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A Cross-National Examination of Citizen Trust in the Public Service in New and Established Democracies

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A Cross-National Examination of Citizen Trust in the Public Service in New and Established Democracies

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Research Questions

- How do levels of trust in the public service differ across countries?
- Are these attitudes about public service determined by similar individual-level attributes across countries?
- Do country-level correlates explain variation between countries in citizen attitudes toward public service?

Importance of Trust for PA

- Legitimacy of the public bureaucracy
 - Marlowe 2004; Houston and Harding 2013
- Effective program operation
 - Miller 1974; Ruscio 1996
- Recruitment and retention for the public service
 - Nye 1997; 1998 Pew Research Center

A Model of Trust

Individual Level:

- **Socio-cultural explanations**
 - Trust is the product of socialization and social experiences
 - Putnam 2000; Brewer and Sigelman 2002; Delhey and Newton 2003; Christensen and Laegreid 2005
- **Socio-psychological explanations**
 - Trust is the result of citizen personality traits
 - Putnam 1992; 2000; Newton 1997; Richardson et al. 2001
- **Attitudes toward government**
 - The perceived trustworthiness of the public service maybe influenced by diffuse support for government
 - Newton and Norris 2000; Marlowe 2004

A Model of Trust (cont'd)

Country Level:

- Quality of government
 - Norris 1999; Mishler and Rose 2001; Andreson and Tevrdova 2003; Van de Walle and Bouckaert 2003; Dehley and Newton 2005
- Ethnic heterogeneity
 - Alesina et al. 2003; Delhey and Newton 2005; Anderson and Paskeviciute 2006; Nannestad 2008
- Political history
 - Mishler and Rose 1997, 2005; Norris 1999; Anderson and Tverdova 2003; Houston 2013

Data & Methods

- World Values Survey (WVS), 5th Wave, 2009
 - samples drawn from 20 North American and European countries

- Multi-level binary logistic regression

Dependent Variable

“I am going to name a number of organizations. For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them ...

The Civil Service?”

- a great deal of confidence
- quite a lot of confidence
- not very much confidence
- none at all

Independent Variables: Level-1

- Socio-cultural
 - Age
 - Male
 - Education high
 - Government employee
 - Left political ideology

Independent Variables: Level-1 (cont'd)

- Socio-psychological
 - Civic engagement
 - Interpersonal trust
- Attitudes toward government
 - Confidence in other governmental institutions

Independent Variables: Level-2

- Quality of government
 - Corruption Perception Index (TI)
 - Government effectiveness (WB)
- Ethnic heterogeneity
 - Ethnic fractionalization (Alesina et al.)
- Political history
 - Former Soviet Bloc country

Findings Table 1. Responses about Confidence in the Civil Service

Country	% None at all	% Not very much	% Quite a lot	% A great deal	N	% Quite a lot or A great deal
Switzerland	2.3	29.8	62.4	5.5	1,204	67.9
Sweden	4.0	30.3	62.5	3.3	856	65.8
Norway	2.4	36.3	59.2	2.2	1,016	61.3
Finland	5.5	34.4	54.6	5.5	1,001	60.1
Canada	7.6	36.1	50.5	5.9	1,995	56.3
France	14.0	32.3	48.1	5.7	1,001	53.7
Russia	13.8	33.3	47.0	5.9	1,833	52.9
Ukraine	16.8	34.4	44.9	3.9	864	48.8
Great Britain	11.6	42.2	40.4	5.7	947	46.1
United States	7.2	50.0	39.3	3.4	1,203	42.7
Bulgaria	20.5	36.9	37.6	5.1	929	42.6
Spain	10.3	48.7	36.9	4.0	1,143	40.9
Italy	13.1	46.0	39.0	1.9	983	40.9
Georgia	14.5	45.0	36.2	4.3	1,300	40.5
Germany	15.0	53.5	29.4	2.1	1,984	31.5
Netherlands	15.9	53.4	29.1	1.6	1,001	30.7
Romania	24.3	45.7	27.7	2.3	1,653	30.0
Poland	19.5	62.1	16.6	1.9	917	18.4
Slovenia	23.2	60.0	15.4	1.3	968	16.7
Moldova	31.6	54.3	12.8	1.3	1,000	14.1

**Table 2. Multilevel Binary Logistic Regression Model:
Have “A Great Deal of Confidence” or “Quite a Lot of Confidence” in the Civil Service**

Individual-level variables	Coefficient	Odds ratio
Socio-cultural		
Age	0.0012	1.00
Male	0.1682***	1.18
Education high	0.0883	1.09
Government employee	0.2946***	1.34
Left political ideology	0.0296**	1.03
Socio-psychological		
Civic engagement	0.0500**	1.05
Interpersonal trust	0.3343***	1.40
Attitudes toward government		
Confidence in other government institutions	1.6860***	5.40
* p ≤ 0.10; ** p ≤ 0.05; *** p ≤ 0.01		

Findings I (individual-level)

- Individuals who are males, who are government employees, and who identify with left-wing political parties are more likely to be trusting
- Civic engagement enhances citizens' trusting attitudes
- Trusting attitudes toward civil service is positively associated with confidence in other government institutions

Table 2. Multilevel Binary Logistic Regression Model:

Have “A Great Deal of Confidence” or “Quite a Lot of Confidence” in the Civil Service

Country-level variables	Coefficient	Odds ratio
Corruption perception index	-0.4701**	0.62
Government effectiveness	1.2806**	3.60
Ethnic heterogeneity	-0.0933	0.91
Former Soviet Bloc country	-0.3675	0.69
Constant	-0.8450***	0.43
Level-2 variance	0.24541***	
Likelihood function	-11,996.4	
Level-1 N	25,457	
Level-2 N	20	
* p ≤ 0.10; ** p ≤ 0.05; *** p ≤ 0.01		

Findings II (country-level)

- Trust in civil service is influenced by institutional quality of government:
 - level of corruption, and
 - government effectiveness

Implications

- The findings indicate the utility of cross-national research on this topic
- People's attitudes are preconditioned by their background
- Civic engagement and social trust matter
 - Public service is a “cog within the system”
 - National context matters
 - Better public institutions lead to more trust

Thank you!