



Trust, Ethics and Civil Society

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“Trust in others and confidence in institutions, two key indicators of social capital, reached historic lows among Americans in 2012 in two nationally representative surveys that have been administered since the 1970s. Social capital was lower in recent years than during the Watergate scandal of the early 1970s; the Iran hostage crisis and “national malaise” of the late 1970s and early 1980s; the height of the crime wave in the early 1990s; the Clinton impeachment of the late 1990s; the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks; and the financial crisis and recession of the late 2000s.” (5, p. 12)

In a classic article, the late professor of corporate strategy and ethicist Larue Hosmer linked the concept of trust in organizational theory to moral philosophy where he noted that trust was generally little discussed across many of the great moral philosophers over two thousand years. He used Rawls’ view of a “good” society as one in which the members willingly cooperate for the ultimate benefit of all as clearly supposing trust as a prerequisite for cooperation



