

5-2012

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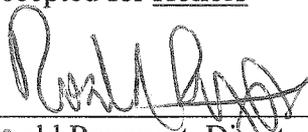
Why Trust Really Matters: How Americans' Declining Trust in Government May Be Altering
the Ideological Landscape

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement
for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Government from
The College of William and Mary

by

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Accepted for Honors



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April 27, 2012

Abstract

This paper attempts to update our awareness of consequences that trust in government can have on the American ideological landscape. Collectively, recent influential research by Hetherington (2005), Rudolph and Evans (2005), and Rudolph (2009) has shown that low trust in government makes people less willing to make material and ideological sacrifices when evaluating their support for government programs. This tendency exerts a bottom-up effect on the legislative process, tending to, though not exclusively, drown out liberal policymaking. My research extends the “Polarization of Trust” argument from Hetherington (2005) and analyzes the trust in government and political ideology variables of the Panel Studies from the American National Election Studies (ANES) since 1978. At several survey points during the last 30 years, Americans’ low trust in government has rarely had a statistically significant, appreciable effect in explaining increases in all Americans’ political conservatism, although stronger such effects often exist with regard to ideological moderates. Though a discussion of what causes political trust and of whether or not trust in government is wholly desirable is absolutely necessary, it is by and large outside the purview of this material. This paper’s findings suggest that the recent political gains from any recent erosion in trust in government have been small and ambiguous, though among moderates have been in favor of conservatives.

Devin Braun
Honors Thesis
March 2012

Why Trust Really Matters: The Changing Ideological Connotations of Trust in Government

President Barack Obama entered the White House following a momentous victory over Republican Senator John McCain in the 2008 election. With a substantial majority in the House of Representatives and a soon-to-be (though temporary) filibuster-proof majority in the Senate, the Democratic Party was at its most influential position in over four decades. Seen in isolation, this setting appeared ripe for sweeping enactment of Democratic Party policy agendas. The Republican Party brand had seemingly been rejected, and the Democrats had just won two consecutively decisive election seasons. Furthermore, during the later years of the Bush administration and the immediate aftermath of the Great Recession of 2008, Americans were, in the abstract, indicating greater preference for new government interventions like health care reform (“Kaiser Health Tracking Poll”). One could even have argued that support for this policy was embodied in President Obama’s winning electoral coalition.

Yet, within the first 18 months of Barack Obama’s Presidency, the Democratic Party would encounter passionate, substantial, and nearly terminal resistance on this bedrock Party initiative. Even with the seemingly opposition-proof majorities in the 111th Congress, Democrats were barely able to get the Affordable Care Act through the House and had to make multiple concessions, among which was the elimination of a single-payer public option, to get the bill through the Senate. A government stimulus bill and financial regulatory reform package met

equally stiff resistance, and a cap-and-trade climate change energy bill never made progress in the Senate. Furthermore, it was the Party's attempts on these issues that were in part credited for the Tea Party's ascendance and the 2010 midterm election's resurrection of Republican Party influence. In short, Democrats ran into far greater resistance in health care reform and other policy initiatives than might have been predicted by their legislative majorities and the electoral mood of the country.

In evaluating explanations of this phenomenon, I argue that a generalized distrust in government can explain not only why the Democrats temporarily assumed political power in the 2006 and 2008 elections, but also, more importantly, why Democrats were often thwarted in their platforms despite their (briefly) insurmountable majorities. Though overwhelmingly electing Democrats might be associated with supporting policies with more government intervention, Americans' trust in government was at historic lows in 2009, the first year of the Obama Presidency ("Pew Research Center"). That this year was to be the year of health care reform, cap-and-trade legislation, and government stimulus aggravated Americans' already-simmering dissatisfaction with the federal government. In retrospect, the Tea Party movement and the generally rapid decline of the Democratic Party's popularity seem straightforward; the Democratic Party was seen as supporting historic interventions of the federal government in Americans' everyday lives at a time when Americans' belief that the federal government does "the right thing" was at historic lows.

In this paper, I argue that, beneath the complexities and vagaries of Party politics, the recently low levels of trust in the federal government have been creating a more conservative American polity that increasingly rejects "Big-Government" policy approaches. Some candidates might run better campaigns than others in a given election year, and one Party may be better

staffed or funded than another, but over time and across Parties, the content of the federal government's policymaking has become more conservative as Americans' conservatism and distrust of the federal government have increased. Importantly, terms like conservative and liberal are used throughout this paper and the ANES data to refer to one's desired size of government (conservative being smaller, liberal being larger), though there clearly are other connotations of a word like conservative, which will be explored in some of the later data sets. Notable scholars have found that liberal social policy options are increasingly forgone by Congressmen due to the perception that they are out of touch with the voters (Hetherington 2005) (Rudolph and Evans 2005). While these authors and many others argue that trust has limited, idiosyncratic effects on the political system, I argue that consistent declines in trust in government over the last few decades have systematically contributed to the rise in conservatism that we've seen since the Reagan Revolution.

Trust in government is a concept inextricably intertwined with democracy. Government institutions that can engender a sense of trust and confidence in the citizenry can help to create the conditions for social prosperity. On the other hand, democracy thrives on a questioning, skeptical public that doesn't just give its trust away to charismatic orators and ideologues (Hardin 1999). Regular elections themselves are a reflection of this tension between democracy and trust; trust is extended to elected representatives, but this trust is temporary and is freely revoked the next Election Day. On a broader level, the tension even exists with voting in general; that slim majorities regularly vote in Presidential and Congressional elections suggests that Americans' trust in the political system is not a given. Any description of political trust or distrust must also consider the interpersonal, civic interactions that take place every day in bowling alleys across the country (Putnam 2000).

Over the years, the academic study of political trust has focused a great deal on the significance and causes of political trust, but until recently little attention had been paid to the consequences of changes in political trust, specifically trust in government. Marc Hetherington, Thomas Rudolph, and Jilian Evans, whose work shall be described in greater detail later, argued persuasively that trust in government has policy ramifications when the policy in question implies material or ideological sacrifice; when trust in government is low, those most skeptical of a government policy are least likely to afford it greater policymaking authority (Hetherington, 2005) (Rudolph and Evans, 2005). While straightforward in principle, this dynamic has contributed significantly to the decline in policy liberalism. In other words, the decline in trust in government among the public has made elected representatives in D.C. less likely to pursue Big Government policies.

Apart from affecting the moods of conservatives and liberals toward policies, does trust in government actually affect the ideology of the American public? If a citizen regularly watches television programs that document government waste, or if he or she is regularly dissatisfied with the policy outputs of the federal government, or if a series of scandals involving Congressmen breaks out, does the citizen become more conservative? It seems intuitive that one who becomes distrustful of the federal government would come to describe themselves as more ideologically opposed to the federal government's involvement in Americans' daily lives. Yet, this direct question has received scant attention in the literature. If anything, the research assumption has been that one's ideological description determines one's level of trust in government, but does it seem plausible that a person would become ideological about government before trustful or distrustful of government? Using the results of the American National Elections Studies (ANES) over the last 30 years, this paper explores the ideological

polarization of political trust with the thesis that low levels of trust in government will exert a direct, noticeable effect on the rise of American conservatism. In the following sections, I will lay out a theoretical conceptualization of trust in government; I will then briefly clarify how I predict trust in government to influence political ideology. After describing the variables and statistical procedures used in my model of political ideology, I will present the results and some modest conclusions, based on the limited data.

Trust in the Literature

Academically, feelings toward the Trust-Ideology connection have ranged from skeptical to apathetic to neglectful. Beyond the droves of research conducted on the causes of trust in government and trust in other people, I consider here the research that at least explores the concept of trust in government having political consequences.

The most obvious place to start is with the question: What is trust? This question has been integral to much scholarly work in political economics, public administration, and political theory. One dominant framework revolves around the idea that trust is a type of good that person A is willing to vest in person B under the assumption that person B will further person A's interests (Levi 1998, page 78; Hardin 1998, 2002). This investment can be made because person A truly believes that person B has trustworthy attributes. These interests can be confined to person A, or they can extend to a broader circle of people. The investment can also be made simply if person A thinks person B has powerful personal interests in continuing the relationship (Pettit 1995; Hardin 1998). This dichotomy speaks to the distinction between "thin" and "thick" trust. Thin trust characterizes relations between the trust-er and the "generalized other," someone

or a group of people with whom the trust-er is not significantly familiar. Thick trust, however, refers to trust relations in which the trust-er and the trustee are closely related and familiar with each other's ethical characteristics, for instance (Putnam 2000, pages 136-137). Deliberative Democracy theorists such as Robert Putnam and David Miller argue that interaction and communication between agents in the trust relationship can give the subsequent trust a thicker quality (Putnam 1993; Putnam 1995; Miller 1993). Whether government can and would want to engender thin or thick trust is a subject to which I will return later.

When dealing with thin trust, the principal form studied in this paper, the decision to invest trust can be thought of in cost-benefit terms. If person A has reason enough to think that person B will dependably further the former's interests, then the benefits may be high enough to justify the investment of trust. If the prospects for person B's utility to person A are low, then the costs (being vulnerable to being cheated, for instance) might be too high for trust to be invested. A couple of layers removed from individual-level trust, citizens may trust government if they have enough reason to believe that government will further their interests or the interests of society at large, such as securing national borders, providing for the common good, or promoting personal liberty. An expression of distrust in government could come overtly in the case of tax evasion (Scholz and Lubell 1998) or, more tangentially, in the form of withdrawing support for salient government policy interventions.

From this point, the first significant divide in the literature comes on the issue of how trust in government is derived/what it reflects. David Easton's classic work categorized the study of trust in government into relationships with 1) specific support for political actors and 2) diffuse support for political institutions and types of governance (Easton 1965). Whichever one of these characteristics one adopts has significant implications for academic study in the area. If

trust in government is merely a product of satisfaction with specific politicians, it may be a less concrete and valid measure of political attitudes than if it reflected contentment with things like the military, the welfare state, or environmental regulatory agencies, for instance. With some modifications, this basic divide has marked the last five decades of research on trust in government. By sorting through this divide, I can better understand the basis for predicting trust in government's effects on changing political ideology.

On one side, critics argue that trust in government is an inconsistent, ephemeral, and even impracticable concept. Jack Citrin laid the foundations for this line of reasoning in a 1974 paper that attempted to make sense of what was then a very recent, precipitous decline in trust in government. In surveying "political cynics" from the 1964-1972 American National Elections Studies (ANES), Citrin finds that dissatisfaction with incumbents and a greater social acceptance of political cynicism led to a greater expression of distrust of government (Citrin 1974).

Anderson and LoTempio provide a more modern version of this argument by suggesting that supporters of the losing Presidential candidate are far more likely to distrust the government in the aftermath of an election than are the winners of that election, regardless of which parties win and lose the election (Anderson and LoTempio 2002). In this light, trust in government is a very transitory, superficial concept that mostly just reflects a person's competitive standing in the political environment. Russell Hardin goes even farther, though, and suggests that there can be no genuine facilitator of trust in government because no genuine trust in government can exist (Hardin 1999). Here Hardin is mainly referring to specific political candidates, but his argument can also be applied to *diffuse* trust in institutions. In essence, accurate information on government's trustworthiness is too sparse for citizens to be able to make real cost-benefit valuations of trusting government; the political actors are too removed, and the machinations of

the political process are too hidden. Thus, it simply is impossible for a “thick” trust in government to be engendered, and therefore anyone who does trust government is projecting some other kind of value (Hardin 1999).

Proponents of a regime-based or diffuse model of trust in government argue that the above authors sell the concept of trust in government short. First, Scholz and Lubell argue that a trust “heuristic” can establish a layer of Putnam’s “thin” trust to help citizens make sense of Hardin’s complex political world. A history of positive experiences with local leaders, communities, and even government agencies can give people an inductive reason to trust these social institutions. Trust in government, then, can be thought of as a summary measure of political experiences (Scholz and Lubell 1998, p. 401; Scholz and Pinney 1995). Furthermore, Citrin’s measures of institutional dissatisfaction deal with whether or not citizens want to change the fundamental form of American government. One could foresee more nuanced incarnations of institutional dissatisfaction, like the ones Marc Hetherington used in 1998 to find that dissatisfaction with domestic policy, perceived removal from government, and perceived ineffectiveness of government all played significant roles in determining one’s generalized distrust of government (Hetherington 1998; See also Christensen and Laegreid 2005 for an international example). Regarding Anderson and LoTempio (2002), it is likely that relying on the victory or loss of two Presidential elections (1972 and 1996) is an overly simplistic view of how trust in government is cultivated. Even more than Presidential election outcomes, Anderson and LoTempio’s models show that “Pre-Election Trust” (p. 342) is the most significant predictor of post-election trust, which begs the question: What types of things build pre-election trust? Among others, Carmines and Stimson (1989) offer the idea that issue saliency, in this case the Democratic Party’s apparent pursuance of minority-centric causes, can better help to explain

variation in trust in government among white voters. Independent of electoral outcomes, whether foreign policy issues or domestic policy issues dominate the agenda can have significant effects on who (ideologically) distrusts government and how many people distrust government (Hetherington and Husser 2011). In short, Miller's (1974) assertion of regime-based origins of trust in government still seems plausible in spite of the claims of skeptics that trust in government is a fleeting, intangible, or electorally-defined measure.

What can explain these opposing conclusions on how trust in government is developed? Firstly, modern researchers have the benefit of American National Elections Studies (ANES) measures that more accurately tap into the distinctions between regime-based trust and incumbent-based trust (Craig, Niemi, and Silver 1990). Relative effects of satisfaction with institutions on trust in government can more easily be teased out by the greater number of battery question offered in recent ANES surveys, whereas researchers like Citrin had to rely on measurements of general dissatisfaction with American democracy. Secondly, it could be that the catalysts for distrust are more programmatic and policy-oriented now than they were in the days of Watergate and the Vietnam War, which may have been rightly seen as more cultural cues. Either way, when someone answers that they can trust the government to do what is right "Only some of the time," we now have valid reason to assume that there is a significant institutional component in the response.

The next and most pressing phase of my theoretical argument concerns the *implications* of trust or distrust in government. As has been noted, while there have been decades of research devoted to the causes of trust in government, there have also been significant strides in our understanding of what trust in government means for our society and for our government. The divides from earlier still emerge. Some think that because trust in government is a flimsy

concept, it has few direct consequences for our political process, while many others believe that, since trust in government has generalized policy origins, it has very significant effects on how Americans perceive political issues, what policies they're willing to support, and who they're willing to elect to enact those policies.

Citrin (1974) and Anderson and LoTempio (2002) best symbolize the first half of this debate. For all of these authors, because distrust of government largely rests on dissatisfaction with incumbents (in Congress and the White House, respectively), distrust of government for any group of people will only last until the next election. Furthermore, Citrin also found that those who distrusted government showed no disinclination to vote, protest, or generally participate in civic activities. In fact, it could be that distrust in government has positive implications for democratic awareness and that it is a fundamentally American state of mind. While it is important to consider these concerns, I would argue that, to the extent that the assumptions of this camp were challenged earlier, their dismissal of trust in government's political implications should be viewed very skeptically. The empirical history of the ANES, as suggested above, favors a more generalized, institutional view of trust in government, and it is the consequences of this type of trust in government that I explore next.

For people who see generalized institutions as facilitators of trust or distrust in government, there is a wide variety of potential implications for such trust. At a very basic level, trust in law enforcement and the impartiality of government administration can act as a kind of discount on the costs involved in investing interpersonal trust (Fukuyama 1995) (Levi 1998) (Offe 1999). This interpersonal trust, then, can be the foundation upon which civically-active, efficient, and productive societies are built. As Robert Putnam argues, societies that prosper and adapt to changing conditions are societies that have interpersonal trust and, therefore, active

citizen participation in the political process (Putnam 1993) (Putnam 1995). Thus, a certain level of generalized trust in government can indirectly facilitate civic participation, under this framework, though short-term, incumbent-based dissatisfaction may actually promote participation, as Citrin (1974) argues. Additionally, government services that have genuine value to people may be more effectively consumed when citizen trust in government is higher. Mark Warren uses the EPA Superfund program as a case study of a government service that, when delivered with greater transparency and efficiency, engendered more trust from citizens and in turn provided greater utility to those citizens as they began to take more action to redress their neighborhood pollution problems (Warren 1999). In other words, a distrust-worthy institution may cause citizens to miss out on the legitimate services that that institution provides. Finally, a systematic distrust of institutions like the legislature may lead to sub-optimal legislative outcomes. In addressing a problem, legislators may not want to engage in a drawn-out legislative process in front of an already-cynical public. Instead, they may search for flawed “Quick-fixes” to complex problems because they are more politically palatable (Orren 1997, p. 79).

What draws the interest of this paper, however, is the possible connection that trust in government may have with the political ideology of the American public. As can be seen, this component of trust in government has been voided by the scholarly literature, though there has been a recent resurgence of trust-ideology research. Carmines and Stimson (1989) flirted with the concept by acknowledging a connection between the salient political issues of the day and a person’s trust in government, but issues of racial redistributive policy were treated as the independent variables, with trust in government and Party loyalty treated as dependent variables. Wouldn’t it be sensible that trust in government might have a return effect on people’s policy views? Chanley, Rudolph, and Rahn (2000) suggest that, when the population’s trust in

government is lower, the “Policy mood” of the country shifts to the Right on the political spectrum, and when trust is higher, the country’s policy mood shifts to the Left. These policy moods are carefully distinguished from programmatic political ideology in that they may be limited to specific issues, however. Marc Hetherington wrote what is arguably the linchpin of this branch of theory with his 2005 book *Why Trust Matters*. The overwhelmingly-supported thesis of the book says that declining trust in government did shift the policy moods of the country, which in turn has prevented Congress from considering many liberal policy options. Harkening back to my original discussion of investing trust, Hetherington’s argument states that when trust in government decreases, many people are less likely to endorse *redistributive* spending programs (Medicaid, for instance) because these programs may involve a greater material cost to the average citizen. These material costs require a higher level of trust in government to justify supporting the programs, and when trust in government decreases, redistributive policy proposals flounder (Hetherington 2005).

Is this dynamic, so central to Hetherington’s argument, limited to material costs and redistributive programs? Rudolph and Evans (2005) argue that federal spending of almost any kind imposes an *ideological* cost, in addition to material costs, on conservatives. Conservatives, then, will require a higher trust in government than will liberals in order to support environmental conservation spending, for instance (Rudolph and Evans 2005). Movements in support of federal policies, consequently, may just be reflective of changing trust in government among conservatives. Another way of wording this argument is to say that higher levels of trust in government can lead to ideological compromise, and this dynamic should not be limited to conservatives. It was relatively high trust in government among liberals in 2001 that was said to allow them to make the ideological sacrifice of supporting then-President George W. Bush’s tax

cut proposal (Rudolph 2009). If one reconsiders Anderson and LoTempio's claim about the electoral effects on trust in government, however, this line of reasoning becomes less tenable. It seems reasonable, for instance, that conservatives' trust in government may have increased somewhat following the election of Ronald Reagan to the Presidency in 1980. Given the boon that the 1980 election was for conservatives, though, it seems very unlikely that conservatives would have become more supportive of increased food stamp spending or environmental regulations. In other words, ideological groups may only be more open to ideological compromise when, politically, it is least likely. This would render the 2001 Bush tax cut episode as an aberration, and it would question the thesis that trust in government acts to moderate ideology.

All of this literature leaves open an important question that I hope to address. Instead of asking how liberals and conservatives fluctuate on policy proposals given their changing trust in government, we should be asking whether or not changing levels of trust in government act to *create* more conservatives or liberals. If a person becomes less trustful of the government, will he or she, in addition to becoming less supportive of the dominant redistributive policy proposal of the day, consider himself or herself more conservative? This paper's working thesis is that recent declines in trust in government have exerted an independent effect on the number of self-declared conservatives and that this conservatism would surely extend to the salient policy issues of the day (Hetherington and Husser 2011) (Carmines and Stimson 1989) and would operate independently of Party electoral outcomes (Anderson and LoTempio 2002).

Trust in the Theory

At the risk of having lost the trust of the reader, I will now attempt to lay out a concise theoretical map of how I figure trust in government affects the political process. Let's start with Citizen A, a moderate yet frequent voter who pays reasonably good attention to the world of politics. Citizen A reads numerous news stories that document billions of dollars of waste in the federal bureaucracy. Delinquent government regulators are said to be bought off by the companies they supposedly regulate. A federal education accountability bill, for example, is shown to produce unintended negative consequences for student proficiencies in important subjects. Meanwhile, congressmen are siphoning taxpayer money off to pork projects that may benefit a handful of companies and contractors, and Parties routinely govern in a polarized fashion. After months of reports on this erosion of responsible politics on the part of incumbent representatives *and* institutions, Citizen A begins to lose trust in the federal government acting ethically or on behalf of his or her interests.

When Citizen A loses a generalized trust in government, he or she may become less active in civic organizations and may be less willing to utilize government resources like public transportation or the Post Office. More important to this paper, though, he or she should begin to retract support for interventionist government policies in education, the sample salient policy mentioned above. Additionally, Citizen A should also begin to think of themselves as more conservative – more supportive of smaller government generally. This increased conservatism could have any number of subsequent effects. Citizen A might vote more regularly for Republican or Third-Party conservative candidates. Citizen A might vote against or voice

opposition to measures that would increase the welfare state because he or she doesn't trust the government to redistribute wealth. Most importantly, though, due to being a conservative, Citizen A will require a higher level of trust in the future to support such interventionist policies, which follows the logic that Hetherington (2005) and Rudolph and Evans (2005) used to argue that changes in trust will have the greatest effects on policy preferences among conservatives. This new required level of trust should be higher than the trust Citizen A would have required to support government interventions when he or she was a moderate. Thus, not only does a systemic increase in distrust of the government reduce temporary support for specific policies, it may make support for those policies even less likely in the future due to an increased affiliation with small-government ideology. In fairness, Citizen A might become more opposed to government military intervention in Iraq, if foreign policy issues are salient at the time of eroding trust, and many pundits would term this an increase in *liberalism*. A palatable summary of this contradiction is to say that Citizen A should become more ideologically opposed to government involvement in salient issue areas as a result of low trust. Whether or not a person's trust in government affects his or her ideology in this manner is what is examined in the following sections.

Methods

The vehicle for analyzing Americans' views toward government over time was the Panel Studies from the American National Elections Studies (ANES). Other national surveys, such as the General Social Survey, probe attitudes such as trust in government and civic trust, but the consistency of wording and methodology as well as the timing of the ANES make it an attractive time-series case study. The fact that, in any given election season, the Panel Studies interviewed the same population multiple times over a period of a couple of years is also a convenient way to notice direct shifts in ideology or trust in government. The same group of people would receive the same questions on trust, ideology, and other key variables multiple times before, during, and after midterm and Presidential elections.

Considering that Hetherington's seminal work (2005) concerned itself mostly with the ANES through 2000, I chose to target my analysis on the similarly-designed Panel Studies that have taken place since 2000. Namely, these are the 2000-2002 ANES and the 2008-2010 ANES. The most significant results come from these surveys, especially the 2008-2010 series. I do, however, go back to the 1978-1980 and 1990-1992 Panels to test the relationships I find in the more recent studies. This was done to see if the thrust of the effect of political trust on ideology has changed drastically since the Reagan Revolution and the generally agreed-upon beginning of the Party polarization era. I keep the analyses of these survey periods separate from each other for theoretical reasons. During a couple of the survey periods (1990-1992; 2000-2002), foreign policy issues were most salient to voters, so the theoretical predictions are quite distinct from the

other datasets in that low levels of trust in government should encourage “liberal” evolution not only on these issues but perhaps in broader ideology. Thus, I evaluate such hypotheses separately for each election survey period.

As the reader will recall, my hypothesis is that lower levels of trust in government will at least partially account for conservative changes in political ideology. Those with lower levels of trust at time 1 should, accounting for all other explanatory variables, become more conservative. This is easily testable using the ANES’s panel data, which involved repeated interviews of the same respondents during two-to-four year election intervals. For my study, four separate election periods were most readily available, as mentioned previously: 1978-1980, 1990-1992, 2000-2002, and 2008-2009 with a most recent re-contact survey wave in 2010. For the different survey waves in each election period, instead of simply correlating Trust at time 1 with Ideology at time 2, I wish to explore whether or not the Trust at time 1 can account for the change in Ideology between times 1 and 2. Thus, I create a dependent variable, “Change in Ideology,” that represents a subtraction of Ideology at time 1 from Ideology at time 2 (or 3 for more extended election periods). If a respondent scored themselves as a 3 (Slightly Liberal) in time 1 and a 5 (Slightly Conservative) in time 2, then their “Change in Ideology” value would be +2. The subtraction is done this way because, as higher scores of Ideology indicated conservatism, a positive value for the “Change in Ideology” variable would represent an increase in conservatism, and positive relationships between Trust at time 1 and Change in Ideology would thus indicate a relationship between higher distrust and higher conservatism. Note that higher values of Trust in the ANES coding actually indicate higher distrust of government. Finally, I use the lagged Ideology variable as an independent variable for “Change in Ideology,” a common practice for attitudinal models. The idea addressed with this variable is whether or not a prior

ideological orientation by itself predisposes a respondent toward one type of ideological change or another.

To be clear, it is not this paper's thesis that trust in government is the only or even the most important predictor of ideological change; several others must be included in any attempt to categorically predict political ideology. While there could arguably be more independent variables added to determine political ideology, the ones I study are: Trust in Government, Interpersonal Trust, Education level, Income, Interest in public affairs, Awareness of public affairs, prior Ideology (within the same election period), prior political Party identification, sense of political efficacy, and dummy variables (0 for "No," 1 for "Yes") for male gender and racial categories. To explain, it could be that declining trust in everyday people around the respondent could cause the respondent to desire less interference from society or government in their daily life. In this sense, the relationship between interpersonal trust and conservatism may take on a similar role to that of trust in government and conservatism. The degree to which a person pays attention to politics, is interested in political affairs, or has a sense that the government can respond to their grievances may also influence political ideology. Together, these ANES questions closely resemble notions of "political sophistication" that previously have been shown to be important predictors of political ideology (Feldman and Johnston 2009) Demographic variables like education level, income level, gender, and race/ethnicity could all provide their own unique ideological cues for respondents, so their inclusion seems justified to avoid creating biased results for the Trust estimator. Finally, it also seems that one's prior or longstanding Party and ideological identifications would give respondents a prism through which to view their trust or distrust in government. Would someone who is already conservative tend to become more conservative if their trust declines than someone who is already liberal? Would the same occur

when comparing already-declared Republicans versus already-declared Democrats? This is certainly a vital question in the aforementioned prior literature and should be included to interact with this paper's models.

Some important caveats about the availability of these variables should be noted. First, the Awareness variable, operationalized in terms of how much information about public affairs the respondent felt he/she had, was only available on the 1978-1980 and 1990-1992 election periods. For the other two election periods, a question relating to the respondent's level of interest, coded as "Interest," was instead included in the models. The degree of trust a respondent had in other people, coded as "Social Trust," was available only in the 1990-1992 and 2000-2002 data sets. Demographic variable availability was naturally quite stable throughout the election periods, though the Hispanic category emerged in later datasets under the race/ethnicity variable. Finally, for ambiguity reasons detailed later, a variable measuring the respondent's level of efficacy (In this case a feeling that government officials "cared") was included in the 2008-2010 models.

Knowledge of how the key ANES variables were coded is vital to understanding the significance of any statistical relationships. "Trust" refers to questions that asked the respondents how often they trusted the government to do what was right, while "Social Trust" corresponds with what many have described as interpersonal trust – how often does the respondent trust other people? The "Trust," "Social Trust," "Awareness," and "Interest" variables were all coded from 1-7 in declining order of trust, awareness, and interest, respectively. Therefore, if something had a positive relationship with a "Trust" variable, it was related to a lack of trust. Similarly, as coded values for political awareness or interest increase, awareness and interest substantively decrease. Demographic variables like levels of education and income were more intuitively

coded, with higher values relating to higher levels. Dummy, or dichotomous, variables were constructed for specific categories of gender and race, with 1 indicating “Male” in the Male gender variable and 1 indicating “African American” for the African American race variable, as examples. In terms of ideology and Party affiliations, values went from 1-7, drifting from liberal to conservative and Democrat to Republican, respectively, along the scales. In later analyses, values 3-5 on the Ideology scale were considered separately as a “Moderate” category of Ideology. These values corresponded to Slightly Liberal, Middle of the Road, and Slightly Conservative, respectively. Parallel considerations could be made for Party identifications. Consequently, the Change in Ideology variables took on a -6 to 6 scale, since a respondent could go from Extremely Conservative to Extremely Liberal (7 to 1), vice versa, experience less severe changes, or experience no change at all (0). In sum, and to aid the reader’s comprehension of future tables, a positive relationship between Trust, the key explanatory variable for study, and Change in Ideology meant that the more distrustful of government one was, accounting for other explanatory variables, the more conservative one was.

Arguably the most politically significant shifts in ideology occur at the nation’s political center. How the centrists, whether considered as independents or moderates, move in a given election can determine the outcome and can influence which policies are considered subsequently by politicians. Thus, when I examine Trust’s effect on Change in Ideology, I additionally explore this relationship when limited to ideological moderates – those classified into 3, 4, and 5 on the ANES Ideology scale. As noted earlier, these values correspond to Slightly (Weak) Liberal, Middle of the Road, and Slightly (Weak) Conservative, respectively. This more fine-tuned aspect of analysis may differ from the overall Change in Ideology results in a couple of respects. Firstly, it is likely the case that extremists on both sides of the ideological

spectrum are not likely to change their ideological viewpoints in the face of changing attitudes like trust in government. Thus, these intransigent respondents may cloud the picture when interpreting the electorate's ideological change over an election period. Studying moderates gives us a more dynamic picture of ideological change. Secondly, these moderates may be more pliable and susceptible to ideological change through some of the other considered variables like "Interest in Politics," or "Awareness of Public Affairs." Because social institutions like the media may have a greater effect on these respondents during elections, it could be that the more dynamic and interesting changes in Ideology as a result of Trust and other variables occur with these respondents. The one statistical drawback of this additional analysis is of course the effect of dramatically reducing sample sizes from the initial survey, though each of these additional models was still statistically significant on the whole.

As discussed in the theoretical sections of the paper, I also want to study political trust's effects on specific, salient issue positions during each election period, not just a respondent's general ideological identification. This phase of analysis represents a more recent, updated test of the research done by Hetherington (2005) and Rudolph and Evans (2005). Thankfully, the Roper Center for Public Opinion Archives at the University of Connecticut offers detailed, repeated surveys of what most Americans thought the most important issues of each election period were ("Roper Center Public Opinion Archives"). In the 1978-1980 period, for instance, inflation unsurprisingly emerged as the most important issue to voters. At the risk of embarking upon a too-exhaustive experiment, I included only one or two of these "Most Important Issues" for each election period. If a decrease in trust in government promoted conservatism, it should certainly do so with regard to these salient issues, even if the relationship were less convincing with regard to overall political ideology.

Since both the Ideology and Change in Ideology variables have an ordered but limited number of outcome categories, the traditional multiple OLS regression model would have painted an inadequate picture of these outcome variables. Ordered probit regressions, by which each category along the continuum of the outcome variables is considered separately, instead were the main mode of statistical analysis. While the coefficients generated from these regressions don't lend themselves to easy substantive interpretation, the key conclusions that can be gleaned from regression output with these models are the sign (+ or -) of the coefficient and whether or not the result for each independent variable is statistically significant – whether or not each coefficient can be explained away by the null hypothesis that no relationship between the independent variable and Ideology exists. To fully examine marginal effects, one needs to consider the predicted probabilities for each value of the dependent variable (Change in Ideology) with respect to changes in the independent variables. While Stata, the statistical software used in this project, reports statistical significance using a two-tailed test, often I point out the one-tailed significance test results for the reader. Nearly all of the specific issue variables also had ordinal characteristics and so received this same type of regression analysis. In the 2008-2010 survey, though, a question on whether or not the respondent approved of President Obama's healthcare policies was a dichotomous (0 or 1) variable, so a logistic regression was run to see if a standard deviation increase in each independent variable resulted in a higher or lower probability of disapproving of Obama (1) on the issue of healthcare.

In the following sections, graphical and substantive results from each survey are reported consecutively. A cruder summary table of Trust's relationship with Ideology across all models is also presented. The Results section begins with the 1978-1980 data and works chronologically up to the 2008-2010 data. For each election period, results are shown featuring both the Trust-

Change in Ideology models (Including those just for moderates) and the models analyzing Trust and specific, salient issues from each election cycle. While I attempt to abstract from the statistical results during the discussion of each election cycle, a more generalized summation of the results is what concludes the paper.

Results: 1978-1980

The midterm elections of 1978 and the presidential election of 1980 combined to suggest that the country had quickly had its fill with the turmoil of the Carter Presidency. A new kind of Republican Party was emerging, and a new degree of partisan polarization of both parties was beginning to dominate national politics. Persistent inflation and tepid economic growth had combined to give voters the very malaise that then-President Carter had hoped to alleviate. With Republican sweeps of the Presidency and Senate in 1980, the country's policymaking and ideology had seemed to take a rightward turn. Was this in part caused by a decline trust in government? The 1978-1980 ANES data provide the first availability of the Panel data discussed in the previous section. Three distinct survey waves were conducted during this two year period. While respondents were asked every time about their political ideology, only once, during the second wave, were they asked about their level of trust in the federal government. Thus, to get an idea of what effect a respondent's trust in government may have had on their changing political ideology, one would need to analyze the Trust response at wave 2, along with other explanatory variables, and the Change in Ideology between waves 2 and 3. Again, the other available explanatory variables in this election period were Prior Party Identification, Prior Ideological

Identification, Interest in politics, Awareness of Public Affairs, Income, Education, Race/Ethnic category, and Gender.

As shown in Table 1 in Appendix A, a higher degree of distrust in the federal government did not suggest a higher degree of conservatism by 1980. Not only is the coefficient close to zero, but there is actually a 56% chance that the hypothesis that no relationship exists between Trust and Ideology could explain the coefficient, thus rendering it nowhere near statistically significant. If you had a low degree of interest (higher value in the Interest coding) in politics prior to 1980, you were likely to become more liberal, whereas if you were less aware of public affairs, you were likely to become more conservative by 1980. While a respondent's level of education did not have a statistically significant relationship with their changing level of conservatism, higher incomes did suggest a very slight increase in conservatism. Perhaps surprisingly, being male was associated with a more liberal change in 1980, though more intuitively being African American also promoted liberal change.

Also in Table 1, when limited to ideological moderates (Those categorized as a 3, 4, or 5 on the wave 2 version of the Ideology variable), no statistically significant relationship emerges between Trust and Ideology. The aforementioned effects of Interest and Awareness were enlarged and still marginally statistically significant, suggesting that ideological movement among moderates was amplified relative to the rest of the electorate. Still, even when looking at the most volatile and arguably significant members of the electorate, there was no evidence to support the thesis that distrust of government promoted conservatism in 1980, despite that year's election serving as a conservative revolution of sorts.

For the 1980 election period, the topic of inflation was considered to be the most important political issue for voters, and a rather sophisticated policy question about inflation was chosen to see if those with greater distrust of the government would become more conservative (hawkish) on inflation (“Roper Center Public Opinion Archives”). More specifically, would those distrustful of the government increasingly think that the government should prioritize cutting inflation (reducing spending) over anti-poverty programs? This policy choice would later become a major fault line in the campaign, and the ANES phrased the question as a 1-7 scaled choice between having the government devote all of its attention to reducing inflation, at the expense of unemployment spending (1), and having the government devote all of its attention to reducing unemployment, at the expense of rising inflation (7). As Table 2 in Appendix A shows, the relationship between Trust and “Inflation” is nowhere close to being statistically significant. If you were male, highly educated, and conservative, you were more likely to think the government should focus on anti-inflationary policies (Evidenced by negative coefficients), but there was absolutely no support for the hypothesis that greater distrust of government would predict a more hawkish approach to inflation. Perhaps this measure of inflationary policy was too nuanced to get a good feel for attitudinal shifts, but other explanatory variables did have the expected effects on conservative opinions about inflation, so the result for Trust remains surprising. When limited to people who had moderate opinions about inflation, the Trust variable did not quite achieve statistical significance, and the coefficient actually went in the opposite direction of what was expected. Greater distrust actually promoted greater support of government spending on anti-poverty programs (As opposed to fighting inflation).

Results: 1990-1992

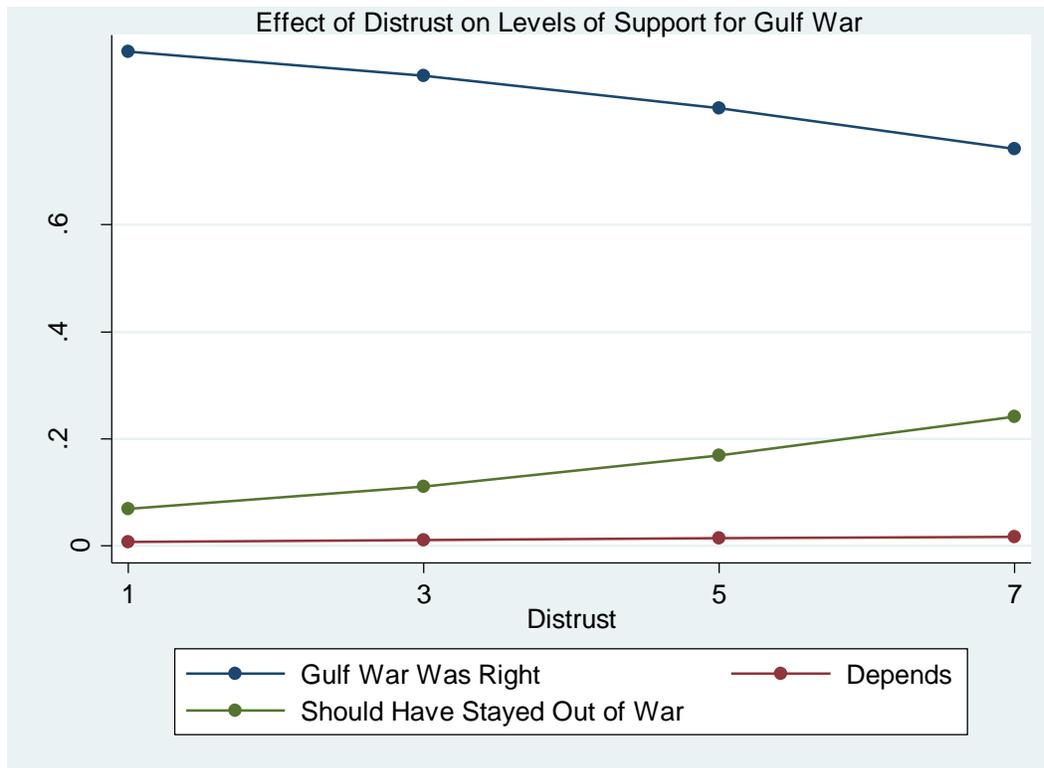
The second available batch of ANES Panel data occurs in the 1990-1992 cycle. After an intervening twelve years of mostly conservative governance, was there a tendency of distrust in government to directly promote conservatism? In this series, the ANES introduced the critical topic of social/interpersonal trust to its Panel studies. Respondents were asked how often they could trust other people, generically. The scale was 1-5, with higher values again indicating lower trust in other people. The question gauging respondents' interest in politics was not available, but the gauge of respondents' awareness of public affairs was available. This batch of surveys produced a wealth of data, as several key explanatory variables were available in all three of the survey waves. Thus, I could analyze the effects of these variables on three different "Change" periods of Ideology – from wave 1 to wave 2, from wave 2 to wave 3, and from wave 1 to wave 3. Other explanatory variables, such as demographic variables and the question relating to a respondent's level of awareness of public affairs, were only asked in wave 1 (1990). For all three of these models, additional models analyzing only the ideological moderates were added. Table 2 of Appendix A offers a rather bewildering summary of the results, but I will highlight the major conclusions here.

When examined across the ideological spectrum and within moderates, once again Trust does not have the anticipated effects on Ideology. In the one case with clear statistical significance (Column 1) and one case with marginal statistical significance (Column 5), increased distrust actually suggests a slightly more liberal ideology, though this may be consistent with the earlier-hypothesized effects of foreign policy issue salience. Trust's effect on changing conservatism among moderates was as expected (And nearly statistically significant) in the 1991-1992 interval, but this was the only instance of support for the paper's hypothesis. The

rest of the models show nothing approaching statistical significance or noteworthy coefficients. In terms of patterns across the data, Republican Party identification consistently suggests a more conservative change in ideology, which may speak to a partisan polarization of the electorate, including moderates, during this time. The less aware of public affairs the respondent was, the more likely he or she was to become more liberal, albeit slightly. Although the strength of the relationship was limited, higher incomes tended to increase the likelihood of becoming more conservative, especially in the 1991-1992 years of the surveys. Again, these trends emerged both with the broader ideological spectrum and with moderates by themselves.

However, as Table 2 of Appendix B shows, increased distrust of government was significantly associated with a sense of disapproval of the Persian Gulf War, considered then the most significant issue of the day, over time (“Roper Center Public Opinion Archives”). At all of the survey waves during this period, those who were more distrustful of the government were more likely to think the war was unsound policy. While this actually seems to challenge the distrust-conservatism thesis, recall that during times of foreign policy issue salience, the effects of distrust may actually work in the opposite ideological direction (Hetherington and Husser 2011). Indeed, while being conservative made a respondent more likely to support the Gulf War, being distrustful of the government had the opposite effect. Liberalism and distrust actually had complimentary roles with regard to the Gulf War. Figure 1 below shows more graphically the changing probabilities of supporting the war at different levels of distrust. While vast majorities of people of all levels of trust supported the Gulf War during this period, a clear trend suggests that distrustful respondents were less likely than trustful respondents to support the war. Here, the hypothesis that distrust of the government encourages opposition to government action in the salient policy areas of the day is strongly supported.

Figure 1:



Results: 2000-2002

The 2000-2002 ANES is a nice microcosm of the various dynamics of trust and ideology that this project deals with. While there were only two survey waves that contained all of the key explanatory variables, one occurred in a time when domestic policy issues were salient (2000), while the other wave occurred at a time when national security issues were most prevalent (2002). The attacks of September 11th not only galvanized support for then-President George W. Bush; it also rejuvenated trust in the federal government, though this trust may have only been extended to national security and defense priorities. Thus, these surveys provided opportunities to test the central hypotheses presented earlier. Since there were only two waves of surveys that

asked the studied questions, though, only one instance of Change in Ideology could be analyzed. Furthermore, the specific issue positions chosen for this election period were each only available once, so no changing attitudes on those issues could be studied. Finally, the variable that gauged respondents' awareness of public affairs was no longer used by the ANES in this election period.

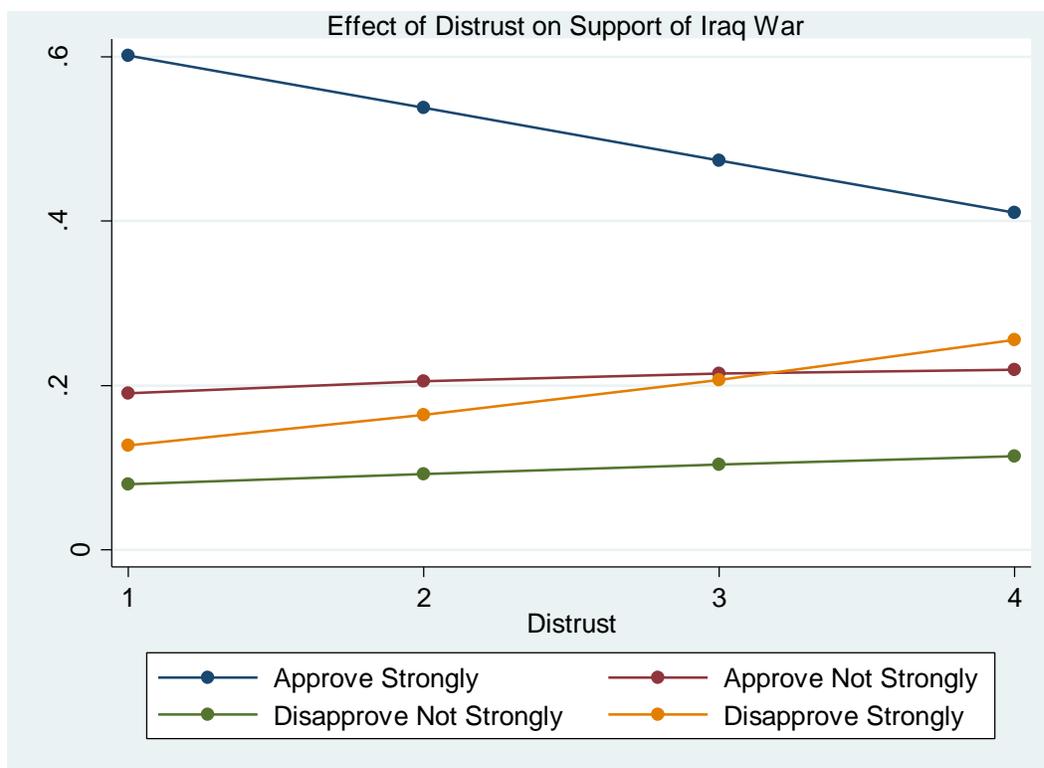
Interestingly, between 2000 and 2002, higher distrust of the federal government suggested a statistically significant conservative change in political ideology across the ideological spectrum, as illustrated in Table 3 in Appendix A. Since the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon occurred near the end of this survey interval, one might expect the typical distrust-conservatism relationship to hold, but the timing of the re-contact survey in 2002 should have occurred at a time when higher levels of trust in government would galvanize the public around the Administration and, perhaps, conservative leaders more broadly. Nevertheless, even in this time of increased Defense spending and national security posturing, those who were distrustful of the government in 2000 were more likely to become more conservative by 2002. Prior identification with the Republican Party less surprisingly suggested a more conservative ideological change during this time, while being male and Black was associated with more liberal ideological change. When the analysis is limited to ideological moderates, males are again more likely to become more liberal during the survey period, while those who distrusted their fellow citizens were more likely to become more conservative. Republican Party adherents in 2000 were again more likely to become conservative, and if one expands one's notion of statistical significance slightly, it is the case that higher distrust of government increases the likelihood of year 2000 moderates becoming more conservative. Thus, the initial hypothesis that distrust breeds conservatism is upheld despite the prevalence of national security issues and events during this survey period.

Even more confounding to prior theoretical approaches is the fact that, as shown in Table 3 of Appendix B, low trust in government is not associated with calls for less federal education funding. During the 2000 election, education policy was consistently at the top of Americans' priorities when evaluating the candidates, and while the federal government's involvement in education has often been ideologically contentious, there was no statistically significant evidence that distrust of the government eroded support for federal involvement in education ("Roper Center Public Opinion Archives"). In fact, less interpersonal trust was actually associated with *greater* support of increased education funding, since higher values on the education funding variable corresponded with *less* support for education funding. On the foreign policy front, one's level of trust in 2000 did not have any statistically significant relationship with one's degree of support for the Iraq War in 2002, as shown in Table 4 of Appendix B. Amazingly enough, having low interpersonal trust in 2000 was associated with much higher support of the Iraq War in 2002, since once again low values of the "Iraq War Support" variable indicate higher support for the war. In all models of support for the Iraq War, Republican Party identification and prior conservative identification suggested much greater support for the war, while Black respondents were much less likely to support the war.

When one only examines the 2002 survey, at the height of buildup for the Iraq War, Trust seems to play a much greater role in cross-sectionally suggesting opposition to the war. As shown in the second column of Table 4 (Appendix B), those who expressed a distrust of the federal government in 2002 were much less likely to be supportive of the war, even though low interpersonal trust had the opposite effect during the same survey wave, thus suggesting that trust in government and interpersonal trust can have quite distinct attitudinal effects. Figure 2 below gives a stark graphical depiction of distrust's effect on the probability of a respondent supporting

the Iraq War. Whereas those who trust the government “Nearly all of the time” have a 60% chance of strongly supporting the war, those who trust the government “None of the time” have only a 40% chance of strongly supporting the war and are nearly as likely to strongly disapprove of the war. Here, then, is an instance of support for Hetherington and Husser (2011)’s thesis that in times of foreign policy issue salience, distrust of government will promote less typically conservative positions. This is especially true given that those who described themselves as ideologically conservative were much more likely to support the war. During the overall survey, though, when distrust of government did have an effect on ideological attitudes, it tended to promote conservatism, even in the face of foreign policy issue salience.

Figure 2:



Results: 2008-2010

Like the panel election data before it, the 2008-2010 ANES interviewed respondents during both Republican and Democratic administrations, thus offering the additional opportunity to test whether or not Trust's effects on Ideology, if existent, were simply the product of partisan electoral outcomes. One key caveat for this data, however, is that the Trust question from previous surveys was in this panel data; instead the measure of respondents' trust in government was the question, "How often does the federal government do what most Americans want?" Though subtly different from asking whether or not the government can be trusted to do what is *right*, when averaged out over the whole population, this question should tap into similar attitudes. After consulting with my advisor, Professor Ron Rapoport, this question was determined to be suitable as a proxy for Trust and was coded 1-4, with higher numbers indicating less trust/confidence in government. In one survey wave, the scale was expanded to 1-5 to include one value, 3, for the response of trusting the government to do what is right "Half the time." The measure of interpersonal trust was also not included in this panel data, but a question relating to respondents' sense of external political efficacy was for the first time asked. Respondents were asked to what degree they thought federal government officials "cared." If people thought they were dealing with disinterested, apathetic government officials, they might

come to want less of a role for those government officials in their daily lives. Thus, the variable Efficacy was entered into the ordered probit regression models.

The 2008-2010 ANES consisted of four separate survey waves – three during the initial 2008-2009 period and one re-contact wave in 2010. Thus, three separate Change in Ideology variables could be generated from the data – from wave 1 to wave 3, from wave 1 to wave 2, and from wave 2 to wave 3. The re-contact survey in 2010 offered an opportunity to see if Trust exerted longer term effects on Ideology, so a fourth Change in Ideology variable measured the difference between the Ideology values at wave 4 and wave 1. Did greater distrust of government at wave 1 (2008) lead to a more conservative ideological change by wave 4 (Between 2008 and 2010)? In total, eight ordered probit regression models are shown in Tables 4 and 5 of Appendix A; models of ideological change among *only moderates* were added to the analysis of each of the four survey waves.

Table 4 shows the three Change in Ideology (both generally and among moderates) models from 2008-2009, while Table 5 shows the results for the 2010 re-contact study. Distrust of the federal government was statistically significantly associated with ideological change among moderates in all of the models. Though distrust was associated with higher liberalism between the two 2009 survey waves, it was associated with a conservative change in the ideology of moderates in all the other models. Among the whole population, Trust had very small coefficients and was rarely statistically significantly related to conservative ideological change. In three of the four models of moderates, though, Trust did have the theorized effect on Ideology. Prior Republican Party identification consistently predicted conservative ideological change among moderates and the broader population, while Efficacy, Income, Education, Race, and Gender all had inconsistent, often statistically insignificant effects. Notably, in these models

as well as the models from other election periods, a prior conservative ideological identification, when accounting for other variables, suggested strong tendencies toward becoming more liberal. Conversely, extreme conservatives were likely to become more liberal, all else being equal. Could it be that, in the absence of other conservatizing influences, ideological partisans were predisposed toward becoming more moderate? This point is discussed further in the Conclusion section.

Table 5 of Appendix B shows the logistic regression coefficients for Trust and other explanatory variables with regard to what were declared by the voters to be the two most pressing issues of the survey period: Healthcare and the Iraq War (“Roper Center Public Opinion Archives”). Logistic models were used for these issues because the dependent variables were both dichotomous; respondents either supported the government’s efforts (0), or they disapproved (1). As with the ordered probit regression coefficients, the magnitude of these coefficients by themselves should not be overemphasized; their sign and statistical significance are more important for analytical purposes. As could be expected, healthcare was more important to respondents during the 2009 and 2010 survey waves, while the Iraq War was more salient in the initial 2008 wave. In both cases, greater distrust of government engendered opposition to government action in these policy areas. In the 2008 cross-sectional data regarding the Iraq War (Column 2), a one standard deviation increase in distrust of government (.694 on a 1-4 scale) made respondents 15% more likely to disapprove of the government’s handling of the Iraq War. In the 2009 cross-sectional data on healthcare, a one standard deviation increase in distrust of government (.675 on a 1-4 scale) made respondents 13% more likely to disapprove of President Obama’s efforts on the issue. Thus, if someone went from trusting the government “most of the

time” to “some of the time,” they would tend to be 13% more likely to disapprove of President Obama’s healthcare agenda.

Conclusion: Trust Matters, under the Right Circumstances

When taken together, these results may seem fairly uninspiring when considering the hypothesis that low trust in government breeds conservatism. Of the nine total models of ideological change among the whole population, distrust was only statistically significant and positively associated with increasing conservatism twice, once in 2008-2010 and again in 2000-2002. Certainly these results don’t justify any claims that variations in trust in government can explain longer term ideological trends across the population. Among *moderates*, however, more intriguing results can be derived. In five of the nine models of changing ideology among moderates, coded as 3, 4, and 5 on the ANES Ideology scale, low trust in government made respondents slightly more likely to be conservative. This relationship existed nearly across the board in the 2008-2010 models and appeared intermittently in the 2000-2002 and 1990-1992 survey periods. To the extent that ideological movement within the moderates of the American political spectrum influences election outcomes, any decline or increase in trust in government may still have significant political impacts. It is also clear from the data that Trust’s effect on Ideology among moderates is a recent and growing phenomenon, as it was nearly absent from the 1978-1980 and 1990-1992 survey periods. While it is not clear what the modern instrument for translating distrust of government into increased conservatism among moderates would be,

the trend is likely worth considering for policymakers and legislators who want to design public policy that caters to the electoral center.

While distrust may frequently tug moderates to the Right (or to the Left when foreign policy issues are most salient), ideological extremists are consistently predisposed to becoming more moderate, holding all other variables constant. This is shown by the consistently negative coefficients generated for “Ideology_lagged” variables in the “Change in Ideology” models. Some of the magnitude of these coefficients is easily explicable. Extreme liberals, those coded as 1, can *only change in the conservative (higher) direction*, whereas extreme conservatives, coded as 7, can *only change in the liberal (lower) direction*. Thus, the beginnings of a negative relationship between lagged ideology and ideological change are framed. However, cross-tabulations and scatterplots indicated similar findings for less extreme conservatives and liberals.

What can be distilled from these opposing trends? On the one hand, during times of relative distrust of government, moderates are likely to move to one extreme or the other (Depending on the salient issues), though typically towards the conservative end in recent times. On the other hand, extreme conservatives and liberals are consistently likely to become more moderate. Can political ideology behave cyclically? This is a question far beyond the scope and quantitative backing of this study, but it is a question worth considering in future research on American political attitudes. At best, what this paper can contribute to this line of research is the idea that, when moderates do move away from the center, at least in recent times, distrust of the federal government is a contributing factor.

Owing to the very influential literature on the topic, this paper also wanted to test, using more recent data, whether or not variation in trust in government had ideological consequences

for issues that were salient or important to voters at the time of the surveys. Through the four ANES survey periods, seven specific issues were chosen based on contemporaneous polling that showed them to be the most significant issues to voters at those times. The issues covered both domestic and international topics, and while it was often difficult to model the *change* in attitudes on these issues during each survey period, it was possible to model these attitudes with lagged independent variables such as Trust. When it came to approving of President Obama's efforts on healthcare reform in 2008-2010, low levels of trust in government were associated with greater disapproval rates. Healthcare proved to be the only domestic issue that saw the expected results; low trust in government in the 1978-1980 surveys actually suggested *less* support for anti-inflationary policies. Additionally, low trust in government was not statistically significantly associated with less support for federal education spending, and only once did distrust seem to suggest less support for government intervention in the economy in 1990-1992. Internationally, however, low trust in government proved to be a strong and consistent basis for opposing both the Gulf and Iraq Wars. Across the categories of trust in government among the population, support for both these wars was quite high, but as respondents became less trusting of government, they were significantly less likely to support or approve of these wars. This finding seems to reinforce the related findings of Hetherington and Husser (2011) in that, when foreign policy/national security issues are dominant, any decline in trust in government may actually promote what we normally think of as liberalism. More generally, low trust in government seems to suggest, though inconsistently, less support for government activity in the salient issue areas of the day.

In the course of this rather quantitatively extensive study, other results may have incidentally proven to be significant for further study. Most interesting was the nature of the

prior Party identification variable, which often suggested that those who earlier described themselves as Republicans were more likely to become more conservative than those who sided more with Democrats. If Republicans are more likely to become more conservative than non-Republicans, is the oft-discussed ideological polarization of the Parties a continuing reality? This trend might also be countering the previously discussed possibility of ideological change behaving cyclically. To fully address the prior literature on trust in government, it also would have been optimal to have consistent questions on respondents' trust in their incumbent elected officials to see if "thicker," non-institutional trust were a stronger measure.

This paper investigated the once-unaddressed question of whether or not the decline in trust in government has had direct ideological impacts on the American political process. Importantly, this paper focused on the changing attitudes of the electorate, not the evolving policy preferences of nervous Democratic lawmakers (Hetherington 2005). While there was little to no support for the blunt hypothesis that low trust in government makes the electorate more conservative, there was moderate evidence for a scaled-down version of the hypothesis when limited to the changing attitudes of ideological moderates. The effect of trust in government on moderates' ideologies also seems to be a recent and increasing phenomenon, which may provide an intriguing set of incentives for the Democratic and Republican Parties during each coming election cycle. There were also several issues, namely healthcare and national security policies, in which people who trusted the government less tended to oppose government involvement later on. This part of the analysis can be seen as a tepid affirmation of the idea that low trust in government makes the electorate more libertarian, not simply what Americans commonly term as "Conservative."

Continued study is of course needed to see if the recent trends in ideological change, especially among moderates, continue to respond in part to changes in trust in government. If persistent budget deficits, congressional gridlock, and perceived corruption continue to depress people's trust in government, will they simply turn away from the Party in power, or will they more gradually turn away from government? If the former is true, then the easy solution to the problem of distrust of government is to hold elections, which may functionally mean that distrust of government is not all that problematic. If the latter is true, however, it raises questions about whose political agenda is really harmed by the decline in trust in government, and it may raise even more important questions about who has the incentive to improve trust in government through, among other things, better governance.

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Appendix A: Modeling Changes in General Political Ideology

Table 1: Change in General Ideology in 1980

	(1)	(2)
	Ideological Change	Only for Moderates
Ideology_lagged	-0.39*** (-7.99)	-0.50*** (-5.40)
Trust	-0.06 (-0.58)	-0.08 (-0.55)
Party	0.04 (p<.15) (1.24)	0.04 (p<.15) (1.19)
Interest	-0.25*** (-3.10)	-0.32*** (-3.32)
Awareness	0.12* (1.64)	0.21** (2.31)

Education	-0.01	-0.01
	(-0.25)	(-0.18)
Income	0.02**	0.02*
	(1.89)	(1.35)
Male	-0.25**	-0.16
	(-1.94)	(-0.97)
Black	-0.59***	-0.38 (p<.15)
	(-2.45)	(-1.17)
Other	-0.36	-0.28
	(-0.65)	(-0.36)

N	401	280
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t statistics in parentheses

* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01 (One-Tailed Tests)

Table 2: Ideological Changes in 1990-1992

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Ideology 90-91	Only Moderates	Ideology 91-92	Only Moderates	Ideology 90-92	Only Moderates
Ideology_1990	-0.40***	-0.64***			-0.42***	-0.47***
	(-11.08)	(-8.42)			(-12.14)	(-6.74)
Trust_1990	-0.05*	0.01			-0.04 (p<.17)	0.01
	(-1.36)	(0.10)			(-0.95)	(0.22)
Party_1990	0.10***	0.09***			0.12***	0.12***
	(4.36)	(3.43)			(5.32)	(4.71)
Awareness_1990	-0.07*	-0.12**	-0.02	0.02	-0.06*	-0.08*
	(-1.42)	(-1.94)	(-0.23)	(0.13)	(-1.30)	(-1.59)
Income_1990	-0.01	0.01	0.02*	0.04**	0.02**	0.01*
	(-0.12)	(0.38)	(1.44)	(1.85)	(2.23)	(1.46)
Education_1990	-0.03 (p<.15)	-0.06**	-0.14***	-0.21***	-0.10***	-0.10***

	(-1.12)	(-1.70)	(-2.45)	(-2.78)	(-3.57)	(-3.16)
Male	-0.07	-0.06	0.24 (p<.15)	0.39**	-0.03	0.07
	(-0.79)	(-0.56)	(1.24)	(1.73)	(-0.36)	(0.66)
Black_1990	0.11	0.31*	-0.13	-0.44 (p<.15)	-0.18 (p<.15)	-0.22 (p<.15)
	(0.70)	(1.47)	(-0.38)	(-1.05)	(-1.25)	(-1.21)
Other_1990	0.26	0.16	-0.80*	-0.61	-0.26 (p<.15)	-0.55**
	(0.95)	(0.50)	(-1.27)	(-0.77)	(-1.07)	(-2.01)
Ideology_1991			-0.59***	-0.78***		
			(-8.60)	(-4.55)		
Trust_1991			0.019	0.09 (p<.16)		
			(0.26)	(0.93)		
Socialtrust_1991			-0.06	-0.11		
			(-0.32)	(-0.45)		
Party_1991			0.21***	0.18***		
			(4.46)	(2.97)		

N	659	436	528	349	732	508

t statistics in parentheses

* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01 (One-Tailed Tests)

Table 3 (Appendix A): Attitudinal Predictors of Ideological Change (2000-2002)

	(1)	(2)
	Δ in Ideology 2000-2002	Only Moderates
Ideology_2000	-0.42***	-0.33***
	(-9.44)	(-3.39)
Trust_2000	0.14**	0.11 (p<.16)
	(1.66)	(1.02)
Social Trust_2000	0.06	0.18*
	(0.56)	(1.29)
Party_2000	0.17***	0.14***
	(5.77)	(3.69)
Interest_2000	0.02	0.04

	(0.43)	(0.53)
Education_2000	-0.03	0.02
	(-0.89)	(0.34)
Income	0.01	0.01
	(0.20)	(0.22)
Male_2000	-0.13 (p<.15)	-0.18*
	(-1.20)	(-1.30)
Black_2000	-0.24 (p<.15)	-0.01
	(-1.10)	(-0.03)
Other_2000	-0.16	-0.08
	(-0.78)	(-0.35)
Hispanic_2000	0.06	0.05
	(0.28)	(0.19)

N	522	292
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t statistics in parentheses

* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01 (One-Tailed Tests)

Table 4 (Appendix A): Models of Change in Ideology 2008–2009

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
	Ideology 08-08	Moderates 08-08	Ideology 08-09	Moderates 08-09	Ideology 09-09	Moderates 09-09
Trust_2008	0.04 (0.71)	0.12* (1.59)	0.05 (p<.16) (1.00)	0.19*** (2.53)		
Ideology_2008	-0.37*** (-15.69)	-0.15** (-2.16)	-0.36*** (-15.68)	-0.11* (-1.46)		
Party_2008	0.24*** (12.47)	0.18*** (6.26)	0.26*** (13.17)	0.21*** (7.24)		
Interest_2008	0.02 (0.77)	0.01 (0.29)	-0.01 (-0.02)	0.04 (0.81)		
Efficacy_2008	0.01 (0.00)	0.02 (0.41)	-0.01 (-0.12)	-0.07 (p<.15) (-1.18)		
Income	0.01 (0.80)	0.01 (0.17)	-0.01 (-0.32)	-0.01 (p<.15) (-1.08)	-0.01** (-2.27)	-0.01 (-0.88)
Education	-0.02 2 (-0.58)	0.03 (0.64)	-0.04* (-1.29)	0.02 (0.38)	-0.07*** (-2.92)	-0.07** (-1.98)
Male	0.06 (0.96)	0.05 (0.56)	0.06 (0.86)	0.08 (0.80)	0.08** (1.65)	0.05 (0.76)
Black	0.12 (0.96)	-0.16 (-0.94)	0.03 (0.20)	-0.18 (-1.02)	0.14* (1.60)	0.18* (1.50)
Hispanic	-0.01 (-0.08)	-0.02 (-0.07)	-0.07 (-0.50)	-0.07 (-0.30)	-0.12 (p<.15) (-1.13)	-0.16 (-0.94)
Other	-0.11 (-0.66)	-0.17 (-0.74)	-0.33** (-1.94)	-0.57*** (-2.37)	-0.33*** (-2.72)	-0.48*** (-2.65)
Trust_2009					-0.06* (-1.49)	-0.11** (-1.78)
Ideology_2009					-0.30*** (-17.61)	-0.12** (-2.17)
Party_2009					0.20*** (13.59)	0.15*** (6.83)
Interest_2009					-0.03 (p<.15)	-0.04

					(-1.17)	(-1.01)
Efficacy_2009					-0.02	-0.04
					(-0.74)	(-0.98)

N	1233	515	1218	504	2362	943
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t statistics in parentheses

* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01 (One-Tailed Tests)

Table 5 (Appendix A): Models of Ideological Change at 2010 Re-contact Survey

	(1)	(2)
	Ideology_Change	Moderates Only
Ideology_2008	-0.38***	-0.04
	(-12.95)	(-0.39)
Trust_2008	0.01	0.13*
	(0.06)	(1.33)
Party_2008	0.26***	0.21***
	(10.76)	(5.73)
Interest_2008	-0.06*	-0.05
	(-1.38)	(-0.82)
Efficacy_2008	0.11**	0.07
	(2.26)	(0.94)
Income	0.01	0.01
	(0.24)	(0.21)
Education	-0.07**	-0.06
	(-1.75)	(-0.96)
Male	-0.04	-0.01
	(-0.56)	(-0.02)
Black	-0.01	-0.38*

	(-0.03)	(-1.61)
Hispanic	0.04	-0.06
	(0.19)	(-0.17)
Other	-0.06	-0.71**
	(-0.29)	(-2.31)

N	771	310

t statistics in parentheses

* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01 (One-Tailed Tests)

Appendix B: Trust's Effect on Salient Issues at the Time of the Chosen Election Survey Periods

Table 1 (Appendix B): Change in Opinions on Inflation in 1980

	(1)	(2)
Change in Inflation Opinion		Just Moderates

Inflation_lagged	-0.60***	-0.74***
	(-11.63)	(-6.11)
Trust	-0.06	0.04

Ideology_1990	-0.12***
	(-2.79)
Party_1990	-0.09***
	(-3.18)
Awareness_1990	0.06
	(0.99)
Income_1990	-0.01
	(-0.29)
Education_1990	0.04 (p<.15)
	(1.22)
Male	-0.16*
	(-1.45)
Black_1990	0.29**
	(1.79)
Other_1990	-0.36
	(-0.99)

N 808

t statistics in parentheses

* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01 (One-Tailed Tests)

Table 3 (Appendix B): Effects on Support for Education Funding (Positive correlations indicate associations with less support for education funding)

	(1)
Support of School Funding_2000	
Ideology_2000	0.11***
	(2.56)

Trust_2000	-0.02
	(-0.30)
Social Trust_2000	-0.14*
	(-1.30)
Party_2000	0.11***
	(3.76)
Interest_2000	-0.09*
	(-1.55)
Education_2000	-0.02
	(-0.51)
Income_2000	0.01
	(0.89)
Male_2000	0.25***
	(2.33)
Black	-0.25 (p<.15)
	(-1.05)
Other	0.09
	(0.44)
Hispanic	-0.23
	(-0.93)

N 782

t statistics in parentheses

* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01 (One-Tailed Tests)

Table 4 (Appendix B): Attitudinal Effects on Support for Iraq War

	(1)	(2)
	2000-2002	Year 2002

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Ideology_2000      -0.11**
                   (-2.28)

Trust_2000         0.02
                   (0.19)

Social Trust_2000 -0.37***
                   (-3.03)

Party_2000         -0.20***
                   (-5.95)

Interest_2000     -0.05
                   (-0.86)

Education_2000    0.20***
                   (4.88)

Income             -0.01      -0.01
                   (-0.65)      (-0.52)

Male_2000         -0.23**
                   (-1.96)

Black              0.32*       0.40**
                   (1.35)       (1.73)

Other              0.17         -0.05
                   (0.73)       (-0.24)

Hispanic           0.01         -0.54
                   (0.00)       (-1.82)

Ideology_2002                    -0.17***
                                   (-3.89)

Trust_2002                    0.16**
                                   (1.71)

Social Trust_2002              -0.33***
                                   (-2.77)

Party_2002                    -0.15***
                                   (-4.75)

Interest_2002                  -0.01

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		(-0.06)
Education_2002		0.15***
		(3.85)
Male_2002		-0.14 (p<.15)
		(-1.15)

N	493	510
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t statistics in parentheses

* p<0.1, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01 (One-Tailed Tests)

Table 5 (Appendix B): Logistic models of Issue Positions in 2008-2009: (1) Approval of President Obama's Handling of Healthcare and (2) Approval of the Iraq War

	(1)	(2)
	Obama_health approval	Iraq War Approval
Ideology_2009	0.31***	
	(7.40)	
Trust_2009	0.18**	
	(1.75)	
Party_2009	0.24***	
	(7.14)	
Interest_2009	-0.36***	
	(-5.99)	
Efficacy_2009	0.34***	
	(4.29)	
Income	0.01	-0.01
	(0.44)	(-0.83)
Education	0.01	0.25***

	(0.12)	(3.41)
Male	0.09	-0.07
	(0.86)	(-0.47)
Black	-1.39***	0.66**
	(-3.64)	(1.99)
Hispanic	-0.18	0.61**
	(-0.64)	(1.84)
Other	-0.92***	1.83***
	(-2.44)	(3.94)
Ideology_2008		-0.31***
		(-6.44)
Trust_2008		0.20**
		(1.81)
Party_2008		-0.50***
		(-11.97)
Interest_2008		-0.16**
		(-2.26)
Efficacy_2008		0.09
		(1.01)
_cons	-4.51***	2.53***
	(-9.72)	(4.64)

N	2247	1358
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t statistics in parentheses

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001 (One-Tailed Tests)