

Online Appendix

Institutional Context and Accountability for Political Distrust

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Appendix A: Variable Measurement and Coding

(All survey questions are measured using the ANES Time Series Cumulative Data File.¹)

Presidential vote: “Who did you vote for [in the election for President]?” Candidate from incumbent president’s party = 1; candidate from major party not holding presidency = 0.

House vote: “Who did you vote for?” House candidate from incumbent president’s party = 1; House candidate from major party not holding presidency = 0.

Political trust. “How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right—just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time? Just about always = 4; most of the time = 3; only some of the time = 2; never [if volunteered] = 1.

Fully divided government: Neither congressional chamber is held by the president’s party = 1; otherwise = 0.

Partly divided government: Only one congressional chamber is held by the president’s party = 1; otherwise = 0.

Third candidate: Election with a serious third-party presidential challenge (winning more than 5% of the national popular vote) = 1; otherwise = 0.²

¹ The American National Election Studies (www.electionstudies.org). These materials are based on work supported by the National Science Foundation under grant numbers SES 1444721, 2014-2017, the University of Michigan, and Stanford University.

² The third-party candidates are Wallace in 1968, Anderson in 1980, and Perot in 1992 and 1996. This matches the coding found in Hetherington (1999). I tested but found no evidence that the effect of trust is diminished with third-party candidates in House races.

Financial situation. 1966-2012, “Would you say that you [and your family] [living here] are better off or worse off financially than you were a year ago?” Better = 1; same = 0; worse = -1; 1964 is missing this specific question and so is measured using a similar question regarding prospective financial expectations. To maximize compatibility between the two measures, I then transformed the 1964 responses by applying the coefficients from a regression estimated using all years in which respondents answered both questions, with retrospective evaluations as the dependent variable and prospective expectations as the independent variable ($r = .25$).³

Presidential affect: 1966-2012 is measured as the rating of the incumbent president on a 0-100 feeling thermometer; 1964 is missing the feeling thermometer and so is measured using the number of likes minus number of dislikes of the incumbent president (Johnson). Initially, this 1964 measure ranged from -5 to +5. I then translated this 1964 measure onto the 100-point scale by applying the coefficients from a regression estimated using all years in which respondents answered both sets of questions, with the thermometer rating as the dependent variable and the number of likes minus dislikes as the independent variable ($r = .69$).⁴

³ Accounting for the measurement difference in this one year by including in the model an interaction between this variable a dummy for 1964 makes no substantive difference to the results.

⁴ Accounting for the measurement difference in this one year by including in the model an interaction between this variable and a dummy for 1964 makes no substantive difference to the results.

Party identification: “Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what? (IF REPUBLICAN OR DEMOCRAT) Would you call yourself a strong (REP/DEM) or a not very strong (REP/DEM)? (IF INDEPENDENT, OTHER, OR NO PREFERENCE) Do you think of yourself as closer to the Republican or Democratic party?” Strong partisan, president’s party = 3; weak partisan, president’s party = 2; leaning partisan, president’s party = 1; pure independent = 0; leaning partisan, non-presidential party = -1; weak partisan, non-presidential party = -2; strong partisan, non-presidential party = -3.

Ideology: 1964-1976 and 1980-2012 is measured by first taking the difference between a respondent’s rating of conservatives and liberals on a 100-point scale (-100 to +100); 1978 is missing these measures and so is measured using respondent self-placement on a 7-point liberal-to-conservative scale. I then translated this 1978 measure onto the thermometer-difference scale by applying the coefficients from a regression estimated using all years in which respondents answered both types of questions, with thermometer-difference as the dependent variable and self-placement as the independent variable ($r = .63$). The complete series is then recoded to measure whether respondent ideological attitudes are directionally compatible with the sitting president.⁵

⁵ Accounting for the measurement difference in this one year by including in the model an interaction between this variable and a dummy for 1978 makes no substantive difference to the results.

Incumbent⁶ from president's party: One of the House candidates is an incumbent from the president's party = 1; 0 otherwise.

Incumbent from out party⁷: One of the House candidates is an incumbent from the non-presidential party = 1; 0 otherwise.

⁶ Incumbency data are coded by ANES for all years except 1964, 1968, and 1972, which were graciously supplied to the author by Gary Jacobson.

⁷ A dummy variable representing races with an incumbent from the out-party is included in addition to aforementioned dummy variable for races with an incumbent from the president's party because there is also a third type of race present in the data: open seats with no incumbent running. In the full model, then, open seats races are the baseline, omitted category.

Appendix B: Pooled Regressions

Table B.1 replicates the results presented in table 1 and table 2, respectively, but with explicit tests of the statistical significance of the differences in the effect of political trust across party-control configurations. Within each model (one for presidential elections and one for House elections), all configurations of government (unified, partly-divided, and fully-divided) are pooled. Each independent variable from the original model is interacted with a dummy variable for divided government (any type), and separately interacted with a dummy variable for partly-divided government. Two interaction terms are of central interest: *political trust X div. gov't* tests the difference in the effect of trust in fully-divided as opposed to unified government; *political trust X partly-div. gov't* tests the difference in the effect of trust in partly-divided as opposed to fully-divided government.⁸ The results in table B.1 demonstrate that for both presidential and House elections, both of these hypothesized differences in the effect of political trust are in the expected direction and are statistically significant. A comparable test of the

⁸ The order of these institutional contexts in Table B.1 (unified, fully-divided, partly-divided) does not perfectly mirror the order presented in tables 1 and 2 (unified, partly-divided, fully-divided). This different ordering for the pooled model is a natural, intentional consequence of the coding of the institutional variables. If I had coded partly-divided government so as to contrast it with unified government rather than with divided government, it would have made sense to place it in the second block of the pooled model. However, such a coding would be unable to illustrate the significant difference in trust's effect between partly- and fully-divided government. Since one of my purposes was to do the latter, partly-divided government is logically placed after fully-divided government in the pooled model.

difference in the effect of trust between unified and partly-divided government is in the correct direction, but does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance in either model (not shown here).

Table B.1: Pooled Regressions

	Pooled replication of Table 1 (presidential elections)		Pooled replication of Table 2 (House elections)	
	Coefficient	P-value	Coefficient	P-value
<i>Political trust</i>	.536	.000	.163	.029
Political trust X third candidate	-.758	.000		
Third candidate	.798	.159		
Financial situation	.301	.001	-.003	.958
Presidential affect	.062	.000	.013	.000
Party identification	.647	.000	.563	.000
Ideology	.045	.000	.018	.000
Incumbent from president's party			1.059	.000
Incumbent from out party			-1.169	.000
Divided gov't	1.497	.017	-.327	.366
<i>Political trust X divided gov't</i>	-.535	.002	-.341	.000
Political trust X third candidate X divided gov't	.692	.009		
Third candidate X divided gov't	-.706	.320		
Financial situation X divided gov't	-.230	.024	.028	.681
Presidential affect X divided gov't	-.006	.149	.005	.028
Party identification X divided gov't	-.014	.724	-.044	.140
Ideology X divided gov't	.012	.044	.005	.181
Incumbent from president's party X divided gov't			.226	.152
Incumbent from out party X divided gov't			-.015	.925
Partly-divided gov't	-3.656	.000	-.935	.010
<i>Political trust X partly div. gov't</i>	.340	.045	.236	.029
Political trust X third candidate X partly div. gov't				
Third candidate X partly div. gov't				
Financial situation X partly div. gov't	.066	.516	.076	.275
Presidential affect X partly div. gov't	.034	.000	.007	.020
Party identification X partly div. gov't	.017	.748	.051	.159
Ideology X partly div. gov't	.015	.079	.012	.007
Incumbent from president's party X partly div. gov't			-.196	.276
Incumbent from out party X partly div. gov't			-.250	.145
Constant	-6.862	.000	-1.616	.000
Nagelkerke R ²	77.1%		59.6%	
Number of cases	13393		16915	

Note: Table entries are logistic regression coefficients and their associated p-values. Model includes year fixed effects, which are suppressed from the table.

Appendix C: Panel Tests of Time Order

In order to rule out the possibility that reverse causality is the driving force behind the (conditionally) observed relationships between political trust and vote choice, I repeat the basic analysis from the text using panel data.

For presidential vote, in seven of the thirteen elections in this paper's sample⁹ ANES measured both political trust and presidential vote intention in the same pre-election survey, with these same respondents' reported presidential vote choice measured in the post-election survey. Because time order is important for demonstrating causality, I test whether a citizen's pre-election political trust affects his or her reported Election Day vote. To ensure that any effects of political trust are on *future* vote preference (not simply continuations of cross-sectional correlations from the pre-election period), the model follows the standard practice of controlling for a citizen's pre-election vote preference. This specification provides the most stringent possible test of temporal causality. Also, as in the main analysis, the panel model controls for party identification, financial conditions, and presidential affect.¹⁰ When this panel model is estimated for presidential voting in table C.1, political trust displays the same conditional pattern

⁹ 2012, 1996, 1980, 1976, 1972, 1968, 1964.

¹⁰ With the exception of party identification, table C.1 does not label the temporality of these controls because they vary across elections in terms of whether they are measured pre- or post-election. The fact that some are measured post-election (giving them a greater likelihood of capturing variance) makes for a more conservative test of the effect of pre-election political trust.

of effects and essentially the same magnitude of effects as in the cross-sectional analysis.¹¹

These results demonstrate that the findings of the cross-sectional analysis are not merely a spurious by-product of reverse causal order.

ANES does not ask a pre-election House vote intention question, thus preventing the exact same type of pre/post panel analysis as for presidential vote. As a next-best option, I found the most recent two-year ANES panel in which both the first and second waves took place during the same governmental configuration¹², and in which that configuration is hypothesized to display significant effects of political trust. Specifically, I analyzed 675 panel respondents who completed both the 2004 time-series study and the 2006 pilot study. During the administration of both waves, Congress and the presidency were controlled by Republicans (during unified government, trust is hypothesized to have a significantly positive effect). As with the presidency panel, the idea is to use a measure of political trust and a control for vote preference in wave 1 (2004) to predict subsequent vote choice in wave 2 (2006). For wave 1 trust in government, I use the standard question asked in 2004. For wave 1 House vote preference, I use respondents'

¹¹ Compare to the pooled cross-sectional analysis in table B.1. Specifically, trust's effects remain positive and statistically significant during unified and partially-divided government, and insignificant during fully-divided government (which essentially functions as a placebo test). Although trust's effects appear larger during partially-divided government than during unified, additional tests show that this difference is not statistically significant (just as in the cross-sectional analysis).

¹² So if voters wanted to hold those in power accountable for perceived trustworthiness of government, it would be the same party (or parties) in both periods.

reported House vote choice in the 2004 election. Though this measure is far from ideal—in part because both House candidates may not be the same in 2006 as in 2004, I attempt to improve it by restricting the analysis to respondents who remained in the same district with the exact same incumbent candidate running in 2006 as ran in 2004. Other controls are the same as those used in the paper’s cross-sectional test. The results in table C.2 confirm that, as hypothesized, during a unified party government configuration, present perceptions of governmental trustworthiness significantly increase *subsequent* voting for House candidates from the president’s party.¹³ Similar to the panel test for presidential elections, this panel test for House elections further supports the claim that political trust’s effects on voting are not merely a spurious by-product of reverse causal order.

¹³ While not the central concern of the panel test, the magnitude of the effect of political trust actually appears larger here than in the comparable cross-sectional test in the first data column of table 2. One possible reason is that because ANES did not conduct a standard time-series study in 2006, this election was not included in the results presented in table 2. Also, as a non-standard survey, the mode of the 2006 pilot study (phone) differs from that of the time-series studies analyzed in table 2 (face-to-face).

Table C.1: Panel Replication of Table A.1 (Presidential Vote)

	Presidential vote _t	
	Coefficient	P-value
Presidential vote preference _{t-1}	3.985	.000
<i>Political trust_{t-1}</i>	.649	.023
Political trust _{t-1} X third candidate	-1.016	.005
Third candidate	1.619	.104
Financial situation	.238	.122
Presidential affect	.032	.000
Party identification _{t-1}	.444	.000
Ideology	.026	.001
Divided gov't	1.029	.383
Presidential vote preference _{t-1} X divided gov't	-.095	.760
<i>Political trust_{t-1} X divided gov't</i>	-.739	.034
Political trust _{t-1} X third candidate X divided gov't	1.257	.022
Third candidate X divided gov't	-1.641	.247
Financial situation X divided gov't	-.275	.163
Presidential affect X divided gov't	.002	.799
Party identification _{t-1} X divided gov't	.011	.881
Ideology X divided gov't	.014	.197
Partly-divided gov't	-5.848	.000
Presidential vote preference _{t-1} X partly-divided gov't	2.225	.001
<i>Political trust_{t-1} X partly div. gov't</i>	1.071	.032
Political trust _{t-1} X third candidate X partly div. gov't		
Third candidate X partly div. gov't		
Financial situation X partly div. gov't	-.084	.762
Presidential affect X partly div. gov't	.002	.876
Party identification _{t-1} X partly div. gov't	.151	.284
Ideology X partly div. gov't	.057	.002
Constant	-7.007	.000
Nagelkerke R ²	89.0%	
Number of cases	6325	

Note: Table entries are logistic regression coefficients and their associated p-values. Model includes year fixed effects, which are suppressed from the table.

Table C.2: Panel Test of Political Trust's Effect on House Vote, 2006 (Unified Government)

	House vote choice _t	
	Coefficient	P-value
House vote preference _{t-1}	1.956	.002
<i>Political trust</i> _{t-1}	1.257	.005
Financial situation _{t-1}	.414	.160
Presidential affect _{t-1}	.004	.688
Party identification _{t-1}	.451	.003
Ideology _{t-1}	.058	.007
Incumbent from president's party _{t-1}	.956	.066
Incumbent from out party _{t-1}	1.956	.002
Constant	1.257	.005
Nagelkerke R ²		78.1%
Number of cases		317

Note: table entries are logistic regression coefficients and their associated p-values.

Appendix D: High Versus Low Information

Are the differential electoral effects of political trust during divided as opposed to unified government actually attributable to the difference in institutional context, or might they simply be artifacts of some other, unaccounted-for differences between these groupings? If they are actually attributable to voters being aware of variation in institutional context, then one would expect these differential effects of trust to be stronger among those who demonstrate awareness of which party controls Congress than among those who don't.¹⁴

I test this expectation by re-estimating table B.1 among each of two groups: those who did versus those who did not volunteer a correct answer to the ANES question, "Do you happen to know which party had the most members in the House of Representatives in Washington before the elections (this/ last) month?"¹⁵ The results for presidential elections are presented in table D.1 and for House elections in table D.2.

¹⁴ At the same time, it is not reasonable to expect a black/white difference, because traditional measures of Americans' knowledge of party control in Congress are known to be imperfect proxies for actual knowledge (e.g., Jones and McDermott 2009). In particular, some of those who answer "don't know" actually do know but are just uncertain (e.g., Mondak and Davis 2001), while some of those who answer correctly are actually only guessing (e.g., Cor and Sood 2016).

¹⁵ The proportion with correct answers is 71% for voters in presidential elections and 72% for voters in House elections. This question was asked in every election included in this study, except 1974, which is excluded. ANES has not consistently asked about party control of the Senate, but in years where it has, the responses correlate with those for the House question at $r =$

In each regression, the key coefficient of interest is the interaction between trust and divided government. As discussed in Appendix B, this coefficient measures the degree to which trust matters less during divided government than during unified government (as predicted in hypothesis 1). The expectation *here* is that this coefficient will be less substantial for low information voters—who are not necessarily aware that government is divided—than for high-information voters—who have a clearer sense of this fact. This expectation is precisely borne out for both presidential elections (table D.1) and House elections (table D.2). In both tables, for low-information voters this key coefficient is closer to zero and does not reach standard levels of statistical significance, while for high-information voters it is of a larger (negative) magnitude, and statistically significant. This difference in the interactive effect of divided government across information groups supports the premise that the underlying reason for its effect in table B.1 is largely attributable to the many voters who perceive differences in institutional context (not some unrelated factor).

.54. Therefore, the House question is a reasonable proxy for knowledge of congressional control more generally.

Table D.1: Replication of Table B.1, Presidential Vote, by Voter Information Level

	Low-Information Voters		High-Information Voters	
	Coefficient	P-value	Coefficient	P-value
Political trust	.435	.072	.602	.003
Political trust X third candidate	-1.172	.001	-.649	.013
Third candidate	1.499	.132	.680	.343
Financial situation	.433	.007	.241	.023
Presidential affect	.056	.000	.065	.000
Party identification	.673	.000	.640	.000
Ideology	.019	.039	.054	.000
Divided gov't	.237	.816	2.214	.007
<i>Political trust X divided gov't</i>	-.337	.215	-.692	.003
Political trust X third candidate X divided gov't	1.135	.013	.600	.071
Third candidate X divided gov't	-1.224	.319	-.950	.296
Financial situation X divided gov't	-.339	.060	-.195	.120
Presidential affect X divided gov't	-.007	.295	.005	.331
Party identification X divided gov't	-.066	.361	.002	.963
Ideology X divided gov't	.016	.151	.016	.042
Partly-divided gov't	-4.424	.000	-2.984	.001
Political trust X partly div. gov't	.300	.259	.278	.239
Political trust X third candidate X partly div. gov't				
Third candidate X partly div. gov't				
Financial situation X partly div. gov't	-.033	.844	-.003	.982
Presidential affect X partly div. gov't	.035	.000	.039	.000
Party identification X partly div. gov't	-.066	.438	.024	.742
Ideology X partly div. gov't	.036	.013	-.008	.471
Constant	-4.564	.000	-7.855	.000
Nagelkerke R ²	69.5%		80.3%	
Number of cases	3752		9451	

Note: Table entries are logistic regression coefficients and their associated p-values. Model includes year fixed effects, which are suppressed from the table.

Table D.2: Replication of Table B.1, House Vote, by Voter Information Level

	Low-Information Voters		High-Information Voters	
	Coefficient	P-value	Coefficient	P-value
Political trust	.230	.129	.130	.131
Financial situation	-.062	.603	.018	.770
Presidential affect	.013	.002	.013	.000
Party identification	.579	.000	.557	.000
Ideology	.014	.063	.019	.000
Incumbent from president's party	.670	.016	1.163	.000
Incumbent from out party	-1.519	.000	-1.086	.000
Divided gov't	-1.454	.052	.224	.601
<i>Political trust X divided gov't</i>	-.310	.081	-.349	.001
Financial situation X divided gov't	-.066	.633	.077	.322
Presidential affect X divided gov't	.000	.932	.008	.005
Party identification X divided gov't	-.042	.490	-.047	.181
Ideology X divided gov't	.012	.163	.002	.584
Incumbent from president's party X divided gov't	.646	.045	.104	.575
Incumbent from out party X divided gov't	.362	.257	-.139	.451
Partly-divided gov't	-.592	.360	-1.259	.009
Political trust X partly div. gov't	.251	.159	.186	.192
Financial situation X partly div. gov't	.252	.033	-.019	.832
Presidential affect X partly div. gov't	.007	.135	.009	.027
Party identification X partly div. gov't	-.048	.414	-.057	.222
Ideology X partly div. gov't	.002	.772	.017	.002
Incumbent from president's party X partly div. gov't	.295	.323	-.459	.051
Incumbent from out party X partly div. gov't	.122	.670	-.479	.032
Constant	-1.010	.000	-1.762	.000
Nagelkerke R ²	57.4%		60.8%	
Number of cases	4673		12114	

Note: Table entries are logistic regression coefficients and their associated p-values. Model includes year fixed effects, which are suppressed from the table.