

Trust in the System? Factors that Impact Citizens' View of Courts in the United Kingdom*

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Objective. The objective of this study was to test the individual and parliamentary constituency factors that impact the level of trust that British citizens have in the courts. *Methods.* By using a Bayesian hierarchical model, this article is able to calculate the effect of variables that exist at both levels. *Results.* At the individual level, the main explanatory variable is the amount of trust a citizen holds for other institutions, and at the constituency level, crime rate has an effect on a citizen's level of trust in the courts. *Conclusion.* Previous findings related to citizen attitudes and support for courts in the United States transfer well to the United Kingdom.

The United Kingdom's courts play a unique role in the country's political system when compared to their American counterparts. First, the fact that the United Kingdom does not have a single, clearly delineated constitution contrasts with the singular document that U.S. courts reference (Bogdanor, 2009). This fact has meant that the British Constitution has evolved rather dramatically over the course of its existence (King, 2009). Further, the restraint on the courts' activities due to the self-imposed doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty indicates that the U.K. courts have less wiggle-room than that offered by the U.S. doctrine of judicial review. Under parliamentary sovereignty, the courts have no power to declare an Act of Parliament unconstitutional. On the other hand, courts in the United Kingdom do retain the power of statutory and common law interpretation, and can determine whether the exercise of power is authorized by a particular law (Bogdanor, 2009; Brazier, 1994; King, 2009). Given these facts, it is no wonder that courts in the United Kingdom receive very limited attention in the literature when compared to the attention courts receive in other contexts. However, recent research is beginning to shed light on individual attitudes, courts, and other judicial institutions in the United Kingdom (Jackson et al., 2012). This research delves into the relationship between British citizens and their attitudes toward courts. Jackson et al. (2012) find that when British citizens do not show support for judicial institutions, these people are less likely to follow the institutions' directions. The main question that this article seeks to answer is: What are the factors that affect citizens' trust in the U.K. courts?

This article sets out to answer the research question by applying the plethora of literature born out of the American context regarding the relationship between citizens and courts

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to the United Kingdom.¹ The motivation for this inquiry is derived from Jackson et al.'s (2012) finding that public compliance with laws in England and Wales is a function of individual views toward the institutional structures of the legal system. If it is true that support for laws in the United Kingdom is a function of individual attitudes, then we must understand precisely which attitudes are correlated with support. The American literature is particularly focused on the importance of individual attitudes.

To further understand attitudes toward the courts in other contexts outside the United States, and to expand the analysis to macro-level factors that influence citizens' views of the courts, the article also considers the comparative courts literature. The comparative courts literature is useful for uncovering macro factors and individual attitudes that are relevant for judicial support for countries outside the United States. For instance, Tyler (2000) finds that the degree of ethnic fractionalization in a country tends to decrease the confidence an individual has for the courts. Gibson and Caldeira (1996) confirm this finding by demonstrating that when people feel as though they are a member of an outgroup, they are less likely to have confidence in legal institutions.

To test the effect that both individual factors and macro factors have on a citizen's trust in the court, a Bayesian hierarchical model is employed. Independent variables operate at the individual level (e.g., ideology), and macro factors operate at the parliamentary-constituency level (e.g., ethnic fractionalization). The article proceeds by discussing the relationship between citizens and the courts, discussing theories and positing hypotheses related to trust in the courts, operationalizing the variables of interest and specifying the model, and, lastly, discussing the results and considerations for future research.

Citizens and the Courts

As stated earlier, the major motivation for this article was a recent study by Jackson et al. (2012) on the U.K. judicial system. The authors extend the analyses by Tyler (2000, 2006), which uncovered that citizens in the United States are most likely to follow the law when they have positive attitudes toward the institutions surrounding the law. Tyler argues that this research is important because the "viability of legal authorities in a democratic society depends upon their ability to secure voluntary compliance with the law" (2000: 984). Jackson et al. (2012) extend Tyler's (2006) study of the United States through utilization of an original survey conducted in England and Wales. The authors find that when a British citizen believes that the courts, or the police, do not represent the same moral alignment as himself or herself, the citizen is less likely to obey the court's decisions. Gibson and Caldeira (1996) confirm this point in their analysis of the legal traditions throughout Europe. The authors find that few people are willing to accept and comply with a European Court of Justice (ECJ) decision that they find objectionable. This finding is especially true for Western European countries because there is a fairly large degree of hostility toward judges in Europe (Stone Sweet, 2002). In addition, Gibson and Caldeira (1995) find that willingness to accept unpopular decisions of the court is most prevalent among those people committed to the court.

An inquiry that explores citizens' views of the courts is important for several additional reasons. First, the ability of the court to expand and sufficiently check other areas of government is dependent on citizen support. Although courts in the United Kingdom do not have

¹ For additional information on the difference between U.K. and U.S. courts, an appendix with background information is provided upon request.

formal judicial review power, the courts do play a significant role in legal interpretation. For instance, courts in the United Kingdom decide the meaning of a law passed by parliament (Bogdanor, 2009). If parliament does not agree with the interpretation, the legislature will have to pass a new law. Also, with the expansion of ECJ power, courts in E.U. member state countries now have the ability to interpret E.U. law. This means that courts in the United Kingdom are able to decide if British law conflicts with E.U. law, which greatly expands court power (King, 2009:346). If the law conflicts, the courts are able to strike down a U.K. law as unconstitutional. Therefore, although parliamentary supremacy reigns supreme in the United Kingdom when deciding laws passed by parliament that do not deal with E.U. law, courts do have the ability to strike down any laws conflicting with E.U. policy. Further, the realm of E.U. policies increases with every passing year. This means that a time will come when courts will be forced to approach most member state laws with an eye toward E.U. policy.

Carrubba (2009) argues that governments create the judiciary to solve collective action problems that occur within the government, and that once the courts have earned the trust of the public, they are able to properly enforce the rules. For instance, Vanberg (2005) argues that the German Constitutional Court has concerns over whether the government will enforce its rulings, but the public's awareness mitigates the enforcement. In the American context, Ura and Wohlfarth (2010) find that increasing public support for the Supreme Court significantly impacts institutionalization in the long run, meaning that the roles of Congress and the judiciary evolve based on the level of support for the court. The authors also point out that legislative support for the courts is a function of the public's support for the judiciary. This means that as the public's support for the Supreme Court increases, Congress will be more willing to defer to the Court as a decisionmaker. This aligns with Mondak's (1994) argument that the institutional legitimacy obtained by the Supreme Court through public support allows it to produce significant shifts in policy evaluations. Finally, Whittington (2005) notes that the power courts are able to obtain through public support allows the courts to decide against government bodies more freely. As the U.K. court further decides if law is in conflict with the European Union, public support for the courts may allow the courts to make these decisions more freely.

The final reason that exploring the relationship between public support and the courts is important is that a lack of trust in the judiciary says something unpleasant about the state of democracy and institutional legitimacy in the country. Casey (1974) argues that it is common for more people to view the courts as a legitimate branch of government than the other branches. In survey responses, he argues that people identify the Supreme Court as a legitimate body of government more than any other institution. If this is true, then a substantial number of citizens lacking trust in the courts might be an indicator that the system as a whole is under severe suspicion by the citizenry. This validates the need for increased attention to the power of courts in the United Kingdom.

Theories and Hypotheses

Microlevel: Individual Factors

Micro-level factors that impact citizens' views of the judiciary indicate the individual-level attitudes that shape people's underlying beliefs. For instance, Gibson and Caldeira (1992, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2003; Calderia and Gibson, 1992; Gibson et al., 2003) have created an entire area of study within the courts literature related to how individual

attitudes affect views of the courts. In addition, the behavioral literature demonstrates that individual attitudes have a significant impact on views of governmental institutions. For example, Mutz and Reeves (2005) show that partisanship has an effect on an individual's view of the civility of governmental debate. Further, Hetherington (1998) finds that there is a link between attitudes of trust toward overall government and approval of important institutions. Previous literature successfully demonstrates that trust in institutions is shaped by the individual beliefs and attitudes that citizens hold. In this section, attitudes that shape trust toward the courts will be discussed, and hypotheses will be developed in order to test each theory.

Political ideology is believed to have a significant impact on trust in governmental institutions. In particular, the idea is that political winners, which are people who have their preferred party in office, are more supportive of governmental institutions.² As discussed above, Mutz and Reeves (2005) find that partisanship affects views of the government's legitimacy. More particularly, Casey (1974) argues that ideology and partisan identification correlates highly with views of the court's legitimacy, knowledge of the court, and acceptance of the court's rulings. Buhlmann and Kunz (2011) also find a relationship between political orientation and confidence in the judiciary. The authors perform a cross-national comparison exploring views of the judiciary and find that political winners tend to have more confidence in the courts. On the other hand, Gibson and Caldeira (1992, 1996) argue that ideology does not significantly impact an individual's view of the court. The authors find, in their cross-national comparisons of Western Europe, that other attitudes are more important. Nevertheless, the hypothesis tested here is that partisanship may affect trust in the courts. In particular, one would expect that party identification has an impact on trust. Therefore, party identification is hypothesized as having an effect in line with Buhlmann and Kunz (2011). Supporters of the party that control government in the United Kingdom will have more trust in the courts. Since the government in the United Kingdom following the 2010 election was a Conservative-dominated Conservative–Liberal coalition, the hypothesized relationship is as follows.

H1: Citizens who identify with the Conservative Party will have the most trust in government, followed by Liberal Democratic supporters. Labour and other smaller party supporters will have the least trust in government.

It is important to point out the potential pitfalls with the partisanship theory. First, judiciaries are less politicized in the United Kingdom. Therefore, the theory might not travel well from the United States. Citizens in the United Kingdom may be less likely to view actions of the courts as representing the will of a particular political party. Second, this theory does not necessarily account for the complexities of regional politics. Devolution, regional political parties, and regional parliaments are unaccounted for by this theory. Therefore, a null result here will provide future research with an avenue of exploration through the incorporation of these more complex partisanship dynamics.

Similar to the political winners hypothesis above, an individual's position as an economic winner or loser could also affect one's view of the legitimacy of political institutions. For example, Caldeira (1986) uncovered that economic conditions impact the amount of support for the Supreme Court in the United States. When the economy is bad, people tend to have negative views of the Supreme Court. Further, Buhlmann and Kunz (2011)

²Political ideology was going to be included as a control variable in the modeling. Unfortunately, there is no straightforward question that asks about political ideology in this round of the BES. In order to avoid unnecessary debate when constructing a measure, this study preferred to explore the more theoretically grounded measure of partisanship. The role of ideology is left for future research.

find that economic winners have more confidence in the justice system on average than do economic losers. The underlying logic is that economic losers perceive that their fate is a symptom of the institutional structures existing in the government. Rather than assume blame for their economic fate, or realize that their economic circumstances cannot be assigned to a single cause, these people will target the most salient institutions as being the cause of their situation. Therefore, one would expect that in the United Kingdom, as people view their economic situation as getting worse, those people will have less trust in the courts.

H2: As a citizen considers his or her economic situation improving, trust in the court is higher.

Third, previous research demonstrates that attention to politics, knowledge about government, sense of civic duty, and interactions with the court have a significant impact on an individual's evaluation of the court. Gibson, Caldeira, and Baird (1998) argue that to know something about the court is to be favorably orientated toward it due to exposure to the court's legitimacy. The authors find that knowledge of the court generally produces diffuse support. More concretely, Wenzel, Bowler, and Lanoue (2003) and Benesh (2006) argue that the type of experience a person has with the court has an effect on his or her overall evaluation of the courts. Benesh (2006) finds specifically that defendants and plaintiffs are less supportive of courts than those without experience. More generally, she concludes that those who view the courts as fair have more confidence in the courts. Unfortunately, an analysis that delves into this level of specificity is not possible yet for the United Kingdom. The lack of attention that the courts have received means that surveys have not begun to ask these types of questions. However, there are more general hypotheses that could be generated from the literature to explore the overall ideas related to attention to politics and civic duty, or what Gibson (1986) describes as democratic values.

H3: Citizens who pay more attention to politics will have more trust in the courts.

H4: Citizens with a stronger sense of civic duty will have more trust in the courts.

Hausegger and Riddell (2004) and Caldeira (1986) argue that respondents' political values were the strongest predictors of support for courts. In particular, the authors argue that the "liberty versus order" contrast can explain differences in levels of support for courts. For instance, Caldeira (1986) found that when the court conveys that the rights of the accused are more important than solving the crime, this leads to decreased levels of confidence in the Supreme Court. The analysis by the author is striking because he controls for ideology. This indicates that the contrast between liberty and order transcends a simple left-right political ideology. The argument is that people who argue that crime should be more strictly punished tend to have less trust in governmental institutions, and in particular, the courts. Instead of being viewed as the protectors of rights, these individuals view courts as defenders of criminals. Further, Chanley, Rudolph, and Rahn (2000) find that there is a relationship between a belief that crime is a huge problem and attitudes toward handling of crime, and that this has an overall effect on the public's trust. Clearly, there is a link between attitudinal positions toward crime and trust in government.

H5: Citizens believing that punishment of a crime is more important than protecting the rights of the accused will have less support for the courts.

The final individual-level explanation for trust in the courts is whether a person has trust in other governmental institutions. Jackson et al. (2012) find that there is a relationship between attitudes toward the police and courts. The authors find that as trust in the police

increases, so does a person's trust in the courts. Further, Chanley, Rudolph, and Rahn (2000) find that measures of trust in governmental institutions are highly correlated. For instance, trust in politicians, political parties, and other branches of government correlates with trust in the courts (Chanley, Rudolph, and Rahn, 2000). The authors concluded that some people might tend to be skeptical of institutions as a whole. An alternative explanation is that people tend to rate on a scale the institutions of the government together when asked to evaluate individual institutions. Therefore, it is important to consider that trust in the courts may be a function of trust in other governmental institutions (Benesh, 2006).

H6: Individuals who have low levels of trust in other governmental institutions will have low levels of trust in the courts.

Macrolevel: Constituency Factors

Micro-level individual factors are not the only factors that impact trust in governmental institutions. Rahn and Rudolph (2005) find that macro-level, local factors also play a significant role in shaping the amount of trust that citizens have in particular governmental institutions. In their analysis of U.S. cities, the authors found that a number of city-level factors, including government type, ideological polarization, and racial fragmentation, impacted citizens' trust in governmental institutions. The effect of macro-level factors on trust is confirmed in cross-national comparisons of attitudes toward the courts as well. For instance, Gibson and Caldeira (1996) found that differences in the level of modernity of a country and the degree of ethnic fractionalization have an impact on attitudes toward the courts across countries. In addition, Buhlmann and Kunz (2011) uncovered that actual independence of courts explains a lot of the variance in attitudes toward the courts cross-nationally. In this article, two macro-level indicators are of particular importance.

The crime rate in an individual's constituency is hypothesized to have a relationship with attitudes toward the courts. As already discussed, attitudes toward the government's approach to crime are hypothesized to have a relationship with trust in the courts. However, it would be unwise to only test the impact of this attitude. It may very well be that in areas where crime is a significant problem, people view the courts as ineffective. In the conclusion of their article, Jackson et al. (2012) hypothesize that there is a relationship between attitudes toward the court and crime rate. However, this assertion has not yet been tested. It would be reasonable to assume that if crime were a significant problem, the police and courts would receive the blame in the eyes of many citizens.

H7: A higher crime rate in a parliamentary constituency leads to lower levels of trust among the people in that constituency.

The other macro-level explanation to be considered here is ethnic diversity, or ethnic fractionalization. Tyler (2000) argues that voluntary compliance is needed to create, maintain, and strengthen the rule of law, and that in ethnically fractionalized societies it is difficult to get everyone to agree on the law. Thus, different groups will perceive the judiciary as being a tool of a competitor ethnic group and not support the institution. Gibson and Caldeira (1996) confirm this hypothesis. The authors found, in their analysis on Western Europe, that higher degrees of fractionalization decrease support for the judiciary. Literature on ethnic conflict confirms the assertion that ethnic cleavages are deep, long-lasting tensions that decrease the saliency of institutions (see Fearon, 2003). Therefore, one would expect

parliamentary constituencies that are less homogenous to contain individuals with less trust in governmental institutions. Additionally, one would expect that in districts with a large nonwhite, non-British population, trust in courts would be lower.

H8: In heterogeneous parliamentary constituencies, people will have less trust in the courts.

Method and Variable Operationalization

The main data source utilized in this article is the 2010 British Election Study (BES), which coincided with the 2010 British General Election. The BES will allow for the testing of the hypotheses dealing with individual-level characteristics of British citizens. The dependent variable for this study is a particular measure of support for the courts. It is important to note that support for government is measured in a number of ways (Dalton, 1999; Norris, 1999). For instance, Easton (1975) points out that there is a difference between diffuse and specific support for governmental institutions. Here, this study is interested in diffuse support. However, measuring diffuse support is not without debate. Several authors acknowledge that there are different, conflicting measures for diffuse support. For instance, Easton (1976) argues that questions about legitimacy provide only one way to measure diffuse support. Further, Hamm et al. (2013) convincingly demonstrate that different diffuse measures asymmetrically impact confidence in the courts. Further, studies have demonstrated that measures of support are subject to questions of endogeneity (Hetherington, 1998; Levi and Stoker, 2000).

The particular measure of diffuse support utilized in this study is the level of trust that citizens have in the court. The measure provides the most straightforward way of measuring diffuse support. In particular, a question that asks the level of trust in the courts on a 0–10 thermometer scale, with 0 being no trust and 10 representing a great deal of trust, is the dependent variable in this analysis.³ The dependent variable was scaled to have a mean of 0 and an *SD* of 1. This was done in order to have the dependent variable on a similar scale as the independent variables.

The independent variables that are measured at the individual level in the analysis are operationalized utilizing questions from the BES. The first hypothesis argues that citizens identifying with the winning Conservative Party will have the most trust in government, followed by the Liberal Democrats. Labour supporters and supporters for other parties will have the lowest levels of trust in courts. Therefore, a variable is included that represents the party for which the respondent voted in the 2010 general election.⁴

The second hypothesis argues that as a citizen views his or her own economic situation as getting better, trust in the court is higher. The idea behind this hypothesis is that economic winners will perceive existing institutions as responsible for their success. Thus, this will lead to higher trust in the institutions. The survey question used to measure this concept

³The mean trust in courts on the 0–10 scale was 5.448. The percentage of observations with zero trust in courts was 5.32 percent, and 31.41 percent lie below the median. The percentage of observations at the median is 14.27 percent. The percentage of citizens who said they had complete trust in the courts was 2.78 percent, and the percentage of observations above the median was 53.59 percent. In comparison, a feeling thermometer for courts in the United States contained in the 2008 American National Election Study (ANES) found a higher mean of 6.2. The median for the United States was 7.

⁴The percentage voting Labour in the sample was 25.32, or 1,248 respondents. The percentage voting for the Conservative Party was 41.7, or 2,055 respondents. The percentage voting for the Liberal Democrats was 24.59, or 1,212 respondents. Finally, 8.38 percent of respondents, or 413 people, voted for a different party besides the main three.

asks how the respondent's personal economic situation has changed over the last year. The respondent could choose between got a lot worse, got a little worse, stayed the same, got a little better, or got a lot better. The variable was coded on a five-point scale where negative values indicate negative economic situational change, and positive values indicate positive change.⁵

The third and fourth hypotheses dealt with a citizen's attention to politics and sense of civic duty, or adherence to democratic values. The underlying mechanisms explaining these hypotheses are that citizens who are engaged in politics and who pay attention to politics will have greater trust in institutions. This corresponds with the idea that to know the courts is to have favorable opinions of them (Gibson and Caldeira 2011). The questions that are utilized to represent these hypotheses are measured on different scales. First, there is a question that asks the respondent how much attention to politics he or she pays. The respondent is offered a 0–10 scale where 0 indicates no attention and 10 indicates a great deal of attention.⁶ Second, the question that measures sense of civic duty asks whether the respondent believes there is a duty for all citizens to vote. The respondent is offered choices of strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, or strongly agree. The variable was coded on a five-point scale so that negative responses are negative values and positive responses are positive values.⁷

The next hypothesis has to do with citizens' political views. The hypothesis argues that citizens believing that crime should be more strictly punished will have less trust in courts. The idea is that citizens believing that criminal punishment is more important than the rights of the accused will have less trust in courts. The question utilized to get at this idea asks which is more important, protecting the rights of the accused or reducing crime? The respondent is offered a 0–10 scale where 0 indicates reducing crime and 10 indicates protection of the rights of the accused.⁸

The final individual-level hypothesis is that individuals with low trust in other governmental institutions will have low trust in the courts. The idea here is that trust across institutions is highly correlated. Therefore, studies exploring trust must take into account the effect of trust in other institutions. The variable representing trust in other institutions is an additive variable of measures of trust for four institutions or aspects of government: trust in parliament, politicians, police, and political parties (see Chanley, Rudolph, and Rahn, 2000). The four trust questions were implemented using the same 10-point scale, where 0 indicates no trust and 10 indicates a great deal of trust. The trust measures were then summed together to create a 0–40 scale.⁹

Additional individual-level controls are included in the model. First, the log of income is included in order to control for any relationship between income and trust in the

⁵In the sample, 15.54 percent (766) of respondents answered that their situation got a lot worse, 36.73 percent (1,810) said a little worse, 32.33 percent (1,593) said it stayed the same, 13.09 percent (645) said a little better, and 2.31 percent (114) said a lot better.

⁶The mean score for attention to politics is 6.826 on the 10-point scale. Only 0.95 percent of people say they pay no attention to politics, 14.06 percent of respondents are below the median, 10.37 percent of respondents are at the median, 75.57 percent of respondents are above the median, and 12.58 percent of people say they pay a great deal attention.

⁷Only 1.32 percent of respondents strongly disagreed that every citizen has a duty to vote, 2.31 percent disagreed, 5.62 percent neither agreed nor disagreed, 21.79 percent agreed, and 68.95 percent agreed strongly.

⁸The mean is 2.597, which indicates a strong desire for the reduction of crime over protection of rights. In the sample, 32 percent answered a 0, 72.26 percent of respondents were below the median, 16.11 percent were at the median, 8.07 percent were above the median, and 1.3 percent were at 10.

⁹The trust measures correlated very highly with each other. The lowest correlation was 0.405 between politicians and the police. The highest correlation was 0.83 between politicians and political parties. A Cronbach's alpha score of over 0.7 was found for combining the measures.

courts.¹⁰ In addition, age is included in order to control for the potential that older people have more trust due to their increased interaction with the courts.¹¹ Gender is included to control for potential differences between men and women and their experience with the court.¹² There is also a control variable that indicates whether the respondent is white-British. As mentioned earlier, Tyler (2000) argues that voluntary compliance is essential to the rule of law, and when individuals perceive the judiciary as being a tool of a competitor group, people will not support the institution. The source of tension becomes even more pronounced when people are able to identify that people in important institutional positions are those in the “in” group. For instance, Tyler (2000) points out that in the United States, African-American citizens may view themselves as American, but view themselves as outsiders when it comes to specific American institutional structures. What this means is that, in addition to the party differences explored in the model, anyone who does not view him or herself as white-British will view the institutional arrangements of the courts with skepticism. Therefore, one would expect that people who do not identify as white-British would have less trust in the courts. The people who should view the courts with skepticism include nationalities other than British, and British citizens who do not identify with the predominant racial category. Finally, a control variable representing the working-class group to which the respondent belongs is included. There are four working-class groupings that combine different types of occupations. Combining categories that are not statistically significant from each other created the groupings.¹³

There are two additional variables included in the model to measure parliamentary-constituency-level factors. The first constituency level hypothesis argues that a higher crime rate in a constituency will lead to lower levels of trust among the people in that constituency. Coding each respondent's constituency for the rate of crime six months before the respondent took the survey created the variable.¹⁴ The crime statistics were obtained for all of the constituencies in England and Wales.¹⁵ The other hypothesis was that in heterogeneous districts, people would have less trust in courts. Due to a lack of data on ethnic group composition by constituency, an indirect measure was needed in order to create a variable that represents this hypothesis. Using U.K. census data, the variable was created based on the percentage of nonwhite, non-British citizens in each constituency for England and Wales.¹⁶

The statistical model employed here is a linear Bayesian hierarchical model. This model is the most appropriate statistical model because there are two distinct levels in operation that impact the outcome of the dependent variable; an individual-level and a constituency-level (Jackman, 2009). It is important to note that all continuous independent variables were scaled to have a mean of 0 and an *SD* of 1. All of the continuous variables were scaled in the same way to make interpretation of coefficients easier. In addition, the variables were

¹⁰The mean income in the sample is £37,240 a year, the median is £32,500, minimum is £5,000, and maximum is £100,000.

¹¹The mean age in the sample is 51.82, the median is 53, minimum is 19, and maximum is 90.

¹²The sample includes 47.46 percent women, and 52.54 percent men.

¹³The original categories included clerical, customer service, management, never worked, other, professional, skilled manual labor, and small business. The categories were statistically tested and combined using a factorplot test. The factorplot is provided in an appendix upon request.

¹⁴The crime rate was obtained by purchasing the data from UK Crime Stats.

¹⁵The mean constituency crime rate is 10.2, median is 9.24, minimum is 2.71 (North Dorset), and the maximum is 69.53 (cities of London and Westminster).

¹⁶The variable contains surprisingly large variation. For instance, the constituency with the smallest percentage of nonwhite, non-British residents is Berwick-Upon-Tweed at 0.48 percent. The constituency with the largest percentage of nonwhite, non-British residents is East Ham with 66.27 percent. The mean percentage nonwhite, non-British is 7.788 percent and the median is 3.2 percent.

TABLE 1
Trust in Court: Hierarchical Bayesian Model

	Coefficient	Credible Bounds
Individual level		
Voted Conservative	0.050	(-0.010, 0.110)
Voted Liberal Democrat	0.199 ^a	(0.134, 0.264)
Voted other party	-0.026	(-0.122, 0.068)
Economic situation	0.048 ^a	(0.025, 0.072)
Attention to politics	0.007	(-0.019, 0.033)
Sense of civic duty	0.020	(-0.008, 0.049)
Crime vs. rights of the accused	0.076 ^a	(0.052, 0.099)
Trust in other institutions	0.563 ^a	(0.539, 0.588)
log(Income)	0.102 ^a	(0.078, 0.127)
Age	0.058 ^a	(0.034, 0.083)
White-British	0.004	(-0.120, 0.128)
Female	-0.093 ^a	(-0.141, -0.047)
Working-class group 2	-0.003	(-0.049, 0.043)
Working-class group 3	-0.025	(-0.055, 0.006)
Working-class group (other)	0.002	(-0.029, 0.033)
Constituency level		
Intercept	-0.008	(-0.146, 0.129)
Constituency crime rate	-0.251 ^a	(-0.483, -0.024)
Percentage white-British in constituency	-0.125	(-0.358, 0.107)
R^2	0.381	(0.378, 0.387)
N		4,928

Note: Credible intervals are in parentheses.

^aCoefficients are statistically significant.

scaled in order to reduce the complexity of the model in terms of statistical calculation and convergence.

The Bayesian models discussed here were estimated in JAGS version 3.4.0.¹⁷ Since the model estimated here is a Bayesian model, some discussion is needed in terms of prior specification. The prior means for each variable were set at 0 and pulled from a normal distribution when estimating the models. Finally, models were estimated by using a burn in of 1,500,000, and a sample of 250,000 that was thinned by 25.¹⁸ The model equation is presented below, along with assumptions about error.¹⁹

Individual level

$$\begin{aligned}
 \text{TrustCourt}_{ij} = & \alpha_j + \beta_1 \text{VoteChoice}_{1ij} + \beta_2 \text{EconomicSituation}_{2ij} \\
 & + \beta_3 \text{AttentionPolitics}_{3ij} + \beta_4 \text{CivicDuty}_{4ij} + \beta_5 \text{ViewOfCrime}_{5ij} \\
 & + \beta_6 \text{InstitutionalTrust}_{6ij} + \beta_7 \log(\text{Income})_{7ij} + \beta_8 \text{Age}_{8ij} \\
 & + \beta_9 \text{Female}_{9ij} + \beta_{10} \text{WhiteBritish}_{10ij} \\
 & + \beta_{11} \text{WorkingClassGroup2}_{11ij} + \beta_{12} \text{WorkingClassGroup3}_{12ij} \\
 & + \beta_{13} \text{WorkingClassGroup(Other)}_{13ij} + \varepsilon_{ij}
 \end{aligned}$$

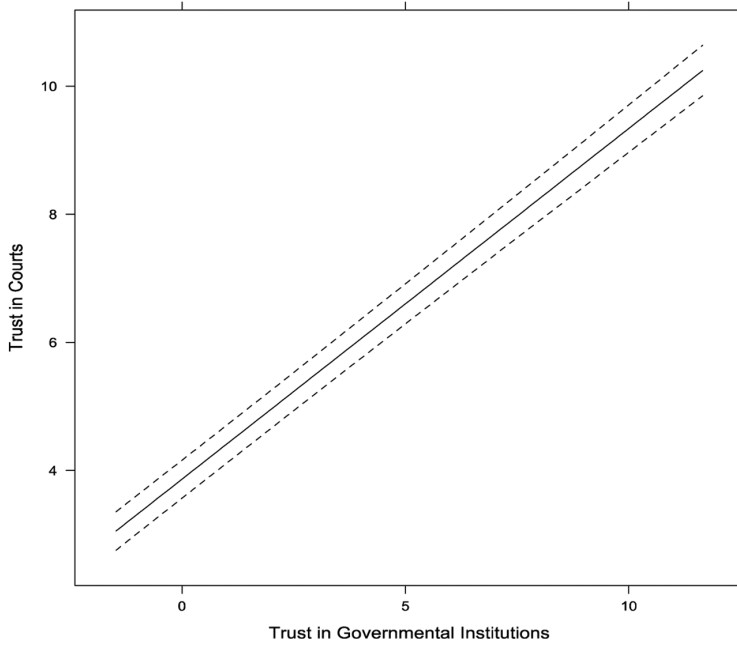
¹⁷The models were estimated in R version 3.0.2 on a MAC running OS X (10.9).

¹⁸Several models were estimated where the number of burn ins, sampling, and thinning were changed. The results were always substantively similar.

¹⁹For additional notes on statistical modeling, a technical appendix is provided upon request.

FIGURE 1

The Effect of Trust in Other Governmental Institutions



Constituency level

$$\text{Trust}_{\text{Court}_j} = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 \text{CrimeRate}_{1j} + \gamma_2 \text{PercentNonWhiteNonBritish}_{2j} + \delta_j$$

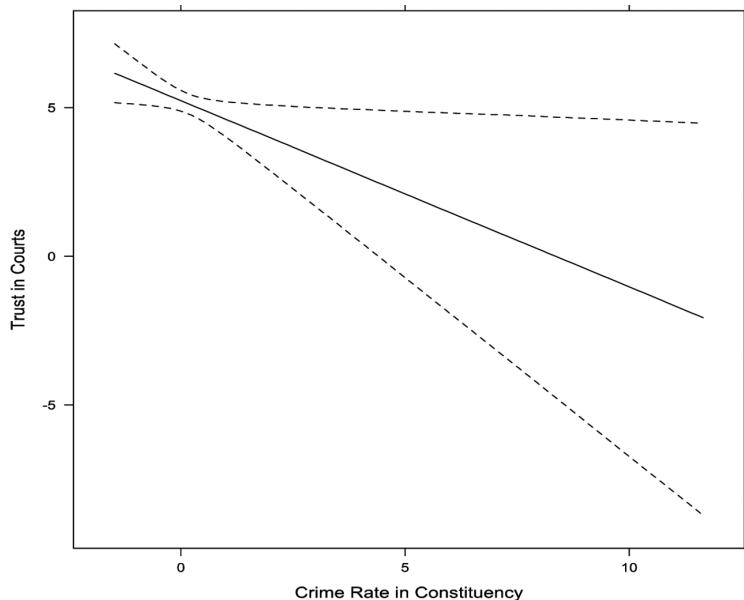
$$\varepsilon_{ij} \sim N(0, \theta_\varepsilon^2)$$

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Results

The results of the Bayesian hierarchical model are presented in Table 1. When exploring the model output, the results convey that not all of the theoretical expectations hold. First, at the individual level, neither voting for the Conservative Party or other smaller parties, attention to politics, sense of civic duty, race, nor working class has an effect on a respondent's level of trust in the courts. Interestingly, voting for the Liberal Democratic Party does have a sizable and significant effect on trust in courts. In particular, respondents who voted for the Liberal Democratic Party tend to have more trust in the courts. Perhaps this higher level of trust in the courts is associated with the fact that the Liberal Democrats entered government in 2010 for the first time in over 45 years, meaning that Liberal Democrat supporters following this election now view the system in a more positive, legitimate manner. This result gives some credence to claims that political winners will be more trusting of the courts. Next, as people view their economic situation as improving

FIGURE 2
The Effect of Constituency Crime Rate



over the last 12 months, trust in the courts is significantly increased. Again, this result indicates that economic winners appear to have more trust in the courts.

The controls that are significant include income, age, and gender. Income and age are positively related to trust in courts. The trend that income is positively correlated with trust in courts indicates again that economic winners may be more accepting of governmental institutions. For age, one could hypothesize that as a person becomes older, his or her likelihood of having an experience with the courts increases. Further, people with more interaction with the courts tend to be more trusting of them (see Benesh, 2006). Finally, women are less likely to have trust in the courts when compared to men. This is an interesting and unexpected result. Perhaps it is the case that Britain's relatively more male-dominated society, when compared to the rest of Europe, makes women a little more skeptical of governmental institutions.

The individual-level variable that explains the largest amount of variance in the dependent variable is the additive trust measure obtained by taking the respondent's answers to trust questions for four other institutions: police, political parties, politicians, parliament. The predicted probabilities and 95 percent confidence bounds for the total trust variable are presented in Figure 1. The predicted probabilities were calculated after rescaling the trust in courts variable back to its original statistical form. This was done in order to convey to the reader the precise substantive effect of the measure. Then, all of the scaled continuous variables in the model were held at their mean values. Finally, all dummy variables were held at the reference category, or middle category.²⁰ Figure 1 indicates that trust in other institutions is correlated with a dramatic increase in trust in the courts when moving from no trust to a large amount of trust. In fact, when moving from the minimum value to the

²⁰For example, vote was held at a Conservative vote, and the working-class grouping was held at group 2.

maximum value on the total trust measure the variable explains over half the variance in the dependent variable. In other words, a move from the minimum value to the maximum value on total trust is correlated with a seven-point increase in trust in the courts on a 10-point scale. The effect of this variable should not be understated.

There were only two variables that were estimated at the constituency level: crime rate and percentage white-British. First, the results convey that there is no statistical relationship between the percentage white-British in a constituency and the respondent's level of trust in the courts. Perhaps this lack of a finding is a product of the indirect method utilized to account for ethnic heterogeneity. A future step would be to calculate ethnic fractionalization in line with Fearon (2003) when future census data become available in the United Kingdom regarding ethnicity by constituency. On the other hand, the crime rate in a respondent's constituency does have a significant effect on the respondent's trust in courts even after controlling for attitudes on "crime versus right of the accused." The effect of this variable is presented in Figure 2. Although there are fairly large confidence bounds in the graph near high levels of crime, the effect does convey a significant drop of about two points in trust in the courts when moving from the lowest to the highest rates of crime. This means that differences in the crime rate between respondent constituencies could explain about 20 percent of the variance in the dependent variable.

In sum, the results indicate that both macro- and micro-level variables affect a respondent's trust in courts in the United Kingdom. The result found here for citizens in the United Kingdom aligns well with much of the empirical findings in the United States. At the individual level, both political attitudes and demographic characteristics explain a fair amount of variance in the dependent variable. At the constituency level, crime rate explains a significant portion of the variance in the dependent variable. A future task would be to improve upon constituency measures in order to get more concrete results.

Conclusion

In this article, I asked what affects a British citizen's trust in the courts? The analysis presented here is important because courts are a widely neglected institution in research on the United Kingdom. The reason is that the U.K. doctrine of parliamentary supremacy conveys to U.S. scholars a lack of importance for U.K. courts. However, courts in the United Kingdom play a significant role in law interpretation, criminal sentencing, and, more recently, the ability to strike laws down as unconstitutional if the laws violate E.U. legal doctrine. These tasks, and the courts' increasing role, should mean that courts in the United Kingdom begin to receive much more attention in terms of attitudes toward the court.

Through the use of a Bayesian hierarchical model, this article demonstrates that both individual-level and constituency-level factors correlate with a citizen's trust in the courts. In particular, the variable with the most explanatory power was a citizen's trust in other governmental institutions. One conclusion is that countries seeking to increase trust in the courts should be cognizant of ways to increase trust in other institutions as well, being that these attitudes are highly correlated. One possible way to increase trust in democratic institutions, and particularly the courts, is to make the institutions more transparent. Gibson and Caldeira (2011) found that people with more knowledge of the courts tend to have positive feelings toward the court, even when these people acknowledge that judges' political views impact decisions. Hopefully, future research could move forward by testing the underlying mechanisms that lead people to trust government institutions as a whole.

Another important takeaway from this study is that there is a relationship between constituency-level factors and attitudes. In particular, an increase in the crime rate is correlated with a decrease in trust in the courts. The finding is important because it provides a first step into investigating how citizens might be adjusting their attitudes toward the courts based on external observations. For instance, the theory is that an increase in crime leads citizens to view the court as ineffective in handling criminals. Citizens may view the courts and the legal system as a whole as being soft on crime. Therefore, individual attitudes are adjusted based on perceptions.

There are a couple of steps that future research may take in order to improve upon the literature. First, this study is only a starting point in understanding citizens' views of the court in the United Kingdom. It is important to point out that several of the theories presented here are borrowed mainly from literature in the U.S. context due to a lack of country-specific literature. Therefore, U.S.-based theories might not travel well to other geographical areas, as was seen here. Second, this study only explores the United Kingdom. It would be helpful to conduct a large-*N* study exploring multiple European countries in order to strive for grand theory.

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