

The Effect of Institutional Characteristics  
On Public Support for National Legislatures

Stacy B. Gordon Fisher  
*Associate Professor*

Katherine Carr  
Matthew Slagle  
Ani Zepeda-McMillan  
Elliot Malin  
*Undergraduates*

Department of Political Science  
University of Nevada, Reno

The Congress of the United States has long been mired in poor approval ratings and even poorer levels of public satisfaction. Designed as the “People’s Branch,” Congress was crafted to be the most responsive, of all three branches, to the concerns and interests of the citizens so the institution’s chronic level of tepid support is surprising and raises very important questions as to its cause. If Congress, the most democratic of all the branches, is unable to retain the public’s support, then how can it effectively fulfill its constitutional duties and responsibilities? Multiple theories have been proposed to explain the issue of support—or lack thereof—for Congress and other national legislatures. In this paper we summarize these various explanations and ultimately find much to agree with in each of the three most common models: individual, contextual and institutional.

For the most part, studies of approval of the U.S. Congress have focused on individual and contextual variables (e.g., Kimball and Patterson 1997; Patterson et al 1992); while cross-national research on support for legislatures has centered on institutions (e.g., Anderson and Guillory 1997). That being said, some of the most compelling arguments about the lack of support for Congress—those proposed by Hibbing and Theiss-Morse and Durr et al—are

primarily institutional arguments. However, it is difficult to test institutional differences when limiting our data to that from the U.S. Congress or the individual states due to the fact that the institutions of interest vary only slightly and not on the most critical dimensions that might explain variation in support. Therefore, we believe that any explanations that use institutions to explain the public's feelings towards Congress must be tested with cross-national data.

To address this problem, we use data from the Global Values Survey to compare support for federal legislatures across a subset of democracies in order to generate and test a complete model that includes all three sets of factors. Ultimately, we find that while respondents generally rate consensual institutions more highly than majoritarian institutions, once we control for the openness of legislative behavior to public view, those relationships change direction and consensual institutions become negatively correlated with confidence in the legislature. In addition, it appears that this change in behavior is particularly strong for respondents with lower levels of inter-personal trust.

### **Review of the Literature**

How the public feels towards Congress matters because it may influence the quality of candidates willing to run for office, the effectiveness of the institution, and the legitimacy the public places on Congressional decisions (Patterson et al. 1992, 316). Because of these potentially negative effects, extensive effort has gone into measuring support for Congress over the last 50 years and the low level of public support of and respect for the most representative branch of government has been well-documented. Many explanations have been provided to explain this low level of support and the variables they include tend to fall into three groups: individual, institutional, and contextual factors. We discuss each in turn below.

### ***Individual-level factors: Explaining Differences Across Citizens***

Individual-level explanations tend to focus on variables related to social and economic status (Patterson et al 1992). It makes sense that those who have the highest levels of status, income and education in society are most supportive of the institutions that potentially reinforce their positions and, while results in the literature are mixed, some findings suggest “strong institutional support from among those with high status, and relatively low support from among those with low status” (Kimball and Patterson 1997, 703). This relationship between status and support may explain why race is believed to play a role, with minority groups feeling more dissatisfied with Congress (Avery 2009).

Ideology and party affiliation may also play a role. Overall, conservatives (as independent from Republicans) rate Congress higher than their more liberal counterparts (Hibbing 2002). In addition, those whose preferred party is in power also tend to have a more positive view of their nation’s legislative institutions, especially if they live in a majoritarian system (Anderson and Guillory 1997).

Where citizens obtain their information about politics matters as well. Those who use mass media as their source of information tend to dislike Congress more, perhaps because media coverage tends to focus on the negative aspects of governing and behavior (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1998), like partisan conflict (Ramirez 2008). It has been found that coverage of congress as an institution and the coverage of congressional ethics and related violations can have a “depressing effect” on approval, while coverage of their personal lives can enhance their support, if it is positive, or depress support if it is negative (Patterson and Caldeira 1990).

Individuals who feel that government does not take account of their interests when making decisions are less likely to approve of the job that legislators are doing, while those who

feel that their positions and opinions are considered reward those in office with higher approval ratings (Anderson, and Guillory 1997; Avery 2009; Patterson et al 1992).<sup>1</sup> In addition, given the lack of specific information that individuals have about Congress, feelings towards other, more central, institutions like the executive branch may act as a proxy for feelings towards the legislature (Patterson et al 1992), particularly among those with less political knowledge (Patterson 1995).

### ***Contextual factors: Explaining Differences Across Time***

While the factors discussed above can explain variations across individuals in the rating of Congress, contextual factors help to explain aggregate differences across time. And it is in this set of factors that we find many of the usual variables that influence public opinion on a variety of subjects. Consumer sentiment and one's optimism about the economy affect congressional approval ratings. High unemployment numbers can generate lower approval ratings and low unemployment higher approval ratings as citizens place blame on institutions for their economic situation (Durr et al 1997; Patterson and Caldeira, 1990; Ramirez 2009).

The "rally around the flag" effect that affects presidential popularity may also have an independent impact on congressional approval and Patterson and Caldeira (1990) found that when foreign affairs issues are the most salient issues to the public, esteem for Congress increases.

### ***Institutional: Explaining Differences Across Nations and Levels of Government***

While individual and time-based differences in congressional approval can be studied within the context of a single country, institutional explanations for mass approval or disapproval of legislatures are best studied through cross-national surveys. Patterson et al (1992) note that their respondents gave different ratings for the Ohio state legislature and Congress and, while

---

<sup>1</sup> This may explain why direct contact with one's representatives affects performance ratings (Patterson et al 1992).

they did not focus on institutional characteristics to explain these differences, the existence of this difference suggests that institutional variation may be one cause.

In the literature on the U.S. Congress, a theory has been proposed that the source of unhappiness with congress is the inherent dislike Americans have for conflict and differing viewpoints and that this aversion to the daily process of democracy may in turn explain Congress' consistently low approval ratings (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995). This is supported by the work of Durr, Gilmour, and Wolbrecht (1997). They argue that it is not the policies that result from the institution that the public doesn't like, but the nature of the decision making process in any open, deliberative, policy making body. Hibbing (2002) agrees and outlines four characteristics of legislative institutions that may actually decrease public support: (1) voice, (2) accountability, (3) representation, and (4) open/visible procedures.

So, what institutional characteristics are most likely to lead to a visible process of conflict, negotiation and compromise? By their very nature, consensual democracies should generate more conflict and compromise as they are designed to reinforce the representative function of democracy by providing seats in the legislature to more parties, often resulting in coalition governments that then must negotiate internally to make policy. Majoritarian systems, on the other hand, emphasize the accountability function by giving strong decision making power to the "winners" of electoral contests (Aarts and Thomassen 2008). Therefore, if Hibbing is correct, legislatures with consensual characteristics should have lower confidence ratings. This is an important point because consensual characteristics have generally been found to be positively related to satisfaction with democracy (a more general measure than we or Hibbing are interested in), especially among electoral losers (Anderson and Guillory 1997) and those who emphasize representativeness over accountability (Aarts and Thomassen 2008).

It is important to note, however, that it is not just the conflict and compromise generated by specific types of institutions that we are interested in, but (1) the visibility of the conflict generated and (2) the level of trust individuals put in their representatives. We believe that the contradictory expectations of the cross-national, institutional models and the arguments made by Durr et al and Hibbing and Theiss-Morse can be reconciled in a model that incorporates the institutional variables with appropriate trust and visibility variables. We argue that consensual legislative institutions in countries with open information systems are most likely to lead to low support among the populace, especially among those with low levels of trust.

### **Data and Methods**

Our unit of analysis is the individual and our dependent variable and individual level independent variables come from the 2005-2008 wave of the World Values Survey.<sup>2</sup> We included every country from the survey that was listed as “Free” and scored a 1.5 or better by Freedom House in 2013. Our dependent variable is confidence in the national legislature/parliament and we have re-coded it to vary from 1 (none at all) to 4 (a great deal).<sup>3</sup> The mean level of confidence in the legislature for all the countries meeting our requirements is listed in Table 1.<sup>4</sup>

### **Institutional Variables**

Hibbing (2002) argues that providing voice, accountability, and representation will actually decrease the public’s support for Congress. This is in direct conflict with cross-national studies that suggest that it is just these types of characteristics that lead to greater support of

---

<sup>2</sup> The World Values Survey can be found at [www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org).

<sup>3</sup> The question wording is as follows: Could you tell me how much confidence you have in [the following institutions, named]: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?

<sup>4</sup> Not all of these countries are included in the multivariate analysis since some of the countries are missing data on institutional or party support variables.

democratic institutions in general (e.g., Anderson and Guillory 1997). A major distinction between the two sets of arguments, however, is that Hibbing also focuses on openness. To take account of all these arguments, we include the following institutional variables.

Since Lijpart (1999), many have argued that the public is more supportive of consensus institutions rather than majoritarian institutions if for no other reason than consensus institutions tend to reflect voter preferences more accurately (Kriesi and Bochsler 2012). Based on this past research, we use three measures of the consensual nature of institutions, particularly as they relate to the legislative branch of government: Lijphart's (1999) measure of number of effective parties, district proportionality (Kriesi and Bolscher 2012), electoral proportionality (Gallagher 1991, reversed), and bicameralism. The values for all of these variables come from updated numbers generated by Kriesi and Bolscher (2012) and are discussed in detail in Appendix A. If the conflict hypothesis is correct, the number of effective parties and district and electoral proportionality should be negatively related to confidence in the national legislature. Bicameralism should also be negatively related to support since it, too, generates another level of conflict and compromise.

To measure the amount of openness and transparency in the system, we created two indices from the Democracy Barometer dataset. The first, *open financing*, is an additive index of two dummy variables measuring the disclosure rules for contributions to and expenditures by political parties. Each equals 1 if there are rules on disclosure and zero otherwise.

The second measure, *open media*, is a two measure additive index relating to press freedom. One variable measures the legal environment for press freedom and the other the political environment. These variables vary from 0 to 40 with the index varying from 0-80. These two measures are discussed in Appendix A as well. If openness is the critical linking

factor between institutions and low support for the legislatures, these two variables should be negatively related to support for the legislature and, once included in the model, should reveal a negative relationship between consensual institutions and support.

### **Individual-level Control Variables<sup>5</sup>**

The impact of many individual-level variables has been inconsistent, but we include the most theoretically important here in order to fully specify our model. We measure *political interest* on a scale of 1 (not at all interested) to 4 (very interested). We expect it to be positively related to confidence in the legislature. We also include a self-reported *ideology* measure on a ten point scale ranging from 1 (far left) to 10 (far right). Based upon the findings of Hibbing (2002), we expect this ideology variable to be positively related to confidence in the legislature.

Regardless of specific ideology, individuals tend to be more supportive of the legislature if the party they prefer is in power (Anderson and Guillory 1997). We measured party power with two variables. The World Values Survey asks respondents which party is their first choice when voting. Our first variable is dichotomous and equals one if the party named by the respondent is a *member of the majority party* in the legislature or the ruling coalition.<sup>6</sup> The second variable measures the amount of power the preferred party has in the coalition. It is calculated as the *seats held by the preferred party* divided by the seats held by the coalition as a whole. Both variables are expected to be positively related to confidence in the legislature.

We use three variables to generate our measure of *socio-economic status*. Education is measured as highest level of education received (9 point scale from “no formal education” to

---

<sup>5</sup> Gender has generally been found to be unrelated to support for Congress (Hibbing 2001 and 2002; Kimball and Patterson 1997), so we do not include it in our analysis. We also did not have an individual-level measure of support for government in general available at this time, but will be including it in future analyses.

<sup>6</sup> Data on parliamentary coalitions and the relative strength of parties in that coalition was obtained from the Inter-Parliamentary Union’s PARLINE database on national parliaments <http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp> (accessed February 24, 2013).

“University education, with degree”), self-placement in social class (5 point scale re-coded so it is scored from 1=“lower class” to 5= “upper class.” We multiplied this by two (to put it on the same scale as the other two variables), and self-placement on income decile range within own country. We expect this index to be positively related to support for the legislature.

To measure involvement we generated an additive index from five variables. Respondents received one point on the index for each time they noted that they had taken one of the following actions: signed a petition, participated in a boycott, participated in a peaceful demonstration, voted in the previous parliamentary election, or participated in some other form of political activity. Because past research has found that citizens who have had contact with their legislator have more positive evaluations of the legislature as a whole (Kimball and Patterson 1997), we believe this should be positively related to confidence.

There are no direct measures of *trust* in legislators or politicians in the World Values Survey questionnaire so, to measure this concept, we use the following question measuring interpersonal trust: “Do you think most people would try to take advantage of you if they got a chance, or would they try to be fair?” The answers vary from 1 “people would try to take advantage of you” to 10 “people would try to be fair.” This measure of trust should be positively related to support for the legislature.

Finally, to measure media source, we included a dummy variable that equals one if the respondent noted that they get their political information from television/radio or the internet. Because these forms of media may be less informative and more sensationalistic, we expect *media source* to be negatively related to support for the legislature.

## **Contextual Control Variables**

As noted previously, the economic and foreign policy environments should also influence support for the legislature. We measured economic strength with national unemployment rate and GDP growth rate for the year the survey was conducted in each country. Data for these two variables was collected from the relevant CIA World Factbooks. We also need to measure the potential “rally around the flag” effect of a threatening defense environment. Respondents to the WVS were asked about the first and second most important issues facing their country and were given four options: economic growth, strong defense forces, having a say in their jobs/communities, and making cities/countryside more beautiful. We measured this variable as one if the respondent named defense issues as their first choice and took the mean response for the entire country. The means varied from .09 (Sweden, Germany and Switzerland) to .65 (USA). Importance of defense should be positively related to support for the legislature. Unfortunately this variable is perfectly correlated with the variables in the rest of the model and is dropped from the analysis.

## **Results<sup>7</sup>**

Our OLS regression analysis is presented in Table 2. In the first column are the results of regressing level of confidence in the legislature on all the independent variables except for the two openness indices. Most of the results are consistent with past comparative literature on the role of consensual versus majoritarian institutions with consensual institutions generally being positively related to confidence in the legislature. Number of parties, electoral proportionality, bicameralism, and both measures of interest group involvement are positive and significant at the .05 level. District proportionality is the only variable that is negatively related to support, but it

---

<sup>7</sup> Models 1 and 2 in Table 2 do not include country dummies while Models 3 and 4 do. For the most part, the statistical results remain the same although we plan to look at substantive differences in a future version of the paper.

too is significant at the .05 level. Most of the control variables—both individual and contextual—are significant and in the expected direction as well. The model as a whole is significant and explains eleven percent of the variance in confidence in the legislature.

However, when we insert measures of openness in the equation, the results change dramatically (see Model 2, in Table 2). For the most part, the individual and contextual variables maintain their relationship with the dependent variable, but an interesting change occurs in the institutional variables. First, both openness measures are negatively related to support for the legislature and are statistically significant. It appears that the model controls for the transparency of the campaign finance system and media freedom, this lowers the level of confidence in the legislature. In addition, many of the measures that previously showed a positive relationship with the dependent variable shift to a negative relationship. Number of parties is negative and significant ( $p < .05$ ), as is electoral proportionality. District proportionality becomes positive while bicameralism remains positive and significant in both models. Finally, adding these two variables increases the predictive power of the model from twelve percent to fourteen percent.

### **The Effect of Trust**

So, it appears that the more open and transparent the system, the less supportive individuals tend to be of the legislature as a whole. But, there is one more aspect of the argument that needs to be tested—whether these relationships are further influenced by a belief that legislators tend to be self-interested decision makers. In the first set of analysis, it is clear that those with higher levels of inter-personal trust have higher levels of confidence in the legislature. The size and significance of the trust variable is consistent across all four models. But the question remains as to whether the same variables predict levels of support across the different levels of trust. To test this, we re-coded the trust variable into three categories. The

new trust variable equals one if the respondent placed themselves from one to three on the original scale (low levels of trust). It equals two if they placed themselves between four and seven (inclusive) and three if they placed themselves as eight or greater. We ran three separate regressions, one for each of the three levels. The results are presented in Table 3. All three models are significant and explain approximately 15 percent of the variance in confidence in the national legislature.

Separating out the respondents this way allows us to see some interesting differences in the predictors of support across levels of trust. For the most part, the individual-level variables remain the same across all three types of respondents, so we will focus on the differences that arise. While those that are more conservative rate the legislature higher at lower levels of trust, ideology is an insignificant predictor for those with high levels of trust. In addition, the political action index remains negative but is only significant among those with low trust. It does not appear to influence legislative support among more trusting individuals. Among those with the highest level of trust, simply being in the ruling coalition increases confidence in the legislature, while those at the medium and low levels depend more upon the strength of their party's power within that coalition. This suggests that they only expect those who hold the same party affiliation as themselves to represent their interests. The economic context (unemployment and GDP growth) affects the ratings of those at the two lower levels of trust but appear to have no impact on the most trusting individuals.

But, it is the institutional variables that provide the most insight. For those with lower levels of inter-personal trust, all but two of the variables (bicameralism and district proportionality) are significant and in the correct direction. The more consensual and open the

system, as measured by number of parties, electoral proportionality and the media and financing variables, the less confidence individuals have in the legislature as a whole.

Compare this to those with medium levels of trust. In this case, the effect of the number of parties, district proportionality and openness all have the same effect as on those with lower trust. However, the coefficient on electoral proportionality is less than a third the size of that in the first model (-0.003 compared to -0.01)<sup>8</sup> and bicameralism is positively related to support for the legislature. Both of these results suggest that there seems to be a shift occurring in the effect of consensual/open institutions on confidence as inter-personal trust increases.

Finally, we look at the effect of institutions on those with the highest levels of trust. Here, it appears that institutional characteristics have less of an influence on confidence. Bicameralism remains significant but the coefficient is about one third the size of that for column 2. Number of parties, district proportionality and open media all become insignificant predictors of confidence. Electoral proportionality remains negative and the coefficient is the same size as for those with medium levels of trust. The one variable that maintains the same effect and level of significance across all three types of respondents is open financing.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The evidence presented here suggests that an explanation of legislative support should include individual, contextual and institutional variables. However, for a complete picture, the model must also control for the visibility of legislative behavior and the level of trust that individuals place in their representatives. While those from more consensual legislative systems tend to be more supportive of their national institutions in general, once we control for the availability of information on what the legislature is doing on a day to day basis, that relationship

---

<sup>8</sup> We have not identified whether this difference is statistically or substantively significant, but plan to do so in future versions of the paper.

actually switches direction and becomes negative. The only exception to this rule is bicameralism which remains positive and significant in all but one of the analyses presented.

The effect of openness of institutions is particularly interesting given the relatively consistent effect of individual-level factors. With the exception of ideology, which only becomes a significant predictor when institutions are included in the analysis, most of the standard individual control variables maintain the same substantive effect and significance regardless of the type of institutional context in which respondents find themselves. The exception to this is the two party control variables (in ruling coalition and strength in coalition) and this is to be expected given past results in the comparative literature on support for institutions by both winners and losers in the electoral process (Anderson and Guillory 1997).

Even Hibbing's (2002) contention that the basis of this relationship is the belief among the general public that legislators are self-interested decision makers appears to be born out in a variety of ways. First, those with higher levels of trust support the legislature more if they are in the ruling coalition while simply being in the ruling coalition is not sufficient for those with lower levels of trust; these individuals base their support on the strength their party holds in that coalition. In other words, among those with low trust, being in the ruling coalition is not enough, their co-partisans need to have power within that group for the institution to gain their support. Those with low trust also need to see some positive policy output. It is only among the least trustful that the objective economic situation influences support.

However, we believe it is the variation in the coefficients and significance of the institutional variables that is most persuasive. While open financing rules have the same negative effect on support across all levels of trust, the influence of the other factors varies in logical ways. Two of the measures of consensual democracy—number of parties and district

proportionality—have the same effect on those with lower levels of trust and become insignificant at the highest level. Electoral proportionality remains negative and significant across all three sets of respondents, but the substantive influence drops dramatically as we move from the least trusting to the moderate/high groups. Finally, both district proportionality and open media have a negative, significant influence on confidence among low levels of trust but is insignificant among those with high trust. So, while the rate of change across trust level is different for many of these factors, the direction is always the same. Institutions have a less negative effect on confidence as trust increases.

The ultimate implication of these results is that increasing public support for all legislatures, not just the U.S. Congress, may be more complicated than it first appears. If we believe that some base level of support for and confidence in the most representative branch of government is a requirement for a strong and functioning modern democracy and that limiting openness is not a realistic or preferable option, we may need to weigh representation and accountability a bit differently than we have to date.

## References

- Aarts, Kees., and Jacques Thomassen (2008). Satisfaction with Democracy: Do Institutions Matter? *Electoral Studies* 27(1): 5-18.
- Anderson, Christopher J., and Christine A. Guillory. "Political Institutions and Satisfaction with Democracy: A Cross-National Analysis of Consensus and Majoritarian Systems." *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 91, No. 1 (March, 1997) pp. 66-81.
- Avery, James M. "Political Mistrust Among African Americans and Support for the Political System" *Political Research Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No.1 (Mar., 2009), pp.132-145. Web. <http://www.jstor.org.innopac.library.unr.edu/stable/27759851>.
- Durr, Robert H., John B. Gilmour and Christine Wolbrecht. "Explaining Congressional Approval." *American Journal of Political Science*. Vol 41, No.1 (Journal 1997). pp. 175-207.
- Hibbings, John R. "How to Make Congress Popular." In *Legislative Studies Quarterly XXVII*. (May 2002): 219-243.
- Hibbings, John R., and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse. "Process Preferences and American Politics: What the People Want Government to Be." *American Political Science Review* Vol 05. No. 1: (March. 2001): 145-153.
- Hibbings, John R., and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse (1995). *Congress as Public Enemy: Public Attitudes Towards American Political Institutions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kimball, David C., and Samuel C. Patterson. "Living up to Expectations: Public Attitudes Towards Congress." *Journal of Politics*. Vol. 59, No. 3 (Aug, 1997). pp. 701-728.
- Mishler. W. and R. Rose. "Political Support for Incomplete Democracies: Reality Vs. Idealist Theories and Measures." *Internal Political Science Review* 22.4 (2001): 303-20.
- Patterson, Samuel C., and Gregory A. Caldeira. *Standing up for Congress: Variations In Public Esteem Since the 1960's*.
- Patterson, Samuel C., Randall B. Ripley and Stephen V. Quinlen. "Citizens Orientation Towards Legislatures: Congress and the State Legislatures." *Western Political Quarterly*. Vol. 45, No. 2. (June, 1992). Pp. 315-338.

Ramirez, Mark D. “ The Dynamics of Partisan Conflict on Congressional Approval.  
*American Journal of Political Science* Vol. 53, No. 3(July., 2009). Pp. 681-694.

.

Table 1: Variation in Confidence in National Legislature by Country

Country Confidence (1 = no confidence, 4 = a lot of confidence)

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std.Dev.</i>
Ghana	2.79	(.87)
Norway*	2.64	(.64)
Switzerland*	2.57	(.64)
Finland*	2.56	(.68)
Cyprus*	2.54	(.93)
Sweden*	2.54	(.66)
Spain*	2.47	(.75)
Uruguay	2.34	(.89)
Canada*	2.28	(.74)
Australia*	2.28	(.73)
New Zealand	2.25	(.71)
UK	2.24	(.78)
Italy	2.18	(.73)
France	2.16	(.80)
Netherlands	2.12	(.70)
USA*	2.07	(.62)
Japan*	2.03	(.69)
Germany*	1.98	(.72)
Chile*	1.97	(.81)
Slovenia*	1.93	(.68)
Mexico*	1.92	(.86)
Poland*	1.81	(.68)
Taiwan	1.73	(.72)

\*denotes country included in multivariate analysis

Table 2: OLS results predicting confidence in the legislature (country dummies used in analysis for Models 3 and 4, but are not included in the table)

Variable	Coefficient (std. error)			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
<b>Individual level</b>				
Trust	.04*** (.003)	.03*** (.003)	.03*** (.003)	.03*** (.003)
Political interest	.10*** (.01)	.10*** (.01)	.11*** (.01)	.11*** (.01)
Ideology	.01 (.003)	.003 (.003)	.01*** (.003)	.01*** (.003)
Age Category	.02 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
Media Source	.001 (.04)	-.03 (.04)	-.02 (.04)	-.02 (.04)
Political Action Index	-.02*** (.01)	-.04*** (.01)	-.02** (.01)	-.02* (.01)
Socioeconomic Status	.01*** (.001)	.01*** (.001)	.01*** (.001)	.01*** (.001)
In Ruling Coalition	.15*** (.03)	.15*** (.03)	.11*** (.03)	.11*** (.03)
Strength in Coalition	.12** (.04)	.12*** (.04)	.14*** (.04)	.14*** (.04)
<b>Contextual</b>				
National Unemployment	-.01*** (.002)	-.02** (.002)	-.02*** (.003)	-.05*** (.003)
GDP Growth	-.01 (.01)	.08*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	.18*** (.01)
<b>Institutional</b>				
Number of parties	.002** (.001)	-.01** (.001)	.01*** (.001)	-.02*** (.001)
Electoral Prop	.005*** (.001)	-.0002 (.001)	.004*** (.001)	-.01*** (.001)
District Prop	-.002*** (.001)	.01*** (.001)	-.002*** (.001)	.01*** (.001)
Bicameralism	.14*** (.01)	.08*** (.01)	.12*** (.01)	.09*** (.01)
Open Financing		-.003*** (.0003)		-.01*** (.0003)
Open Media		-.03*** (.002)		-.04*** (.003)
Constant	1.64*** (.06)	2.11*** (.06)	1.64*** (.06)	2.03*** (.07)
N	14,057	14,057	14,057	14,057
F	122.33	129.96	124.60	124.60
Prob(F)	.001	.001	.001	.001
Adj. R-squared	.12	.14	.17	.17

Table 3: OLS results predicting confidence in the legislature, by level of inter-personal trust (country dummies not included in table)

Variable	Level of Trust		
	Low	Medium	High
<b>Individual level</b>			
Political interest	.13*** (.02)	.10*** (.01)	.10*** (.01)
Ideology	.01* (.01)	.01** (.01)	.01 (.004)
Age Category	.03 (.02)	.02 (.02)	-.01 (.01)
Media Source	-.05 (.07)	.03 (.06)	-.03 (.05)
Political Action Index	-.05*** (.01)	-.02 (.01)	-.001 (.01)
Socioeconomic Status	.01* (.003)	.01** (.003)	.01*** (.002)
In Ruling Coalition	.07 (.06)	.09 (.05)	.15*** (.04)
Strength in Coalition	.19* (.08)	.20** (.07)	.12* (.05)
<b>Contextual</b>			
National Unemployment	-.06*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	-.01 (.01)
GDP Growth	.20*** (.08)	.20*** (.03)	-.01 (.02)
<b>Institutional</b>			
Number of parties	-.02*** (.003)	-.02*** (.01)	.0004 (.001)
Electoral Prop	-.01*** (.002)	-.003* (.001)	-.003** (.001)
Dist. Prop	.01*** (.003)	.01*** (.002)	-.001 (.001)
Bicameralism	.05 (.03)	.13*** (.02)	.04* (.02)
Open Financing	-.01*** (.001)	-.01*** (.001)	-.01*** (.001)
Open Media	-.05*** (.01)	-.05*** (.01)	-.002 (.003)
Constant	2.15*** (.14)	2.25*** (.12)	2.07*** (.09)
N	3,483	3,929	7,311
F	28.06	32.72	57.69
Prob(F)	.001	.001	.001
Adj. R-squared	.15	.15	.15