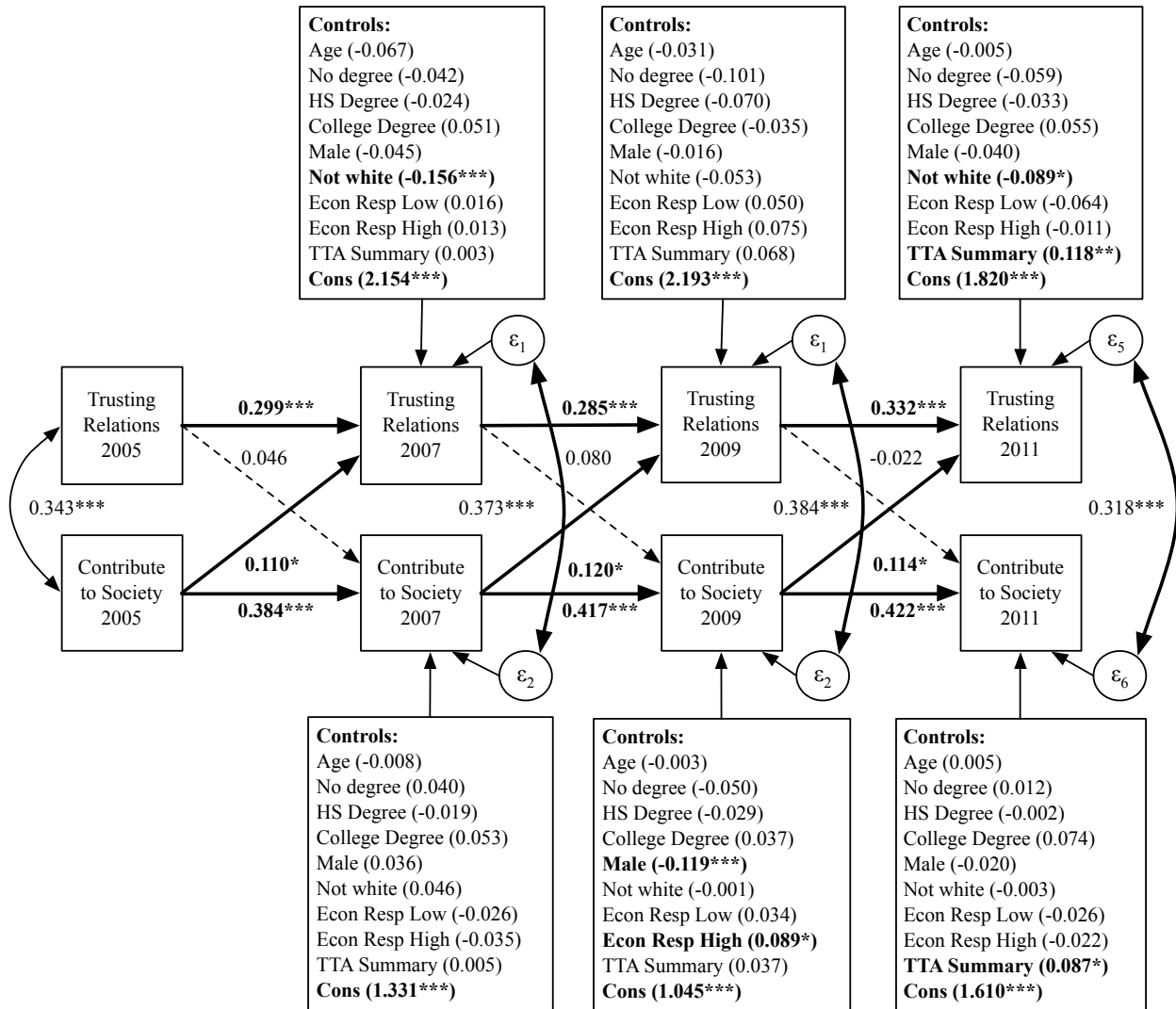
Model 2: Cross-lagged relationship between feeling society is getting better and having something of value to contribute to society ($n = 720$)



Notes. R^2 : Society better 2007 = 0.154; society better 2009 = 0.215; Society better 2011 = 0.190; contribute 2007 = 0.167; contribute 2009 = 0.238; contribute 2011 = 0.199; overall = 0.343. *** $p \leq 0.001$ ** $p \leq 0.01$ * $p \leq 0.05$.

Figure 5

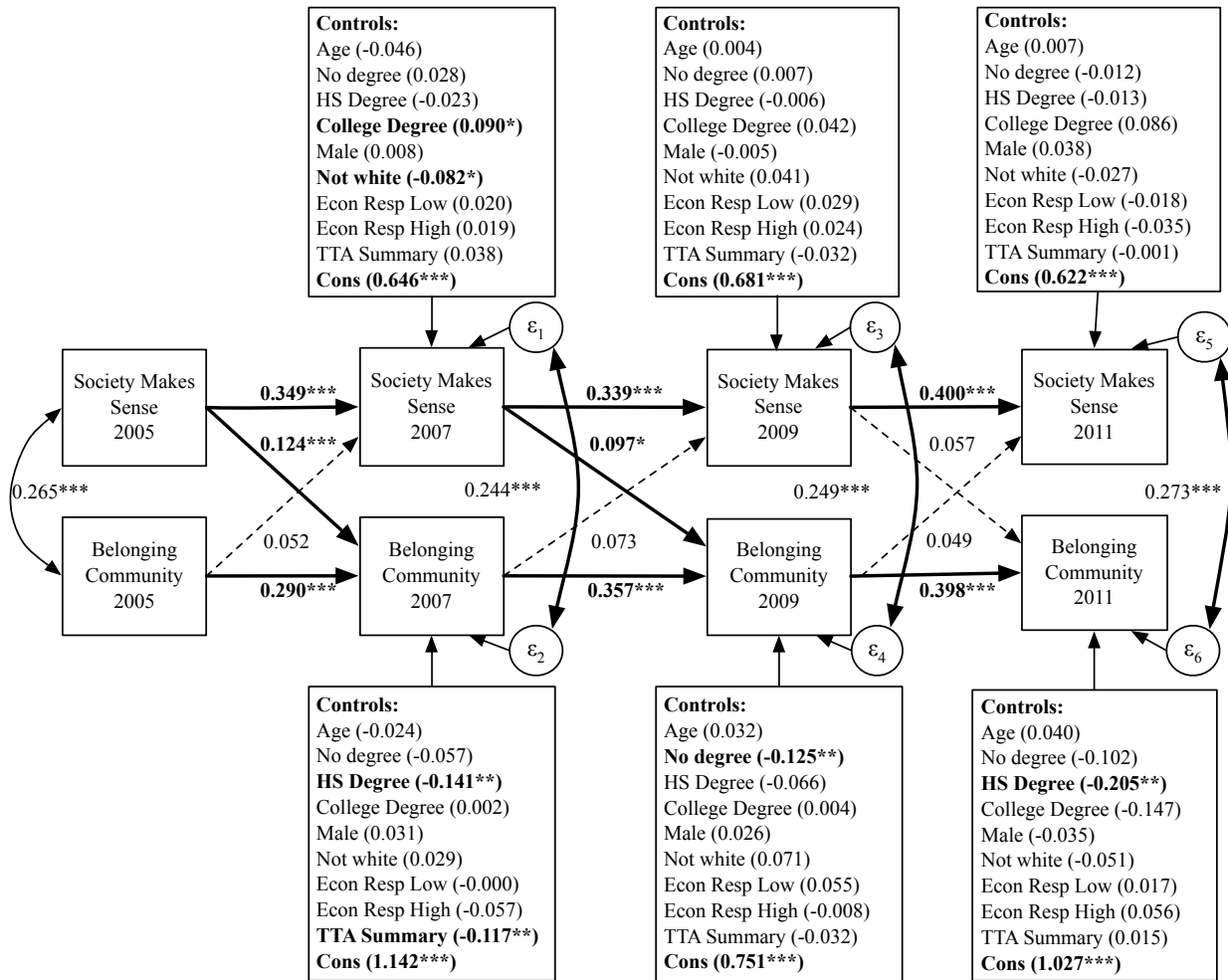
Model 3: Cross-lagged relationship between feeling of trusting relationships with others and having something of value to contribute to society ($n = 723$)



Notes. R^2 : Trusting relationships 2007 = 0.191; trusting relationships 2009 = 0.155; trusting relationships 2011 = 0.209; contribute 2007 = 0.168; contribute 2009 = 0.239; contribute 2011 = 0.188; overall = 0.379. *** $p \leq 0.001$ ** $p \leq 0.01$ * $p \leq 0.05$.

Figure 6

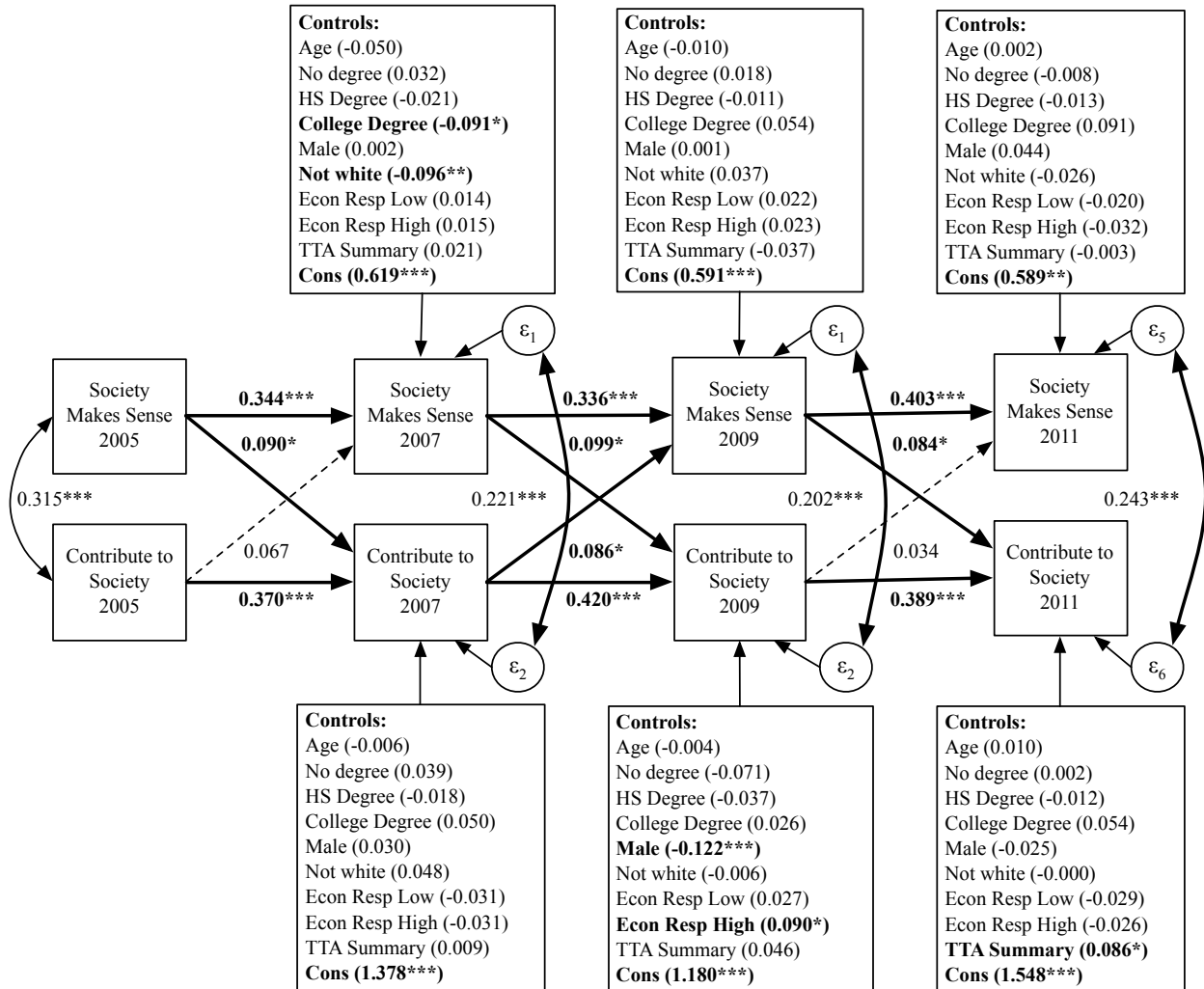
Model 4: Cross-lagged relationship between feeling way society works makes sense and belong to community ($n = 724$)



Notes. R^2 : Society makes sense 2007 = 0.159; society makes sense 2009 = 0.143; society makes sense 2011 = 0.196; belonging 2007 = 0.220; belonging 2009 = 0.200; belonging 2011 = 0.204; overall = 0.372. *** $p \leq 0.001$ ** $p \leq 0.01$ * $p \leq 0.05$.

Figure 7

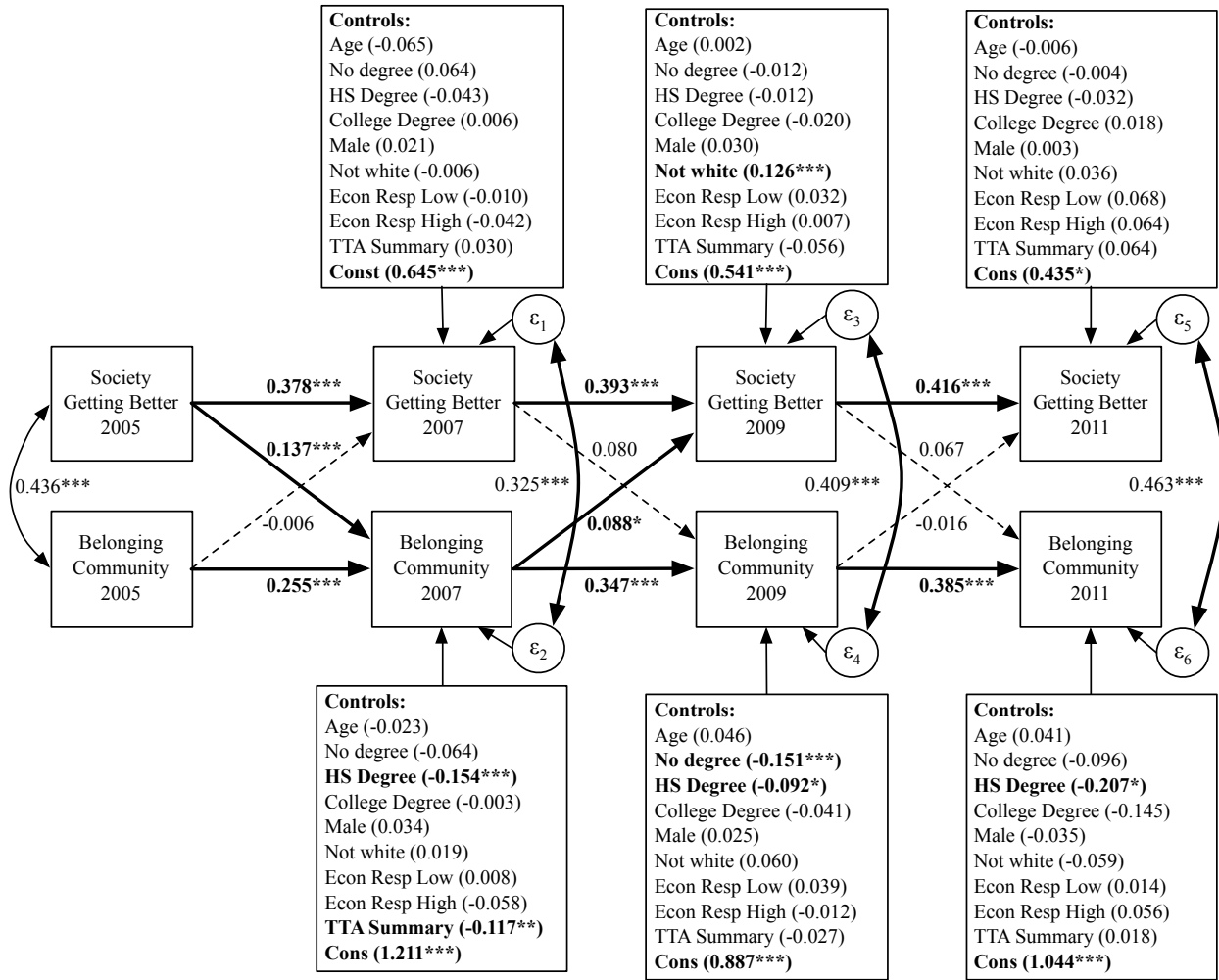
Model 5: Cross-lagged relationship between feeling way society works makes sense and something important to contribute to society ($n = 721$)



Notes. R^2 : Society makes sense 2007 = 0.166; society makes sense 2009 = 0.146; society makes sense 2011 = 0.192; contribute 2007 = 0.173; contribute 2009 = 0.243; contribute 2011 = 0.194; overall = 0.342. *** $p \leq 0.001$ ** $p \leq 0.01$ * $p \leq 0.05$.

Figure 8

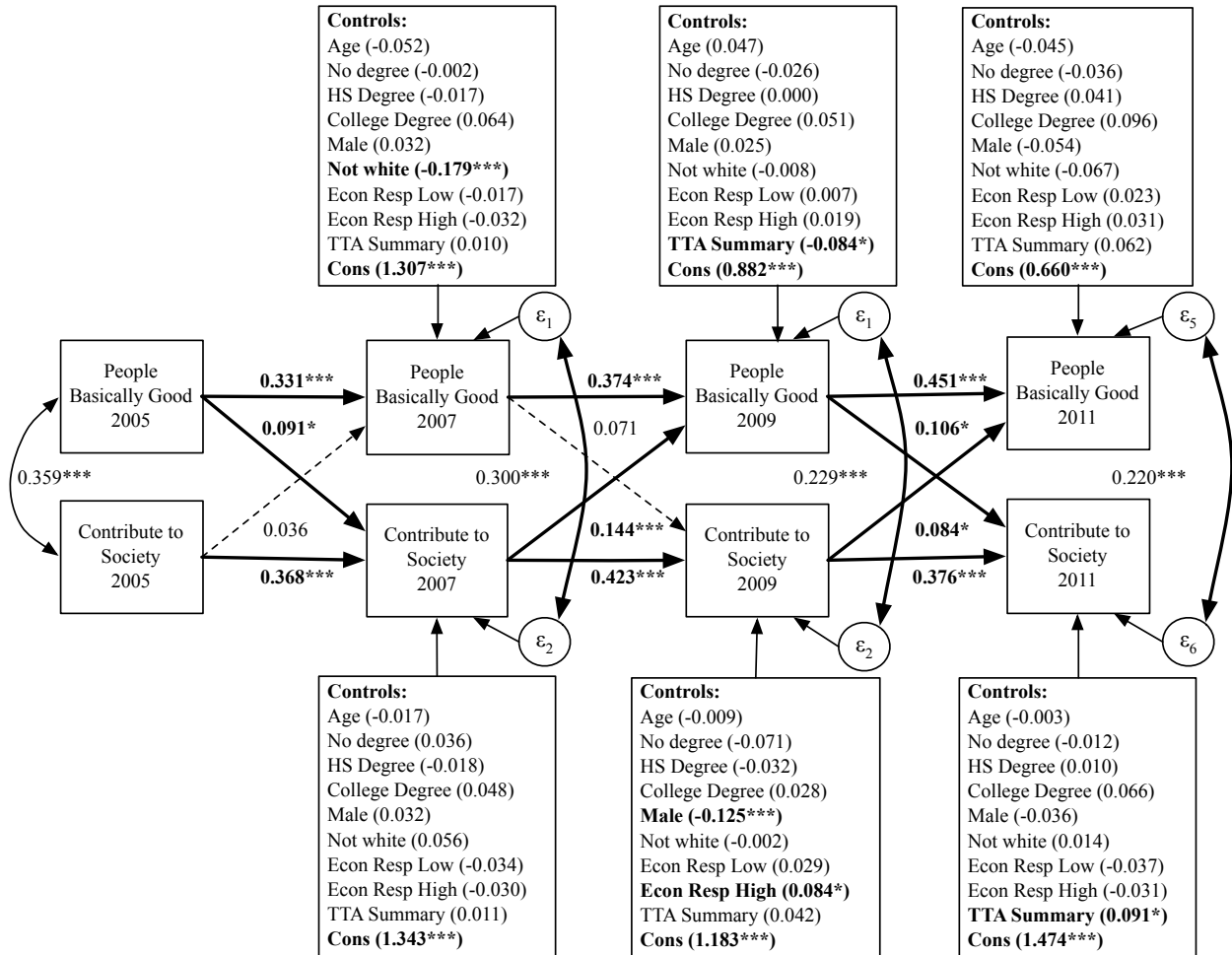
Model 6: Cross-lagged relationship between feeling society getting better and belong to community ($n = 723$)



Notes. R^2 : Society better 2007 = 0.151; society better 2009 = 0.206; society better 2011 = 0.180; belong 2007 = 0.219; belong 2009 = 0.198; belong 2011 = 0.202; overall = 0.383. *** $p \leq 0.001$ ** $p \leq 0.01$ * $p \leq 0.05$.

Figure 9

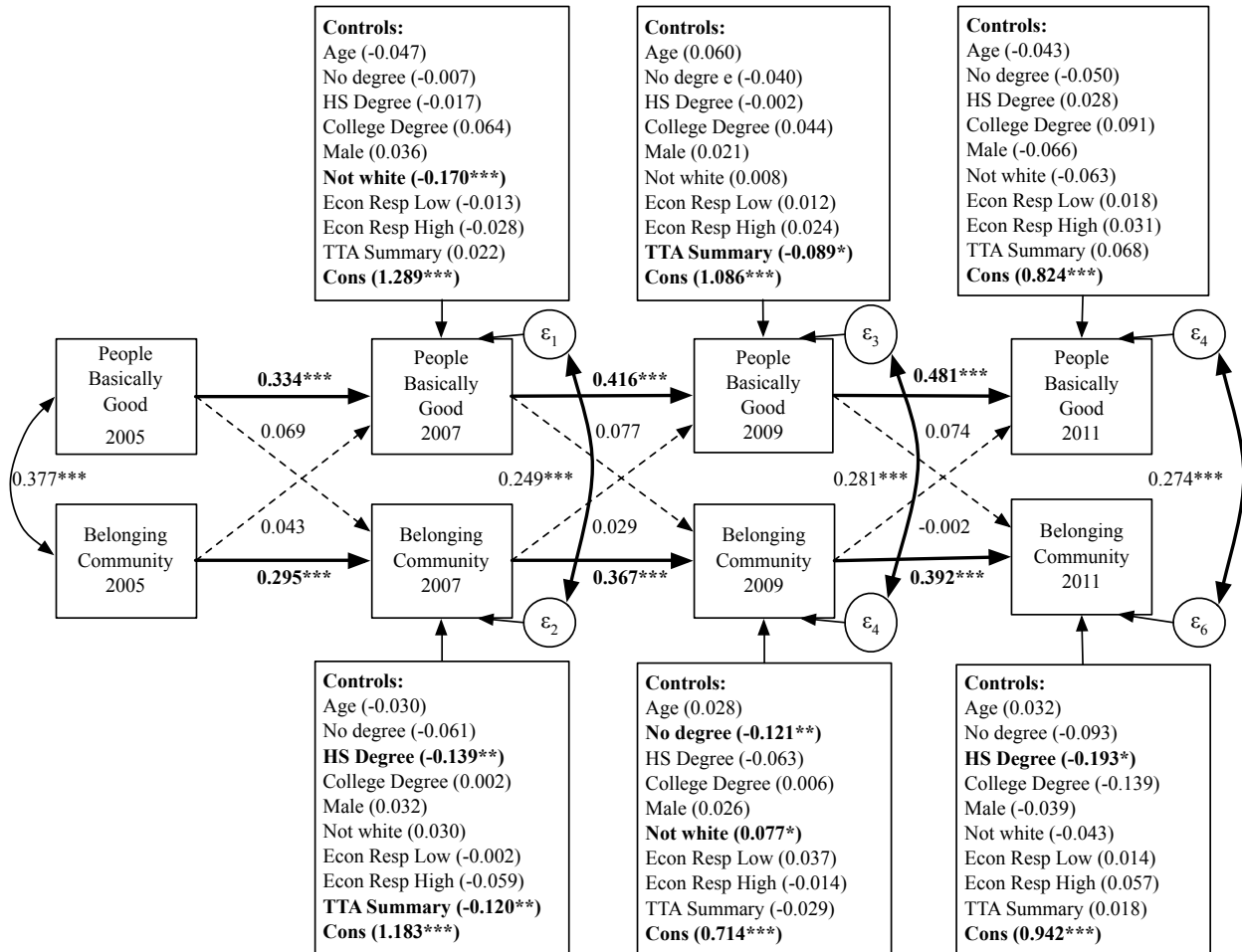
Model 7: Cross-lagged relationship between people basically good and something of value to contribute to society ($n = 720$)



Notes. R^2 : People good 2007 = 0.188; people good 2009 = 0.226; people good 2011 = 0.270; contribute 2007 = 0.174; contribute 2009 = 0.236; contribute 2011 = 0.196; overall = 0.386. *** $p \leq 0.001$ ** $p \leq 0.01$ * $p \leq 0.05$.

Figure 10

Model 8: Cross-lagged relationship between people basically good and belong to community ($n = 723$)



Notes. R^2 : People good 2007 = 0.188; people good 2009 = 0.211; people good 2011 = 0.267; belonging 2007 = 0.210; belonging 2009 = 0.199; belonging 2011 = 0.204; overall = 0.403. *** $p \leq 0.001$ ** $p \leq 0.01$ * $p \leq 0.05$.

Table 12

Summary results for cross-lagged models (measures of social trust and integration only)

	2005 → 2007		2007 → 2009		2009 → 2011	
	β	Bootstrapped Standard Error	β	Bootstrapped Standard Error	β	Bootstrapped Standard Error
Social Integration predicting trust						
Belonging → Belonging	0.298***	0.041	0.379***	0.042	0.401***	0.038
Trusting Rels. → Belonging	0.063	0.045	-0.006	0.044	0.071	0.041
Trusting Rels. → Trusting Rels.	0.317***	0.047	0.322***	0.046	0.350***	0.051
Belonging → Trusting Rels.	0.084	0.043	0.055	0.049	0.133***	0.039
Contribute → Contribute	0.367***	0.046	0.423***	0.044	0.371***	0.048
Better → Contribute	0.067	0.041	0.07	0.040	0.124**	0.044
Better → Better	0.360***	0.043	0.380***	0.044	0.358***	0.045
Contribute → Better	0.042	0.041	0.123**	0.041	0.133**	0.044
Contribute → Contribute	0.384***	0.045	0.417***	0.045	0.422***	0.049
Trusting Rels. → Contribute	0.046	0.046	0.079	0.047	-0.022	0.054
Trusting Rels. → Trusting Rels.	0.299***	0.050	0.285***	0.052	0.332***	0.045
Contribute → Trusting Rels.	0.110*	0.046	0.120*	0.049	0.114*	0.049
Social trust predicting Integration						
Belonging → Belonging	0.290***	0.040	0.357***	0.042	0.398***	0.042
Makes Sense → Belonging	0.124***	0.039	0.097*	0.042	0.057	0.041
Makes Sense → Makes Sense	0.348***	0.039	0.339***	0.043	0.400***	0.042
Belonging → Makes Sense	0.052	0.041	0.073	0.046	0.049	0.044
Contribute → Contribute	0.370***	0.041	0.420***	0.042	0.390***	0.045
Makes Sense → Contribute	0.090*	0.041	0.099*	0.040	0.084*	0.040
Makes Sense → Makes Sense	0.344***	0.040	0.336***	0.045	0.403***	0.042
Contribute → Makes Sense	0.067	0.041	0.086*	0.041	0.034	0.043
Mixed Trends						
Belonging → Belonging	0.255***	0.045	0.347***	0.044	0.385***	0.048
Better → Belonging	0.137***	0.041	0.080	0.044	0.067	0.047
Better → Better	0.378***	0.044	0.393***	0.042	0.416***	0.046
Belonging → Better	-0.006	0.044	0.088*	0.043	-0.016	0.046
Belonging → Belonging	0.295***	0.044	0.367***	0.042	0.392***	0.045
People Good → Belonging	0.069	0.042	0.077	0.040	0.074	0.044
People Good → People Good	0.334***	0.040	0.416***	0.039	0.481***	0.039
Belonging → People Good	0.043	0.041	0.029	0.044	-0.002	0.041
Contribute → Contribute	0.368***	0.042	0.423***	0.043	0.376***	0.046
People Good → Contribute	0.091*	0.041	0.071	0.042	0.106*	0.042
People Good → People Good	0.331***	0.044	0.374***	0.044	0.451***	0.039
Contribute → People Good	0.036	0.042	0.144***	0.044	0.084*	0.041

Note. Model sample sizes and results for control variables are omitted from this table, though are included in model figures.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The results of this study paint a complicated portrait of social integration and trust among young adults. On the surface, there is clear evidence of a mutually causal relationship between integration and trust. Yet the emergent patterns are not consistent over time. Therefore, the relationship between measures must be considered in relation to broader contextual factors. It is reasonable to assume that those entering adulthood during an economic crisis may lack social trust and connections to social roles, such as those associated with gaining stable employment, hindering social integration. The findings challenge this assumption, however, and a more encouraging narrative emerges. Both feelings of trust and integration fluctuate over time, though neither follow a trajectory that suggest young adults simply become more or less trusting, or connected and engaged, as the economy worsens and they proceed into adulthood.

In this chapter, I first establish trends within measures related to social integration and trust across each wave, and then draw comparisons across models. Next, I consider fluctuations in the relationships between measures within the context of developmental and macro-level factors, such as political transitions and changes in the economy. I then closely examine the covariates to reveal trends that indicate who is more likely to have stronger feelings of social integration and trust. From there, I relate findings back to previous research and theoretical frameworks presented in chapter 2. Finally, I critique current measures of social integration and trust, and propose future directions for research.

Disentangling Developmental and Macro-Level Effects

Referring back to Table 7, it is apparent that respondents are not simply marching upwards or downwards in their feelings of integration and trust. A substantial percentage of

respondents change in feelings related to: (1) belonging to communities; (2) having something of value to contribute to society that may lead to future investments that establish and strengthen connections to social roles and networks; (3) confidence in others, in the way society currently works, and in the direction it is heading in the future; and (4) in interpersonal trust.

In the following section, I consider two pathways of change within measures. First, I consider possible developmental effects, referred to as “threshold effects” and “transitional effects.” Threshold effects are those that level off or decrease over time. For example, feelings of belonging may decrease as individuals exit education and lose readily available connections to social networks. Transitional effects are those in which feelings either increase or decrease among younger respondents, and then flow in opposite directions once respondents are older. This effect likely signals transitions into new roles that may influence feelings of trust and integration. For example, feelings of belonging may decrease among younger respondents, and increase among older respondents who form connections to the labor market and enter other roles associated with adulthood. Second, I consider notable fluctuations in the measures related to social trust and integration that suggest they are sensitive to normative instability, such as shifts in the economy and political climate.

There is not strong evidence of a threshold effect within measures of social integration (patterns of change within measures of trust indicate that they are may be susceptible to change related to macro-level factors, and will be discussed later). Respondents aged 17-19 (ages are the age of the respondents in 2005) reported increases in feelings of belonging between 2005-2007. Thus, it seems that losing natural connections to social networks established in high school is not

associated with decreases in feeling a sense of belonging to communities, though the effect may be mitigated by entry into the labor market or higher education.

Those aged 20-21, however, were more likely to report decreases in feelings of belonging between 2005-2007, and increases between 2009-2011, providing some support for a possible transitional effect. This is further supported by overall trends in which those aged 17-19 were more likely to decrease in feelings of belonging between 2005-2011, whereas those 20-21 years old were more likely to increase. This supports previous findings of increased community engagement among those who have more fully made the transition to adulthood (Finley, Wray-Lake, & Flanagan, 2010; Flanagan & Levine, 2010; Flanagan, Levine, & Settersten, 2009). Therefore, there may be a transitional period in which those leaving high school and college feel less connected to communities, though become re-integrated as they transition into adult roles. Given that young adults are in transition, this may be a pivotal time to provide opportunities to become actively involved in communities, and more civically engaged in general.

The other measure of integration, *contribute*, follows a nearly opposite pattern from *belonging*. Individuals in all age groups were more likely to report an increase in feelings of having something of value to contribute to society, overall. A substantially larger proportion of individuals aged 17-18, however, reported more frequently feeling that they have something of value to contribute between 2005-2007. This trend decreases in strength over time, suggesting a potential threshold effect in which individuals establish these feelings in their late teens, and are less likely to change in their feelings as they enter their 20s.

Trends of *belonging* and *contribute* among respondents aged 17-19 are often opposite of those aged 20-21: when one age group increases on the measures, the other age group decreases.

While there are likely macro-level factors associated with variability within these measures, explored in more detail below, there is support for a transitional effect in which individuals' developmental trajectories play a notable role in determining feelings of integration. More specifically, younger respondents were more likely to decrease in their feeling a sense of belonging to communities over time, whereas those between the ages of 20 and 21 were ultimately more likely to report more frequent feelings of belonging. Additionally, participants aged 17-19 were more likely to increase in the frequency that they feel they have something of value to contribute to society, whereas those aged 20-21 became more stable in this measure (that is, they were less likely to change in frequency across waves).

Observing the broader changes in *belonging* and *contribute* between 2007-2011 (encapsulating the period of time just before the economic recession and during the recovery), trends differ between the measures, signaling that *belonging* and *contribute* measure different aspects of social integration. *Belonging*, the more direct measure of integration, taps into feelings of integration within various networks, including peer networks, which likely explains why feelings of belonging tend to decrease among younger respondents. *Contribute* taps into feelings that respondents have something of value to contribute to society, and is therefore assumedly associated with a motivation to do so through various avenues, including work and volunteering, which provide access to social networks.

Turning attention to change within measures related to social trust, a different narrative related to macro-level factors emerges. Specifically, measures related to trust do not provide strong evidence of threshold or transitional effects. Rather, there are changes across age groups and between waves that illustrate that measures of trust related to confidence in others (*people*

good), and the functioning and future of society (*society makes sense* and *society better*) are likely sensitive to social factors, such as changes in the economy and political climate. The interpersonal measure of trust, *trusting relationships*, remains relatively stable over time, with comparatively small increases and decreases in the measure across waves. This supports previous research that suggests that interpersonal trust may be a more stable trait (Delhey & Newton, 2003; Uslaner, 2000).

A broad view of *society better* (between 2007-2011) implies that young adults simply become more optimistic. Yet variations across waves reveal that respondents fluctuate on this measure over time. Specifically, respondents were more likely to report decreases in feeling society is getting better between 2005-2007, a trend that surprisingly reverses during the onset of the economic recession between 2007-2009. It is reasonable to assume that young adults would adopt a more pessimistic outlook about the future as the economic downturn takes hold, yet this does not seem to be the case for many of the respondents in this study. Additionally, more individuals were likely to report an increase in the measure between 2009-2011 (except for 19 year olds, who were more likely to report a decrease), though the rates of increase were lower than they were between 2007-2009.

This trend may partially be attributed to the lagging economic recovery, yet also suggests that young adults' outlooks on the future are not strongly associated with the recession. This interpretation is somewhat challenged, however, by changes in *contribute* between 2007-2009 in which respondents aged 19-21 were more likely to report decreases. Perhaps this is attributable to the economic downturn that may have limited opportunities to make significant and meaningful contributions, especially through the fragile labor market. Interestingly, the political

climate may be more strongly associated with fluctuations in measures of social trust. Young adults were more likely to have a pessimistic outlook between 2005-2007, when President Bush was reelected, and became more optimistic upon President Obama's—whose ideals appealed more to young adults—election between 2007-2009. Although this explanation is plausible, the data do not allow for a direct test of this hypothesis.

Although trends for *society makes sense* follow a similar pattern to those of *society better*, respondents across all ages were more likely to decrease in feelings of *society makes sense* between 2009-2011. Thus, although young adults appear to be optimistic about the future of society, they are less positive about the current functioning of society, perhaps a reflection of the slow and prolonged economic recovery. These findings suggest that young adults may not be overly idealistic, and likely recognize the challenges that face them. Nevertheless, they feel positive about the future, which has encouraging implications for the likelihood that they will make investments that better position them for the future, and that are beneficial to society. With these basic narratives in mind, I now turn attention to the results of the cross-lagged analyses, elucidating the mutually causal relationship between measures.

General Trends Across Models

In the following discussion, I identify general emergent trends regarding the cross-lagged effects and significant covariates across models, and discuss the overall implications of key findings. I begin with a broad view of the reciprocal relationship between measures of social integration and social trust—referring to the first, second, and third hypotheses. I then narrow the focus to consider what the covariates explain regarding variations within measures—referring to

the fourth, fifth, and sixth hypotheses. Finally, I discuss possible macro level-factors that are not directly accounted for in the models.

Direct effects within measures notably remain significant across waves. This indicates that feelings of integration at one time point are significantly associated with increased feelings of integration in the future. The same holds true for measures of trust. Early investments in communities, therefore, have a positive effect on belonging to communities over time, which highlights the potential benefits of establishing social ties through education or work for those in their late teens and early 20s. Additionally, developing social trust early increases the likelihood that individuals will continue to be more trusting in the future.

The cross-lagged models clearly establish a mutually causal relationship between the two constructs, and one that is more complicated than suggested by previous studies in which the causal relationship is assumed to flow from trust to integration (Jennings & Stoker, 2004; Kwak, Shah & Holbert, 2004; Newton, 2001; Putnam, 2000; Uslander & Brown, 2005). In fact, the cross-lagged effects of measures of social integration predicting trust reach significance with slightly higher frequency than those of trust predicting integration. Nevertheless, the cross-lagged effects of trust predicting integration reaches significance at least once in every model except in Model 3 (*trusting relationships* and *contribute*) and Model 8 (*people good* and *belonging*).

The second noteworthy trend is that patterns of the causal relationship between measures of social integration and social trust vary across waves. That is, the cross-lagged effects do not simply increase or decrease in strength. This has implications for whether or not there is evidence for a developmental effect related to these measures, or if there may be broader social

factors influencing the relationship not directly accounted for in the models. It is clear that the strength of the effect of measures of integration on trust, and vice-versa, do not universally increase or decrease over time, nor in a predictable manner related to changes in the economy. Model 7 (*people good* and *contribute*) provides the clearest illustration of the lack of clear patterns in terms of cross-lagged effects reaching significance. Specifically, between 2005-2007, *people good* significantly predicts *contribute*, though the opposite is true between 2007-2009. Both cross-lagged effects reach significance between 2009-2011. This challenges the first and second hypotheses proposed in Chapter 2 in which I assumed that higher levels of social trust would either be associated with: (1) lower levels of social integration because individuals are less motivated to activate social networks when things are going well; or (2) higher levels of social integration as individuals make investments in diverse social networks.

What do these trends tell us? Are those in their 20s simply optimistic—perhaps naïvely so—about their future (Arnett, 2000), and ignoring the realities of a tenuous labor market that may leave many economically insecure in the years to come? Are they trying to make the best of a difficult situation by making more investments in their social relationships in order to better position themselves for the future? Or do they not react because this is their “normal,” as they have not been of age during a period in which the economy is more stable? While it is not possible to discern the motivations of the respondents in this study, the results inform narratives about how those in early adulthood navigate changes associated with a severe and prolonged economic recession.

The trends also challenge theories that posit that trust promotes integration, but that integration does not necessarily increase trust. The dialectic relationship between social trust and

integration evident in this study illustrates the valuable insight longitudinal investigations of these constructs offer into the complexity of the emergence and cultivation of social relationships and trust. Though more trusting individuals may be more inclined to form relationships with others, this study clarifies that connections to and investments in social networks can promote social trust. Although insular social groups may not promote higher levels of general trust in others, or society more generally, forms of social integration associated with making contributions through labor or volunteering likely promote trust.

Relationship Between Social Trust and Social Integration Among Young Adults (Research Question 1)

The findings do not present a simple story of maturation in which individuals form bonds and establish unchanging views regarding social trust in their late teens or early twenties. Nor does the relationship between trust and integration flow in one direction. That is, this is not a straightforward story of trust emerging from group membership, or vice-versa. In the section that follows, I delve into what the various models illustrate about the mutually causal relationship between trust and integration, and identify relatively consistent and divergent trends across models.

Social integration predicting trust.

In the first set of models (Models 1, 2, and 3), measures of social integration more often predict trust than trust predicts integration. These models provide support for the third hypothesis, which assumes that stronger feelings of social integration may encourage higher levels of social trust. More specifically, *contribute* predicts *society better* (Model 2) and *trusting relationships* (Model 3) across at least two waves, whereas *belonging* only predicts *trusting relationships* (Model 1) between 2009-2011. Notably, the relationships between the measures

vary across both models and waves. For example, in Model 1, *belonging* is associated with an increase in *trusting relationships* between 2009-2011 only. In Model 3, which provides the strongest support for the third hypothesis, *contribute* is significantly associated with *trusting relationships* between 2005-2007, 2007-2009 and 2009-2011.

These findings do not provide support for a maturation effect in which the cross-lagged effects between measures uniformly increase or decrease over time (this is reinforced by age never significantly predicting the measures related to integration or trust). There is also not evidence of a period effect in which the cross-lagged effects uniformly increase or decrease between waves or across models. These three models also suggest that social trust emerges from social integration, as measures of social integration more often predict trust. Yet two premises challenge this notion: First, *Society better* also significantly predicts *contribute* between 2009 and 2011 (Model 2). Therefore, both cross-lagged effects reach significance, suggesting a causal relationship that flows in both directions. Second, in the models to which I now turn attention (Models 4 and 5), measures of social trust more often predict integration.

Social trust predicting integration.

As illustrated in Models 4 and 5, measures related to social trust tend to predict integration. These models challenge the first hypothesis—those higher in social trust will be less motivated to make investments in social networks—and provide support for the second hypothesis—higher levels of social trust will be associated with increased social integration. More specifically, *society makes sense* predicts *belonging* (Model 4) between 2005-2007 and 2007-2009, and *society makes sense* predicts *contribute* (Model 5) between 2005-2007, 2007-2009, and 2009-2011. Model 4 provides evidence of a maturation effect in which having confidence in the way society works predicts feeling a sense of belonging to a community, with the effect dissipating in significance over time. These findings highlight that young adults may be likely to make investments in social relationships or roles that connect them with communities if they have more confidence in society generally, or a stronger understanding of how society functions.

Yet decreases in the significance of cross-lagged effects between *society makes sense* predicting *belonging* across waves suggests that having more confidence in the way society works is a stronger predictor of finding connections to communities when individuals are younger, and possibly still in school. This premise gains plausibility given that covariates related to having a high school degree or no degree, compared to some college (a category in which most respondents also report being either a student or working), are negatively associated with feelings of belonging. Specifically, individuals may lack natural connections to social networks as they graduate high school and college (e.g., Wilcox, Winn, & Fyvie-Gauld, 2005), especially if employment opportunities are limited (Danziger & Ratner, 2010), and thus may feel a

decreased sense of community. As individuals lose these natural connections to communities, having confidence in society ceases to be predictive of this measure of social integration.

The decrease in the significance of *society makes sense* predicting *belonging* over time suggests that there may be critical periods of investment in social trust for beneficial outcomes related to belonging to communities. This may, however, be a spurious relationship in which individuals are better able to make investments in their communities in their early twenties, as they have more flexible time. Once competing demands related to employment or beginning families emerge, young adults may be less likely to make new investments in their communities, and rather may rely on and foster existing social connections (Knoester & Eggebeen, 2006; Settersten, Day, Cancel Tirado, & Driscoll, 2014). Nevertheless, the findings support that increases in *society makes sense* significantly predict increases in *belonging*, and therefore cultivating social trust may be one avenue for strengthening young adults' connections to communities.

Model 5 provides clear evidence of a mutually causal relationship between trust and integration in which *society makes sense* consistently predicts *contribute*, and *contribute* predicts *society makes sense* between 2007-2009. These findings suggest that confidence in society—or feeling that society functions in a predictable way that does not disadvantage individuals—increases feelings of having something of value to contribute to society. That is, having confidence in how society works may promote feelings of competency to engage in social roles in productive ways. Additionally, *contribute* predicting *society makes sense* between 2007-2009 suggests that those who have stronger feelings of having something of value to contribute during

the economic recession not only serves as a buffer against losing confidence in society, but even increases individuals' confidence in society.

So far, I have established a mutually causal relationship between measures of social trust and integration by exploring models in which trust more often predicts integration, and in which integration predicts trust. To further investigate the complexity of the causal relationship between the two, I now focus on models in which there are not clear trends, and that both support and challenge findings discussed thus far.

Models without clear trends.

Supporting the second and third hypothesis—higher social trust will increase social integration, and stronger feelings of social integration will encourage social trust—Model 6 further illustrates the mutually causal relationship between trust and integration. In this model, *society better* predicts *belonging* between 2005-2007, and *belonging* predicts *society better* between 2009-2011. This also provides support for theories which posit that social trust leads to social engagement (Jennings & Stoker, 2005; Rahn & Transue, 1998; Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005; Uslaner & Brown, 2005), yet extends these theories by suggesting that those who form social connections may also increase in their levels of trust.

This model also presents somewhat perplexing results in which the direction of the cross-lagged effect from *belonging* to *society better* is negative between 2005-2007 and 2009-2011, though does not reach significance, and positive and significant between 2007-2009. It is not immediately clear why the direction of this effect change, though this possibly provides insight into the communities individuals feel they are apart of. The negative effect between *belonging* and *society better* suggests that the communities may be insular, reinforced by the fact that

feeling a sense of community with others does not translate to more positive feelings of confidence in the future of society, or trusting feelings towards others generally. Yet why does the trend reverse between 2007-2009? This may once again be explained by a change in the political climate in which younger people may have felt a sense of unity during an election in which a candidate that seemed to be a clear departure from the status quo was elected president. This may have bolstered a sense of connection to a broader community, and fueled a sense that society was heading in a new and more positive direction. Once again, these interpretations are made with caution, and further research is necessary to clarify the relationship between these measures.

The models that include *people good* (Models 7 and 8) complicate the narratives described above. When *belonging* and *people good* are included in the model (Model 8), no cross-lagged relationships reach significance. This suggests that the measure of general trust in others does not predict feeling a sense of belonging to community, nor does belonging to a community predict general trust in others.

Model 7, however, challenges theories and findings that promote the primacy of trusting relationships in predicting participation in social groups and civic activities (Jennings & Stoker, 2004; Rahn & Transue, 1998; Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005; Uslaner & Brown, 2005). When *belonging* is replaced with *contribute* (Model 7), the cross-lagged effects tell an interesting and more complicated story. Between 2005-2007, an increase in feelings of *people good* is associated with an increase in *contribute*. It might therefore be assumed that having higher levels of general social trust increases the likelihood that people may make investments that strengthen social networks and builds social capital (Delhey & Newton, 2003; Newton, 2001; Putnam, 2000). The

results also illustrate that an increase in *contribute* is significantly associated with an increase in *people good* between 2007-2009. In this case, it might be assumed that participating in roles that provide contributions to society leads to higher levels of social trust in terms of having a positive view of others (Delhey & Newton, 2003; Delhey, Newton, & Welzel, 2011; Gubbins & MacCurtain, 2008), which may result in individuals being more willing to establish trusting relationships with others. This premise gains support given that *contribute* is consistently and positively associated with *trusting relationships* between 2005-2007, 2007-2009 and 2009-2011 (Model 3). The bidirectional relationship between *trusting relations* and *contribute* is reinforced by both cross-lagged effects reaching significance between 2009-2011.

Comparing Models 7 (*people good* and *contribute*) and 8 (*people good* and *belonging*) leads to two possible explanations as to the causal relationship between trust and integration. First, general social trust does not emerge from membership in more localized communities. At the same time, membership in localized communities does not promote increases in broader notions of social trust, as evidenced by Model 8. This finding is not necessarily so surprising. It is reasonable to assume that people are able to establish close social ties within their communities without this translating to more positive, trusting views of others outside their community (Foddy & Yamagishi, 2009). Second, the measure of social integration associated with the likelihood that individuals will make investments in social networks that build social capital, *contribute*, both strengthens and is reinforced by more generalized feelings of social trust. More positive feelings about having something of value to contribute to society may therefore be an indicator of intentions to find avenues for making good on these feelings (e.g.,

through participation in the labor market, volunteering, or becoming a parent) and to broaden social networks.

Comparing and unifying findings across models.

Untangling the various trends within and across models reveal several interesting findings. First, the more direct measure of social integration, *belonging*, is more often predicted by measures of trust (the causal relationship tends to flow from trust to integration, rather than from integration to trust), supporting previous findings. Second, the measure related to the likelihood of making investments in social relationships and roles in the future, *contribute*, more often predicts measures of trust. This finding challenges previous findings, illustrating the need for conceptualizations of social integration and trust that account for varying types of social connections and support, and social trust as it relates to general trust in others and confidence in society. Finally, there are notable exceptions to these trends that emphasize the mutually causal relationship between integration and trust, suggesting that investments made in one domain likely has positive implications for the other.

These findings have substantial implications for young adults establishing connections to social roles and networks that will influence their trajectories throughout adulthood. More trusting individuals are likely to be connected to social networks, and more integrated individuals are more likely to increase in social trust. Additionally, the findings suggest that strengthening social trust among young adults may encourage participation in civic activities beneficial to the health of society. Direct effects within all of the models clearly illustrate that increases in social trust and social integration positively predicts increases in feelings of trust and integration in the future. This signals that finding ways to connect young adults to communities and to foster social

trust early is a worthy investment for individuals' development through early adulthood, as well as for communities and society more generally.

Given that measures of social trust are related to confidence in the way society works and optimism about the future of society (Helliwell, 2003; Rothstein & Uslander, 2005), the results from this study indicate that attitudes related to trust and integration among those transitioning to adulthood remain optimistic, despite the economic downturn. Where I expected to find more pessimistic—or declining—feelings regarding social trust given the economic recession and prolonged recovery, an alternative, and more encouraging, narrative emerges.

Social Trust and Social Integration Among Young Adults Who Have Experienced Differing Levels of Economic Instability (Research Question 2)

Surprisingly, there does not seem to be a strong, or even moderate, relationship between economic instability at the individual level and measures of social integration and trust. The findings, therefore, do not support the fourth and fifth hypotheses positing that social trust may decline during the economic crisis (e.g., young adults may adopt more pessimistic outlooks on the future, especially if they perceive that adequate opportunities for employment are limited), and feelings of social integration increase as young adults rely on social networks for support during the recession.

Notably, having a high level of economic responsibility is positively associated with *contribute* in all models that include the measure, though only in 2009. This suggests that having something of value to contribute to society may result in individuals making investments in their social capital, possibly by becoming engaged in the labor market. Yet why does this covariate predict *contribute* in 2009 only? It is possible that at the onset of the economic downturn, those with higher levels of economic responsibility also had more confidence in their ability to make

valuable contributions to society, especially if they were already doing so when the economic recession began. That is, the ties established through economic responsibility may serve as a protective factor against the negative effects of the ailing economy. This explanation gains support from the fact that this trend does not hold for *belonging*, which includes peer networks as a form of community, or other groups that are fundamentally different from the social networks that may be established through the motivation of contributing to society. Therefore, motivation to make valuable contributions to society, perhaps through employment or volunteering, may be a pathway to secure and better resourced social ties.

The findings in this study provide a bridge between studies that establish a relationship between economic inequality and generalized trust (e.g., Costa & Kahn; Fairbrother & Martin, 2013; Uslaner, 2008; Uslaner & Brown, 2005), and theories related to social upheaval and trust (Hardin, 2002; Misztal, 1996). Specifically, the data show fluctuations in perceptions of social trust among respondents in relation to the timing of the Great Recession, and across presidential elections in which leaders with substantially differing political ideologies were voted into office. The generally encouraging findings related to positive feelings towards the future of society, and of the way society currently works, provide some support for findings that macro-level factors, such as economic instability or inequality, though correlated, do not directly influence general social trust (Fairbrother & Martin, 2013). Additionally, fluctuations in these measures suggest that social trust may be more closely associated with political climate (Richey, 2009; Schyns & Koop, 2010), which is closely related to economic fluctuations (e.g., perceptions of government enacting effective measures to help improve the economy, or confidence in national leaders to effectively handle economic crises).

Alternatively, the findings possibly reflect the enduring optimism of young adults, independent of historical time and place. Young adults, especially those who come from relatively advantaged backgrounds, may have an unfailing belief that challenging or negative situations will simply work themselves out. Whether they believe in meritocracy—that hard work and skill is all one needs to succeed—or, simply have not experienced enough hardship in life to be concerned with the reality that a persistently weak economy can severely limit opportunities for gainful employment in the future, they may have little reason to lack confidence in society and the future.

In this case, being too trusting may be to the detriment of young adults. If they are simply naïvely optimistic and confident about the future, they may be less likely to make investments to better position themselves in the future. Additionally, they may be less likely to engage in civic activities that could influence policy and the political process, or even to strengthen relationships and connections within their communities. Conversely, completely lacking in trust may result in many of these same outcomes. Moving forward, identifying who is more likely to be trusting and why, and when trust is adaptive and beneficial for motivating individuals to become more civically involved, will facilitate identifying and developing ways to foster social trust through social relationships.

Although this study offers a glimpse into how the relationship between trust and integration operates among young adults today, it is only a small snapshot that leaves much to be explained. First, the data do not allow for inferences about which respondents were more likely to be trusting to begin with, nor about the origins of trust within respondents. That is, it is unknown how early experiences within families, or during key developmental moments in

childhood and through adolescence informs feelings of social trust among respondents. While families provide a foundation for social trust—or lack thereof—especially early in life (Uslaner, 2000), individuals’ experiences, or experiences of others like them, are likely to challenge or reinforce conceptualizations of trust later in life. Youth who are exposed to significant inequalities early in life, for example, may have lower social trust, and therefore may be less likely to form relationships with others outside of their immediate communities (Delhey & Newton, 2003). Additionally, youth who observe injustices towards others they identify with may have less reason to be trusting of others, encouraging them to form insular bonds with others like themselves.

Social Trust and Social Integration in Relation to Achieving Markers of Adulthood (Research Question 3)

While I expected to find that achieving markers of the transition to adulthood would influence feelings of social integration and trust, as stated in the sixth hypothesis, a fairly clear trend emerges: The effect is strongest when transitions to adulthood may be considered early or on-time. That is, the index of achieving markers of adulthood, which includes whether or not participants have children, live with their parents, and/or are cohabiting or married, only significantly predicts measures related to social integration and trust in 2007 and 2011.

Achieving markers of the transition to adulthood negatively predicts *belonging* in 2007, and positively predicts *contribute* and *trusting relationships* in 2011, though the summary index does not reveal which transitions may be driving these effects. It is likely that cohabitation or parenthood may be primarily responsible for the effect in which the index negatively predicts *belonging* in 2007 only, as these are less age-normative transitions for those in their late teens or early 20s. Nevertheless, the results indicate that an increase in achieving markers of adulthood

decreases feelings of belonging to a community, lending support to previous findings that entering roles associated with adulthood may deepen or establish new social connections (Lundberg & Rose, 2002), early transitions may be detrimental and serve as barriers to social integration (Benson & Elder, 2011; Hofferth, Reid, & Mott, 2001; Settersten, 2005; Staff, Schulenberg, & Bachman, 2010).

As individuals in the sample move into their mid-to-late 20s, transitions such as becoming parents become more normative, which may at least partially explain why markers of the transition to adulthood positively predict both *contribute* and *trusting relationships* in 2011. These trends are reversed from those described above, which suggests that becoming a parent “on-time,” for example, may encourage making investments that increase social integration (Daly, Ashbourne, & Brown, 2009; Knoester & Eggebeen, 2006; Kwak, Shah, & Holbert, 2004; Son & Lin, 2008). Though the direction of the causal relationship cannot be discerned with certainty, these results indicate that entering roles associated with adulthood either help establish or emerge from trusting relationships with others. Because both *belonging* and *contribute* predict *trusting relationships* in 2011, it may be more likely that these key transitions help establish or strengthen trusting relationships.

Reciprocal Model Between Instability, Social Trust, and Social Integration Reconsidered

This study provides insight into the dynamic relationship between normative political and economic instability, social trust, and social integration, illustrated in Figure 1. In this overarching model, periods of normative instability are assumed to affect feelings of social trust and integration. As social integration both encourages and emerges from civic engagement, individuals may increase in their feelings of integration if they take an active role in shaping the

government's response to the economic crisis through civic engagement. Yet it is clear that though young adults feel engaged within localized communities, they are not becoming civically engaged at the same rate or in the same ways as past generations (Pew Research Center, 2014). The findings in this study suggest that young adults may nevertheless be motivated to make valuable and useful contributions to society. They may, however, be hesitant to make investments at a broader level, as they may lack general trust in others and society. That is, they may feel they are unable to affect meaningful change at the national level, instead opting to maximize connections within local communities. Indeed, persistent and growing inequality, especially economic, poses a significant threat to social trust (Rothstein & Uslaner, 2005), further threatening future engagement of those currently transitioning to adulthood.

Unexpectedly, the young adults in this study largely do not decrease in their levels of social trust during the economic recession, even though trust tends to be dependent on predictability and stability (Hardin, 2002). Respondents do not, however, appear to simply remain high in trust throughout their late teens and into their twenties, as measures of social trust tend to fluctuate in relation to presidential election cycles. While this seems to contradict the interpretation of why respondents are low in objective measures of civic engagement (i.e., according to Putnam, they are less trusting and therefore disengaged), it is possible that individuals maintain optimism for the future, even if they are disillusioned by the current state of the economy and political system, and are distrusting of others outside their immediate communities.

Nevertheless, it is evident that normative instability, especially political instability, may be associated with young adults' attitudes about social trust and civic engagement. This is

reflected in movements such as Occupy Wall Street in which many young adults came together to express frustration with the state of the economy, growing income inequality, and the political response to the economic crisis. A defining tenant of this movement was banding together at a local level to provide support and a voice for those who were struggling during difficult economic times. Though the movement may not have been effective for spurring meaningful or lasting change, it is illustrative of the concerns of a new generation, and an undercurrent of frustration with the current status quo regarding the distribution of wealth within the United States. It also demonstrates ways in which young adults may become civically engaged through non-traditional means. Probing the unease and disenfranchisement some Millennials may feel, and are expressing, is an important step for identifying ways in which young adults take an active role in the political process and informing policy.

An Optimistic Outlook?

Having established a relationship between measures of trust and integration over time, I now turn attention to: (1) inferences about patterns of trust and integration among those transitioning to adulthood during a period of economic turmoil; (2) what can be determined about the relationship between trust and integration more generally; and (3) implications of social trust and integration for the transition to adulthood, and for trajectories beyond early adulthood.

The preceding discussion demonstrated that the causal relationship between trust and integration flows in both directions, and that these relationships vary over time, making the overall relationship difficult to decipher. However, it is clear that investments made in both trust and integration in early adulthood persist, and sometimes strengthen, over time. The findings

suggest that having a sense of belonging either serves as a protective factor in the midst of economic uncertainty, or that feeling a sense of belonging bolsters positive feelings about the direction society is heading, which is contingent upon having positive feelings about the future of society in general. These trends provide support for studies that found social activity promotes civic and community engagement (Kwak, Shah, & Holbert, 2004; Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002; Son & Lin, 2008). Although respondents in this study are low in traditional measures of civic engagement, which may be attributed to young adults simply being less civically engaged generally, their relatively strong feelings of social trust and of having something of value to contribute suggest that they may be searching for ways to become civically active, or are engaged in ways that have not been measured. For example, we do not know if the current sample is participating in non-traditional civic activities through the use of social media, or engaging in social actions such as Occupy Wall Street, which is not associated with a political group but rather is an expression of ideals.

Importantly, fears of disengagement may be exaggerated. Although younger generations may not be participating in traditional civic activities, as Putnam found (Putnam, 2000; Sander & Putnam, 2010), they may not feel, or even be, as disconnected as is currently assumed. Young adults' attitudes and feelings of social connectedness may be just as important as actual patterns of social integration, as they speak to the likelihood or intentions of individuals making investments in others, in their community, and to be civically engaged. Thus, young adults may be finding, or at least searching for, new ways to be engaged in a rapidly changing society and economy. That is, they may *feel* connected without actually *being* connected, as the findings

demonstrate. Future research is needed to explore how feelings of integration translate into actual behavior, especially among Millennials.

I assumed that the economic collapse would be associated with deleterious effect on measures related to trust, especially in 2009 and 2011, as others have raised concerns about declining social trust in the United States (Nannestad, 2008; Putnam, 2000), and among young adults particularly (Rahn & Transue, 1998). It is, therefore, surprising that participants in this study remain relatively optimistic across each wave of data collection—though not universally so. I hypothesized that an economic collapse may be associated with a decrease in measures of social trust related to optimism about the future (Halliwell, 2003). Notably, individuals were more likely to express increased feelings that society is getting better and makes sense between 2007 and 2009, corresponding with the onset of the economic collapse, challenging this hypothesis.

Nevertheless, it is not so surprising that generalized trust has eroded among Millennials (Pew Research Center, 2014), as they are coming of age during a period defined by contentious and polarizing political ideologies and increasing economic inequality. Indeed, there may be good reason to be less trusting of faceless others who may be perceived as primarily looking out for their own self-interests. Yet it is also clear that young adults are not simply pessimistic and disconnected from others. Rather it appears that they are making investments in their social networks, and that many have an enduring optimism about their own future, both economically and related to the future of society—findings supported by this study and echoed by trends highlighted in a recent report by the Pew Research Center (2014).

Thus, it is necessary to continue to probe how young adults are, or are not, socially integrated today, and how connections to social networks benefit young adults, as this has meaningful consequences for life courses beyond early adulthood (Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002; Sherrod, Torney-Purta, & Flannagan, 2010). As social trust both increases and emerges from civic engagement, which also encourages and fosters social integration, it is necessary to gain further insight into young adult's feelings of trust. Doing so will inform more effective policy and programs that encourage and provide opportunities for engagement that supports young adults' development and entry into roles that benefit society.

This issue is especially pressing as there are many daunting social issues that may discourage young adults from engaging, including: (1) a fractured political system that often provides many reasons to lose confidence in the government, and perhaps in the future of society more generally; (2) a tenuous economy that puts individuals at increased risk for having unstable and variable work trajectories throughout adulthood and into retirement; and (3) growing income inequality that makes it increasingly difficult to rise in socioeconomic status, and to seize opportunities provided to past generations—especially regarding educational and employment opportunities available after World War II. Because Millennials seem increasingly hesitant to engage in traditional civic activities, or identify with long-standing political parties and institutions (Pew Research Center, 2014), it is vital to identify ways in which young adults become more involved in communities, and politically, as their involvement is essential for addressing these complex issues.

Further research is needed to elucidate: (1) how young adults use social networks as sources of support; (2) how social networks help them connect to productive opportunities, or

when social fail to do so; and (3) how individuals become civically engaged in order to improve society and its future, or why they chose to forego civic activities. It is clear that young adults are not participating in traditional civic activities at the same rate as previous generations, a trend that has also been witnessed in other studies and samples. Yet this does not mean that young adults are completely disengaged, nor do they necessarily want to be. Therefore, future research should further probe how young adults are engaged, how they define their communities and what community means to them, and the types of civic engagement that motivate them.

Limitations and Future Directions

The module on the transition to adulthood in the PSID provides a unique view into the lives of those entering adulthood during an economic recession, though the sample may not be representative of a broader population. The PSID originally oversampled low-income families, and therefore does not have a representative sample of races beyond whites and Blacks, under-sampling families from more collectivist cultures. Accounting for a wider range of ethnic and racial diversity will enhance understanding of the relationship between social integration and trust, and how it fluctuates across social groups. Future studies should clarify if the relationship between social trust and integration found within this study holds within cultures or communities in which the culture promotes social trust, or in which trust is generally lacking.

It is important to note that the covariates related to economic insecurity may not have been sensitive enough to accurately assess their relationships with the measures of social trust and integration. Those who participated in the module on the transition to adulthood may be better resourced than participants who dropped out of the study, or who never participated in the first place, as evidenced by the low rates of those receiving public assistance. Additionally, the

current sample primarily includes individuals who maintain employment, or are enrolled in higher education, during the recession. Future studies should probe the relationship between social integration and trust among individuals who may have been more negatively affected by the economic downturn, or who are persistently economically disadvantaged.

The findings in this study support a call for re-conceptualizing measures of trust and social integration for a new generation. The traditional measure of social trust, “most people can be trusted” (related to *people good*), does not differentiate between trust in faceless others and those who individuals are more likely to interact with (e.g., others within their immediate communities). Additionally, this is a narrow measure of trust, as it does not tap into individuals’ general confidence in society or the government, or optimism about the future. Indeed, many have stressed the need to develop a more unified theory and definition of trust (Hardin, 2006; Nannestad, 2008), and the importance of this call is underscored by the necessity to better understand if and why young adults trust, who they trust, and how this guides and emerges from social integration. Doing so will help identify ways in which young adults are engaged, and to help promote the development of social capital and engagement in civic activities that are complimentary to the values of a new generation.

Measures related to social trust included in this study, *society better*, *society makes sense*, and *people good* each tap into a dimension of social trust, but how completely they encapsulate trust is questionable, and reiterates the need to develop more coherent and consistent definitions of social trust. *Society makes sense* is similar to measures related to confidence in government. Though confidence in government is not a direct measure of trust, it is clearly closely related to issues of general attitudes of social trust that include feeling that society is functioning in a

predictable manner, and in a way that is beneficial to the individual. *Society better* measures individuals' optimism about the future, and the general direction society is heading. Thus, these two measures probe individuals' feelings about the current and future functioning of society—or more simply, confidence in society.

While measures of social trust are thought to be predictive of, and predicted by, civic engagement, the measures in this study are not strongly correlated with traditional measures of civic engagement. While this may suggest an issue with the measures of social trust, it may also be attributed to respondents' generally low engagement in traditional measures of civic engagement—an issue of concern that applies to broader populations of young adults. *People good*, which closely aligns with the most common measure of social trust, “most people can be trusted,” is also vulnerable to criticism for its vagueness. It is unclear whom respondents are referring to when they envision “most people.” Moving forward, it is necessary to critically examine how individuals define “others” to determine whom they do or do not trust (Delhey, Newton, & Welzel, 2011; Hardin, 2006).

Future studies should also consider more direct measures of integration to provide insight into how young adults define, establish, and utilize connections that foster a sense of community, and how this influences, and is influenced by, social trust. Although *belonging* clearly measures feelings of integration within a social network, the term is broadly defined within the PSID, and is open to respondents' interpretations. Future studies should therefore clarify how community is defined (e.g., peer networks; neighborhood; communities that extend beyond geographic location and are maintained through technology and social networks on the internet). As increased mobility is facilitated by technology, and perhaps becomes increasingly necessary to pursue

stable employment, it is essential that researchers carefully consider how the definition of community may change or differ for different segments of the population. That is, younger generations may have fundamentally different definitions of community from older generations, underscoring the need to develop measures sensitive to variations in how community is defined, and the functions it serves.

The other measure related to social integration, *contribute*, used in the current study relates to the likelihood of making future investments in roles or activities that facilitate social integration. These roles may include finding employment or volunteering opportunities that are in line with the valuable contributions individuals feel they can make. The data available through the PSID do not, however, allow for an assessment of whether or not this measure is predictive of future behavior. Any inferences made about future behavior are therefore done so with caution, and further research is needed to determine the reliability of this measure.

In light of increased uncertainty introduced by the economic recession, knowing more about how young people's feelings of social connectedness, and confidence in others and society more generally, translates into becoming integrated and active members of communities will elucidate how they establish and utilize social capital and become civically engaged. Better understanding social relationships during the transition to adulthood will also inform policy and programs that supports young people as they begin to form ties to the labor market, enter into long-term relationships, and begin families. Most importantly, understanding these processes offers important insights into whether and how young adults invest in social networks and communities that may offer support for weathering economic crises. Longitudinal and cross-sectional studies are especially instructive for distinguishing between micro and macro-level

influences. In this study, for example, it is unclear whether fluctuations in the relationship between measures of trust and integration are influenced by individual experiences, a function of young adulthood in which these constructs may generally be less stable, or can be attributed to macro-level events. Therefore, investigating differences between cohorts and age groups, and across wider periods of time will elucidate the mechanisms that influence fluctuations in trust and integration.

Additionally, considering how social trust and integration vary within and across different social groups will clarify the micro- and macro-level factors that influence the development of social capital and civic participation. Future studies should therefore turn focus to marginalized populations (e.g., LGBT youth, and individuals in low-income communities) to inform policy and practices that better integrates groups that tend to be marginalized or insular. For example, the types of support LGBT youth receive from social groups may vastly differ from youth living in low-income communities. Where LGBT youth may find support for developing identities within certain communities, they may find themselves isolated from other groups that are not sensitive to the needs and struggles youth who identify as such face. Therefore, LGTB youth may find support within relatively insular communities, though this may not translate to connections to broader social groups, and may not be associated with an increase in social trust more generally. Conversely, LGTB youth who find supportive communities may have more optimism about the future, and more positive feelings about the progress in gains related to LGBT rights. These experiences may foster stronger feelings of social trust, and be associated with more community and civic engagement, and stronger connections to various social groups.

Considering another context in which the relationship between social trust and integration may be complicated, those living in poverty may have little reason to be generally trusting of others. Their social groups may primarily serve as a source support for meeting basic needs. These groups are likely to be more insular, and offer few connections to opportunities or wider social networks that will help move individuals out of poverty. Indeed, these social connections may also hinder individuals from improving their situations, as there is a tacit expectation for individuals to continue to help those around them, sometimes at the cost of self-gain (Deparle, 2004).

These brief examples emphasize the need for carefully considering definitions and types of social integration and trust moving forward. Specifically, studies should carefully define and account for: (1) how individuals are socially integrated in terms of the breadth and diversity of social connections, specifically identifying the insularity of social groups; (2) the perceived benefits and outcomes of social connections (e.g., have they helped individuals find employment? Have connections within social groups led to making connections with others outside of the group?); (3) how social groups are defined by individuals (e.g., do they include friends or acquaintances from a specific location, or do they include individuals with whom relationships are maintained primarily through social networking?); and (4) the quality of the social group (e.g., does the group tend to engage in risky behaviors? Are a majority of the member of the group employed/ unemployed/pursuing higher education?).

Regarding trust, studies should clarify and account for: (1) how individuals define “others” in terms of who they trust; (2) probe *why* people are or are not trusting (e.g., because of family background? Experiences in which trust was violated? Whether or not individuals feel

they can influence political processes at the communal and/or national level?); and (3) individuals' general level of optimism or pessimism. Each of the considerations listed above have received attention within individual studies. However, longitudinal and qualitative studies that further investigate the relationship between social integration and trust while probing these aspects of the constructs are essential for understanding how social groups promote or hinder social trust, and vice-versa. These are vital lines of inquiry, as both trust and integration are fundamental to developing social capital and civic engagement.

In light of recent findings that Millennials are increasingly disengaged from traditional social and political institutions, we must consider how youth and young adults of a new generation form, utilize, and nurture social connections. Investigating ways in which younger people are engaging in civic activities at localized levels may be particularly instructive for gaining a more comprehensive understanding of issues and forms of engagement that motivate them to action, and for translating local participation into civic engagement at the national level. We know, for example, that young adults are more likely to be civically engaged through technology and social media (Baumgartner & Morris, 2009; Pew Research Center, 2014). Longitudinal studies are therefore necessary for determining if this type of engagement leads to more direct forms of involvement, and if it establishes a foundation for sustained civic participation throughout adulthood.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Those transitioning to adulthood are confronted with numerous challenges while trying to establish connections to roles that set a trajectory through adult life. Social relationships both provide individuals access to opportunities, and emerge from the successful fulfillment of roles. Additionally, the investments individuals make in social networks are dependent on the trust individuals have in others, and in society more generally. This transition becomes increasingly complicated by further uncertainty and instability introduced by an economic recession that threatens social trust, and encourages increased reliance on sources of social support.

Findings from this study contribute to existing literature on attitudes and behaviors related to trust and integration in relation to normative political and economic instability by exploring these constructs during a period of economic instability, and across two election cycles. The findings support a call for continuing to investigate changes in social integration and social trust among younger generations, especially in light of continued social change related to shifting dominant political ideologies. Findings from the study also stress the importance of identifying ways in which young adults who may be increasingly disillusioned by traditional forms of civic participation are, or want to be, civically engaged.

This study provides evidence for a mutually causal relationship between feeling having something of value to contribute to society, which is indicative of establishing and utilizing social capital, and feelings of social trust. This underscores the importance of continuing to consider the relationship between social integration and trust to shed light on how social trust translates to behavior, and also how social relationships help build social trust. This is an especially pertinent line of inquiry for future study, as social trust is intimately linked to the functioning and health of society, the economy, and government.

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