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## POLITICAL TRUST AND ELECTORAL BEHAVIOUR

*by Agnieszka Turska-Kawa*

The concept of trust in the context of voting behavior is difficult to define, because it is not a factor specific solely to this domain. Firstly, trust is an essential element of social life. It is the essence of social capital that has significant impact on many issues – education<sup>1</sup>, economic growth<sup>2</sup>, crime level<sup>3</sup>, quality of functioning of the democratic institutions<sup>4</sup>, community of the citizens<sup>5</sup>. Secondly, in large partly due to the multiple con-

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<sup>1</sup> J.S. Coleman, *Social capital in the creation of human capital*, "American Journal of Sociology" 1988, 94, pp. 95–120.

<sup>2</sup> F. Fukuyama, *Zaufanie: kapitał społeczny a droga do dobrobytu (Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity)*, Warszawa–Wrocław 1997; S. Knack, P. Keefer, *Does social capital have an economic payoff? A Cross-Country Investigation*, "Quarterly Journal Economics", 112, 1997, pp. 1251–1288; P.J. Zak, S. Knack, *Trust and growth*, "Economic Journal", 111(470), 2001, pp. 295–321.

<sup>3</sup> A. Varshney, *Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life: Hindus and Muslims In India*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2002.

<sup>4</sup> R.D. Putnam, *Demokracja w działaniu. Tradycje obywatelskie we współczesnych Włoszech (Making Democracy Work)*, Kraków 1995; R. Inglehart, *Trust, well-being and democracy*, [in:] M.E. Warren (ed.), *Democracy and Trust*, Cambridge 1999, pp. 88–120.

<sup>5</sup> T. Yamagishi, *Trust as a form of Social Intelligence*, [in:] K.S. Cook (ed.), *Trust in Society*, Calif 2001; E. M. Uslaner, *The Moral Foundations of Trust*, New York 2002.

texts of use of this concept, there are difficulties as regards distinguishing it from related concepts such as empathy, community, respect, kindness, brotherhood, esteem, unity<sup>6</sup>. Despite the many shortcomings and imperfections in the concept of trust, it appears that the concept is well understood intuitively – individuals answering questions in surveys on trust seem to understand the concept very well, and their expressed trust level is proportionate to their individually observable behaviour<sup>7</sup>.

Politics is a particular plane of social life, distinguished by a multiplicity of mutually exclusive interests and personal conflicts. Active social interactions, however, occur on the political plane not only horizontally – between the actors of the political scene, seeking to achieve their goals, but also vertically – between potential voters and the same political actors mentioned above. It is difficult to assess the importance of these two directions of interaction, but certainly they are inseparable and codependent, in the sense that without a positive vertical relationship there is no chance for the existence of any horizontal interaction; it is, after all, the voters – through the democratic choice of their representatives – who determine the original outlook of the political scene. Thus, the question of core competencies that have an impact on voting behavior gains in importance. Trust, in the opinion of Tadeusz Godlewski, who performs the function of activating citizens as a factor cementing and connecting various components of civic competences, it provides opportunities to participate in the procedural and deliberative democracy. “It sets a threshold which determines the vitality of democracy, proper functioning of democratic institutions, and civic activity”<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> See: B. Barber, *The Logic and Limits of Trust*, New Brunswick, NJ 1983; D. Gambetta, *Mafia: the prize of distrust*, [in:] D. Gambetta (ed.) *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*, Blackwell, Oxford 1988; B.A. Misztal, *Trust in Modern Societies*, Blackwell, Oxford 1996; A.B. Seligmann, *The Problem of Trust*, Princeton 1997; M.E. Warren (ed.), *Democracy and Trust...*

<sup>7</sup> Newton K., *Zaufanie społeczne i polityczne (Social and political trust)*, [in:] R.J. Dalton, H.-D. Klingeman (ed.), *Zachowania polityczne (Oxford Handbook of political behavior)*, Oxford–Warszawa 2010.

<sup>8</sup> T. Godlewski, *Obywatelskie kompetencje polityczne (Political competencies of the citizens)*, [in:] D. Karnowska (ed.), *Demokracja w Polsce po 2005 roku (Democracy in Poland after 2005)*, Toruń 2008, p. 105.

Richard Fenno has attempted to define the meaning of political trust, by reference to the reflections of the voter. "If the voter trusts the member of parliament, the prevailing thought in their mind is: I am ready to give myself over into your hands. I know that you can hurt me, though I do not know when it might happen. But I assume nevertheless that you will not hurt me, and I will not have to worry about your behavior"<sup>9</sup>. Fenno also notes that trust is not something that can be gained during an election campaign. It is a process that often lasts for years, requires dedication and effort on the part of politicians. Furthermore, even trust built over a long time can be destroyed in a moment – due to a single event, speech, or behaviour.

Trust itself carries with it certain belief, expressed in an implicit way. When one trusts another person, it implies accepting some risk of injury as a result of the expected or necessary wider exchange of goods (values, support, material goods etc.). Annette Baier writes: "Where one depends on another's good will, one is necessarily vulnerable to the limits of that good will. One leaves others opportunity to harm one when one trusts, and also shows one's confidence that they will not take it"<sup>10</sup>. The foundation of political trust is the individual's belief that the psychological contract, concluded between citizens and the state personalized in the authority<sup>11</sup> will be fulfilled. It is an informal agreement, understood rather indirectly than directly, which most often refers to the individual's perception of what the state could offer "me" (specific democratic rights, a sense that the main national institutions function based on democratic principles, freedom of speech, sense of security, integrity, prosperity, etc. ) and what "I" can in return give back to the state (participation in elections, participation in direct forms of government, such as the referendums, membership in organizations, interest in mechanisms of functioning of the political scene, etc.). According to the canons of democracy, citizens

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<sup>9</sup> R. Fenno, *Home style: representative in their districts*, Boston 1978, p. 55–56.

<sup>10</sup> A. Baier, *Trust and antitrust*, „Ethics”, Vol. 96, 1986, p. 235.

<sup>11</sup> For more see: A. Turska-Kawa, *Społeczna recepcja partycypacyjnej płaszczyzny demokracji w świetle koncepcji kontraktu psychologicznego (Social reception of the participative plane of democracy in light of the theory of psychological contract)*, „Rocznik Nauk Politycznych” 2010, nr 1(13), pp. 81–104.

make (create) some assumptions as to what a democracy can offer them, both in procedural, as well as substantial terms. A violation of the psychological contract is defined as awareness that the other party did not honor this agreement. The consequence consists in the individuals granting themselves the similar right to not fulfill their part of the informal contract. Thus, when a voter trusts a given politician or party, they nurture within themselves the belief that there is no conflict of values, ideas or objectives pursued between the political actor – be it a party or a politician – and the individual voter, what could in turn translate into support for the representation of this particular individual's interests by the political actor deemed worthy of this trust.

Democracy should produce and support mechanisms that will form the foundation for the functioning of good, well-meaning policies, and thus existence of trust is crucial to it. Just as we are not able to function socially without a minimum of trust in others, which stimulates our social relations – suspicion with respect to every individual encountered can be translated simply into difficulties in undertaking any kind of cooperation both on a private or professional level. As noted by Claus Offe, trust in certain domains is a means of regulating cooperation, while in others it is replaced by a variety of legal restrictions<sup>12</sup>. A society that relies on a strong trust relationship probably requires less regulation. Greater freedom in many areas can lead to engaging the greater responsibility of citizens, activating their potential ingenuity and commitment to common goals.

With the progressive development of society, their increasing diversity, and developing network of mutual dependence, an individual is faced with a paradox. Namely, on the one hand, this diversity provides a greater range of choice. On the other, the same plurality makes it impossible to take a good look at each of the existing options and monitor it for weaknesses. Sources of knowledge allowing an individual to make optimal decisions and to gain sufficient knowledge of all elements of the environment that may affect his or her life are limited<sup>13</sup>. One of the mechanisms minimizing

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<sup>12</sup> C. Offe, *How can we trust our fellow citizens?*, [in:] M.E. Warren (ed.), *Democracy and Trust...*, pp. 42–87.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*.

these limitations is the trust that allows one to make, to a certain extent, thoughtless choices based on faith in the good intentions of others (individuals, groups, and institutions). Anthony Giddens<sup>14</sup> and Niklas Luhmann<sup>15</sup> emphasize that faith in other people (understood as neighbours, citizens, residents of the same city) allows for the better coordination of activities in large areas and in the long term. At the same time, trust reduces the diversity and complexity of one's environment and its unpredictability in many ways, thus giving a greater sense of security, and letting the individual simply accept without reflection much of the network of close and not-so-close relationships in which the individual participates. This situation has both psychological benefits for individuals it increases their well-being, releases personal resources, makes for a better mental condition, but also for the community – the greater openness of individuals to cooperation, shared responsibility for carrying out tasks important for them, translates into an increase in the coefficient of citizenship.

Politics is a social plane where the decisions made have an impact on the quality of life of individuals. At the same time, the political offer addressed during the election campaign to the citizens, the process of implementing the various commitments and objectives pursued by certain political actors between the elections contains too much information for each strand of it to be separated and analyzed in the context of a given individual's electoral decision. Moreover, the increasing rate of circulation of individual content often causes the phenomenon of fusion. The difficulty of thoroughly assimilating the content relates, primo, to their plurality, secundo, to the time constraints of the voters, and tertio – to specific interpretation of the information imposed on the voters through a communication channel by which the information arrives. Trust is the bridge between the voter and a particular political entity, which allows us to avoid these difficulties. It allows an individual to actively participate in important state decisions, without incurring major psychological costs, related to the necessity of the systematic tracking of policies, detailed analysis of the

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<sup>14</sup> A. Giddens, *The consequences of Modernity*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1990.

<sup>15</sup> N. Luhmann, *Trust: A mechanism for the reductions of social complexity*, [in:] *Trust and Power: Two works by Niklas Luhmann*, Chichester 1979.

electoral offer, or spending large amounts of time on these activities. As writes Krystyna Skarżyńska, often “it is easier in this situation to withdraw from the hardships of the searching a solid base for one’s electoral decision, stay home or vote based solely on the suggestions of some authority”<sup>16</sup>. Research shows that trust placed in a politician is even more important in the perceptions of voters than the characteristics closely related to that profession, such as leadership, political party, professed ideology or domestic or foreign policy supported<sup>17</sup>. Looking more generally, trusts placed by a voter in some planes of broadly defined politics, provides an opportunity to focus his or her attention on only those elements of the system giving rise to suspicion<sup>18</sup>. Thus it deepens the conscious political participation, by complementing and supplementing knowledge and information.

### POLITICAL TRUST IN DIFFERENT MODELS OF ELECTORAL BEHAVIOUR

The first scientific attempts to find answers to questions on the determinants of voting behaviour and their practical use (reflected in the issues such as: *What to do to win the elections? What to say to make them cast their vote in my favour? Why do they support this party, and not another?*) were undertaken as early as the 1920<sup>s</sup>. Charles E. Merriam and Harold F. Gosnell<sup>19</sup> analyzed the reasons why individuals choose political (electoral) activity or inactivity. Polls carried out within this study led to a definition of three fundamental paradigms of voting behavior<sup>20</sup>. Those are: a) socio-

<sup>16</sup> K. Skarżyńska, *Aktywność i bierność polityczna (Political activity and passivity)*, [in:] K. Skarżyńska (ed.), *Psychologia polityczna (Political psychology)*, Poznań 2002, p. 44.

<sup>17</sup> See.: W. Cwalina, A. Falkowski, *Marketing polityczny, perspektywa psychologiczna (Political marketing – a psychological perspective)*, Gdańsk 2006, p. 559–560.

<sup>18</sup> M.E. Warren, *Deliberative democracy and authority*, “American Political Science Review” 1996, Vol. 90, pp. 46–60.

<sup>19</sup> C. E. Merriam, H. F. Gosnell, *Non-voting: Causes and method of control*, Chicago 1924.

<sup>20</sup> R. J. Dalton, M. P. Wattenberg, *The not so simple act of voting*, [in:] A. Finifter (ed.), *The state of the discipline II*, The American Political Science Association, Washington, DC 1993; A. Antoszewski, *O zwiększeniu skuteczności prognoz wyborczych (On increasing the*



logical model (social-structural model); b) model of social psychology (party identification, socialized individual); c) economic model (rational choice theory).

Trust is the propensity of entrusting one's interests to other people. It is not biologically conditioned, but is a measure of our personal beliefs as to the nature of the social world, and a function of one's personal experience. Each of these models, places differently the determinants of one's electoral activity, views the concept of political trust differently.

The sociological approach to the study of electoral behavior, often called the social-structural approach, is historically the oldest trend where the main point of reference of an individual is its participation and membership in a group, determining his or her present attitudes and behaviour<sup>21</sup>. The basis of this model is the assumption of the collective nature of electoral behaviour<sup>22</sup>. According to the main assumptions of this model, behaviour is determined by the membership of a particular social community (professional, religious, social class, etc.), as demonstrated by the high compatibility of preferences in families and the strong influence of the leaders in specific groups. The occurring "freezes" and "defreezes" of the party systems are to a large extent an effect of changes in the nature of the social structure, and these in turn are related to the dynamics of socio-political divisions<sup>23</sup>.

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*reliability of political prognosis*), [in:] W. Sitek (ed.), *Czy można przewidzieć? Socjologiczno-metodologiczne doświadczenia polskich badań przedwyborczych (Can we predict? Socio-methodological experiences of Polish pre-electoral polling)*, Wrocław-Warszawa-Kraków 1995; J. Raciborski, *Polskie wybory. Zachowania wyborcze społeczeństwa polskiego w latach 1989–1995 (Polish elections. Electoral behaviour of the Polish society in the years 1989–1995)*, Warszawa 1997; in: Cwalina, A. Falkowski, *Marketing polityczny, perspektywa... (Political marketing – a psychological..)*

<sup>21</sup> S.M. Lipset, S. Rokkan, *Osie podziałów, systemy partyjne oraz afiliacje wyborców (Axes of division, party systems and voter affiliations)*, [in:] J. Szczupaczyński (ed.), *Elity, demokracja, wybory (The elites, democracy, and the elections)*, Warszawa 1993, p. 97–99.

<sup>22</sup> W. Cwalina, A. Falkowski, *Marketing polityczny, perspektywa... (Political marketing – a psychological...)*, p. 57–62.

<sup>23</sup> A. Turska-Kawa, W. Wojtasik, *Zachowania wyborcze obywateli w 2010 roku (Electoral behaviour of citizens In 2010)*, „Preferencje Polityczne” 2011, (Political Preferences), 2, p. 22.



Membership in a certain community implies different interests, accepted values of its members, that should translate to different voting behaviour, focused on meeting collective needs. The fundamental element is the belief of those belonging to the group that they all work for the good of the community created by them. Therefore, trust will be one of the important elements binding its members together. An individual works towards common goals, and effectiveness of cooperation in this field requires a belief that other members also labour for the very same interests, and their activities are directed to the benefit of the community and every individual who identifies with it. Electoral activity, in this context, is understood as a type of mobilization for the good of the group. Mutual trust of the group members constitutes the social background of this activity, as the decision undertakes a specific behaviour is secondary to the needs and interests of the group.

One of the first studies in this trend referred to the role of party identification in creating election behaviours. The second model indicated – the psychological approach – emphasizes the particular value of permanent preferences in explaining the electoral behaviour. One of the first studies in this domain referred to the role of party identification in the creation of electoral behaviour<sup>24</sup>. Under this assumption, voters are guided by loyalty to specific political parties (or, in extreme cases, political leaders) and not by their membership of a particular social group. This model is often described as the psychological identification model<sup>25</sup>. Party identification is here understood as an attitude, emotional (positive) approach to the actors on the political scene. It works to some extent as a filter for perceiving the actions of politicians and in a way protects the good opinion of people with whom the individual identifies. A stimulus undermining the thus-far positive picture and coherency of information on a given politician

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<sup>24</sup> A. Campbell, P.E. Converse, W.E. Miller, D.E. Stokes, *The American voter*, New York 1960.

<sup>25</sup> A. Antoszewski, *Wzorce rywalizacji politycznej we współczesnych demokracjach europejskich (Models of political competition in contemporary European democracies)*, Wrocław 2004, p. 19; W. Jednaka (1999), *Zachowania wyborcze (Political behaviour)*, [in:] A. Antoszewski W. Herbut (ed.), *Encyklopedia politologii (Encyclopaedia of politology) t.3*, Kraków 1999, p. 328.

arouses in an individual the process of negative emotions that can lead either to a change in the previously accepted image, or to reinterpretation of the situation. One can assume that among the supporters of a given politician who have a fixed image of this personage, the process of altering the interpretation of the situation will be initiated faster by, for example, assigning evil intent to the surroundings. Thus such rationalization in principle consolidates the previous image. The research of Glenn R. Parker has shown that party identification is an important factor affecting trust in a politician<sup>26</sup>. Further studies by the author confirmed that trust is the most important characteristic of a given political personage in the context of gaining support in the elections, exceeding in significance the leadership skills, experience and other personal characteristics<sup>27</sup>. The essence of identification is to find common elements between entities – accepted values and beliefs, goals to be pursued, views, characterological traits or idealistic perception of the relevant entity as a model to follow. This attitude, therefore, requires the bestowal of trust upon the other party (entity), since its absence would not allow the individual to solidify the belief that the actor in whom he or she trusts acts in his or her best interests.

Within the paradigm of social psychology, there have also been attempts to explain voting behaviour through the characteristics of voters, such as voters' system of values<sup>28</sup>, the sense of political aliena-

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<sup>26</sup> G.R. Parker, *The role of constituent trust in congressional elections*, "Public Opinion Quarterly" 1989, 53(2), pp. 93–109.

<sup>27</sup> After: W. Cwalina, A. Falkowski, *Marketing polityczny, perspektywa... (Political marketing – a psychological...)* p. 565–566.

<sup>28</sup> M. Rokeach, *The nature of human value*, London 1973; P. Boski, *Jak wartości społeczno-polityczne dzieliły elektoraty pretendentów do Belwederu w wyborach prezydenckich 1990? (How did the social and political values divide the electorates of presidential candidates in the 1990 race?)*, [in:] W. Z. Daab, K. Korzeniowski, P. Boski, K. Gembura-Chmielewski, K. Skarżyńska, M. Zakrzewski, *Polski wyborca '90. Psychospołeczne studia nad wyborami prezydenckimi (The Polish voter. Psycho-sociological studies on the presidential elections)*, t. 1, Warszawa 1991, pp. 93–123; V. Braithwaite, *Harmony and security value orientations in political evaluation*, „Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin” 1997, nr 23(4), pp. 401–414.

tion<sup>29</sup>, anxiety<sup>30</sup>, machiavelism<sup>31</sup>, openness to experience, agreeableness<sup>32</sup>. CBOS reports dealt with the psychological profiles of party electorates by highlighting variables such as optimism-pessimism, self-confidence, willingness to cooperate, paranoid thinking, authori-

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<sup>29</sup> G. Reimanis, *Relationship of locus of control and anomie to political interest among American and Nigerian students*, „Journal of Social Psychology” 1982, nr 116; K. Korzeniowski, *Poczucie podmiotowości-alienacji politycznej. Uwarunkowania psychospołeczne (Sense of subjectivity-political alienation. Psycho-social considerations)*, Poznań 1991; K. Korzeniowski, *O psychospołecznych uwarunkowaniach zachowań wyborczych Polaków w latach dziewięćdziesiątych (On psycho-social determinants of Poles' voting behaviour in 1990s)*, [in:] L. Kolarska-Bobińska, R. Markowski (ed.), *Prognozy i wybory. Polska demokracja '95 (Prognoses and elections. Polish democracy 1995)*, Warszawa 1997; A. Bronowicka, *Alienacja polityczna i społeczna jako wyznacznik zachowań wyborczych młodzieży (Political and social alienation as an indicator of youth electoral behaviour)*, [in:] A. Bronowicka (ed.), *Wyzwania i zagrożenia demokracji w Polsce w obliczu wyborów 2005 (Challenges and threats to Polish democracy in the face of the 2005 elections)*, Opole 2005; A. Turska-Kawa, *Psychologiczne aspekty społecznej akceptacji zmiany systemowej (Psychological aspects of social acceptance of systemie change)*, [in:] R. Glajcar, W. Wojtasik (ed.), *Transformacja systemowa w Polsce 1989–2009 (Systemic transformation in Poland 1989–2009)*, Katowice 2009, pp. 84–104.

<sup>30</sup> W. Cwalina, A. Falkowski, *Marketing polityczny, perspektywa... (Political marketing – a psychological...)*; A. Turska-Kawa, *Dyspozycyjny lęk jako zmienna różnicująca aktywność wyborczą w wyborach do Parlamentu Europejskiego w 2009 roku (Dispositional fear as a variable affecting political activity In the European Parliament elections in 2009)*, [in:] A. Sokala, B. Michalak, A. Frydrych, R. Zych (ed.), *Wybory do Parlamentu Europejskiego. Kampanie w Polsce i Europie (European Parliamentary elections. Campaigns in Poland and in Europe)*, Toruń 2010, pp. 293–308.

<sup>31</sup> I. Pilch, *Makiawelizm jako osobowościowy predyktor zachowań wyborczych (Machiavellism as a personalisty predictor of voting behaviour)*, „Preferencje polityczne” (Political preferences), 2/2011, pp. 145–164; I. Pilch (2011B), *Osobowość „idealnego” prezydenta oraz profile osobowościowe kandydatów w wyborach prezydenckich 2010 w ocenie wybranej grupy wyborców (Personalisty of an „ideal” president and personalisty profile of the presidential candidates in the 2010 race as seen by a selected group of voters)*, [in:] J. Okrzesik, W. Wojtasik (ed.), *Wybory prezydenckie 2010 (2010 Presidential elections)*, Katowice 2011.

<sup>32</sup> A. Turska-Kawa, *Osobowościowe predykatory zachowań wyborczych. Rozważania w kontekście modelu „Wielkiej Piątki” (Personalisty predictors of voting behaviour. Considerations in the context of the „Big Five” model)*, „Preferencje polityczne” (Political preferences) 2011, 2, pp. 165–186.

tarianism, anomy, political alienation, conservatism-innovation<sup>33</sup>. The inclusion of individual predispositions of voters as a platform determining individual electoral activity invokes a similar mechanism as described for the party identification.

On the basis of diagnosis of persistent individual characteristics, one can infer the particular needs of a voter based on the relevant characteristics. Needs, as a dynamic component of personality, act as a signal to the body, mobilizing the individual to undertake activities aimed at satisfying these needs. Motivational forces that are initiated by the needs affect human behaviour, determine what he or she seeks, and what they try to avoid, what gives satisfaction, and what makes one uncomfortable. Thus, sets of needs govern the relationship of an individual and the surrounding environment. The diagnosed differences in psychological characteristics of those electorally passive and active on the one hand, and supporters of different political parties on the other, suggest that the different voting behaviour observed in them has the objective of meeting specific needs or systems of needs. In order to satisfactorily tie one's electoral decision with a particular political entity, the activities of which in some way will be compatible with the needs of the voter, the said voter must first place trust in that political actor.

The literature on the subject presents us also with an interesting theory which emphasizes the fact that trust is taught during childhood, and becomes a part of one's personality. According to this theory, trust or distrust is the result of relationships built with adults in the early experiences, particularly with the mother<sup>34</sup>. The trust level solidified at the time

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<sup>33</sup> BS/172/99, *Zmiany w psychologicznych profilach elektoratów partyjnych. Komunikat z badań (Changes in psychological profiles of the party electorates)*, Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, Warsaw, November 1999, [http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/1999/K\\_172\\_99.PDF](http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/1999/K_172_99.PDF); BS/95/2002, *Psychologiczne profile elektoratów partyjnych. Komunikat z badań (Psychological profiles of the party electorates)*, Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej, Warsaw, June 2002, [http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2002/K\\_095\\_02.PDF](http://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2002/K_095_02.PDF).

<sup>34</sup> K. Newton, *Zaufanie społeczne i polityczne (Social and political trust)*, [in:] R.J. Dalton, H.-D. Klingemann, *Zachowania polityczne (Oxford Handbook of political behavior)*, t. 1, Oxford–Warszawa 2010, p. 416.

accompany's an individual throughout his or her whole life, in different situations, also in the process of building one's political subjectivity

The economic model, often called after the author of the first studies on the subject, the theory of rational choice, is the purest approach, devoid of psychological colouring. In general, it maintains that voters approach the elections rationally, making their decision on the basis of a profit and loss account they draw up. As the creator of the model is considered Anthony Downs, who in the 1960's presented the initial assumptions thereof<sup>35</sup>. The balance sheet of possible voting options created by the voter was presented by Downs in the form of the formula:

$$R=(B)(P)-C+D$$

where R is the total reward that the voter gains from participation In the elections, B is the benefit resulting from the belief that the candidate preferred by the voter would win and Hus brings the voter more benefits than the possible victory of other candidates, P is the estimated probability that by participating in the elections one will influence the election result, C is the cost of voting from the point of view of time and money spent, which the voter incurs, and D is the feeling of fulfilling the „citizen duty” and personal satisfaction from participation in the election<sup>36</sup>. The higher the estimated total Reward (R), the greater the likelihood that an individual will choose to be active in the elections. The rational voter therefore seeks to maximize the expected benefits brought by the act of voting, is guided by selfish self-interest.

Rational choice theorists see political trust as a rational calculation of “getting something in exchange for something else”, according to which they suggest that one should bestow trust upon others in order to be able to expect similar behaviour from them in turn. Rational trust is, therefore, protecting one's own interest, which is the difficulty in defining the very

<sup>35</sup> A. Downs, *An economic theory of democracy*, New York 1957.

<sup>36</sup> J. A. Ferejohn, M. P. Fiorina, *The paradox of not voting: A decision theoretic analysis*, “American Political Science Review” 1974, 68(2), pp. 525–536; W.H. Riker, P.C. Ordeshook, *A theory of the calculus of voting*, “American Political Science Review” 1968, 62(1), pp. 25–42.

essence of trust. “If a man serves himself by serving others, even the most altruistic and selfless action could be interpreted as a clever and far-sighted action in their own interest”<sup>37</sup>. Describing the term “trust” as a belief that the subject/object of that trust will not cause us harm and will act in our best interests in the case of “getting something in exchange for something else” would mean that we will in turn act in the interests of the other party, which is contrary to the essence of rational decision making in accordance with the present model. Casting a vote in favour of any political entity will not be an expression of trust, but the pure calculation that the given entity can best satisfy the interests of the voter. The model permits for no emotion, attachment, identification, but is solely based on the profit and loss account, the point of reference only the voter’s own needs and goals. Thus when making a thorough analysis of the situation, an individual must trust in him – or herself, in the sense of believing that the decision made is optimal for his or her own sake. So the entity upon which trust is bestowed, is the individual him or herself, and the final quality of the electoral decision is a function of emotion-free analysis of its individual elements (see the formula above).

**Table 1.** Place of trust in different models of electoral behaviour

Model of electoral behaviour	Direction of trust
<i>Sociological model</i> (social-structural)	Social group
<i>Social psychology model</i> (party identification, socialized individual)	Political entity (party, political grouping, a politician)
<i>Economic model</i> (rational choice theory)	Individual (voter)

Source: own material.

Generally, it should be noted that in the three fundamental approaches to electoral behaviour analyzed above and the presented form of models: sociological, social-psychological, and economic, the place and role of trust is significantly different (Table 1). In the first of the presented models, referring to the theory of the collective nature of electoral behaviour, in

<sup>37</sup> K. Newton, *Zaufanie społeczne i polityczne... (Social and political trust)*, p. 415.

which the reference point for the decision is membership in a particular social structure, trust is directed to the individual members of the group to which the voter belongs and in favour of which interests he or she act. In the psychological perspective, the foundation of which is the identification of the voters with a political entity, trust is directed precisely towards this entity. The economic model in turn, where the electoral decision is the result of individual calculation as to which political actor can best meet the voter's interests, shows trust being placed in the very same individual making the decision.

### **POLITICAL DISTRUST OF POLISH SOCIETY AND THEIR VOTING BEHAVIOURS. OWN RESEARCH RESULTS**

The important role of political trust in electoral behavior encourages one to attempt the diagnosis of the rate of political distrust in Polish society. This coefficient is not a figure referring to any individual politician, but in general to the political sphere in which all political actors operate. It does not contain a structural distinction between the trust in politics and in politicians, but describes the overall attitude of the individual.

Political distrust is one of the important elements of a sense of alienation of individuals, understood by researchers as a feeling of alienation and isolation in dealing with various types of institutions and organizations, leaders, elites exercising power<sup>38</sup>. In this construct the theorists distinguish several different structures. For example, Ada W. Finifter, one of the major scholars of the subject, points to a *sense of political powerlessness* (sense of lack of understanding of political phenomena and processes, a low level of willingness to take political action, disbelief in its efficacy) and *perceived anomie* (a feeling that in the political system the generally

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<sup>38</sup> To see more: A. Turska-Kawa, *Poczucie alienacji a użytkowanie mediów. W poszukiwaniu nowych obszarów zastosowania teorii użytkowania i gratyfikacji (Sense of alienation and the use of the media. In search of New applications of the theory of usage and gratification)*, Katowice 2011.



accepted standards are often broken and violated )<sup>39</sup>. Samuel Long, in turn, differentiates: *political powerlessness, political discontent, political cynicism, political hopelessness, political isolation*<sup>40</sup>.

In the process of operationalization of political distrust index, 4 of the 12 items of one of the three dimensions of the author's proprietorial Sense of Alienation Scale "Z" were used<sup>41</sup> – namely the *sense of political alienation-political self-significance dimension*. The claims included in the index are:

1. *In politics, only contacts and networks count.*
2. *Most politicians lie to gain votes and public support.*
3. *I often feel cheated by the politicians.*
4. *Most politicians – no matter what they say – only really care about their own career and personal needs.*

The respondents were asked to react to these statements by choosing one of four responses: *I strongly agree, rather agree, rather disagree, strongly disagree*, scored in sequence: 4, 3, 2, 1. Possible scores range from 4–16. The higher score reflects a higher political distrust level.

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<sup>39</sup> A. W. Finifter, *Dimensions of political alienation*, „American Political Science Review” 1970, Vol. 64, pp. 389–410; Finifter A.W. (ed.), *Alienation and the Social System*, New York 1972.

<sup>40</sup> S. Long, *Urban adolescents and the political system: Dimensions of disaffection*, „Theory and Research in Social Education” 1980, Vol. 8, pp. 31–43.

<sup>41</sup> Reliability of the Sense of Alienation Scale „Z” is  $r_{tt}=0,87$ . Reliability of the three separated sub-scales is: for the sense of powerlessness-power dimension  $r_{tt}=0,89$ , for the dimension *sense of alienation –political self-significance*  $r_{tt}=0,89$ , for the dimension *sense of isolation–integration*  $r_{tt}=0,87$ . The value of the tool lies in the independence of the sub-scales, what permits one to treat the results obtained for each of them astronomically. Research conducted using the Scale: A. Turska-Kawa, *Poczucie alienacji a użytkowanie mediów...* (*Sense of alienation and the use of the media*); A. Turska-Kawa, *Poczucie alienacji jako zmienna różnicująca zachowania wyborcze obywateli w wyborach do sejmu 2011 roku*, (*Sense of alienation as a variable affecting the electoral behaviour of citizens in the 2011 parliamentary elections*) „Preferencje Polityczne” (Political Preferences) 2012, nr 3.

The research was conducted under the “Political Preferences. Attitudes-Identifications-Behaviours” project during November-December 2011. The study involved 1099 people nationwide<sup>42</sup>.

The average index of political distrust in the studied group was 11.1 (standard deviation – 2.3), a value slightly above average.

**Table 2.** The results of analysis of variance for individuals with different political preferences in the parliamentary elections in 2011 and those who opted for electoral absenteeism in this election

	df	F	p
Electoral behaviour (between groups)	7	10,304	,000

Source: own material based on author’s own research results

The carried out analysis of variance showed that the level of political distrust significantly differs in the respondents presenting different voting behaviour in the 2011 parliamentary elections (Table 2).

**Table 3.** The averages and standard deviation of the index of political distrust, and the results of Tukey’s HSD post-hoc test for selected socio-demographic groups

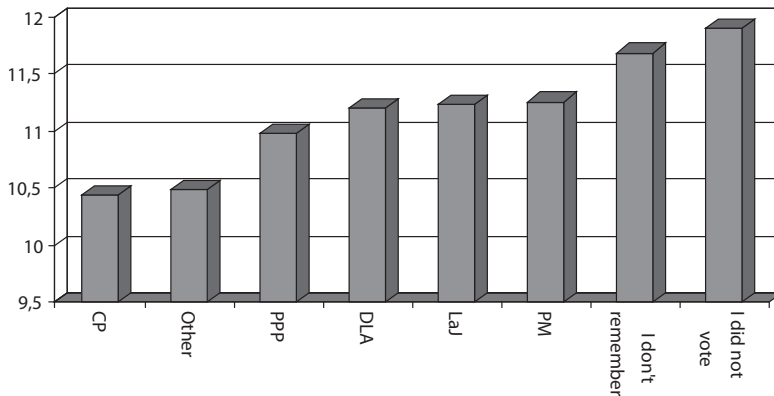
Category	Average	N	Standard deviation
Civic Platform	10,44 abc*	359	2,38
Polish People’s Party	10,98	56	2,57
Law and Justice	11,24 ae	166	2,32
Palikot’s Movement	11,26b	115	2,34
Democratic Left Alliance	11,20	70	1,97
Others	10,49 d	39	1,79
I don’t remember	11,69	13	1,55
I did not vote	11,91 cde	281	2,15

\* letters indicate pairs with significant differences as to the tested value in the post-hoc test.

Source: own material based on author’s own research results

<sup>42</sup> See more: [www.badania-elektoratu.us.edu.pl](http://www.badania-elektoratu.us.edu.pl); „Preferencje Polityczne” (Political Preferences) 2012, nr 3.

Average levels of political distrust in the electorates of the different political parties and among those who did not actively participate in the 2011 elections are presented in Table 3. When analyzing the collected data, it should be noted that the extremes of the continuum of political distrust level are taken up by two groups – on one side the supporters of the Civic Platform, showing the lowest level of distrust, and on the other hand, individuals who have not used their active right to vote in 2011, presenting the highest levels of this variable. Significantly different result (medial) from these extremes is presented by supporters of the Law and Justice party.



**Figure 1.** Average index of political distrust in groups presenting different electoral behaviour in the 2011 elections (ordered by size)

Source: own material based on author's own research results

The study showed that the highest level of political distrust is represented by individuals who have opted for electoral passivity (Figure 1). They did not find actors worthy of their trust on the political scene, and felt they could not entrust their own interests to any entity, taking the risk of not being harmed. Passivity thus becomes the optimal alternative, which defends the individual from a sense of deception. The lowest rate of political distrust was presented by supporters of the party with the largest number of seats in parliament, and the head of which is also the head of the government. The distribution of the distrust index among the electorates of the other parliamentary parties shows a significant trend. The lower

distrust coefficient was found among the supporters of the party making up the ruling coalition, and the higher one – with almost the same results for each of them – among supporters of the opposition parties. One can assume that the political scene through the eyes of the opposition parties electorate is viewed much more through the lens of “contacts, frauds, lies,” which translates into the result obtained.

## CONCLUSION

Electoral activity in Poland is not entrenched in law in the sense that there is no institutional compulsion to vote. All law is largely the result of a lack of trust, as it clearly and explicitly outlines a series of expectations and requirements, and the consequences of failure to comply with them. Thus, political and electoral activation of the citizens requires a foundation that will motivate individuals to exercise their right to vote. Cooperation, commitment to common goals, and social development require cooperation and risk-taking associated with the division of responsibilities for joint action. Ability to deal with risk, in turn, requires at least a minimum degree of certainty, which is the essence of trust.

“All the research shows that success and the wealth of nations depends on three interrelated factors: optimism, conviction of the people that they have influence over state affairs, and trust that makes us relate to others in an open, kind way, in the hope that we will not be cheated, or lied to. Only then can democracy make full use of its social capital”<sup>43</sup>. Democracy in itself does not guarantee trust, or cooperation of the citizens. It is the only ground for the flourishing of trust, at all times when people show even the smallest desire to believe in others. This situation only opens the possibility for the efficient transformation of the different areas of social life, and implementing reforms that will support the development of society.

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<sup>43</sup> Interview of Katarzyna Janowska and Piotr Mucharski with sociologist Piotr Sztompka, „Gazeta Wyborcza”, 10–11.02.2007, p. 16. quoted after: T. Godlewski, *Obywatelskie kompetencje... (Political competencies...)*, p. 104.