

Political Studies Book Note Form

Thank you for offering to review:

***Handbook on Political Trust* by Sonja Zmerli (ed.). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2017. 624pp., £205.00 (h/b), ISBN 978 1 78254 510 1**

We look forward to receiving your completed review by: 17 April 2017

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Thank you for agreeing to write for *Political Studies Review* and enriching the development of information in political science.

Given the tides of citizen discontent surfacing in many advanced democracies in recent years, this extensive volume on political trust is relevant and timely. The editors have assembled a stellar cast of authors to write concise – but never meagre – accounts on different aspects of political trust. Across almost thirty chapters, the focus is on the nature and measurement of political trust (in Part 1), the causes and consequences of political trust (in Part 2) and empirical trends in political trust (in Part 3). Each of the chapters provides a summary of the existing research base, and plenty supplement this with original empirical analysis. While most of the chapters draw on perspectives from political science, there are also welcome perspectives from biology and psychology, focusing on such factors as the role of individual personality and emotions, along with the nature of trust as a heuristic device. The editors have also made a conscious effort at geographical diversity; Part 3 in particular moves beyond the usual focus on western countries to consider trends and causes of political trust in both developing and non-democratic countries.

The result is a treasure-trove of information, both for researchers new to the field and for more experienced scholars seeking updates on the literature and fresh perspectives on a well-studied topic. Not surprisingly given its size, the book achieves an admirably broad coverage. Even so, its scope could have extended a little further. Alongside all the data on levels of trust and analyses on the causes of trust, might not more consideration have been paid to the way that trust is measured? Many of the chapters rely on conventional survey-based measures of political trust yet, aside from a couple of chapters, the adequacy of these indicators goes unprobed. A more ambitious conclusion would also have been welcome. Empirical research on political trust has, to date, proceeded in a fragmented manner, largely due to the data-driven nature of most investigations. A clearer roadmap of the directions for future research would be useful, helping to bring together the scattergun nature of the existing literature. This book could have provided such a unifying thrust, and it is a pity that the editors did not attempt the task. Overall, however, this is an immensely useful resource for public opinion scholars. A shame is that the book's cost means that, for most, this will be a library purchase only.

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