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PERCEPTIONS OF PEOPLE, PROCESS, AND POLICY
ON POLITICAL TRUST

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Abstract

The qualities of the people serving in government, the processes used, and the policies that result have been put forth in the literature as possible determinants of political trust (Miller and Borrelli 1991; Ulbig 2002; Erber and Lau 1990; Rahn and Rudolph 2005). Political evaluations of people, process, and policy can be seen as determinants of political trust. While previous scholarship hypothesizes them as such, there is no empirical work which investigates these three variables together. This project combines people, process, and policy into one study to examine their influence upon trust in relation to one another. Evaluations of people, process, and policy are found, through analysis of originally collected data, to influence both trust in government and trust in specific politicians. A representative national sample survey combined with the power of a randomized experiment was employed to study the effect of perceptions of people, process, and policy on trust. Survey questions asked participants to consider people, process, and policy on a global level, while the experimental design tested specific attributes of people, process, and policy. Findings from both the survey and the experiment indicate that, of these three, perceptions of policy had the greatest impact on trust. Perceptions of people followed closely behind policy, and the effect of process was the weakest. This

convergence between survey and experimental findings lends confidence to the overall ability of evaluations of people and policy to explain trust in government.

Chapter 1
A Consideration of Political Trust

Political trust is a concept within political science that is prolifically studied and understood little. What explains why some individuals trust the federal government and others do not? How do people arrive at the decision to trust? The political science literature is replete with trust studies that isolate one causal variable or one category of causal variables at a time. Explaining a complex political attitude such as trust is not easy and although several alternative reasons have been identified and studied, in fact, whole books have been devoted to the topic (Nye, et.al. 1997; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001), there still exists a methodological and conceptual void in the literature. Multiple explanations of trust have not been studied together. It would be helpful in constructing a more comprehensive theory of political trust, which we so sorely need, to know which indicators of the political system have an effect, either in the positive or negative direction, and which of these exhibits a greater effect. We do not know which political attitudes and impressions have the most effect on individuals and their trust decisions. It is possible, indeed probable, that political trust is of parts. What are these parts, and how do they function?

Individual level characteristics of citizens such as education, income, party identification, etc. although long posited as affecting trust have actually been

found to have little predictive power. Instead, my work emphasizes aspects of the political system itself, specifically the people who serve in office, the process of government, and the resulting policy. This spotlight on aspects of the political process, system, and the people who serve in it allows us to look outside of individuals for indicators of trust. All three of these have been put forth in the literature as possible determinants of political trust (Miller and Borrelli 1991; Ulbig 2002; Erber and Lau 1990; Rahn and Rudolph 2005). This project combines people, process, and policy into one study to examine their influence upon trust in relation to one another. The premise is that political trust is a result of political evaluations made in response to these three primary components that I am specifying here, people, process, and policy. Which of these three variables exerts the most effect on political trust? By combining all three into one study, the impact of each will be measured relative to the others, at least as far as they are conceptualized here. Which of these three indicators does the best job in explaining political trust? What influences political trust more – the qualities of the people serving in government, the processes used, or the policies that result?

In order to construct a broad explanatory theory of trust, a national survey experiment was conducted. I inquired about and measured trust in two different ways. The first of these was to ask participants to respond to various statements that ascertained their sentiments towards the qualities of the people in office, the processes, and the policies. I then constructed variables of people, process, and

policy based upon responses to political statements. Multivariate models were then applied to test perceptions of people, process, and policy upon political trust.

For the experimental portion of the study, I exposed a random, nation wide sample of Americans to experimental treatments which emphasized different elements of people, process, and policy. Each respondent was read three separate descriptions of a politician, one about person qualities, one about process factors, and one focusing on policy. There was one specific attribute of people, process, and policy presented within each treatment, and people were randomly assigned into these groups. The responding levels of political trust were then compared under qualities of people, process, and policy. The experimental portion of this research design enabled me to test specific attributes of people, process, and policy in order to find out if they affect levels of trust. The magnitude of the effect of each of the three indicators of trust was then compared to each other in bivariate statistical models.

This research design has much to offer. Empirically, it has the combined power of a randomized experiment together with a large and representative national sample. This will provide good substantiation to answer causal hypotheses. My findings will theoretically add to and refine the existing literature on political trust. Can the elements of people, process, and policy help us to explain trust? If so, are they capable of composing a broader theory than currently exists regarding this complex political attitude? Additionally, there may

be an important substantive contribution to be made. If I can explain the characteristics of people, process, and policy that people either trust or distrust, then this information is very relevant to real world politics. This information will be useful to those people already serving in public office or potential political candidates. Americans do not currently have a great deal of trust in the federal government, but my research may reveal which parts of people, process, or policy have the capability to affect trust in government.

Why is Political Trust Important?

Political trust has largely been studied in the aggregate, as a political attitude of the collective through time. The reason for this is apparent. There has been a fairly steady decline identified in aggregate levels of trust in American politics since the 1960s. Research has therefore sought to explain this decline.

Does the decline in political trust matter? In the American political system, a certain amount of skepticism has historically been considered healthy so perhaps there is no need to sound the alarm over declines in trust. This has not prevented scholars from trying to explain the decline and its possible consequences. Although trust has long been thought to influence political behavior, participation specifically, there exists no definitive proof of this. Trust does not appear to have a direct effect upon voter turnout, the most commonly

utilized measure of participation (Miller 1980; Caldeira, et.al. 1985; Uhlaner 1989; Rosenstone and Hansen 2003).

Political trust has often been posited as an important indicator of the health of a democracy. Without trust the political system may be doomed, or so the thinking goes. Effects of declining political trust, however, have not been shown to have any lasting effect on government legitimacy or the continued existence of the American political system. If anything, Americans continue to show unwavering support for their form of government, even as trust declines (Farnsworth 2003b, 28).

Some important scholarship, though, has shown that trust has some important implications in policy preferences and election outcomes. Trust, Hetherington argues, benefits the government and the politicians in it because "More trust translates into warmer feelings for both, which in turn provides more leeway to govern effectively and institutions a larger store of support regardless of the performance of those running the government" (1998, 803). This is due to the fact that decreases in trust cause people to evaluate the president and the Congress more harshly (791). "Greater support for government spending and activity is, at least in part, a positive function of public trust in government…" Chanley, Rudolph, and Rahn concur (2000, 252). Trust, then, has the potential to influence policy preferences held on the part of the citizenry.

Some scholars posit that political trust serves as a simple and quick heuristic by which people evaluate government (Hetherington 1999, 2004; Chanley, et.al. 2000). Hetherington makes an interesting case that trust in government serves as a simple heuristic that citizens use in deciding whether to support governmental action. As such, political trust has importance in its influence on both the policy mood of the country and how much people generally approve of their government.

Trust also has the capacity to influence election outcomes. It has been argued that trust influences evaluations of incumbent officeholders. This relationship is also reciprocal, as evaluations of incumbent officials also influence trust (Hetherington 1998). These evaluations, then, can affect the vote choices people make. Hetherington (1999) shows that high trust is associated with voting for the incumbent. People who lack trust in the government are more likely to vote for the non-incumbent or third party candidates (Hetherington 1999). On the other end of electoral considerations, Anderson and LoTempio found that those who vote for a winning presidential candidate have higher levels of trust in government than those who vote for the losing candidate (2002). In this way, electoral outcomes also influence political trust.

Previous analysis of public opinion data does indicate that there is some variety in the explanatory variables which explain confidence in leaders (Richardson, et.al. 2001, 97). Simultaneously, though, political science has not

yet been able to explain variation in levels of trust over time (Alford 2001). There exists some variation in explaining political trust but we cannot yet explain that variation. Obviously, political trust is not a constant but is an ever-changing political attitude. Other scholars have pointed this out, calling trust highly malleable (Mutz and Reeves 2005) and a multidimensional concept (Ulbig 2002).

I expect that the explanatory variables constructed here, people, process, and policy, will contribute to a deeper understanding of what does affect political trust. This spotlight on aspects of the political process, policy, and the people who serve in it will allow us to look outside of individuals for causes of trust. It is not possible that people, process, and policy will completely explain the variation in political trust. Political attitudes such as trust are incredibly complex and nuanced. It does not seem feasible that an attitude such as trust could be fully captured with a single methodological tool. However, this research will be useful in that it will measure trust on the diffuse, systems level and at the specific level. It will test generic ideas of people, process, and policy on trust in government. Moreover, specific attributes of people, process, and policy, as they are conceptualized here, will be tested for their effect on specific trust in a politician.

Ultimately, trust is an interesting and timely political topic because it is what Americans claim that they want out of government and their political system. Americans may not trust government but they *want* to. Hibbing and Thiess-Morse's most recent work, *Stealth Democracy* (2002), asserts that

Americans want a political system that they can trust to do the right thing, so that their required involvement is very little to none. If they can elect politicians whom they trust and who are in touch with real American problems, citizens figure the system will serve them well. The question then becomes what begets trust? If the populace wants to trust their government, what is it that would bring that about? Specifically, what characteristics of individual politicians and the political system that they operate in affect trust? Is political trust more responsive to the people in government, the process of government, or the policy of government? This project will help determine which factors make people trust the government and individual politicians. This information could enable us to identify which characteristics might increase individuals' level of trust in government.

Defining Political Trust

So what is political trust? Different scholars have defined trust differently. Generally, it is the belief, held on the part of individuals, that the government is conducting itself according to the way citizens expect it to operate (Miller 1974b). Trust is also the feeling that the system can be counted on to provide equitable outcomes and do as the people would want it to (Gamson 1968). Trust is a belief that public officials have the capacity to perform their given tasks effectively under the ethical standards that people find acceptable (Kornberg and Clarke

1992, 97). Trust is often equated with other attitudinal variables such as political efficacy, political support, legitimacy, confidence, and satisfaction. All of these attitudinal variables have long been considered interrelated and for that reason, the literature which speaks to one will be considered to speak to them all.

It is obvious in the few definitions of political trust mentioned that although scholars have defined it differently it is commonly thought of as a belief or a feeling. Trust is an evaluative decision that citizens make that is based upon affect and feeling. Some scholars posit that political trust serves as a simple and quick heuristic by which people evaluate government (Hetherington 1999, 2004, Chanley, et.al. 2000). The assumption here is that trust is an evaluation of government that is based upon feelings that are put together in piece meal fashion, like an online model of information processing. This model of information processing, first described by Lodge, McGraw, and Stroh (1989), suggests that people process information when they receive it, use it to update their opinions, and then discard the actual information while retaining the updated opinion or judgment. The question then becomes which information or opinions or feelings have the most effect upon political trust. When asking about trust, the presumption is that people will make an affective choice as to how they feel about the government writ large, and let that guide their subsequent decision about trust.

Political trust is not easily measured because there is some disagreement as to what it is. The political science literature dealing with trust has not had an

easy time defining what trust is or in deciding how to measure it. It should be noted that political support and political trust are often equated with one another, as are confidence, legitimacy, or efficacy. These terms shall be considered very similar ideas for the purpose of this research, especially in trying to define and explain what trust is. The literature which specifies political support lends itself to understanding political trust.

David Easton's (1965) investigation of political support set the tone for this debate, as he was the first to conceptualize political support as having two parts. Specific support, according to Easton, is that which is directed at components of the political system and it originates with the evaluation of satisfaction with what the system, and its parts, is doing. This type of support is premised upon the outputs and performance of the system. Diffuse support, on the other hand, is the idea of support based on how one feels about the political system in general. In other words, you may not like the parts of the government, but you approve of it as an entity overall.

Interestingly enough, Easton has since reassessed the concepts of political support and political trust (1975). Easton here maintains that support and trust are conceptually different. He points out that political trust is not political support, but it would be closer to specific support than diffuse support if it were (450). Specific support, he says, is a response to the authorities in charge of government and a response to the decisions and policies of the incumbent authorities (437),

while trust is a "symbolic satisfaction with the processes by which the country is run" (447). This makes specific support and trust somewhat similar but not entirely. The debate in the literature, however, rages on.

Trust then stems from evaluations regarding certain performance of the political system and its parts (specific support) and from generalized feelings of satisfaction and support directed at the entire political regime (diffuse support). So when we ask people to evaluate the government and to formulate political attitudes like trust, are people accessing their opinions of particular officials, the incumbent political authorities, or opinions about the entire system? Is trust that which is directed at the specific officials in political office, or trust given to the political system as a whole?

Following upon Easton's theory, Miller and Citrin engaged in a meaningful debate in the 1970s that has also helped to define the academic approach to studying trust. Miller (1974a) initially argued that levels of trust were a response to the policy alternatives presented by the entire governmental system, meaning that people who were pleased with the policy direction offered by the government were more trusting of government and vice-versa. Citrin's (1974) rebuttal to Miller was based upon the idea that trust was measuring satisfaction with incumbents in office, rather than with the system as a whole. This conflict has never been resolved with any satisfaction and continues to be a part of the literature.

Still, the conceptual distinction between diffuse and specific trust and where political trust is directed may be important. Does this distinction matter, and are these types of trust indeed separate? Hetherington (2005) argues that trust in specific individuals is but one small component of the larger measure of trust in government as a whole. He finds a correlation between trust in individual political figures and the government as a whole but he notes that that correlation is "far from perfect" (11). Other evidence more clearly indicates that system trust and trust in individuals is linked. Kornberg and Clarke's investigation of political support in Canada indicates that the level of support for the larger political system is "virtually a linear function of levels of trust in public officials" (1992, 138). These scholars conclude that political support flows upward, meaning that specific trust and diffuse trust are linked (30). The Pew Center also reports a correlation between trust in government and trust in individual politicians (PEW 1998). People who trust the government are likely to say that they trust elected officials, and people who distrust the government are more likely, by the same margins, to not find elected officials trustworthy. Additionally, survey research in American politics reveals that along with the general decline in trust in the American federal government, there has also been a sharp decline of confidence in political leaders (Blendon, et.al. 1997, 212-13). The available evidence certainly does not *prove* that specific trust in individuals and trust in government as a whole are measuring the same thing. Trust in the system and trust in

individual politicians are measures that move together however. This does not necessarily establish causation between these two but indicates some relationship.

As such, political trust has been studied and measured both as a response to the larger political system and as an evaluation of particular political officials. There exists evidence that supports either manifestation. For instance, Citrin, et.al. (1975) found that citizens who disapproved of political officeholders were more likely to be alienated from the system (12). Low trust in individual politicians caused low trust in the government as a whole. Luke Keele (2005) argues that citizens do evaluate government according to the authorities, measured as the political party in charge, and his evidence shows this to be true especially among partisans. Using political party control as a measure of an individual political figure is a blunt way to do this, but Keele's research indicates that evaluations of political incumbents are capable of affecting trust. On the other side of things, political trust directed at the entire government has been extensively investigated as well. Specifically, the NES trust questions which have been in existence in survey research since the 1950s get at this. These are the general measures of trust most often referred to and or used in research dealing with political trust.

This work does not aim to resolve the conceptual debate over what political trust is measuring but to be careful and specific in measuring trust on the diffuse, general level and the specific level, as directed at incumbent

officeholders, so as to head off any possible source of confusion. Perceptions of trust will be measured both through evaluations of trust in government as a whole and through evaluations of individual politicians. As previously mentioned, the idea of trust in the political regime and trust in the individual politicians are measures that generally move together. We cannot establish for sure that one causes another, but that is not crucially important for to this research question here. Clearly these differing ideas of trust are tapping into similar attitudes and opinions held on the part of the American people regarding government and politics. For the purposes of this research, trust will be measured as both general and specific. In order to measure broad trust in the government as a whole, trust will first be operationalized as the standard NES battery of questions that refer to government in general. Then, I will employ a trust measure that focuses on trust in an individual politician, thus measuring specific trust.

A Brief Empirical Test of Trust

Before beginning this project, I conducted a pretest of my survey instrument using college undergraduates (N = 179). This enabled me to have some empirical reference as to how this specific group of people conceptualizes of political trust. In this pretest, one of the questions specifically inquires about what political trust is. Respondents are provided five options to choose from: Political trust is

1. when the government passes laws that I agree with
2. when I like the people who run the government
3. when I agree with the way things are done in government
4. trusting government to do what is right without me having to watch over them
5. expecting elected officials to do their jobs effectively under ethical standards that I find acceptable.

The fourth and fifth options are definitions that come straight out of the literature whereas the first three options are ideas of trust which emphasize people (option 2), process (option 3), or policy (option 1).

A simple frequency distribution indicates that the two most often chosen definitions of political trust are the ones that originate from the literature, options 4 and 5. It shows that 49% (n = 88) of the sample think of political trust as being the expectation that politicians do their jobs effectively and under prevailing ethical standards. This is the most popular choice, while 37% (n = 67) believe that political trust is trusting government to do what is right without having to police them. Almost 90% of the sample surveyed, then, thinks of political trust as expecting or trusting the government to do what is right. This includes doing it effectively and doing it under some ethical guidelines so that people do not have to constantly keep watch. This idea of political trust, then, shall be the one used here. It puts together the two most often chosen definitions of political trust which appears to comport with how people themselves would define trust. This provides some empirical reference as to what political trust is. Also, this

definition is very much inline with the first question of the NES trust battery of questions, which will be utilized in this study as a dependent variable.

Another note of interest is that of the other three definitions offered as choices, intended to represent people, process, and policy, only the process idea of trust, as I am putting forth here, had any takers. Only 12% of the sample (n = 21) identified political trust as "when I agree with the way things are done in government". The fact that an overwhelming percentage of this sample chose two widely used definitions of political trust provides some support for my supposition that people, process, and policy are *determinants* of trust and not trust writ large and proof that people generally do have similar definitions of political trust.

How Do People Make Political Evaluations?

There is a subtle trend present in the literature that the perspective by which people think about government does influence evaluations made of it. The perspectives that people use in evaluating government and politics, as examined by previous scholarship, can be classified into three categories: the personality of incumbent officeholders, the people; the process that shapes the business of politics and government; and the outputs of government and politics in the way of policy and performance. Trust is, of course, an evaluative judgment so these different perspectives should have some effect on political trust.

According to Erber and Lau (1990), people have what they refer to as either an issue-oriented perspective to politics or a person-oriented perspective to politics. They test whether or not these orientations affect individual levels of trust in government. This whole premise is based upon the theoretical disagreement between Miller and Citrin in 1974 as to what political trust measures. It should be noted that this debate has not been fully resolved. Miller (1974a) argued that dissatisfaction with the policy choices offered by the two political parties causes distrust, while Citrin (1974) claimed that trust is influenced by dissatisfaction with the incumbent politicians and their job performance. Erber and Lau, utilizing some of the only panel data available (the NES surveys from 1972, 74, and 76), find that an information processing effect, based upon a person's orientation to politics, does influence corresponding levels of political trust. This means that how a person perceives of politics affects her corresponding levels of political trust.

In their 1995 work *Congress as Public Enemy*, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse examine dissatisfaction with the political system as a whole but with an emphasis on Congress. To get at what people like or dislike about political institutions, they used open-ended survey questions. These answers were then categorized and coded according to three orientations: people, policy, and process (47). Hibbing and Thiess-Morse argue that a person's satisfaction with parts of the political system will be affected by the orientation that he uses.

These three categories of variables, people, process, and policy indicate what Hibbing and Theiss-Morse call a "propensity" towards politics. In this way, each category is considered a heuristic of sorts which works to help individuals interpret and process information through a "dominant attitude structure" or "framework" (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995, 127). Erber and Lau (1990) use propensities in the same way as Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, although they call it"chronicity" and offer only two, a people orientation and an issue orientation. (Note: I will be using the words framework, propensity, schema, and orientation interchangeably hereafter. They will all refer to the same thing.)

This research design builds upon the ideas and findings of these scholars. It borrows the three categories of people, policy, and process in order to explain political trust. Based on this previous evidence that people do use these orientations in the formulation of political attitudes and that these orientations can influence political trust, I presented participants in my project with one of these three orientations. This was done, without the participant's knowledge, by manipulating treatments to emphasize people, process, or policy. In this way, by virtue of the information shared with him, a participant is gently forced into thinking about politics and the political information of the treatment according to one of these three frameworks. We know that they matter; I can then ascertain the predictive power of people, process, and policy on political trust, especially in relation to each other. This represents a unique usage of previous scholarship.

Additionally, although these three variables have been previously identified as playing a role in trust, no attempt has been made to study all three of these determinants simultaneously. I am on the forefront of the study of political trust in empirically investigating this conceptual repertoire of variables affecting trust. In the use of a schema in evaluating politics, it has generally been argued that people have a dominant one. Some people are more likely to be influenced by the people in office and others by policy. There is some evidence that political information which is in line with the schema a person employs will more strongly influence political evaluations than information which is not in line with one's schema (Lau 1989, 7). No matter which framework a person predominantly uses the proximity of the framework presented to her would dominate because of the idea of priming. Priming is the idea that activating certain types of knowledge in a person's memory causes that knowledge to have a greater influence upon subsequent evaluations (Krosnick 2002, 202). There is, however, some evidence to the contrary, as Domke, Shah, and Wackman (1998) assert that priming effects differ among people based upon the dominant schema that they rely upon (55).

The treatments that people encountered in this research design can be seen as a priming affect, calling to mind either details of people, process, or policy, and then asking for their consequent trust judgment of the politician in question. Participants were randomly assigned into these priming conditions and should then be capable of evaluating an individual member of Congress with the

information at hand, without having to rely upon their usual orientation to politics. Richard Lau postulates:

> …if the individual holds no strong political schema or if available information does not allow categorization of the politician into a well-developed schema, then affective evaluation will be piecemeal. The overall evaluation of the politician will be a 'running total' of all the affect associated with every individual bit of information known about that politician (1986, 97-8)

Lau's statement supports my reasoning. Decisions about trust are affective evaluations. These decisions, according to Lau, can be made by putting together all of the information one has at her disposal, whether or not the information is in line with a particular schema. Moreover, if we consider that citizens are "cognitive misers", meaning that they try to make decisions with the least amount of information possible, then the default information-processing objective should naturally be to form an opinion based on readily available information. As such, it is perfectly reasonable to expect that the nature of the information presented within the treatments will affect the political decision-making process that takes place afterwards.

Why People, Process, and Policy?

The idea that people, process, and policy are components of trust and therefore elements which may explain trust comes straight out of the literature.

There is ample support in the political science literature that each of these three factors (people, process, and policy) influences political trust to some degree.

Miller and Borrelli (1991) conducted a study of trends in political trust through the 1980s. In their conclusion, they say, "…it is becoming increasingly evident that public cognitions and evaluative responses to political phenomena involve a focus on three conceptually distinct factors: policy, performance, and the attributes of political leaders" (169). This statement acknowledges that these three factors influence ideas and evaluations that people form about politics, similar to Erber and Lau (1990).

Most recently, Rahn and Rudolph (2005), in an exploration of local political trust, summarize that in the literature an integrated model of political trust has four recurring criteria for determining political trust: quality of policy outcomes, policy congruence, procedural considerations, and attributes of officeholders (532). They come up with four criteria, while I am proffering three. Policy congruence, although long believed to be an element of good representation (Miller and Stokes 1963), has proven to be too great of a burden for the citizenry to truly evaluate. Policy congruence simply means that the represented and the representative have the same, or very similar, positions on policy issues. This requires, of course, that the average citizen have enough political information to formulate and express a policy opinion as well as that citizen being aware enough to categorize her representative's position on the same

issue. As such, I believe that a more general version of policy and performance is the best way in which to conceptualize of policy. This shall be hereafter referred to as policy outcomes. However it is conceptualized, as policy congruence or satisfaction with policy outcomes and performance, the idea of policy matters in decisions regarding political trust. These scholars' work provides the basis for conceptualizing trust as being of three parts, or at least being influenced by the three categories of people, process, and policy. Although it is apparent in the literature that these three determinants of political trust have been heretofore identified, people, process, and policy have not been studied together in their impact on trust.

This work builds upon the ideas and findings of these scholars. It will borrow the three categories of people, policy, and process in order to explain political trust. These perspectives will then be tested simultaneously for their impact on political trust. There is a plethora of evidence to show that all three of these orientations towards politics, primarily studied singularly, have the capability to affect political trust. Most often, these three factors have been disaggregated and studied one at a time. Even the work of Hibbing and Theiss-Morse, which attempts to integrate policy concerns and process concerns in political attitudes, gives primary attention to process. This work will attempt to study people, process, and policy in conjunction with one another. Most previous work has not been able to speak with much clarity to the entire litany of causes

and explanations of political trust as it has tackled smaller, but not inconsequential, pieces of the puzzle. By investigating these three factors together, I should be able to weigh their relative importance in political trust.

The Determinants of Trust

People

The attributes of officeholders affect political trust because citizens can easily reference the individual politicians when making evaluations of government. There exists plenty of evidence that assessments of political officials help predict trust. Citrin (1974) posited that political trust is affected by the citizen's perceptions of what incumbent political authorities are doing. Research also indicates that trust is influenced by evaluations of the president and approval of Congress (Miller and Borrelli 1991; Citrin and Luks 2001). Although congressional and presidential approval ratings are not direct evaluations of just the people who hold these offices, research shows that when people like and approve of these politicians, they tend to trust government more.

Moreover, additional research indicates that when voters evaluate political candidates they predominantly use personality characteristics of the politicians (Miller, et.al. 1986, 525). These scholars proffer that what affects candidate assessments should also influence the way in which people evaluate the government (533). People are, at least in part, thinking about the personal

characteristics of the people in government when forming political opinions. For instance, when people are asked to evaluate the performance of their member of Congress, personal characteristics of that congressman are one of the major criteria used (Parker and Davidson 1979).

Previous literature has found that people who obtain their political information through television are more likely to find personal characteristics of politicians important (Keeter 1987). Television, perhaps, primes its viewers to notice personal characteristics of politicians (Druckman 2003). This is an important consideration in that most American people depend upon broadcast media for their political news and information. This means that the great majority of people are primed to think about politicians in terms of personal characteristics, making a people orientation to political evaluations more likely.

As such, this research design will conceptualize that citizens judge politics and government by the people who serve in it. The people variable will then represent personal qualities and attributes of elected officeholders that might influence evaluative political decisions such as trust. These personal qualities might be honesty, integrity, or something having to do with an individual's morality. We know, for instance, that the populace expects politicians to have certain attributes. Competence, for instance, is thought to inspire trust (Wright 1976; Hart 1978; Barber 1983).

Process

The newest perspective of evaluating government performance is process. Americans pay attention to the way in which their political system functions and the processes that it uses. The work of Hibbing and Theiss-Morse looms large because their 1995 work *Congress as Public Enemy* focused predominantly on process, as does their follow up work on political attitudes (2001, 2002). People, they find, like procedural justice more than specific policy outcomes. As long as the process is fair, Americans feel better about government, and this should then affect political trust. Both Owen and Dennis (2001, 220-1) and Farnsworth (2003a, 73) find that perceptions of fairness do, in fact, influence political trust. Fairness, in this sense, refers to the nature of representation (Hibbing 1999, 47). Does government represent the interests of its people or is it more responsive to special interests and lobbyists?

Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) discern that people are more affected by processes than policies. When evaluating government, people's dissatisfaction is related to perceptions of *how* government does its job, not *what* it does (34-5). Especially for citizens with minimal political interest and knowledge, process concerns are most important (80-1). If we consider that a great deal of the American electorate lacks political interest and knowledge, then the role of process in evaluating the government and its actors should play a substantial role.

This research design postulates that people will then evaluate government by the processes used and by the way government does its job, more specifically how *politicians* do their jobs. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's work convincingly demonstrates that Americans have a propensity to evaluate government by impressions of process.

Policy

It has long been believed that citizens evaluate their political system according to the outputs and performance of that system, most often conceptualized as public policy. The thinking about policy's effect on trust is that citizens will evaluate the government based on what it is doing and how it is performing. People who are pleased with the policy direction and policy outputs of the government are expected to trust government more because it is producing desired outputs (Citrin 1974; Miller 1974; Easton 1975).

Policy entails general governmental performance as well as specific policy outputs. Historically, there is evidence of a correlation between feelings of political trust and perceptions of governmental performance on broad policy issues, even when controlling for other factors like ideology, income, and economic satisfaction (Citrin, et. al. 1975, 19). It should be noted, however, that evidence to the contrary has been found as well (Hibbing 1999, 48). Moreover,

scholars note that the evidence on the affect of policy on trust has been underwhelming (Ulbig 2002).

Although the empirical evidence is mixed, there is an intuitive appeal to believing that people who like what the government produces should be more likely to trust it. This, along with the fact that policy has long been considered a factor which affects political evaluations, merits its inclusion into this research design.

Dissertation Layout

Chapter Two discusses the research design and methodology used in this research project. This includes how the dependent variable of political trust was measured as well as the primary independent variables of people, process, and policy. The survey experiment instrument will be fully explained.

Chapter Three addresses my survey evidence on political trust. In order to construct a broad explanatory theory of trust, a national survey experiment was conducted. I address trust in two different ways. The first of these asked participants to respond to various statements that ascertained their sentiments towards the qualities of the people in office, the processes, and the policies. Respondents reacted to statements like "Politicians generally have good intentions", "The political process is fair and open", and "All in all, the government does a good job of running its programs". I constructed variables of

people, process, and policy based upon responses to these political statements. Multivariate models were applied to test perceptions of people, process, and policy upon trust in government. This tested how people perceive of people, process, policy, and what affect they have upon political trust. These indexed variables were considered along with all relevant control variables in order to form as complete a picture of political trust as possible.

Chapter Four considers the experimental portion of the research design. For the experimental portion of the study, a national sample of Americans was exposed to treatments that emphasized different elements of people, process, and policy. Each respondent was read three separate descriptions of a politician, one about person qualities, one about process factors, and one focusing on policy. Within the person category, there were two conditions to be tested, whether a politician is experienced and how principled he is. The process conditions contained within the treatments included how a politician runs his campaign and how he engages in debate. As far as policy is concerned, the conditions of the treatments were whether a politician has a national or a local focus and whether or not he accepts pork barrel project monies for his district. There was one specific attribute of people, process, and policy presented within each treatment, and people were randomly assigned into these groups. Randomization assures that what participants will be responding to can be attributed to the treatments and not other factors. The experimental portion of this research design enabled me to test

which attributes of people, process, and policy most influence specific trust in that politician. Because the treatments were conceived of in pairs, the magnitude of the effect of each treatment can be compared to its pair. Moreover, the magnitude of the effect of people, process, and policy treatments can be compared to one another within each of their same categories.

Chapter Five of this dissertation puts together the pieces of the trust puzzle as investigated here. Applying the findings here, I address which characteristics of people, process, and policy affect trust in government. This will be done through analysis of the generalized statements that people were asked to respond to (the survey) and analysis of the reactions to each of the experimental treatments. This enables me to compare which of these three components have the most effect on trust in government as well as how they perform as predictors of trust in relation to each other. In conclusion, I address the relevance of my research and what we might do with these findings. Moreover, I discuss how future research on political trust might be based upon my ideas and methods.

Chapter 2
Research Design

Measuring the Dependent Variable – Trust

In the last chapter, I discussed the conflict in the literature over diffuse trust and specific trust. This presents a problem of measurement because it is not possible to ensure that when a person is asked to evaluate trust that he will use either specific trust, the incumbents running the political system, or diffuse trust, feelings about the larger government, in a mutually exclusive manner. As Citrin and Muste (1999) point out, however, political trust has a specific object, whether it is a politician, a process, or an institution, and Easton (1975) would concur. A person does not simply trust (Citrin and Muste 1999, 467). She trust something, someone, an entity. There is certain logic to this. As such, these scholars recommend that when measuring political attitudes we carefully specify which aspect of government is being judged.

One of the recommendations that Citrin and Muste (1999) make regarding measuring trust is to "specify the attitude object as unambiguously as possible" (480). This piece of advice was carefully implemented into the research design. The first time that survey respondents were asked about trust was following a battery of political statements they were asked to respond to. The prompt for these trust questions referenced government in general, getting more at diffuse trust. Then, because the treatments in my survey experiment are all focused on

elected officials, it should be very clear that any assessments of trust, post treatment, would be made about individual politicians. When asking citizens about trust, it must be made relevant and to make it relevant, the object of political trust should be a political actor (Levi and Stoker 2000, 497). As such, the experimental portion of the research design asked respondents to answer the questions following the treatment with the incumbent officeholder presented in the treatment in mind.

Another recommendation from Citrin and Muste is that in order to ensure that we are measuring true political attitudes, rather than just emotional responses, we should test trust more than once (1999, 480). This suggestion was also implemented within this research design. The NES trust battery of questions was first asked of respondents after they responded to various political statements but before they received any of the experimental treatments. These NES questions have been utilized for decades and their validity has been well established. There are four questions in this battery that get at the trustworthiness, honesty, wastefulness, and responsiveness of the federal government. These four questions together are often employed in the literature as a scaled variable of trust. I also used the NES trust battery as a scaled dependent variable, which will be called Trust Scale. Furthermore, I also used the first question of the NES trust battery as its own dependent variable (How much do you trust the government in Washington to do what is right?); this shall be referred to as Trust.

Both of these methods of conceptualizing of trust have been utilized in creating dependent variables. It appears that a type of trust scale formulated from the NES trust battery is most often used in this literature. Several scholars make the argument, though, that the first question of the battery stands alone as a good measure of trust (Alford 2001; Owen and Dennis 2001, 211). Alford (2001) specifically states that this single question is a better indicator of trust in government than an indexed variable (29). As such, I utilize both of these dependent variables throughout the analysis. This will enable me to investigate how perceptions of people, process, and policy perform in explaining one pointed question about generalized trust in government and a trust scale formed with four separate questions about both generalized trust and more specific elements of trust as well.

Political trust was measured a second time to detect the effect of the treatments. The second time political trust was measured with a new question borrowed from previous literature, in particular a measure created by Cook and Gronke (2005). This question inquired about the level of trust felt towards the one particular politician introduced in the treatment. For instance, "How much do you trust this person as an elected official to do what is right?" measure specific trust in the individual and originated with the work of Cook and Gronke (2005).

Why use the Cook and Gronke measure of trust? As they have pointed out, a potential conflict in measuring political trust is in the interpretation of trust

survey responses. More specifically, does a lack of trust signify cynicism or skepticism or outright and active distrust? Cook and Gronke (2005) argue that the current survey measures appear to truncate the full diversity of responses to questions regarding trust, making a person appear either trustful or distrustful. These scholars have developed their own measure of political trust which indicates that healthy skepticism is more the norm than are either absolute trust or distrust.

The Cook and Gronke trust variable asks respondents to place themselves on a scale from 0 - 10, where 0 indicated very strong distrust of government with the expectation that government would do the wrong thing, 10 meant strong trust of government to do the right thing, and 5 indicated neither trust, nor distrust (787). Their findings reveal very few people (23%) were actively distrustful, providing responses below the score of 5 (789). Moreover, they find a correlation of .34 between their measure of trust and the primary NES trust battery question (How much do you trust the government in Washington to do what is right?). The nature of the relationship between the Cook and Gronke measure and the NES measure is positive, meaning that these two variables increase together. A correlation coefficient of .34 indicates that these two different measures of trust are analogous enough to be measuring something similar but the correlation is not strong enough to signify that these measures are the same. It seems that Cook and Gronke's measure is indeed capturing something a little different than the

standard NES trust question. Perhaps the difference with this measure is that it gets at intensity of feeling in measuring trust, distrust, and anything in between, which is where a lot of people would fall. As a result, Cook and Gronke's measure, instead of the NES trust questions, will be utilized to ask about trust post treatment.

It is important to note that I did *not* repeat the standard NES battery of trust questions after the experimental portion of the survey. Doing this would have provided a second measure of the exact same trust question and enabled me to get at more stable political attitudes. However, the survey experiment ran under ten minutes, and I felt that repeating the same four NES trust questions would be far too repetitive and noticeable given the short length of the instrument.

Measuring the Primary Independent Variables of People, Process, and Policy

These three variables of people, process, and policy represent the primary independent or explanatory variables of interest in explaining political trust. As such, these three ideas, though introduced above, must be elaborated upon. What exactly is meant by the personal attributes of politicians, the processes of government and politics, or the resulting government policy? People, process, and policy will be explained beginning with their origins in previous literature and then building upon it to explicate my definitions. Additionally, their usage for explaining trust will be justified. The evidence to indicate that these three

variables of people, process, and policy influence trust was reviewed above, so we have established that these three components matter. The scholarship of Erber and Lau (1990), for instance, shows that people do use these orientations to politics to make decisions regarding trust. In order to build a model that explains trust, it must be established that individuals are able to differentiate among these three components posited as predictors of trust. That task shall be taken up in this section as well.

The work of a few choice scholars colors my conceptualization of people, process, and policy and it is their scholarship which will be described and elaborated upon. The first of these are John Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse and their ideas come out of *Congress as Public Enemy* (1995). Although there are other instances in the literature that belie the potential importance of people, process, and policy, I adapted these terms specifically from the work of Hibbing and Theiss-Morse. In *Congress as Public Enemy* (1995), Hibbing and Theiss-Morse examine dissatisfaction with the political system as a whole but with an emphasis on Congress. To get at what people like or dislike about political institutions, they use open-ended survey questions. These answers were then categorized and coded according to three orientations: people, policy, and process (47). Hibbing and Thiess-Morse argue that a person's satisfaction with parts of the political system will be affected by the orientation that he brings to politics.

My work is premised upon this idea. Political trust should be influenced by a person's perception of people, process, and policy.

The second piece is an article from Ralph Erber and Richard R. Lau published in the *American Journal of Political Science*. The article entitled "Political Cynicism Revisited: An Information-Processing Reconciliation of Policy-Based and Incumbency-Based Interpretations of Changes in Trust in Government" (1990) posits that how people think about politics, here defined as either a person chronicity or an issues chronicity, affects levels of political trust. These would loosely connect with my ideas of people and policy, and so their work also influences my approach. The argument that how people think about politics affects their political attitudes formulates the bedrock of my research question here.

The third work comes from Stacy G. Ulbig (2002). The title of her work "Policies, Procedures, and People: Sources of Support for Government?" shows exactly why her work informs my own. Ulbig's work is a study of policy, procedure, and people as explanations of political trust, not completely unlike my work here. Ulbig's article is not commonly cited in the political trust literature, however, and there are also critically important differences between Ulbig's work and my own. The way I conceptualize of people, process, and policies does not coincide with her definitions or measures whatsoever. Noting that trust is multidimensional, she uses items from the NES trust battery to explain trust itself.

Her analysis, therefore, is limited and rather weak. My data will be original and very specific to my question. I am also positing certain ways to conceptualize and test ideas of people, process, and policy which have not been done before. As a result, I feel that I have something original and illustrative to contribute to the discussion of political trust.

People

Hibbing and Theiss-Morse classified individuals with a person orientation if they answered their open-ended question "in terms of the members of the institution, the job performance of people in government, specific public officials, or generalizations about politicians" (1995, 129). Erber and Lau posit that an individual with a person chronicity will interpret political events in relation to politicians and in terms of the "personality characteristics" of politicians (1990, 238). Ulbig (2002) operationalizes person by using standard NES questions that inquire about public officials, basically politicians in the aggregate.

Miller, Wattenberg, and Malanchuk's (1986) conceptualization of personality characteristics most comports with how I perceive of a people component of trust. These scholars did not subjectively categorize evaluative statements made by voters about candidates but performed a factor analysis to find out which characteristics about candidates most clump together. The five characteristics they categorize as person-oriented are competence, integrity,

reliability, charisma, and personal factors. The average correlation across the five characteristics was .10, indicating that these five factors are measuring different personal characteristics (527-28).

This previous scholarship will have some overlap with my definition of people orientation. My research design conceptualizes a people framework as judging individual politicians by their individual characteristics, not in the aggregate or as a collective. A people orientation, as conceptualized here, will be focused on the individual politician as a person and his individual characteristics that speak to his ability to perform well as a politician. For instance, honesty, integrity, and character issues would be classified as people factors. This is important in that people will use a politician's character as an indicator of how they will perform in office.

Process

Hibbing and Theiss-Morse define a process orientation as one which focuses on these characteristics: institutions of government, reform of certain political processes, relations between institutions, the ideas of efficiency and organization, or references to specific processes which are associated with the structure of government and its parts (1995, 129). In fact, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse are the first to postulate that people judge politics and government primarily by the processes used. Erber and Lau (1990) do not include process as

one of their chronicities. Ulbig (2002) does include process in her study, although she calls it "procedures". Additionally, she conceptualizes procedure as being of two parts, institutional and individual, because people evaluate the process of government by ideas of efficiency and neutrality and evaluate the individuals who make up government by honesty and competency (793-4). Basically, she collapses evaluations of process and people into one category, procedure, while I isolate people and process into separate variables.

As Hibbing and Theiss-Morse point out, when evaluating government, people's dissatisfaction is related to perceptions of *how* government does its job, not *what* it does (2002, 34-5). People want a process that is fair and open instead of catering to special interest groups and monies. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) claim that indicators of bad process, so to speak, are running nasty and negative campaigns, making promises that one has no intention of keeping, and being heavily invested in special interests (45). In this way, flawed political process is dominated by elected officials and special interests and institutions (48) and conflict and intense debate (122). Since Hibbing and Theiss-Morse make the convincing argument that people are concerned about the process of government, the process qualities that their research identifies as problematic will most dictate how process will be operationalized here.

My measures of process will be more specified. For my purposes here, a process framework will be operationalized as how a specific politician goes about

doing his job. His job here is that of representation and making laws. How well does a politician represent the interests of his constituents and get the business of law-making done? A process framework will be operationalized as how a specific politician goes about doing his job within the institutional context, particularly the decisions that he makes in carrying out his job as congressman. Process factors might then include things like negative campaigning, political debate, compromising, and relationships with special interest groups.

Policy

Finally, the framework of policy has been conceptualized in previous literature as meaning that people will make political evaluations based upon the government's handling of a specific policy problem. This originated with Miller's research on trust in 1974 and has continued unabated. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse conceptualize a policy propensity in terms of explicit references to specific policies of the government, no matter what the type (1995, 129). Erber and Lau's (1990) issue chronicity is operationalized in the same way (238). Ulbig (2002) measures policy as satisfaction with specific policies (796). This also represents the idea of policy congruence, that one's elected representative pursues policies that one wants.

People will judge the government by how it produces the most desired policies. The most desired policy will naturally vary among individuals. Policy

satisfaction should enhance trust while policy dissatisfaction should decrease trust. As noted previously, the evidence on policy's effect on political trust has not been very strong.

Almost all of the scholarship which posits a relationship between policy and trust, measures policy satisfaction by first asking people what they think the most important problem facing the United States is and then inquiring how good of a job the government is doing in handling that problem. The conceptualization that I am putting forth here will not measure policy as such because this method of measurement requires that individuals are paying attention to policy and performance outputs. The literature on the ability of the masses proves that the demands of paying attention to politics and government enough to follow specific policy are too great a burden for the average citizen to shoulder (Campbell, et. al. 1960; Delli Carpini and Keeter 1996). As such, individuals are much more likely to evaluate politicians and government with an eye towards the performance and general policy produced by government and numerous scholars have found this to be true (Hetherington 1998; Owen and Dennis 2001; Keele 2007).

I will then operationalize policy as very general policy considerations along with general governmental performance. A policy framework, in this sense, will concentrate on the outputs of government and politicians; exactly what is being done that can be measured and felt without requiring intensive knowledge on the part of citizens. Ideas of policy as conceptualized here would include

macro economic performance, deficit spending, pork projects, and the focus of representation, being national or local.

Potential Problems in Separating People, Process, and Policy

There is potential difficulty in separating people and process in the way that I have decided to conceptualize them. Other scholars have encountered the same problem. In reality, there may be some interplay between these two orientations because, as Ulbig (2002, 794) points out, these ideas may not be distinct dimensions of trust in the minds of people. Other scholars have also found that it is empirically hard to sort out the marginal effects of both process and people (Steele 2005, 884).

For instance, when citizens were asked whether the wrong kind of people were running for Congress in the first place, or if Congress has a bad effect upon people once elected, people are torn but seem to be capable of differentiating between people and process. 21% of Americans believe that bad people are running for Congress, 51% think Congress has a corrupting effect upon people, and 26% think that it is a combination of the wrong people and something being wrong with the system (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995, 63). People seem to be capable of distinguishing between people and process as a full 72% of the public was able to identify either one or the other as the cause of some of the ills present in Congress.

People may have a difficult time differentiating between the people and the process, but this evidence does not show it to be impossible. Once again, breaking out people and process has been hard for previous scholars to do. I am under no presumption that it is simple, but I still aim to conceptualize of people and process as different elements of trust. Here, people and process will be considered distinct. Two features affect the political, decision-making process, the individuals involved, the people, and the institutional aspects involved the process (Ulbig 2002, 794). Ulbig sees the individuals and the institutions as nested within what she calls process. I would argue that people and process are distinct because institutions would fall under process, not the other way around.

For instance, I have characterized campaigning as a process factor because it is within the institutional framework of running for and holding political office. Someone else might argue that making the decision to run a positive or a negative campaign is a function of that person's personality. Campaigns and elections, though, are parts of the institutional apparatus, and for the purposes here, are conceived of as process. A people orientation will hone in on the character and personal attributes of a politician, which, although they may be influenced by the institution, are fundamentally external to the institution. The process orientation will focus on how a politician does his job within his institutional constraints or considerations.

A Brief Study of People, Process, and Policy Variables

A pretest of my survey instrument was conducted using college undergraduates. This was done in order to test potential measurements of people, process, and policy to ensure that they are appropriately operationalized. Using an undergraduate introductory course, American Federal Government, at the University of Oklahoma, 179 college students completed this pretest survey during the Fall 2005 semester. The survey asked respondents to rate the importance of twenty-nine different aspects in deciding whether or not a politician should be trusted. These twenty-nine factors were all hypothesized qualities of people, process, and policy. I wanted some empirical justification for these three primary independent variables of people, process, and policy. I also used the identified people, process, and policy variables to create experimental treatments.

Factor Analysis of Pretest

My work is premised upon the idea that people, process, and policy are separate determinants of political trust that people are able to differentiate. In order to support this, I ran a factor analysis of these twenty-nine variables to see which of these variables group together. (A list of these twenty-nine potential variables of people, process, and policy is included in the Appendix as Table 2.1.) This analysis should reveal whether or not compartmentalizing people, process, and policy is statistically justifiable. The results show that it is. I found variables

that cluster together and represent these three determinants of trust. I was able to pare down twenty-nine variables into twelve, and these twelve variables separated into three distinct factors – people, process, and policy.

The process of paring down twenty-nine variables started with eliminating any variable which, on average, was not ranked as somewhat or very important. If the sample surveyed did not find a particular quality to be at least somewhat important in deciding whether or not a politician is trusted, I dropped it. This resulted in six variables falling out of the model. Left with twenty-three potential variables, I then made the choice to remove any variables which did not correlate with any factor at .5 or above.

Next, I considered how the remaining variables could be operationalized. Because these variables were to be ultimately turned into experimental treatments, I needed to be able to operationalize them as clearly and succinctly as possible. For instance, "whether or not you believe that he is honest" was identified as very important in trust decisions. Though it correlated with the person factor, as I would have hypothesized, I ultimately removed it from consideration because it is hard to measure honesty in a manner objective enough to create an experimental treatment. Besides that, it is simply unexciting to explore. We would expect that if you find a politician honest, you are more likely to trust that politician and likely, by extension, the government as a whole. After removing the variables,

such as honesty, which would be too difficult to operationalize into treatments, I settled on twelve.

Interestingly enough, most all of the removed variables did factor with the element of people, process, or policy that I hypothesized it would. Although these variables correlated with the factors at different rates, meaning some more strongly than others, this analysis indicates that the explanatory variables of people, process, and policy that I have created here are accurately specified.

In order to conduct an effective factor analysis, the variables must be linearly related to each other. The measure used to test this is called the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin. Smaller values of KMO indicate that factor analysis with the given variables is not a good idea. This model of twelve variables has a Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of .75. .75 seems very acceptable given that it is the halfway point between .5, which indicates a sample is not appropriate for factor analysis, and 1.0, meaning that the variables in the sample are perfectly related in a linear manner.

A good factor analysis tries to explain as much as possible with as few factors as possible. With these twelve variables which cluster around three factors, 49% of the variance in the model is explained. Of these twelve variables, four fall under each of the three factors. Each variable correlates with a factor with scores over .6, so these three factors seem very reasonable. The people factor that emerges includes the variables of having held previous office, being

principled, having charisma, and supporting his political party. The process factor includes the variables of willingness to compromise, a willingness to work with the president regardless of party, conducting a clean campaign, and engaging in civil and friendly debate. The policy factor includes the variables of working to limit the influence of special interests, deficit spending, bringing money and projects to his district, and placing the focus on the good of the nation over specific localities. All three of these factors represent the people, process, and policy factors as I have conceptualized them here. The variables that load onto each of these three factors are very much in line with the characteristics that I expected would fall under people, process, and policy.

(Table 2.1, Factor Analysis of 12 People, Process, and Policy Variables from Pretest **,** Here)

Next, I took the results of the factor analysis and used them to create experimental treatments of people, process, and policy. All twelve variables representing people, process, and policy which resulted from this factor analysis could not be included in the survey experiment for very important reasons. First, twelve variables would require a very lengthy survey. The longer a telephone survey gets, the more the response rate goes down. It is simply harder to keep people on the phone long enough to complete the survey. Second, a longer survey also costs more money to complete. Every research project has its budget, and I

had to identify only a couple variables of each people, process, and policy that could be utilized.

I identified two variables within each category which were highly loaded onto the factors and created experimental treatments. For people, I chose to use whether or not he has held previous office (.62) and being principled, defined here as "standing up for what he believes in" (.66). For process, whether or not he engages in civil and friendly debate (.75) and whether or not he conducts clean campaigns, free of mudslinging and negativity (.74) were the chosen variables. For the policy treatments, I chose pork, whether or not he brings money and projects to his district (.70) and national versus local focus (.66)

These six variables were all strongly correlated with the three factors but were also chosen with an eye toward practicability in formulating experimental treatments. Additionally, I believe that these variables best represent an opportunity for interesting and valuable findings. These six variables then represent how people, process, and policy will be operationalized and measured for the experimental portion of this research.

Melding Together Survey and Experiment

The traditional methodology utilized in the study of political trust has been survey research. Most research on trust has been performed using individual level, cross-sectional survey data (Chanley, et.al. 2000, 241). Because surveys

are very useful for measuring and studying political attitudes, which is the goal of this research, it is one of the methods that was used in this study (Weisberg, et.al. 1996, 13).

This work will also study political trust using a method not common in political science, the experiment. The experiment itself was embedded in a telephone survey. Telephone surveys make "inserting experiments into naturally-occurring environments" possible (Druckman, et.al. 2006, 629). There is a natural symbiosis, then, between these two methodologies. This gives this research great explanatory power in that it combines the power of a randomized trial experiment with the larger and representative survey sample. In fact, one of the "principal breakthroughs" in public opinion surveying has been the combining of "distinctive external validity advantages of the representative public opinion survey with the decisive internal validity strengths of a fully randomized, multifaceted experiment" (Sniderman and Grob 1996, 378).

The experimental design was nested within a survey instrument. This multi-method approach melds together a method often used in the study of political trust, the survey, with a method not usually employed in studying trust, the experiment. A survey is well suited for the goal of this research design as surveys are very useful for measuring and studying political attitudes, which is exactly the goal of this research design (Weisberg, et.al. 1996, 13). Experimental

research is well suited for any research design because it represents the scientific ideal (Bositis 1990, 85).

Experimental Methodology

The experimental method allows the systematic variation of variables in a controlled environment with randomly assigned subjects. Because the investigator controls the production of the setting, the creation of treatments, and the observation, it is possible to eliminate threats to valid inference (Kinder and Palfrey 1993, 7). The outcomes in an experimental setting differ based on the variables being systematically manipulated, thus offering very high internal validity. As a methodology, experiments offer the strongest support for causal inferences to be made (McDermott 2002, 38). As a result, experimental research has become important in the political science discipline as we have moved towards emphasizing causal inference (Druckman, et.al. 2006, 627).

Experimental research aimed at understanding political opinions, both measuring them and explaining their formation, has been successfully completed (Bositis 1990, 71). As pointed out in a recent *American Political Science Review* issue on the evolution of the discipline, the range in usage of experiments in political science remains narrowly focused on three subfields, one of them being political psychology (Druckman, et.al. 2006, 627). My research fits comfortably

within this subfield. Even then, very few studies of political trust using experimental methods have been employed (Levi and Stoker 2000, 501).

Most political science experiments involve changing the content of the experimental treatment, and this experiment did just that (Bositis 1990, 75). An experimental design is inherently useful in that it allows for more than one treatment to be introduced. More specifically, this research design altered the decision-making environment by providing differing information to randomized groups of survey participants (Gilens 2002, 240). Because the research question of interest here involves the explanatory power of three determinants of trust, all three indicators, people, process, and policy, served as their own treatment.

Utilizing a survey experiment has advantages in that it can better get at the responses that people have to survey questions. Martin Gilens says, "…the randomized experiment can tease out the nuances of public opinion or uncover aspects of the public's thinking that may otherwise remain hidden" (2002, 233). In asking survey questions, the researcher is putting values and definitions upon the possible responses. For instance, the concept of interest here is political trust. Surveys have consistently asked about trust since the late 1950s, but this does not mean that we know what people are thinking about when they are making these political evaluations. Survey evidence alone can never tell us what people are considering when they are asked about trust. An experimental survey, however, allowed me to present information in the context of treatments in order to see if

these qualities of people, process, and policy influenced people in making decisions about political trust.

Survey Methodology

Political science literature indicates that survey methodology is the preferred method to study a political attitude like trust. I am very comfortable with the survey process as a methodology and feel that I can usefully interpret and use the data to address my research question about political trust.

The survey instrument allows two models of political trust to be tested, one based upon survey responses and one based upon experimental manipulation. First, I describe the nuts and bolts of what the survey portion looks like and what questions it enables me to answer. Then, I demonstrate the work that has gone into creating a good survey instrument.

At the very beginning of the survey, participants responded to statements about politics. These statements represented all three of the primary independent variables, people, process, and policy. There were three statements for each of the three categories. These are detailed in Chapter Three. Each statement represents a single variable to be included as an independent variable in statistical analysis. Also, the responses to each of these three statements for each category will then be added together to create a scaled variable for each people, process, and policy. These variables will indicate the degree to which an individual is

satisfied with the people in office, the process of government and politics, and the general performance and policy. These independent variables will then be statistically tested in a multivariate regression model, along with some pertinent control variables, for their influence on trust in government. Political trust, here, will be operationalized as the NES trust battery. Variables of people, process, and policy will be tested in separate models and then again altogether in a simultaneous model with all three. This will enable me to ascertain which attitudes, as measured through self-proclaimed survey responses, most affect political trust. Additionally, by combining all three of these variables into one model, I can see how people, process, and policy perform relative to each other, at least as they are conceptualized here.

Good survey design is qualified by three methodological elements: sampling, designing questions, and data collection (Fowler 2002, 4). Each of these will be considered in turn.

Sampling

The first consideration is that of sampling. A sample, of course, is only an approximation, as we cannot get to the entire population (Weisberg, et.al. 1996, 67). As such, the sample of people under study needs to be identified and explained. The population of interest here is the entire United States citizenry, so a good sample should be representative of this. A random sample will be needed

so that the results of this study can be generalized onto the population of interest. The best way to achieve a random national sample is a random digit dialing telephone survey. This is a probability sampling procedure that is used to draw a random sample of housing units in order to sample people in those households (Fowler 2002, 23). The value of random digit dialing depends upon the fact that most American households have a telephone so that everyone has the opportunity to be a part of the sample. This is generally true, as only 5% of the population does not have telephone service (Fowler 2002, 25).

The fact that I utilized a random sample of Americans nation-wide sets my work apart. In a recent review article on the use of experimental research in political science, the authors note that 64% of the "laboratory experiments" in political science articles used "exclusively students" (Druckman, et.al. 2006, 633, n7). This research could have been completed using a college student population. Because I am interested in conducting generalizable research about the entire American population, I pushed the normal boundaries of dissertation research in my department to include a national sample.

Choosing Questions

Next, the nature of the questions used in a survey needs to be examined. The major concerns in survey questions revolve around the idea of validity, meaning are the questions accurate in measuring the phenomena of interest. The

first place to look for good questions is in previous research. Using previous measures indicates that a study has good face validity, meaning that it is measuring what it claims to be measuring. What I am trying to measure is political trust, so the questions used must comport with that concept. Most all of the political statements that participants were asked to react to in the survey portion came straight out of previous scholarship on political attitudes. Additionally, the wording of the demographic questions and some of the control variables came from previous and well-respected work, particularly the National Election Studies, Gallup, and the Pew Center.

All of the questions in the survey were closed-ended ones. Closed-ended questions provide ease of comparison among participants especially as compared to open-ended questions. The other advantage to them is that having answers to choose from makes questions clearer to some participants in a survey (Rea and Parker 1992, 39). A potential negative is that there is very little thinking involved on the behalf of participants because they may choose one of the answers provided (Rea and Parker 1992, 42). It is of the utmost importance to make comparisons across survey participants easier, however; so closed-ended questions serve this purpose best.

Data Collection

The final component of good survey design is data collection. As already mentioned, the method of data collection here is telephone surveys, specifically computer assisted telephone interviews (often referred to as CATI). The use of experiments in political science scholarship has been aided by the increase in technology, especially the rise of computer assisted telephone interviews (Druckman, et.al. 2006, 629). There are certain advantages with telephone surveys. These include rapid data collection, lower cost, the ability to conduct surveys at all levels (local, state, or national), and the advantage of anonymity (Rea and Parker 1992, 11-12; Fowler 2002, 71-72).

Some of the disadvantages of telephone surveys are the limits to potential respondents and the lack of visual materials that are normally used in face-to-face interviews (Rea and Parker 1992, 11-12). Other disadvantages that could become important in telephone surveys are the problems of response rates and sampling limitations (Fowler 2002, 64-66). The rate of nonresponse is higher with random digit dialing than it is with personal interviews. Additionally, there is an inherent nonreponse bias associated with age and education (Fowler 2002, 66). Using the telephone and random digit dialing does make it easier to get in touch with some populations and also more difficult to get in touch with others. This is also referred to as the noncoverage error. Ideally, the noncoverage error should be kept to a minimum in trying to get a random national sample, but these problems with telephone surveys remain. People without phone service, homeless people,

soldiers, prisoners, and people in the hospital are typically excluded from surveys (Weisberg, et.al. 1996, 65). In this instance, the advantages of this methodology outweigh these potential shortcomings, as achieving a random sample of the nation is the preeminent concern.

Completion of Survey and Summary

The OU POLL on the University of Oklahoma's campus was employed to conduct the survey experiment. The data was collected between October 2006 and February of 2007. The completed project resulted in 600 complete and 4 incomplete interviews obtained among residents of the 48 contiguous states. For the population of interest, the 600 interviews represent a margin of error of +/- 4.0% at a 95% confidence level. (The 95% confidence level means that if the survey were to be conducted 100 times with 100 different random samples, the actual results obtained would fall within the limits of error at least 95 times). OU POLL reported that the 600 completed and 4 partially completed interviews represent a 26% response rate of known, eligible households.

Experimental Design within the Survey

Special care has been taken to circumvent the potential shortcomings of experiments. A potential disadvantage in experimentation is in generalizability. External validity, generalizing results from one specific population onto another

larger and more general population, is typically problematic in experimental research. External validity is generally of great concern in political science (McDermott 2002, 35), so it is important to ensure that this research provides the greatest extent of external validity possible. The population of interest is normal American citizens and the population utilized was a national random sample of American citizens, so there should be no concerns about generalizability. The population of interest, American citizens, is the population that was sampled from, which should ease generalizability, because the sample is representative of the population of interest.

Another concern with generalizability for my research is in generalizing about people, process, and policy. While people, process, and policy are broad ideas, I tested only a few specific elements of each of these three primary independent variables. In the survey, I inquired about three statements of people, process, and policy, while in the experimental portion of the design, I tested the effect of two aspects of each people, process, and policy, which resulted in four treatments for each category. When I report my results here, and refer to people, process, and policy, I can only speak with certainty about the aspects specifically tested here. Beyond that, any conclusions that I come to regarding these three broad categories of people, process, and policy may not be generalizable to all ideas of people, process, and policy.

Experiments are capable of altering the regular behavior of people because they are fully aware that they are participating in one. As such, generalizing across settings also presents a concern because an experimenter may capture behavior in an experiment that may not otherwise occur (Kinder and Palfrey 1993, 27). This does not present an obstacle in this research design because people were exposed to an experiment within a survey. When participants agreed to participate in this research, it was described as a survey, which it was. Telephone surveys make "inserting experiments into naturally-occurring environments" possible (Druckman, et.al. 2006, 629). As such, there are no overt concerns that the behavior and attitudes of people was altered. Because this research design exposed all participants to just three treatments, there is also little risk of carryover effects from one treatment to another, as can sometimes be a problem in experimental designs (Sniderman and Grob 1996, 382).

As a result, this research design exhibits strong internal validity and external validity. Internal validity means that what is done in the study, the treatments for instance, causes what is observed, here trust scores. Because of the experimental design, I can ensure that the manipulation of the independent variables, through the treatments, will be causing the difference (if one is to be perceived) in the dependent variable of trust. As mentioned above, by using a random sample of people, I am able to tentatively generalize to the entire collective of people, so external validity is strong. Any threat to external validity

would originate with the way in which I have decided to operationalize and measure my explanatory variables.

For the experimental portion of the research design, survey participants were exposed to different treatments on particular attributes of people, process, and policy. Each person was exposed to three treatments which described an individual politician; each treatment emphasized one attribute of each people, process, and policy. After each of these treatments, respondents were asked about their level of trust in this politician. The second part of this methodology, then, allows me to test the affect of two variations of the same attribute of people, process, and policy upon trust.

This simple experimental design was first divided into three groups which represented each of the three primary explanations of trust to be examined, people, process, and policy. There were two specific attributes to be tested within each component of people, process, and policy, and each attribute had two treatments. This resulted in four possible treatments within each category of people, process, and policy. Survey respondents were randomly assigned to experience one of the four treatments for each component. The dependent variable, political trust, was measured for each of these groups. Because of randomization, the subgroups of the sample should be identical. Any differences between these groups on the dependent variable can then be attributed to the difference in the treatment.

The Treatments

The treatment was a description of an individual politician. The object of trust to be asked about here, then, was a political actor. This should make it fairly easy for people to make a trust decision, as there is a specific object. An individual politician is a concrete entity whereas the federal government is an obscure and unclear political object.

Each attribute of people, process, and policy to be tested had two treatments. These treatments were both stated in a positive direction but they presented different scenarios. People, process, and policy attributes were not to be portrayed as zero sum games, where a politician can only be one way or the complete opposite. For instance, the variables of people, process, and policy used in this study were discussed above and now an example of the way in which these treatments will be operationalized can be given. The process variable of clean campaigning was presented in treatments this way. The first treatment read "Congressman Frank Smith, in his campaign, promised to keep the focus of the election on the issues and not the people running for office. He publicly promised not to run any negative campaign ads or to attack his opponent on a personal level." The second treatment read "Congressman Frank Smith, in his campaign, vowed to point out the differences between himself and his opponent. He publicly pledged to make sure that voters had all the important information on the

candidates and the issues." In this way, these treatments allowed me to tease out the subtle differences we expect to see in politicians and gauge individuals' reactions to reality, rather than a simple dichotomy. The assumption is that each treatment had differing effects on political trust, both pair-wise and also in comparison with other treatments within each of the three categories of people, process, and policy.

The experimental treatment was a description of an incumbent officeholder, specifically a member of Congress. Congress is the institution that representative government is premised upon as it was the only institution in the original American constitution which called for direct elections by the people (at least the House of Representatives anyways). Its position in the political system is of the utmost importance. Congress is also the least liked of all American institutions (Cooper 1999). In using a member of Congress, this research design used the hardest case to test aspects of political trust.

Additionally, the frame of reference for this research question about political trust, though aimed at specific trust in individuals, places the decisions about trust within the larger federal government. I felt that the politician, the object of political trust in this experimental design, should be representative of the federal government. Citizens generally trust state and local governments more than the federal government (Uslaner 2001, 133). We would expect that if the politician used in the treatment were a state official, that no matter what the

treatments, levels of trust might be higher. Congress is the best federal institution to place a hypothetical politician in, as Congress is the institution most commonly thought of when asked about the federal government. Feelings about Congress have already been found to affect trust (Williams 1985). Some research has found a strong causal link between trust in Congress as a political institution and trust in government in a general sense (Feldman 1983, 351). It follows accordingly then that Congress is the most natural referent for our politician to be used in the treatment.

Another distinction to be explained is that the individual office holder in each treatment was male. Gender considerations may complicate the analysis unnecessarily and water down the potential effect of the variables of interest, people, process, and policy. Previous research indicates that gender does matter. Voters view male and female candidates differently. Male and female candidates are thought to excel in different areas of policy (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a, 1993b). Male traits are generally associated with being a more effective legislator (Rosenwasser and Dean 1989). Most importantly, though, there is evidence that judgments made about male and female candidates differ in regards to trust. There is evidence that female political candidates are trusted more than men (Matland and King 2002). Women candidates are seen as more honest than similar male candidates (Kahn 1992, 504; Leeper 1991, 255).

As such, varying the gender of the politicians in the treatments would presumably affect political trust. While the experimental treatments here did not describe candidates, it was presumed that the differences detected in how male and female candidates are evaluated would also apply to politicians, without reference to their status as candidates. Because trust is the concept of interest to be tested here, it was reasonable to not include gender as an issue. I wanted to keep conditions, in this case gender, constant, and simultaneously minimize all extraneous variables. Moreover, male politicians are more common than are females. Admittedly, this decision to use only male politicians may limit the findings and interpretation of my research, but given the conditions just discussed, I am comfortable with this. The issue of gender and trust in politicians remains open for future research.

The issue of partisan identification is also a concern in asking people to evaluate politicians. We know that people's political judgments including vote choice will be affected by the party identification of both the politician in question and their own partisan persuasion (Campbell, et.al 1960). Of greatest concern for this research design is how to either include party identification or control for it. People evaluate politics according to their partisanship, so in introducing survey respondents to members of Congress, partisanship is an automatic element of any subsequent evaluations made. The expectation is that people will be more likely to trust politicians that share their party identification. There does not, however,

exist any substantive evidence that party identification or ideology affects overall levels of political trust (Alford 2001, 41; Owen and Dennis 2001, 222). In order to neutralize the effect of party identification upon trust, the prompt before the treatments did not reference ideology or partisanship of the politician in question at all. This decision to not include party identification also has its consequences as I will not be able to speak to the effect of partisanship on the elements of people, process, and policy or the resulting levels of political trust that will be tested. This question would be an appealing one for future research along these lines to consider.

In conclusion, special attention went into ensuring that there were no symbolic or ideological cues in these treatments. The treatments were very brief and free of any extraneous information. After the treatment, when respondents were asked about trust in that individual politician, their opinions will not have been influenced by any confusion over the level of government, gender concerns, or partisan identification. Survey respondents reacted, then, to the actual content of the treatments.

Chapter 3
Survey Results

The purpose of this research design is to find if the ideas of people, process, and policy are determinants of political trust. The first part of the research design attempts to answer this question through a survey. As previously mentioned, respondents were asked to respond to nine different political statements: three each for people, process, and policy.

This survey experiment (N = 600) was conducted by the OU POLL beginning in October of 2006 and ending in February of 2007. It is important to understand the political climate of this time, since the questions asked here tapped into people's feelings about people, process, and policy. The country was entering the fourth year of the war in Iraq and the country was growing continually weary of this war. President George W. Bush's popularity was also on the wane. The sample surveyed here were much more likely to disapprove of the job he was doing, than to approve (62%, n =361 to 30%, n = 177). The survey also spanned a congressional election in November 2006 which saw control of Congress switch from the Republican to the Democratic party. This has been attributed to the dissatisfaction with the war in Iraq, that party control in Congress switched hands. As such, the political context within which this survey experiment was conducted was one of dissatisfaction and increasing cynicism.

The statements intended to measure how people feel about qualities of elected officials were 1. Politicians generally have good intentions. 2. I have a great deal of confidence in the men and women in this country that either hold or are running for public office. 3. Politicians in the U.S. deserve respect.

In order to measure feelings about process with political trust, the following three statements were tested. 1. Most politicians do a lot of talking but they do little to solve the really important issues facing the country. 2. The political process is fair and open. 3. Fighting between political parties in Washington prevents our elected officials from getting anything done.

In order to test the idea that policy, as conceptualized here, is a determinant of political trust, three statements were included in the survey portion of this research design. 1. I am generally satisfied with the public policies the government has produced lately. 2. All in all, the government does a good job of running its programs. 3. Things in this country are generally headed in the right direction.

Table 3.1 – Summary of People, Process, and Policy Statements

People	1. Politicians generally have good intentions. 2. I have a great deal of confidence in the men and women in this country that either hold or are running for public office. 3. Politicians in the U.S. deserve respect.
Process	1. Most politicians do a lot of talking but they do little to solve the really

	important issues facing the country. 2. The political process is fair and open. 3. Fighting between political parties in Washington prevents our elected officials from getting anything done.
Policy	1. I am generally satisfied with the public policies the government has produced lately. 2. All in all, the government does a good job of running its programs. 3. Things in this country are generally headed in the right direction.

Survey participants were asked to evaluate these nine political statements on a 5 point scale, where 5 is strongly agree, 4 is agree, 3 is neither agree nor disagree, 2 is disagree, and 1 is strongly disagree. The nine statements were randomly rotated in the order in which they were read to participants. In all, participants had no problem providing their opinion on these ideas, as the sample size for each question ranges between 591 and 596 (out of a possible 600), meaning that there are at the least 4 missing values and at most 9.

Descriptive Analysis

In order to analyze this data, I must first summarize and describe it. First, measures of central tendency should be considered. These nine variables of people, process, and policy are ordinal variables which use a Likert scale, as explained above, to ascertain people's reactions to them. Ordinal variables have numerical value between each possible response but we cannot know if the

intervals on the scale are all equal. Social science literature often treats these types of variables as true interval variables and calculates a mean for them (Cohen and Lea 2004, 3), I shall do the same here. The mean and the standard deviation will be reported for each of these nine variables.

Additionally, frequency distributions and percentages can be reported with an ordinal variable (Cohen and Lea 2004, 6). I will be reporting the valid percents in these cases, which do not take into account the missing values. Because there are so few missing values with these variables, as mentioned above, there is no problem in reporting the valid percents. These frequency tables are included in the Appendix as Tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 in order to save space.

Means and Frequency Distribution of People Variables

(Table 3.2 Here)

As far as respondent's perceptions of whether or not politicians generally have good intentions, the mean is 3.10 and the standard deviation 1.01, meaning that the sample of people surveyed generally neither agrees nor disagree that politicians have good intentions. A look at the frequencies reveals that 40% of the sample either strongly agrees or agrees that politicians generally have good intentions (n = 238), although the percentage of those who strongly agree is small

(5%, n = 28). A full third of people (33%, n = 195) remains squarely in the middle, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. The amount of people who agree that politicians have good intentions is greater than those who don't (27% either disagree or strongly disagree, n = 162). On the issue of politicians having good intentions, the greatest percentage belongs to those who agree (35%, n = 210) and the second greatest is the neither agree nor disagree response (33%, n = 195). As a whole, these individuals either agree that politicians have good intentions or they have no definite opinion.

The second people question asks respondents about their confidence in the people that are either running for or holding elective office. The sample appears to be neutral on this question ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.01$), as the mean indicates neither agrees nor disagree that they have confidence in politicians. The sample here is ambivalent about this question with a third of the sample (33%, n = 196) claiming they neither agree nor disagree. A frequency distribution reveals that people are more likely to disagree (32%, n = 189) that they have confidence in political leaders than agree (20%, n = 120), with only very small percentages who feel strongly either way on this idea. The two most often occurring responses are neither agree nor disagree and disagree, indicating that this group of people do not have a great deal of confidence in their political leaders.

The third people statement asks if "Politicians in the U.S deserve respect". It appears that the sample neither agrees nor disagrees with this statement as well

(M = 3.29, SD = 1.18). Out of all three of the people statements, this one has the highest mean, meaning that, as a whole, people are more likely to agree that politicians deserve respect than agree that politicians have good intentions or they have a great deal of confidence in them. More revealing, however, is the frequency distribution, as almost half (49%, n = 293) of these people agree or strongly agree that politicians deserve respect.

As a whole, then, on matters related to the people serving in political office, this sample has a rather neutral impression of politicians. On average, they are most likely to neither agree nor disagree that politicians do have good intentions, that they have a great deal of confidence in them, and that politicians deserve respect. A majority of those surveyed do think that politicians deserve respect.

Means and Frequency Distribution of Process Variables

(Table 3.3 Here)

The three statements of process were chosen to represent two specific process qualities that Americans seem to complain about and one more general statement about the political process. People's reactions to these process statements are much more extreme than those associated with people. The first of

these (Most politicians do a lot of talking but they do little to solve the really important issues facing the country) asks people to gauge whether they agree or disagree with the idea that politicians talk but do not get anything done. The mean of 3.88 indicates that most people agree with this statement (*SD* = 1.14). A great majority, 71%, either agree or strongly agree that most politicians do a lot of talking but get little done (n = 418).

The next process statement that responses were measured for is "The political process is fair and open". It appears that the majority of people neither agree nor disagree with this sentiment of process (*M* = 2.84, *SD* = 1.16). 41% of this group of people either strongly disagree or disagree that the political process is fair and open (n = 244). The tendency as a whole is negative, as there are twice as many individuals who strongly disagree (14%, n = 83) than strongly agree (7%, n = 41).

The last process sentiment tested was "Fighting between political parties in Washington prevents out elected officials from getting anything done". This statement garnered the highest average score of all nine statements with a mean of 3.96 (*SD* = 1.22). A full 74% (n = 437) of the sample agreed or strongly agreed that fighting between political parties prevents politicians from getting things accomplished. This statement resulted in the lowest percentage (for all nine of these statements) of those who neither agreed nor disagreed with only 10% (n =

59) of the sample falling into that category. This indicates that this idea evokes a very strong reaction from the people surveyed.

Overall, responses to process statements show more extreme variation than responses to people statements. Frequency distributions show there were far fewer individual who chose the neither agree nor disagree option on the questions of process than the questions concerning people. Two of the process statements, "lots of talking" and "fighting between parties", had means that hovered near 4, indicating that most people agreed. The mean response to "fair and open" indicates neutrality. On average, this sample of people does not have very favorable opinions of the elements of process asked about here.

Means and Frequency Distribution of Policy Variables

(Table 3.4 Here)

The three statements of policy were intended to represent policy as a general idea about the state of the nation and its policies. These statements were all worded in the positive direction. As a whole, the numbers show that people are generally not pleased with the state of things. These three policy statements garnered the lowest mean scores of all nine statements. The first statement asked participants to respond to "I am generally satisfied with the public policies the

government has produced lately". The mean of 2.37 indicates that people were most likely to disagree with this statement (*SD* = 1.13) and 58% (n = 347) of the respondents overall disagreed or strongly disagreed with this sentiment. In fact, almost as many people strongly disagreed (n = 162) that they were satisfied with public policies, as those that just disagreed (n = 185). Moreover, a smaller percentage of the sample agreed (20%, n = 103) than had no opinion (22%, n = 130).

The second policy idea inquired about how people felt about the government's performance in running its programs. The mode here was 2.53, meaning that on average most people disagreed or neither agreed nor disagreed. A frequency distribution shows that 53% (n = 314) of people, a majority, either disagree or strongly disagree that the government is doing a good job running its programs. Furthermore, 28% of the sample neither agrees nor disagrees (n = 166), which overshadows the 19% that do agree (n = 113). Much like the first policy statement, respondents definitely had a negative opinion of the how well the government does in running its programs.

The third policy idea was represented by a question utilized often in survey research. Participants were asked to respond to "Things in this country are generally headed in the right direction". The mean here was 2.46, meaning that people generally disagree with this statement as well (*SD* = 1.16). 55% of the sample disagrees or strongly disagrees that things are headed in the right direction

(n = 325). The majority, then, does not seem happy with the direction that the country is headed in. Equal numbers of people had a positive response here (22%, n = 135) as a neutral opinion (23%, n = 135).

The means across responses to policy ideas, as a whole, are the lowest out of the three ideas of people, process, and policy. This intimates that this group of people is likely to disagree with positive statements about the policy, programs, and general direction of the country. In each case, majorities of the sample disagreed with any positive sentiment here. It can be safely said that this sample of people does not generally seem happy with these broad elements of policy.

As a whole, this random, nationwide sample of people have neutral feelings about the people in office, are much more likely to have an extreme response to the process of politics, and are generally dissatisfied with elements of policy in this country. The next question then becomes, do these sentiments of people, process, and policy influence political trust?

People, Process, and Policy as Determinants of Trust – Regression Analysis

What effect do citizens' evaluations of people, process, and policy, as conceptualized here, have on political trust? Are they determinative of trust, as I have postulated? In order to answer this answer this question, linear regression analysis was performed. Regression is performed to examine a relationship between one or more independent variables and a single dependent variable. The

purpose is to create a regression equation to predict a dependent variable from a group of independent variables. There are two important outcomes to be had from regression analysis. The first of these is to help determine which independent variables are good predictors of the dependent variable, and the second purpose is to obtain estimates of the individual coefficients in the model in order to understand their predictive value (Elliott and Woodward 2007, 95). OLS regression can speak to the magnitude of the variables in the model. This will enable me to compare the effects of people, process, and policy variables to each other to compare how they perform in explaining trust without performing any further models. The hypothesized relationship in all of the subsequent regression analyses is that as a person's impression of these particular ideas of people, process, and policy becomes more positive, trust in government should increase.

As a side note to these methodological considerations, I considered using another type of regression, logit. This type is often employed when analyzing a limited dependent variable. The Trust dependent variable, especially, could be conceived of as such with five response options. I did perform a logit regression analysis and found that the variables of primary interest, people, process, and policy performed similarly as they had using OLS regression. Because of the ease in interpreting OLS regression, I chose to stay with OLS.

First, people, process, and policy variables will be considered separately in regression models. This will indicate which of the variables within each category

have the most predictive power over trust and which ones are statistically significant. Then, all nine variables of people, process, and policy will be regressed onto trust in one model. This will enable me to see how these variables compare across categories in their effect on trust. Then, scaled variables of people, process, and policy are regressed onto trust. Creating scaled variables will be done to find out if the effect of people, process, and policy are different as amalgamated concepts versus single variables. Finally, the effect of people, process, and policy on trust is considered in tandem with other pertinent control and demographic variables. The political trust literature is rich with other variables which have been tested for their effect on trust, and those will be considered here as well. This is done in order to see how people, process, and policy stack up against other hypothesized explanations of political trust.

How Will Trust be Measured?

Since regression models depend upon the dependent variable that is being predicted, the dependent variable should be explained. The dependent variable of trust shall be considered in two ways for the remaining analyses in this chapter. The first of these is what shall hereafter be referred to as the Trust Scale. As previously mentioned, this appears to be the most common way of conceptualizing of trust as a dependent variable. This Trust Scale adds up the values of all four questions included in the NES trust battery. All four of these

questions are coded so that the greater the numerical value for each question, it indicates an increasing amount of trust. The higher the number on the Trust Scale indicates more trust. The range for this version of trust is a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 11, and the mean is 7.06.

The second version of trust will be a more truncated version of the Trust Scale and will be called Trust. It will use only the first question of the NES trust battery (How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?). Several scholars make the argument that this question alone stands as a good measure of trust (Owen and Dennis 2001, 211). As such, this Trust dependent variable will utilize only this question. The possible responses include never, rarely, some of the time, most of the time, and always, and are coded from 1 (never) to 5 (always). The mean of this variable of trust is 2.91, and the majority of this nationwide sample of people (56%, n = 335) chose the response option "some of the time".

It is important to point out that the traditional "How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?" question generally has only three response categories: just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time. I altered the response categories to include five: always, most of the time, some of the time, rarely, and never. These response categories were adopted from the work of Gershtenson and Plane (2006). These scholars argue that the difference between these response options

is unclear, especially the distinction between just about always and most of the time. They suggest the use of "always" as a response option because it is more absolute. Moreover, offering respondents more response choices should make for finer distinctions. The response option of "never" is also offered here while it is not in the standard NES trust battery.

Looking at the descriptive statistics for this trust question, it is evident that the distribution of trust across this sample with these response options approximates a normal curve. Only two people claimed that they "always" trusted the government which accounts for less than 1% of the sample. On the other extreme, 5% of the sample chose "never" (n = 28). As indicated above, a full 56% (n = 335) of the sample says they trust the government some of the time. Approximately equal percentages say they "rarely" trust the government (19%, n=115) as "most of the time" (20%, n=116).

People, Process, and Policy Separately

In order to see how variables of people, process, and policy perform as predictors of political trust, three different models will be computed. One model will use only the three people variables as independent variables, another with only the process variables, and the final one only with policy variables. This will allow us to see what effect these concepts of people, process, and policy have on trust separately. All three of these models will be performed using two separate

dependent variables. None of the following regression models has any indication of multicollinearity as evidenced by the Tolerance and VIF statistics. Multicollinearity refers to explanatory or independent variables being highly correlated with one another. For the purposes of prediction, which is the goal of a regression model, the explanatory variables should be only weakly correlated with one another and strongly correlated with the dependent variable. The fact that these models have no evidence of multicollinearity means that these independent variables, even within the same categories of people, process, and policy, are measuring different things.

People

This initial models using just the three people variables as independent variables and the Trust Scale as the dependent variable has an R-squared of .25 in the Trust Scale and a .21 for Trust, meaning that these three people variables explain 25% of the variation in the Trust Scale and 21% of the variation in Trust. All three people variables are positive and statistically significant in both models ($p < .000$) and in the hypothesized directions. This means that the more likely a person is to think that politicians have "good intentions", politicians deserve "respect", and that they have a great deal of "confidence in politicians", the greater their trust will be. The strongest independent variable, in examining their

betas, appears to be "confidence in politicians", and that is the case for both dependent variables.

(Table 3.5 Here)

Process

The models with process variables as independent variables do not explain as much of the variation in the dependent variables of trust as the model with people characteristics. The R-squared for the model with Trust Scale as the dependent variable is .14, and the R-squared for the model with Trust as the dependent variable is .11. Two of the process variables ("lots of talking" and "fighting between parties") were expressed in the negative direction and were recoded to be stated in the positive direction along with "fair and open". One of the process variables, fighting between parties, fails to achieve statistical significance. This is probably due to the fact that there is not enough variation to find a relationship. A large percentage of the sample (73%) either agrees or strongly agrees that fighting between the political parties prevents elected officials from getting anything done. "The political process is fair and open" is statistically significant in both models ($p < .000$). In models with either of the dependent variables, the beta for this variable reveals that it has the greatest effect of all three process variables. The other variable "lots of talking" is statistically

significant in each of the models and has a positive relationship with both Trust and Trust Scale. This means that the more likely a person is to think that the political process is fair and open the more trusting they are. Also, the more likely one is to disagree with "Most politicians do a lot of talking but they do little to solve the really important issues facing the country", the more trusting they are. Put simply, the more likely a person is to disagree with the negative process statement "lots of talking", the more trusting she is.

(Table 3.6 Here)

Policy

The R-squared statistic shows that the regression model with policy variables has about as much predictive power over trust as the model with people variables only. In the two models here, the R-squared of .25 for both indicates that policy variables alone account for about 25% of the variation in both versions of trust. All three variables are positive and statistically significant at at least the $p < .01$ level. How a person feels about the government's performance in "running its programs" has the greatest predictive power in both models, as indicated by the betas of these variables.

(Table 3.7 Here)

All Nine Variables of People, Process, and Policy

These next regression models will utilize all nine variables of people, process, and policy that were tested. This will show how they all work in concert with one another. Because these nine variables of people, process, and policy have the same units, it will be possible to compare the size of the betas, or standardized coefficients, in the regression models to compare the relative effects of different explanatory variables.

Dependent Variable – Trust Scale

The first regression model included all nine of the people, process variables as independent variables. According the ANOVA F-test, the model is a strong fit ($p < .000$) and can be considered statistically significant. Missing values were excluded list wise, resulting in a sample size of 515.

The dependent variable utilized here was the created Trust Scale. This trust scale adds up the values of all four questions included in the NES trust battery. All four of these questions have responses that are coded so that the greater the numerical value for each question, it indicates an increasing amount of trust. The higher the number on the Trust Scale indicates more trust. The range for this version of trust is a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 11.

The purpose of a scaled variable is to summarize and quantify some underlying dimension. The Trust Scale here adds up the values of all four trust questions of the NES battery to form a more complete picture of political trust. When using a scale, its reliability must be tested to ensure that all of the items in the scale are measuring the same thing. Cronbach's alpha for Trust Scale was .62 (M = 7.06, SD = 1.63). Although good scales tend to have values larger than .8, this is an acceptable reliability coefficient. All four questions of the Trust Scale, although long considered measuring one component, are not measuring the exact same component. Trust Scale will continue to be used as a dependent variable for now and its usage will be continued until otherwise stated.

(Table 3.8 Here, Model 1)

The R-squared is a measure that evaluates the performance of a regression model. This statistic measures the strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. It indicates how much of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the regression. It ranges from 0, indicating no linear relationship, and 1, indicating a perfect linear relationship. This first regression model, then, has an R-squared of .36. The nine variables included explain 36% of the variation in the dependent variable Trust Scale.

There is no evidence of multicollinearity present in the model. There is no strong correlation among the independent variables. The Tolerance levels are all well above zero, the lowest variable at .561. Likewise, the VIF statistics show no evidence of multicollinearity, ranging from 1.118 to 1.783.

Six of these nine independent variables are statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level or better. These are "good intentions", "confidence in politicians", "respect", "lots of talking", "running its programs", and "headed in the right direction". The political process is "fair and open", "fighting between political parties", and "satisfaction with public policy" are not statistically significant. All six of these significant variables have positive relationships with the Trust Scale, meaning that as a person's impressions become more positive, their trust increases.

The only process variable that achieves significance ("lots of talking") has a positive relationship with trust. This variable was recoded in the positive direction, meaning that the more likely a person is to *disagree* that politicians do a lot of talking but get little done, the higher their score on the Trust Scale. The more likely one is to disagree with a negative statement about process, the higher their trust is. While all three of the people variables achieve statistical significance in this model, only one of the three process variables does. All six variables that are significant should then be interpreted as when a person's

impression becomes more positive on that specific element; their level of trust should increase.

Overall, the predictive power of policy variables appears to be the greatest. A look at the betas shows that the "running programs" ($\beta = .194$) and "headed in the right direction" ($\beta = .151$) variables have the greatest predictive power in this regression model with all nine people, process, and policy variables. The process variable "lots of talking" ($\beta = .139$) exerts the next greatest predictive power and is the only process variable that is statistically significant. Following closely behind, however, are the people variables, "good intentions" and "respect" with ($\beta = .130$)

Dependent Variable – Trust

The second regression model is similar to the first model in all respects except one, the dependent variable. Several scholars have made the argument that the first question of the trust battery is the best measure of trust (How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right?) (Alford 2001; Owen and Dennis 2001). Alford (2001) specifically states that this single question is a better indicator of trust in government than an indexed variable (29). Using this variable, which I will call Trust, as the dependent variable results in an N of 555.

Once again, this regression model exhibits a strong fit ($p < .000$) according to the ANOVA F-test and can be considered statistically significant. Missing values were excluded list wise here as they were in the first model.

There is no evidence of multicollinearity in this model either. The Tolerance and VIF statistics look very similar to those in the previous model.

(Table 3.8 Here, Model 2)

This regression model results in an R-squared of .32. This model explains less variance in the dependent variable of Trust than the other model did in explaining Trust Scale. These models have differing dependent variables though, so really cannot be compared on that.

In this model, two of three people variables are statistically significant ("good intentions" and "respect"). One process variable is significant ("lots of talking"). Two of three policy variables are significant ("running programs" and "headed in right direction"). All of these statistically significant variables have a positive relationship with Trust, meaning that as they increase, so does trust.

Overall, the independent variables perform similarly in both of these regression models, even though they have different dependent variables. In neither of these two models do the process variables of "fair and open" and "fighting between parties" achieve statistical significance. Two other variables

indicate differently in each regression model. With Trust Scale as the dependent variable, "confidence in politicians" achieves significance but it does not in the model with Trust as the dependent variable. In the Trust model, the policy variable of "satisfied with public policy" achieves statistical significance although it does not in the model based on Trust Scale.

Scaled Independent Variables of People, Process, and Policy

All nine variables of people, process, and policy were included separately in the previous regression models. This was done in order to see which of these variables were significant predictors of trust. That being accomplished, I will now use these nine political statements to form scale variables for the ideas of people, process, and policy. Can these singular sentiments of people, process, and policy be amalgamated into scales which adequately represent the ideas of people, process, and policy?

To create these scaled variables, the responses to all alike statements were added together. The People Scale adds together "good intentions" + "confidence in politicians" + politicians deserve "respect". The Process Scale adds "lots of talking" + process "fair and open" + "fighting between political parties". The Policy Scale is formed by adding "satisfied with public policy" + "headed in right direction" + "running programs". This was easily done as all nine variables were worded in the same direction or were recoded to do so (the two process variables

"lots of talking" and "fighting between parties"). As a result, three indexed variables were created, each ranging from 3 to 15. In the case of all three scales, the *higher* the value indicates greater satisfaction with that element.

These indexed variables will be utilized as independent variables in regression models which use Trust and Trust Scale as dependent variables. All three of these variables will be entered into each of these two models. This will be done in order to ascertain the effect of each of the three ideas of people, process, and policy in relation to each other. Because these scaled variables of people, process, and policy all have the same units, it will be possible to compare the size of the coefficients in the regression models to compare the relative effects of these different explanatory variables.

Once again, the purpose of a scaled variable is to summarize and quantify some underlying dimension. The people, process, and policy scales add up the values of the three questions from the survey in order to form a more complete picture of how a person feels about that dimension of politics. When using a scale, its reliability must be tested to ensure that all of the items in the scale are measuring the same thing. If the items of a scale are not measuring the same component, then it does no good to form a scale in the first place. As such, reliability analysis of these three scaled variables must be performed first. Cronbach's alpha is the measure of internal consistency of scales and will be utilized for this analysis. This analysis will also reveal if the ideas of people,

process, and policy that I have tested here are measuring the three elements that I have proffered here.

People Scale

Cronbach's alpha for the People Scale was .68 (α= .68, *M* = 9.09, *SD* = 2.51). Although good scales tend to have values larger than .8, this is an acceptable reliability coefficient. These three questions about perceptions of people in politics are similar but not the same. Obviously, there is an underlying dimension that holds these three ideas of people together, although it may not be as statistically strong as is normally desired.

Process Scale

Reliability for the Process Scale (α = .37, *M* = 7.00, *SD* = 2.35) was unacceptable. The observed reliability coefficient indicates that there is no underlying dimension present in this scale. Although I have posited these three variables as measuring process, this analysis shows that the variables are **not** measuring the same thing. This scale will, therefore, not be utilized as a scaled variable of process, as this analysis shows that there is no real uniformity here.

In the initial discussion of these three dimensions of people, process, and policy, I shared that people and process were probably the hardest to differentiate. Other scholars have had the same problem and would concur (Ulbig 2002; Steele

2005). This reliability analysis of the Process Scale indicates that I have not conceptualized of process in such a way that there is uniformity amongst the measurements (at least in the survey portion of the design). Although not completely surprised, as I knew that this was going to be particularly difficult, I am disappointed.

Policy Scale

Cronbach's alpha for the Policy scale was a very respectable .76 ($\alpha = .76$, $M = 7.36$, $SD = 2.76$). The policy variables have a nicely uniformity to them, measuring a similar construct of policy, and therefore the Policy Scale performs very well as a scaled variable. This finding makes it usage justifiable.

Reliability of Scaled Variables

Analysis of the scaled variables of people, process, and policy provides evidence regarding the uniformity of the concepts as they have been conceptualized and measured here in the survey part of the research design. The observed reliability coefficients for the People and Policy Scales indicate that reliability for these two scales is acceptable. This means that these scales are internally consistent, measuring the same idea. The Process Scale, however, performed poorly and cannot be used in any analysis as the three variables are not internally consistent with each other and cannot be used as a scale.

Dependent Variable – Trust Scale

First, the People Scale and the Policy Scale variables will be entered into a regression model, along with the three separate process variables, with Trust Scale as the dependent variable. According to the ANOVA F-test, this model is a strong fit ($p < .000$). Missing values were excluded list wise for this analysis, which results in an N of 515. The R-squared of this model with this dependent variable is .35. There is also no multicollinearity apparent in this model.

(Table 3.9 Here, Model 1)

With Trust Scale as a dependent variable, both the People and Policy Scales are statistically significant and both at $p < .000$ levels. The only process variable that is significant is "lots of talking". These three variables all have positive relationships with Trust Scale meaning that as the perceptions of each become more positive, trust increases.

In looking at the betas of these coefficients, the People ($\beta = .285$) and Policy Scales ($\beta = .313$) have similar magnitude effects on Trust Scale. The strength of "lots of talking" ($\beta = .133$) follows. This is very much in line with previous findings here as people and policy variables have had a greater impact than process variables in all regression models performed thus far. It does not

appear that the effect of people or policy variables changes significantly with the usage of the scaled variables. Although the Process Scale had to be abandoned, one of the process variables plays an important predictive role in this model.

Dependent Variable – Trust

Next, the People and Policy scales will be entered as independent variables, along with the separate process variables, in an attempt to explain Trust. According to the ANOVA F-test, this model is a strong fit ($p < .000$). Missing values were excluded list wise for this analysis, which results in an N of 555. There is no evidence of multicollinearity in this model indicating that there is no collinearity among independent variables. The Tolerance statistics are all well above 0, the lowest being .678, and the VIF statistics indicate no multicollinearity present. The R-squared of this model is .32.

(Table 3.9 Here, Model 2)

The People Scale and the Policy Scale are both statistically significant at the $p < .000$ level. Similar to the model with Trust Scale as the dependent variable, "lots of talking" is the only process variable that has a statistically significant and positive relationship with Trust. The betas in this model with

Trust as the dependent variable reveal that Policy Scale (β = .348) has the greatest predictive power over Trust, followed by the People Scale (β = .247).

Choosing Among Dependent Variables

It appears from the analysis of these regression models that these dependent variables perform similarly. In models using nine separate individual people, process, and policy variables, the R-squared statistics are very similar, .36 (Trust Scale) and .32 (Trust), meaning that they are similar in how much of the variance in the dependent variable the independent variables are capable of explaining. In the regression models using the indexed variables of People Scale and Policy Scale, along with three separate process variables, the R-squared statistics were .35 (Trust Scale) and .32 (Trust). In comparison, the same independent variables are capable of explaining slightly more of the variation in Trust Scale versus Trust. Since the independent variables are exactly the same, the difference in R-squared statistics can be understood as an artifact of the dependent variable. Why might this be? First of all, the Trust Scale has more variation to explain because it has a greater range, from 4 to 11, versus the Trust variable that has a range from 1 to 5.

In order to determine if these two dependent variables are related, correlation analysis can be used. The coefficient for linear correlation is referred to as *Pearson's r* and measures the strength of a linear relationship between two

variables. For testing the statistical significance of a Pearson's correlation coefficient, the null hypothesis would be that there is no linear relationship between two variables. If the p-value for the test is small, then the null hypothesis can be rejected. A correlation measure between Trust and Trust Scale shows a positive and statistically significant correlation of $r = .81$, n = 550, $p < .01$ (two tailed). The null hypothesis can be rejected, indicating that there may be a linear relationship between these two variables. Due to the strength of the correlation, it appears that there is a linear relationship between Trust and Trust Scale. A scatter plot formulated with these two variables shows the relationship to be very linear. As such, it would appear that both of these dependent variables are measuring similar ideas of trust.

There is a slight difference in the sample size of each dependent variable, Trust Scale n = 550 and Trust n = 596. The difference between these two represents 10%, give or take, of the total sample size. Trust Scale, while it has the lower sample size, is better predicted by the independent variables of interest, people, process, and policy. Overall, the fact that both models perform similarly, regardless of sample size, and that there is a significant linear relationship between Trust and Trust Scale indicates a need to continue to utilize both dependent variables, at least for the time being.

Performance of Independent Variables

How do the ideas of people, process, and policy perform when entered separately and when used as indexed variables? Is there a significant difference? As discussed above, the independent variables, when entered separately, perform similarly in their ability to explain the dependent variables of interest. It appears that the overall predictive power of process ideas on trust is the weakest, as both process "fair and open" and "fighting between parties" are not significant in either model.

The same independent variables appear to be significant in both models, with two exceptions. One exception is that confidence in politicians is not significant in explaining Trust, but it is for Trust Scale. Similarly, satisfaction with public policy is not significant in predicting Trust Scale, but it is with Trust. Perhaps an assessment of public policy has a more direct relationship with simple trust. After all, this dependent variable simply asks "How often do you trust the government in Washington to do what is right?" How satisfied a person is with the policies produced by the government should affect trust. The Trust Scale dependent variable adds responses together from four separate questions. One of these inquires directly about politicians "Do you think that quite a few of the people running government are a little crooked, not very many are, or do you think that hardly any of them are crooked at all?" Confidence in politicians should matter in how people would answer this particular question alone, which would then affect Trust Scale as a dependent variable but not necessarily Trust.

As the reliability analysis revealed, the three process variables were not consistent enough to form a scaled variable. When entered separately, "lots of talking" is the only process variable that achieves statistical significance. This is also the case when all nine people, process, and policy variables are regressed onto trust, both versions of it. It appears that this variable is a powerful idea of process. Basically, the less likely a person is to think that politicians do a lot of talking but little to solve problems, the more she trusts the government. The perception of inactivity and tongue wagging has a strong negative effect on trust.

The indexed variables of people and policy also perform well in predicting trust. People Scale and Policy Scale reach statistical significance ($p < .000$) in both models. Looking at the size of the betas, it appears that in predicting both dependent measures of trust that the Policy Scale has the larger effect of the two.

Differentiating People, Process, and Policy

One of the goals of this work was to compare the effects of people, process, and policy upon political trust. The standardized coefficients, or betas, of the regression equations with indexed variables of people and policy, process variables entered separately indicate that policy has the greatest impact on trust of the three. The People Scale is also significant and trails just behind the Policy Scale in its power. The primary process variable "lots of talking" plays an important predictive role in all of these regression models, but the size of its beta

relative to the others shows it to be the less influential than people and policy. In the regression models where all variables of people, process, and policy were entered singularly, a policy variable ("running programs") came out as the most important predictor of trust, with both dependent variables. More of the people and policy variables were influential in predicting trust than were process variables. People and policy variables were more likely to reach statistical significance and in the hypothesized direction. Only one process variable ("lots of talking") achieved significance when all variables were entered separately. It also indicated in the hypothesized direction, meaning that as a person's feeling about this statement becomes more positive, her trust increases. This one is tricky to interpret as it was recoded in the positive direction. As a person becomes more likely to disagree that politicians do lots of talking but get little done, the more trusting she becomes.

These first nine political statements of the instrument were asking survey participants to respond to general ideas of government, politics, and politicians. Although these statements asked about specific elements of people, process, and policy, we have no way of knowing how each respondent interpreted these statements. For instance, in considering whether or not politicians deserve respect, we have no idea what information a respondent called upon to make this assessment. These nine statements should then be interpreted in a broad manner. As such, sentiments about the people in office are consistently capable of

influencing trust across all of these regression models. Ideas about the general policy direction of the country are also statistically significant in their predictive power over trust.

Although other scholars have found that people care a great deal about the process, I find only one process idea that influence political trust ("lots of talking"). In comparison to the people and policy variables (their betas), the process ones do not perform as well in predicting trust. Based upon the statistical evidence that the process variables were not consistent enough to form a uniform scale of process, though, the process variables were clearly not as accurately conceptualized as were people and policy. That process variables do not perform well in these analyses may be indicative of this researcher's difficulty in operationalizing process.

Other Explanatory Variables of Political Trust

Perceptions of people, process, and policy are the primary independent variables of interest here in explaining trust in government. It cannot be possible, however, for people, process, and policy to explain all of political trust. There are a plethora of other variables that have been proffered in the literature as having the capability to affect trust. Most of these are personal individual level indicators such as social, economic, or psychological variables. Although these variables have had limited and mixed success in helping scholars to understand or explain

trust in government, they are included for analysis. Having other possible explanations or predictors of political trust will enable me to create as robust an explanatory model of trust as possible, thus their inclusion.

These other variables, what I shall refer to as demographic and control variables for now, will be first explicated and justified for inclusion based on theoretical or exploratory reasons. Then, these variables will be used in regression models along with the primary explanatory variables of people, process, and policy to predict political trust. The regression models will then be analyzed. These other explanatory variables have not been consistent in explaining political trust, but their inclusion here allows me to test their affect along with people, process, and policy.

Economic Expectations

The first control variable to be explicated is economic expectations. There is evidence in the literature that this matters for political trust (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002, 70), although economic conditions are not considered a powerful explanation for changes in trust over time (Orren 1997, 293). Lipset and Schneider (1987) found that those people who perceive of their own financial situation as getting better were above average in confidence in government, while those who thought their financial status was getting worse lad the lowest levels of confidence (118). Citrin and Luks (2001) also find that in the 1990s those who

say their financial conditions are improving express more political trust than those whose conditions are worsening (17). In an analysis of trust in local government, Rahn and Rudolph (2005) also find that as people's perceptions of their own financial condition become more favorable, so too does their trust in local government (545). Economic conditions also affect trust in different parts of government. There has been a tendency for financial conditions to affect confidence in the president much more so than the Congress (Richardson, et.al. 2001, 93).

The general rule of thumb is that those whose finances are looking up are likely to be higher in political trust and that those whose finances are not looking up are likely to be lower in trust. Other scholarship has also included a question about the expectations of the national economy as a whole. However, Mutz and Flemming (1999) find that people are more likely to see their own economic situation in a more positive light than the national economic status (82). Egocentric economic conditions are most often found to be more important than sociotropic economic conditions (Lockerbie 2002, 399). Since the variable of interest here is one's political trust, it makes more sense to use an economic variable which applies to a person's own economic condition.

The specific question used for economic expectations reads, "We are interested in how people are getting along financially these days. Would you say that you are better off financially, worse off, or just the same as you were a year

ago?" Responses were coded -1 for those who say they are worse off financially, 0 for those who say their finances are just the same as they were a year ago, and 1 for those who claim to be better off financially. The hypothesis regarding financial condition is that those who claim that their personal economic situation is improving would be more likely to express more political trust than those who say their economic situation is worsening. I do expect that this economic condition variable will play a significant role in predicting political trust given that it has been found to be significant across a great deal of the literature.

Education, Income, Gender, Race, and Age

The next five variables to be considered are standard demographic control variables in most statistical models of politics: education, income, gender, race, and age. These are normally included in models which seek to explain political trust or satisfaction (Abramson 1983; Hetherington 1998, 794; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002, 67-8). These five demographic variables are included in these regression models as exploratory variables to see if they have any predictive power. There is also some theoretical reason to expect that they may influence trust as all of them have had mixed success in helping explain or predict political trust. Even back in 1973, these types of variables were used to explain political trust and found to have, at best, an indirect effect and to account for only a small portion of the variation in trust (Cole 1973). In order to make the effects of the

true explanatory variables of people, process, and policy more substantive, I will control for these factors.

Education is a socioeconomic variable often included in any models which explain political behavior and/or participation. It has long been used in the study of political trust (Cole 1973). It has been argued that increasing education might decrease trust, specifically the college educated, who are trained to be more critical of government (Alford 2001, 34-5). However, it has also been posited that increasing education should have a positive relationship with trust because better educated people have a better understanding of political institutions and processes (Richardson, et.al. 2001, 86). It has also been discovered, however, that political knowledge itself has no significant effect on political trust (Damico, et.al. 2000, 397).

Confidence in government and in the political system has been found to rise with education levels (Lipset and Schneider 1987, 311-12). Although Alford (2001) finds no difference in levels of trust based on education levels (35), Patterson does (1999). His analysis of General Social Survey data over the time period of 1972 until 1994 indicates that the more educated are more trusting than the less educated (173). Previous scholarship has found mixed results regarding trust and education, but education is included as a demographic variable nonetheless.

The question asks participants about the highest level of education completed. There are eight possible choices, the lowest (1) being less than high school and the highest (8) representing post graduate or professional degree. This variable was not recoded but left in its original ordinal form. The hypothesized relationship between trust and education would be that the higher one's education level, the greater one's political trust.

Closely related to the idea of education is income. Do those at the lower end of the income scale trust government more or less? Does income play any role in political trust? Lipset and Schneider's 1987 study found that confidence in government and the political system was higher among middle class respondents, which they classified as white collar workers, and below average in working class, which they categorized as blue collar workers (315). Clearly, the implicit assumption is that white collar, middle class people had higher levels of income and more trust than working class, blue collar workers, so income must matter. Income has been found most recently to have the opposite affect noted by Lipset and Schneider. In a 1997 study, people at the lowest end of the income ladder were found to have higher trust than the average person (Blendon, et al. 1997, 208). Currently, the poor are more trusting than the rich (Alford 2001, 37).

The income question asked people to indicate the category which best represents their total household income. This ordinal variable begins with 20,000 dollars or less and tops out with 100,000 dollars or more, with a range from 1 to 6.

This question resulted in the highest number of missing values (168), as people do not generally feel comfortable disclosing their income. The hypothesized relationship would be that those people at the lower levels of income would have greater political trust than those at higher levels of income.

Is there a gender gap in political trust? It does not appear that a relationship between gender and trust has been found through time. Some scholars claim to have found a slight tendency for men to be more trusting than women but not by a great deal (Patterson 1999, 173; Alford 2001, 38). Women may be less likely to trust government because it is generally run by men and may feel that their needs will not be fairly addressed (Richardson, et.al 2001, 85-6). Alford specifically concludes, though, that a gender gap does not appear in political trust. The hypothesized relationship between gender and trust is that men will be more trusting than women. Gender is included in the survey experiment instrument, so it is possible to find if a relationship does indeed exist among gender and trust. Gender was determined by the interviewer and coded 0 for male and 1 for female.

Race is a demographic variable which has often been studied in tandem with political trust and often it has a statistically significant relationship with trust. Whites have more often been found to trust the federal government more as compared to people of color (Abramson 1983). It has often been postulated that race might affect political trust because the federal government was instrumental

in advancing racial equality (Alford 2001, 33-4). This may result in increased trust on the part of nonwhites or a white backlash against the federal government for their activism on racial equality. Alford (2001) finds no difference in trust levels across race (33-4). Other scholarship, however, has found that Hispanics and African Americans exhibit higher than average trust in the federal government (Blendon, et.al. 1997, 207-8; Patterson 1999, 175). When investigating levels of trust in local government, Rahn and Rudolph (2005) discovered that African-Americans and Native Americans were less trustful (547). Because there exists evidence that race may affect trust, it was included in this analysis as a control or demographic variable.

Race was inquired about with an open ended question, asking what race do you consider yourself. The first mention was taken as that which a person most identified themselves as. Eventually, this variable was recoded 1 for white respondents and 0 for people of color. The hypothesized relationship would be that people of color are less trusting of government than are whites.

Age is another variable which appears to affect a person's level of political trust. As people age, their identification with political institutions and processes should increase, which may cause age to be positively related to trust in government. Alternately, as people grow older they may become less trusting of government because they are less idealistic and learn to lack confidence in political leaders (Richardson, et.al. 2001, 87). Young adults, often defined as

those under the age of 30, express more trust than other Americans (Blendon, et al 1997, 208; Alford 2001, 36). Moreover, adults between the ages of 50 and 64 trust government less on average (Blendon, et.al. 1997, 208). It has also been pointed out that since 1964; the oldest cohort has been the least trusting and the youngest age cohort the most trusting of government (Orren 1997, 84). The relationship between age and trust is murky at best.

Participants were asked to please share their age. The numeric age was then entered and this variable was not recoded. The hypothesized relationship between age and political trust, as such, is that younger people would tend to be more trusting than older people, although there is not much confidence in this relationship.

Party Identification, Attachment, and Ideology

Another variable always included in regression models of political participation and behavior would be political party identification. Does party identification have an impact on a person's political trust? It has been found that Republicans are less trusting on average (Blendon, et.al. 1997, 208). These scholars hypothesize that this is because Republicans disagree with expansion of federal government post New Deal and are therefore less trusting. Alford (2001) asserts that identifiers of the political party that holds the presidency tends to be the more trusting at that time (40), and Citrin and Luks concur (2001, 18-9). This

makes sense in that a person would be more likely to trust a government run by politicians who are like them. For every piece of literature that has discovered party identification matters for trust, though, there is one that has not (Owen and Dennis 2001). The standard question regarding party identification (Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what?) was used to measure this. Party identification was then recoded into a series of dummy variables for Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. I specifically excluded the Independent variable from these models as I thought it would increase multicollinearity among the party id variables. In fact, SPSS excluded the Republican variable as well.

Furthermore, the strength of a person's attachment to a political party has been found to affect political trust. This argument was first posited by Miller (1974) who found that the highest levels of discontent were found in those at the extreme ends of the ideological scale. Lipset and Schnieder (1987) report that "strong party supporters are relatively high in confidence no matter what their ideological inclination" (107). The strength of attachment to a party was asked about in separate follow-up questions after general party identification. Those people who claimed to be a Democrat or Republican in the party identification question and then said they were either a strong Democrat or Republican were coded as Strong Partisans, measured as a dummy variable. Those people who claimed to be either a Republican or Democrat and then said they were a weak

Republican or Democrat were coded as a Weak Partisan, measured as a dummy variable. I also coded people who called themselves independents and said they were close to neither the Republican nor Democrat party as True Independents, another dummy variable. This variable was not used in the regression models here as there is no evidence that being an independent would affect one's political trust. According to previous findings, I would hypothesize a positive relationship between being a strong partisan and political trust. In order to examine the interaction between party identification and attachment, an interaction variable was created. These variables are entitled Strong Dem and Strong Repub.

A third variable of political ideology, whether a person considers herself conservative, liberal, or moderate, is also included. It is important to note, however, that some scholarship has found no important differences in levels of trust by ideology (Alford 2001, 42). This question asked people to describe their political views with the choices being very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal, and very liberal. Responses to this question were coded as -1 for conservatives, 0 for moderates, and 1 for liberals. I do not expect to find a relationship between ideologies and trust here either.

Presidential and Congressional Approval

Two important variables of political evaluation, presidential approval and congressional approval, are also included in this study. Feelings about Congress

(Feldman 1983; Williams 1985) and the president (Citrin 1974; Citrin and Green 1986) have long been linked to political trust. Citrin and Luks (2001) posit that political trust taps into feelings towards government that are based on evaluations of the people in political office (18). They, in fact, found that both of these variables were statistically significant predictors of political trust. Other scholars have also noted that people who feel positively towards the president are more likely to trust the government (Damico, et.al. 2000, 397). Hetherington (1998) was the first to point out that there may be a reciprocal relationship between presidential and congressional approval and political trust. It is expected that how people feel about the president and Congress will influence their corresponding levels of political trust, but Hetherington says that those with higher levels of trust are also more likely to have more favorable approval ratings of the president and Congress.

These questions are worded exactly the same as they are in most other studies, i.e. Do you approve or disapprove of the way George W. Bush (Congress) is handling his job as president (its job)? Reponses to this question are coded with a -1 for disapprove, 0 for neither, and 1 for approve. The hypothesized relationship between presidential and congressional approval and trust is that as an individual's approval levels increase in either the president and/or Congress, their level of trust should as well.

Political Interest

As far as identifying other variables which might influence political trust, I have a couple unique contributions. I include a political interest question. I found only one previous study of political trust which tested the effect of political interest on trust. Newton and Norris (1999) found a statistically significant, although weak relationship between political interest and trust (64-5). Although I am not suggesting a particular relationship between political interest and trust, its inclusion in the models is purely exploratory. It might be that as a person's political interest increases their level of trust increases as well due to the fact that that person is paying attention and it politically aware. On the other hand, it may be possible that as a person pays closer attention to politics they are less likely to trust government because paying more attention activates cynicism towards government.

The measure of political interest comes straight out of the NES text. Answers were then coded so that as the value goes up it indicates more political interest. This is an ordinal variable which ranges from 1 (hardly at all) to 4 (most of the time).

Can Government Increase Trust?

There is one final question that has the potential, as an independent variable, to explain political trust. The question is this "Do you think that most

people will mistrust the government no matter what, or do you think there are things the government could do to increase the public's trust?" I pulled this question from a Pew Center Poll on political trust that was reported in 1998. This variable is coded so that a 0 represents the idea that people will mistrust no matter what and a 1 represents the idea that there are things the government could do to increase trust. Do those people who think that people will mistrust no matter what have lower levels of trust than those who believe that there are things the government could do to increase trust? This variable is included for exploratory purposes, as I have no preconceived notion as to what effect it might have.

Religion

Another idea that may help explain political trust may be religion, in many aspects. I have included three different variables that measure religious attitudes and behaviors. The first asks what a person's religious preference is and the given responses include Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion. Responses to this question were based upon what one claimed their religious preference to be and then used to form dummy variables for Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and No Religion. I can then ascertain whether a person's religious identification influences political trust. There is some evidence that indicates that Jews may be the most trusting of government, as compared to Protestants and Catholics (Patterson 1999, 174-5). Moreover, because the option

of no religion is present, I can also analyze whether a person's lack of religion influences trust. The idea of religious affiliation influencing trust is not common in the literature. I, in fact, found only the one piece cited above which included it as a factor. As such, I am not positing a specific relationship between religious affiliation and trust.

The second religion variable inquires about religious service attendance, how often do you attend religious services? Does the frequency of a person's attendance at religious services have any effect on political trust? Because participation in voluntary associations such as a church increases social cohesion and builds social capital, it may be that increased church attendance results in increased levels of trust (Richardson, et.al. 2001, 87-8). In analyzing confidence in political leaders across different branches of government, Richardson, et.al. (2001) find that people who attend church are more likely to exhibit confidence in executive leaders (93), although this relationship is not evident in confidence in the legislature and the Supreme Court. This measure is a straightforward question which asks how often do you attend religious services. This is an ordinal variable and has a range from 1 (never) to 7 (more than once a week). As the value increases, attendance at religious services gets higher. Although only one piece of literature sets forth and tests a relationship between religious service attendance and trust, I will hypothesize that as people's attendance increases, so too should their trust in government as a whole.

The third question asks participants about their beliefs on biblical literalism. Participants are asked to choose a statement which best describes their feelings about the Bible. The three options are: the Bible is the actual word of God and should be taken literally (1), the Bible is the word of God but should not be taken literally (2), and the Bible is a book written by men and not the word of God (3). This question had the second highest amount of missing values (74). Due to the sensitive nature of talking about religion in the United States, it makes sense that people might be unwilling to answer questions regarding how they feel about the Bible. These three response categories were not recoded but left as is, as their ordinal scale represents that the higher the value, the less likely a person is to believe in strict biblical literalism. Again, this variable is included for exploratory purposes. I am not positing specific relationships among these three religious variables and political trust.

Analysis

To begin the exploration of whether or not any of these variables represents a viable explanation of political trust, several regression models were conducted. These models included all of the explanatory variables discussed above, unless SPSS did not allow them or there was some evidence of multicollinearity. Some were entered for theoretical reasons because there is previous evidence that they may help explain political trust and some were

entered for exploratory reasons, to see if they help explain any of the variance in the dependent variable of trust. I will conduct separate models with Trust Scale as the dependent variable in one, and Trust as the other.

After this initial analysis, it will be determined which of these variables shall be retained in the regression. Those variables that have theoretical importance shall remain and a final model will be formulated that has good predictive power. Another consideration is keeping the model simple so any unnecessary or redundant variables will be deleted.

Regression Models with other Control/Demographic Variables

Dependent Variable – Trust Scale

The first regression model will utilize all of the variables explicated above, unless they cause too much multicollinearity in the model. I will enter these control/demographic variables in stages. The first model will use only the socioeconomic status type of variables (age, gender, race, income, education, and financial condition) to explain trust. The second includes the variables of party identification, attachment and ideology. The third model will add in what I refer to as the political variables (congressional and presidential approval, political interest, and can trust be increased?). The fourth model pulls in the religious variables, affiliation, religious service attendance, and biblical literalism. The final model adds the primary independent variables of interest here – people,

process, and policy. Since the people and policy scales were internally consistent and performed well, they will be used. The only process variable that I will include in this model will be "lots of talking" as it is the only one which performed well in the previous regression models.

This final model includes twenty independent variables. Adding variables to the models in this way allows me to see if the addition of variables causes a significant difference in the R-squared statistic. Generally, any time more independent variables are added into a regression model, the R-squared increases, but the *F* change statistic reveals whether the addition of variables is statistically significant. Missing values for these regression models were excluded pair wise, as list wise deletion significantly reduced the sample size. Variables which were not allowed to enter into these regression models due to multicollinearity were Republican, Protestant, and No religion.

(Table 3.10 Here)

The first model with demographic variables has the lowest R –squared (.05). The only statistically significant variable here is a person's financial condition. There is a positive relationship between a person claiming that their financial condition is better and trust. Two of the basic demographic variables of gender, age, race, education, or income are statistically important in predicting a

person's score on the Trust Scale. The first of these is education. As a person becomes more educated, her trust increases. The second variable that achieves significance is financial condition. This variable indicates that the more likely a person is to say their financial condition is better now than a year ago, the higher their trust will be.

The second model which brings in the party variables achieves a higher R-squared of .10. The *F* change statistic reveals that the addition of these variables to the model is significant ($p < .01$). None of these added variables regarding party ideology, party attachment, or party identification achieve statistical significance at all.

The third model includes political variables. This model has an R – squared of .19. The *F* change statistic shows that these variables had a significant effect on the R-squared ($p < .000$). The only statistically significant relationship between any of these variables and political trust is congressional approval, and the relationship is in the hypothesized direction. The more likely a person is to approve of Congress, their trust increases.

The fourth model brings the religion variables into the analysis. The R-squared does not change at all with the addition of these variables, maintaining at .19, although the *F* change statistic indicates that these variables significantly change the R-squared statistic for this model ($p < .000$). With all of these

potential explanatory variables of political trust included, congressional approval continues to have a positive and significant relationship with trust.

The fifth and final model adds in the variables of interest, people, process, and policy. The R-squared goes up significantly to .40, and the *F* change statistic shows that this addition of variables is highly significant in increasing the R-squared ($p < .000$). Interestingly enough, the income variable becomes significant here, meaning that as income goes up, so does the Trust Scale. Congressional approval continued to be positive and significant. The other political variable which becomes a significant predictor of the Trust Scale is can trust be increased? This can be interpreted to mean that those individuals who think that there are things that the government could do to increase trust have significantly lower levels of trust than those who do not. Individuals who think that the government could take action to increase political trust tend to have lower levels of trust as measured through the Trust Scale. This may be due to the frustration of thinking the government could increase it and yet doesn't. This is an interesting finding in that this question has not been applied to predict trust before. People who feel that people will mistrust the government no matter what have statistically higher levels of trust than those who think the government could increase trust.

Dependent Variable – Trust

The second regression model has the dependent variable of Trust and the same independent variables as the previous regression model using control and other explanatory variables. The analysis was conducted through five separate regression models as above, and the final model utilized twenty one independent variables. Adding variables to the models in this way allows me to see if the addition of variables causes a significant difference in the R-squared statistic. Generally, any time more independent variables are added into a regression model, the R-squared increases, but the *F* change statistic reveals whether the addition of variables is statistically significant. Missing values for these regression models were excluded pair wise, as list wise deletion significantly reduced the sample size. Variables which were not allowed to enter into these regression models due to multicollinearity were Republican, Protestant, and No religion.

(Table 3.11 Here)

The first model with demographic variables as predictors of trust had an R-squared of .03, meaning that is was capable of explaining only 3% of the variation present in the variable of Trust. Race is the only variable to achieve statistical significance here, and it is in the hypothesized direction. White people are more trusting of government than people of color.

The second model which adds in party variables appears to do a little better in predicting trust than the last model. The R –squared does increase to .09, and the *F* change statistic indicates that this change is significant ($p < .01$). There are no variables which are statistically significant in this model. One variable falls just outside of being significant, that is being a Democrat ($p > .10$). Democrats are less trusting of government. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the party that was holding the presidency at the time this survey experiment was conducted was the Republican Party. This would provide some confirmation of previous scholarship which has found that the members of the party that hold the presidency tend to have higher trust (Alford 2001; Citrin and Luks 2001). Moreover, this may serve as further evidence as to what Anderson and LoTempio (2002) found. Those who vote for the losing presidential candidate tend to show lower trust in government that those who voted for the winning one. Assuming that Democrats most likely did not vote for President Bush, it would then make sense that Democrats here were less trusting of government.

The third model includes political variables. The R-squared here is .16, and the *F* change statistic reveals that this these variables add a statistically significant difference ($p < .000$) Congressional approval is the only statistically significant variable and its relationship is in the hypothesized direction, meaning that the more likely a person is to approve of Congress, the larger their trust score. The fourth model includes all previous variables and the religion ones as well.

Although the R-squared increases only slightly, to .17, the *F* change statistic indicates that this is a significant difference between the last model and this one ($p < .000$). Congressional approval continues to be the only significant predictor of trust.

The fifth and final model takes into consideration people, process, and policy. The R-squared here is .36, meaning that the addition of the people, process, and policy variables doubles the explanatory power of the model as compared to the previous one. The *F* change statistic shows the addition of these variables adds a significant difference to the R-squared ($p < .000$). Congressional approval maintains its positive and statistically significant relationship with Trust. The more positively one feels towards Congress, the more likely they are to think that the government can be trusted to do what is right. The People and Policy Scales have a positive and significant relationship with Trust, as expected. The one process variable, although significant in the models with Trust Scale as the dependent variable, is not significant here.

This means that most of these explanatory variables of trust do not perform well in predicting the dependent variable Trust. In fact, the biggest difference between the explanatory variables' ability to predict Trust and Trust Scale is that very few variables achieve significance with Trust as the dependent variable. Besides race, which is significant in the first model, none of the demographic variables appear to be good predictors of trust. Personal financial

conditions, which have generally been found to have a relationship with trust, do not help predict trust, nor do any of the religion variables. None of the party identification, attachment, or ideology variables are significant either. Presidential approval doesn't matter, nor do the other political variables of political interest and can trust be increased.

Assessment of Control or Demographic Explanations of Political Trust

Overall, almost none of the other potential explanations of trust which have been posited and tested by other scholars have performed very well here. Both of these models (3.10 and 3.11) look quite similar although they have different dependent variables. What is noteworthy, in fact, is that of so many possible variables, very few achieve any statistical significance at all. Although the addition of more variables into each model increases the ability of the model to explain the variation in political trust (as is indicated with the *F* change statistics), few of these variables achieve or maintain significance in their predictive power. The norm has generally been that the differences in trust due to gender, race, age, education, and income are insignificant (Hetherington 2005, 17). That appears to be the finding here as well. In the Trust Scale model, both education and financial status were initially significant, but both dropped out when other variables were added into the model. With Trust as the dependent variable, race was statistically significant in the model with only SES variables. It

had a statistically significant relationship with Trust, meaning that whites here were more trusting of government than people of color. This is as hypothesized. Once again, with the addition of other variables, race was no longer significant.

These potential explanations perform differently for each of the two dependent variables. A person's financial status also plays a significant role in predicting Trust Scale whereas it does not in predicting Trust. In predicting Trust, only race and congressional approval are statistically significant. The reasons why this might be the case is discussed below in again assessing these two ways of measuring trust.

Comparing Dependent Variables Again

The four NES questions that form the scaled variable called Trust Scale ask how often can you trust the federal government to do what is right, how much tax money is wasted, how crooked the people running government are, and whether the government is run by a few interests or for all of the people. There are, obviously, a few components involved here, not just trust. A person's financial status plays a role in predicting Trust Scale whereas it does not in predicting Trust. This may indicate that financial status affects how people evaluate how tax money is used, how crooked politicians are, and whether the government is run by a few interests or for all of the people. Financial status

alone, though, does not play a role in predicting straight trust in the federal government.

The Trust variable is the one that simply measures the response to the question of trusting the federal government to do what is right. It is strictly measuring trust and not any potential correlates of trust. In predicting Trust, only race and congressional approval are statistically significant. These variables signify that whites are more trusting than are people of color and that those who are more likely to approve of Congress are more likely to trust. This finding supports that previous research which found that how people evaluate Congress affects their trust in the federal government (Feldman 1983; Williams 1985; Hetherington 1998; Citrin and Luks 2001). Considering that presidential approval did not have any predictive power over Trust but congressional approval did implies that Congress is fundamentally important in people's perceptions of the federal government.

In predicting Trust Scale, more of these explanatory variables play a statistically significant role (five in predicting Trust Scale and two in predicting Trust), and I believe that this may be because the Trust Scale contains four questions which ask people to evaluate parts of the government, rather than just the government as a whole, as the Trust dependent variable does. As such, it seems very possible that there would be a greater number of variables that would be significant predictors of the Trust Scale versus Trust. Moreover, this might

help explain why the R-squared statistics are always higher in models which have Trust Scale as their dependent variable. There is simply more variance to explain in this dependent variable, as there are four distinct components of trust.

Another consideration is in the previous criticism of the NES trust battery of questions. Here is a succinct explanation of its problems:

> Much of the criticism aimed at the NES trust in government measure has been with the combination of several different value judgments into a single index. The suggestion has been that the index obscures the impact that different judgments have on political trust and that using the components separately might provide more valuable insight (Ulbig 2002, 797)

Other scholars have come to similar conclusions about the NES trust battery (Craig 1993, 24-35; Owen and Dennis 2001, 209). Ulbig's research, moreover, indicates that these three other questions of the NES measure can be used as explanations of trust itself, measured only as the very first question of this NES index (800). In a regression model with trust as the dependent variable, Ulbig uses all three of the other questions of the NES battery as independent variables. (As a reminder, these are "Would you say that government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves, or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?" and "Do you think that quite a few of the people running government are a little crooked, not very many are, or do you think hardly any of them are crooked at all?" and ""Do you think that people in government waste a lot of money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it?") She

finds that all three of these variables are statistically significant and have a positive relationship with trust (802). So there is some evidence that the other three questions of the NES trust battery are explanatory pieces of trust.

The simple trust question "How much do you trust the government in Washington to do what is right?" is the closest thing we have to a universal measure of political trust. It is also, as my analysis so far has indicated, a little more difficult to explain than the Trust Scale with its four questions. This has tended to be the case throughout the analysis in this chapter. Here, the R-squared statistics show that the final regression models with demographic variables and people, process, and policy are capable of explaining up to 40% of the variation in Trust Scale and 36% of the variation in Trust. The dependent variables Trust Scale and Trust seem to be conceptually distinct from one another.

Assessment of People, Process, and Policy

These two final regression models in this chapter tested the ability of previously identified variables in explaining political trust. Some of these had theoretical reasons to be included while a couple variables were purely explanatory (political interest, Biblical literalism, can trust be increased?). The evidence indicates that all of these variables are capable of explaining less than 20% of the variation in political trust, measured either as the Trust Scale (R-squared = 19%) or Trust (R-squared = 17%).

In the final model, I added in people, process, and policy variables to ascertain their predictive power in relation to all other potential explanatory variables. The people and policy scales were highly significant in predicting Trust Scale and Trust, while the one process variable entered ("lots of talking") was statistically significant in predicting Trust Scale but not Trust. This is not surprising in light of the discussion above about these two measures. What is interesting is that the addition of people, process, and policy variables *doubles* the amount of explanatory power present in these regression models. The *F* change statistic shows that these variables significantly increase the explanatory power of the models. Even with the inclusion of lots of other possible explanations of political trust, perceptions of people, process, and policy still perform very well. This is rather convincing evidence that perceptions of people, process, and policy have power in explaining trust in government.

Chapter 4
The Experiment

In a recent review article on political trust, Margaret Levi and Laura Stokes emphatically state:

> We urge scholars to expand their inquiries beyond the traditional focus on citizens' trust in 'government' in general, by studying the causes and consequences of citizen's trust in specific political actors, organizations, or institutions (2000, 495-6)

The goal of the experimental portion of this research design is to move beyond generalizations and test the effect of specific attributes on political trust. Survey research in political trust has tended to focus on these generalizations, trust in the government as a whole. How do we know, though, which qualities or characteristics of government a person uses to make the trust decision? Although we may never know that for sure, experimental research enables me to posit specific attributes that may affect trust *and* then test them. Levi and Stokes assert that micro-level research on trust should put forward characteristics that make an actor trustworthy and then measure people's perceptions of these characteristics (2000, 500). In this way, we can then know if these attributes play a role in the trust decision. What Levi and Stokes recommend is exactly what I am doing here.

For the experimental portion of the research design, survey participants were exposed to different treatments on particular attributes of people, process, and policy. Each person was exposed to three treatments which describe an

individual politician, each treatment emphasizing one attribute of each people, process, and policy. After each of these treatments, respondents were asked about their level of trust in this politician. The second part of this methodology, then, allows me to test the effect of two variations of the same attribute of people, process, and policy upon trust. These treatments will serve as independent variables in the analysis and the trust score will be the dependent variable.

Description of the Treatments

The treatment is a description of an individual politician. Each treatment focuses on one aspect of the three variables of interest, people, process, or policy. After each of these treatments, respondents were asked about their level of trust in this politician. The assumption is that the nature of the treatment a person is presented with will affect the level of trust felt for that politician. Each attribute of people, process, and policy tested had two treatments. These treatments were both stated in a positive direction but they presented different scenarios. People, process, and policy attributes are not to be portrayed as zero sum games, where a politician can only be one way or the complete opposite. In this way, these treatments will allow me to tease out the subtle differences we expect to see in politicians and gauge individuals' reactions to reality, rather than a simple dichotomy. What is important is that people were expected to react to the treatments differently and they did.

The experimental treatments comprise descriptions of an incumbent officeholder, specifically a member of Congress. Congress is the institution that representative government is premised upon. Its position in the political system is of the utmost importance. Congress is also the least liked of all American governmental institutions (Cooper 1999). Citizens generally trust state and local governments more than the federal government (Uslaner 2001, 133). We would expect that if the politician used in the treatment were a state official, that no matter what the treatments, levels of corresponding trust might be higher. This is why I chose not to use a state or local political official in creating these treatments. In using a member of Congress, this research design used the hardest case to test aspects of political trust. If I can explain the characteristics about members of Congress that people either trust and/or distrust, then this information is very relevant to real world politics.

Additionally, the frame of reference for this research question about political trust, though aimed at specific trust in individuals, places the decisions about trust within the larger federal government. This also makes Congress the best institution to place a hypothetical politician in, as Congress is the institution most commonly thought of when asked about the federal government. Feelings about Congress have already been found to affect trust (Williams 1985). Some research has found a strong causal link between trust in Congress as a political institution and trust in government in a general sense (Feldman 1983, 351). It

follows accordingly then that Congress is the most natural referent for our politician to be used in the treatment.

The individual office holder in each treatment was a male congressperson. Gender considerations may complicate the analysis and water down the potential affect of the variables of interest, people, process, and policy. Previous research indicates that gender does matter in politics. Voters view male and female candidates differently. Male and female candidates are thought to excel in different areas of policy (Huddy and Terkildsen 1993a, 1993b). Male traits are generally associated with being a more effective legislator (Rosenwasser and Dean 1989). Most importantly, though, there is evidence that judgments made about male and female candidates differ in regards to trust. There is evidence that female political candidates are trusted more than men (Matland and King 2002). Women candidates are seen as more honest than similar male candidates (Kahn 1992, 504; Leeper 1991, 255). Making the politician in the treatments a female would definitely, then, change the dynamics in the way people evaluated her.

As such, varying the gender of the politicians in the treatments would presumably affect political trust. While the experimental treatments here did not describe candidates, it was presumed that the differences detected in how male and female candidates are evaluated would also apply to politicians, without reference to their status as candidates. Because trust is the concept of interest to be tested here, it was reasonable to not include gender as an issue. I wanted to

keep conditions, in this case gender, constant, and simultaneously minimize all extraneous variables. Moreover, male politicians are more common than are females.

The issue of partisan identification is also a concern in asking people to evaluate politicians. We know that people's political judgments will be affected by the party identification of both the politician in question and the person. Of greatest concern for this research design was how to include party identification or how to control for it. People evaluate politics according to their partisanship, so in introducing survey respondents to members of Congress, partisanship is an automatic element of any subsequent evaluations made. The expectation is that people will be more likely to trust politicians that share their party identification. There is not, however, any substantive evidence that party identification or ideology affects overall levels of political trust (Alford 2001, 41; Owen and Dennis 2001, 222). In order to neutralize the affect of party identification upon trust, the prompt before the treatments did not reference ideology or partisanship of the politician in question at all.

In conclusion, special attention went into ensuring that there were no symbolic or ideological cues in these treatments. The treatments were very brief and free of any extraneous information. Survey respondents should be reacting, then, to the actual content of the treatments. Because the dependent variables all specifically reference the politician in the treatment, there also should not be any

measurement concerns. The text of each individual treatment will be presented in the forthcoming text.

Which Attributes of Trust are Tested?

Where do these specific attributes of trust that are to be tested come from? From the pretest of my survey instrument, a factor analysis was conducted, the details of which were explained in Chapter Two, which resulted in twelve identified variables across the people, process, and policy categories. For the sake of parsimony and an eye towards the cost involved, I identified two variables within each category which were highly loaded onto their respective factors and created experimental treatments. For people, I chose to use whether or not a politician has held previous office (.62) and whose opinions he most considers in taking positions on issues, his own or his constituents. In the original pretest, this variable was defined as "being principled", essentially meaning that he stood up for what he believed in, which correlated with this people factor at .66. Because of the word principled, I decided against using this variable, as initially tested, in a treatment. There was no way to use the word principled and not bias people's evaluation of that politician. Moreover, the opposite of being principled would be being unprincipled, and that dichotomy seems too simplistic. By focusing this idea on whose feelings he most considers in taking positions, I can test a specific component of what might be considered "being principled". For process, whether

or not he engages in civil and friendly debate (.75) and whether or not he conducts clean campaigns, free of mudslinging and negativity (.74) were the chosen variables. For the policy treatments, I chose pork, whether or not he brings money and projects to his district (.70) and national versus local focus (.66).

These six variables were all strongly correlated with the three factors but were also chosen with an eye toward practicability in formulating experimental treatments. Additionally, I believe that these variables best represent an opportunity for interesting and valuable findings. These six variables then represent how people, process, and policy will be operationalized and measured.

People Treatments

The attributes of officeholders affect political trust because citizens can easily reference the individual politicians when making evaluations of government. There exists plenty of evidence that assessments of political officials help predict trust. Citrin (1974) posited that political trust is affected by the citizen's perceptions of what incumbent political authorities are doing. Research also indicates that trust is influenced by evaluations of the president and approval of Congress (Miller and Borrelli 1991; Citrin and Luks 2001). Although congressional and presidential approval ratings are not direct evaluations of just the people who hold these offices, research shows that when people like and approve of these politicians, they tend to trust government more.

Moreover, additional research indicates that when voters evaluate political candidates they predominantly use personality characteristics of the politicians (Miller, et.al. 1986, 525). Miller and his colleagues proffer that what affects candidate assessments should also influence the way in which people evaluate the government (533). People are, at least in part, thinking about the personal characteristics of the people in government when forming political opinions. For instance, when people are asked to evaluate the performance of their member of Congress, personal characteristics of that congressman are one of the major criteria used (Parker and Davidson 1979).

Previous literature has found that people who obtain their political information through television are more likely to find personal characteristics of politicians important (Keeter 1987). Television, perhaps, primes its viewers to notice personal characteristics of politicians (Druckman 2003). This is an important consideration in that most American people depend upon broadcast media for their political news and information. This means that the great majority of people may be primed to think about politicians in terms of personal characteristics, making a people orientation to political evaluations more likely.

Competence

The first people treatments include whether or not a politician has held previous office. Previous elective experience is interpreted as a sign of

competence. If a politician has held previous office, then he has already established competence with voters. The idea of competence has long been hailed as a quality of politicians which is worthy of trust (Wright 1976, Hart 1978, Barber 1983, Levi and Stoker 2000). The work of Miller, Wattenberg, and Malanchuk (1986) identified five characteristics about political candidates which people use to evaluate them, competence being the first of these. If these characteristics are capable of affecting how people feel about candidates, then they should be potentially useful in explaining political trust. In evaluating the qualities of politicians as people, it is expected that competence and experience would play a role. A politician who is seen as competent, as measured through previous political experience, will be trusted more than a politician who is less experienced.

The specific text of the competence treatments is presented here. They are exceedingly straightforward with no other extraneous information contained to skew people's reaction to them.

> Treatment 1: Congressman Tom Ward served as a state legislator before being elected to Congress.
>
> Treatment 2: Congressman Tom Ward did not have any previous political experience before coming to Congress. He had never held any elective office.

Whose Opinions?

The second people treatments focus on how a legislator comes to take positions on issues. What do Americans expect of their political leaders? Whose opinions become most important when taking positions and making choices? Do they think that they should behave as delegates and accurately reflect what their constituents want, or should they behave as trustees, using their own good judgment to make choices on political issues? Generally, previous research has been unclear, although much evidence suggests that people prefer elected officials to take on a delegate role (Sigelman, et.al. 1992, 369). Sigelman, et.al. (1992) conducted a very interesting experimental study which sought to explain how people want to be represented by politicians. They found that a politician who followed what his constituents wanted was evaluated more favorably than one who followed his own sentiments (376). Another interesting finding was that people had a preference for a politician to take on a delegate role when that politician was a legislator versus an executive official (377). Furthermore, if a politician is perceived of as principled in his position-taking, it is assumed that he would be respected and therefore trusted. This is also a variable that Sigelman, et.al. tested and found that principled decisions were evaluated more favorably than self serving ones (376-77).

For the experimental vignettes created here, I would have liked to have included the idea of principled position-taking. Because of the desire to make the

treatments as value neutral as possible, I took out the references to principled position-taking as well as politically expedient position-taking. As such, the treatments utilized here only reference whether a politician takes positions on issues based upon his own personal feelings or how his constituents feel about those issues. The expectation is that a politician who takes positions on issues based upon how his constituents feel will be more trusted than one who follows his own personal feelings.

The specific text of these treatments is included here.

Treatment 1: Congressman Tom Ward is a politician who takes positions on issues based upon his own personal feelings about those issues.

Treatment 2: Congressman Tom Ward is a politician who takes positions on issues based on his constituents' feelings about those issues.

Process Treatments

The newest perspective of evaluating government performance is process. Americans pay attention to the way in which their political system functions and the processes that it uses. The work of Hibbing and Theiss-Morse looms large because their 1995 work *Congress as Public Enemy* focused predominantly on process, as does their follow up work on political attitudes (2001, 2002). People, they find, like procedural justice more than specific policy outcomes. As long as the process is fair, Americans feel better about government, and this should then

affect political trust. Both Owen and Dennis (2001, 220-1) and Farnsworth (2003a, 73) find that perceptions of fairness do, in fact, influence political trust.

Hibbing and Theiss-Morse's 2002 study discerns that people are more affected by processes than policies. When evaluating government, people's dissatisfaction is related to perceptions of *how* government does its job, not *what* it does (34-5). Especially for citizens with minimal political interest and knowledge, process concerns are most important (80-1). If we consider that a great deal of the American electorate lacks political interest and knowledge, then the role of process in evaluating the government and its actors should play a substantial role.

Clean Campaigns

The first element of process will be running clean a clean campaign versus a negative and nasty one. Campaigning is the process a politician uses to gain his job. As such, it is an institutionalized process of the job of office holding. Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) claim that an indicator of bad process, so to speak, is running nasty and negative campaigns. Some politicians engage in nasty campaigns to win elections. This can include negative ads on television and attacks on political opponents. Brady and Theriault (2001) posit that the public has a strong negative reaction to these practices. They find that public approval of Congress, as an institution, is reactive to the proximity of an election. This

means that as elections near, public approval decreases, and as elections fade into the past, approval increases (185-7). These scholars argue that approval of Congress being negatively correlated with the closeness of an election is evidence of the public's negative response to campaign techniques. Although causation is not firmly established here, these scholars make an interesting case. It is expected that a politician who runs a clean campaign by refusing to run negative ads will be trusted more than a politician who does not make such a pledge.

The text of these treatments follows here. It is important to note that any specifically emotive language was not used here. The congressman who promises to keep the focus of the election on the issues and not the people running for office is indicative of running a clean campaign. He specifically says that he will not campaign in a negative manner. In the other treatment, I did not want to use the specific phrase negative or nasty campaign, as that would immediately generate negativity from people. Instead, this other congressman is described as wanting to point out the differences between himself and his opponent. This was done so as not to completely bias a person's evaluation of these politicians. This may make it harder to tease out the differences between how these treatments affect trust, but it was necessary in order to avoid emotional language which might bias peoples' evaluations.

Treatment 1: Congressman Frank Smith, in his campaign, promised to keep the focus of the election on the issues and not the people running for

office. He publicly promised not to run any negative campaign ads or to attack his opponent on a personal level.

Treatment 2: Congressman Frank Smith, in his campaign, vowed to point out the differences between himself and his opponent. He publicly pledged to make sure that voters had all the important information on the candidates and the issues.

Debate

The next element of process to be tested was the nature of debate a politician engages in. Legislative bodies are given the task of making public policy. Part of the process of making public policy involves debate among different actors with differing ideas and values. One of the most significant pieces of information to emerge from recent literature dealing with political attitudes is that Americans do not like the processes that politicians use in doing their jobs. A part of this process is democracy in action, and democracy in action entails debate and disagreement and the need for compromise. People simply are not fond of these aspects of the political system and do not find them necessary. As Hibbing and Theiss-Morse put it, "Fighting is equated with an absence of productivity" (2002, 122). Their survey results show that roughly one in four people feel uneasy and uncomfortable with any political debate (135). Carolyn Funk (2001), in an interesting experimental design, found that conflict within

policy debate elicits negative reactions from people (203). Mutz and Reeves (2005) show that civil and uncivil debate has differing affects on political trust. Research also indicates that high levels of dissension within Congress lead to declines in congressional approval as well (Durr, et.al. 1997). Politicians who engage in debate which is civil and involves cordial disagreement will be trusted more than one whose debate style is marked by negativity and heated exchange with others.

In the first treatment on debate as process, a member of Congress was described as participating in very friendly and civil debate. Mutz and Reeves (2005) defined civil debate in their research as being polite, calm, waiting patiently for the other person to answer, and paying attention to the person speaking. The politician in the treatment will, therefore, be explained as very civil in his relationships with all fellow members, including ones of the opposing political parties, and that he is polite even in times of disagreement, never raising his voice. Likewise, Mutz and Reeves say that uncivil debate is defined as including a lack of respect, showing frustration with the opposition, interrupting another speaker and also includes nonverbal cues like rolling of the eyes. As such, the second treatment will describe a politician who interrupts other people and raises his voice. The expectation is that a politician who is civil and friendly in debate will be trusted more than a politician who is not.

The text of these two treatments follows. These two treatments are exact opposites of each other, utilizing the same language in opposite directions.

> Treatment 1: In debating the issues, Congressman Frank Smith is usually calm and polite. If he disagrees with his colleagues, he tries to never raise his voice or interrupt other members.
>
> Treatment 2: In debating the issues, Congressman Frank Smith is usually passionate and vocal. If he disagrees with a colleague, he is not afraid to voice his opposition even if it means raising his voice or interrupting other members.

Policy Treatments

It has long been believed that citizens evaluate their political system according to the outputs and performance of that system, most often conceptualized as public policy. The thinking about policy's effect on trust is that citizens will evaluate the government based on what it is doing and how it is performing. People who are pleased with the policy direction and policy outputs of the government are expected to trust government more because it is producing desired outputs (Citrin 1974; Miller 1974; Easton 1975).

Policy entails general governmental performance as well as specific policy outputs. Historically, there is evidence of a correlation between feelings of political trust and perceptions of governmental performance on broad policy

issues, even when controlling for other factors like ideology, income, and economic satisfaction (Citrin, et.al. 1975, 19). It should be noted, however, that evidence to the contrary has been found as well (Hibbing 1999, 48). Moreover, scholars note that the evidence on the effect of policy on trust has been underwhelming (Ulbig 2002).

Almost all of the scholarship which posits a relationship between policy and trust, measures policy satisfaction by first asking people what they think the most important problem facing the United States is and then inquiring how good of a job the government is doing in handling that problem. That method is not used here. Because of the experimental design, the specific policy information can be included in the treatment, thereby making it possible to know that it is these particular elements of policy that an individual is responding to.

Pork Barrel Spending

The first variable of policy will be pork barrel spending. Pork is the political term used to refer to members of Congress tacking on monies to spending bills for special projects back in their home state and district. Members of Congress do this because they believe it enhances the chance of being reelected and that it earns them personalized electoral support (Cain, et.al. 1987). Their willingness to engage in pork barreling can be understood to represent the dominance of parochial issues for members. The most often mentioned criteria in

evaluating a member of Congress have been constituency services, including service to the district, service to constituents, and the conditions of the district (Parker and Davidson 1979, 56-7). It is presumed that pork monies would fall into this array of factors because they would affect the quality of the district.

More recent evidence, however, indicates that bringing home pork to one's congressional district has no effect upon how people evaluate their member of Congress (Farnsworth 2003a, 75). Farnsworth's finding is surprising in that members of Congress fixate upon this task, bringing monies and projects back to their district, as they assume it assists in their reelection efforts. As Farnsworth is quick to point out, though, this may be representative of a socially desirable response pattern or an effect of an abstract question, rather than a specific one which asks about responses to specific pork projects (76). Since Farnsworth's work seems to stand alone in arguing that bringing home pork does not affect constituents and their subsequent evaluations, it stands to reason that the common understanding in political science literature is that it *does* matter.

Interestingly enough, previous research reveals that 85% of Americans believe that members of Congress should pay more attention to the interests of the entire nation rather than just their districts (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995, 64). As such, politicians who pay more attention to national issues than local issues should be trusted more because it is what people claim they desire. We can measure how politicians prioritize national interests and localized interests in

regards to how they spend the federal government's money. The concept of pork barrel spending is a very specific indication of this. Bringing home specific pork monies and projects implies a focus on one's constituency back home, a local focus.

It is assumed, then, that if citizens want legislators to focus on national affairs rather than parochial ones, that this requires a rejection of pork barreling. It is therefore expected that a politician who rejects pork barrel monies for their particular districts will be trusted more than a politician who does not.

The text of these treatments follows. Although I use the word "pork" here, it is worth noting that the word "pork" was not utilized in any of the treatments. It definitely has a negative political connotation, so its usage was avoided altogether. Although the specific element here is either taking or rejecting pork barrel monies, the justification for this decision further sets apart these two politicians. The first congressman turns away this money because the federal government is spending more money than it has and that it is in the best interests of the *nation* to stop these sorts of projects. The second congressman acknowledges that the government is spending more money than it has but that his state needs this money and other states are receiving money for projects like this. I initially wanted to include deficit spending as its own treatment under the policy framework, but found conflicting evidence as to its effect on public opinion. Its inclusion within this treatment allows me to explore the idea of

deficit spending in conjunction with pork barrel spending. Although these two ideas of pork barrel spending and deficit spending cannot necessarily be isolated here, it will be worthy of note to see how they both are interpreted by people. As an aside, the amount of money described in these treatments (1.2 million dollars) was not chosen with any specific theoretical reason, as the amount in question is not a fundamental aspect being investigated. This amount would assuredly seem large enough to the everyday American.

> Treatment 1: Congressman Brian Douglas recently turned down 1.2 million dollars of a recent bill dealing with highway transportation that was set aside for his state. Congressman Douglas justified this decision based on the fact that the federal government is spending more money than it has and that it is in the best interests of the nation to stop these projects.
>
> Treatment 2: Congressman Brian Douglas recently accepted the 1.2 million dollars awarded to his state in a highway transportation bill. Congressman Douglas explained that although the federal government is spending more money than it has, this money is needed by his state very much and that all other states are benefiting from projects like this.

National versus Local Focus

This specific variable in the pretest was worded "whether or not he focuses attention of the good of the entire country over the good for particular places". It was highly correlated with the policy factor, and I felt that it would answer a very relevant question in politics. Should members of Congress focus on their geographic constituency or the nation as a whole? More specifically, does the decision about which focus a politician takes influence the resulting trust that people have in him? We already know that people evaluate Congress and its members by different standards (Parker and Davidson 1979). It may be that while Congress is expected to guard the national good, individual members are expected to guard the good of a district and/or state. Either way, how this variable performs will indicate how important an issue this really is and if it has any effect on trust in government.

The specific text of these treatments follows. Similar to the previous work discussed above, if citizens tend to think that Congress should pay attention to the entire nation, rather than single districts, then the expectation is that people would trust a politician who claims to represent the national interest more than a politician who represents his specific district and constituency.

> Treatment 1: Congressman Brian Douglas often turns down money from the federal government for his district. He considers himself a representative for the national interest, rather than just his district, and feels that the money could be better put to use for the good of the nation.

Treatment 2: Congressman Brian Douglas never turns away money or attention from the federal government for his district. He first considers himself a representative of his specific district and his constituents and feels that federal monies are put to very good use there.

Analysis

In order to find out if the treatments had any effect on political trust, the means of the trust score following each treatment can be compared. This might normally be done with a series of means tests. Repeated applications of a test to the same data, however, increase the likelihood of committing a Type I error, which is the type of error associated with making a decision based on the data from the sample (Rea and Parker 2005, 145). Repeating applications of means tests or t-tests involves all error factors being compounded in one's data set, making it much more likely to reject hypotheses when one should not. Because of this, multiple comparisons are usually performed with ANOVA models to control the level of significance, thereby maintaining the traditional error rate for an experiment (Elliott and Woodward 2007, 154).

First, there will be three ANOVA models, one for each people, process, and policy treatments. A major advantage in using analysis of variance (ANOVA) is that more than two means can be compared (Cohen and Lea 2004, 97). This is helpful here as each category has four treatments within it. Although

there are no hypothesized relationships between each of the four treatments within each category of people, process, and policy, I believe that how the four treatments compare with each other in their effect on trust may prove to be interesting.

Because it is of import to analyze the differing effect of each of the two treatments in a pair, the pairs will then be analyzed as independent samples t-tests. These tests will be run as follow-ups to the ANOVA models. This results in six different analyses being conducted.

The Dependent Variable

These specific treatments described above will represent independent variables in the proceeding analysis. In order to ascertain the effect of the treatments on political trust, I measured an individual's trust in the specific politician presented in each treatment. This shall serve as the dependent variable in the proceeding analysis. This measure of trust is borrowed from Cook and Gronke (2005). The Cook and Gronke trust variable asks respondents to place themselves on a scale from 0 - 10 regarding their level of trust in government to do the right thing, where 0 indicates very strong distrust of government, 10 means strong trust in government to do the right thing, and 5 indicates neither trust, nor distrust (787).

Why use the Cook and Gronke measure of trust? As these scholars have pointed out, a potential conflict in measuring political trust is in the interpretation of trust survey responses. More specifically, does a lack of trust signify cynicism or skepticism or outright and active distrust? Cook and Gronke (2005) argue that the current survey measures appear to truncate the full diversity of responses to questions regarding trust, making a person appear either trustful or distrustful. These scholars have developed their own measure of political trust which indicates that healthy skepticism is more the norm than are either absolute trust or distrust.

The only change that I made to this dependent variable was to change the item of reference from the government to the specific politician presented in the treatment. The dependent variable here reads: On a scale from zero to ten, where ten means very strong trust in this politician to do what is right, zero means very strong distrust in this politician, and five means that you neither trust nor distrust this politician, where would you place yourself?

Examining the descriptive statistics for this variable, it appears that there is a large portion of the sample that did not answer these questions, either with a don't know or refused to answer but continued with the call. The valid sample sizes of people answering this primary dependent variable after the treatments are lower than the full sample size of 600. Following the people treatments, we have N = 443, following the process treatments N = 440, and following the policy

treatments N = 438. This presents evidence of a problem identified in experimental research as "experimental exit" where respondents are free to leave any question selectively, which potentially excludes them from the experiment (Sniderman and Grob 1996, 394). Sniderman and Grob say that this raises potentially critical risks of self-selection effects. Because the sample sizes are still relatively large, this should not be a problem for the proceeding analysis. In the end, this is a liability for experimental research and one must carefully proceed.

ANOVA Analysis

In order to ascertain the effect of each of these treatments, I conducted one way analysis of variance (ANOVA). This was done in order to find if there are differences in mean trust scores due to the treatments received within each category of people, process, and policy. One way analysis of variance is used to test the null hypothesis that several independent population means are equal, in this case that would mean that the treatments resulted in no statistically significant differences in trust. Whereas before I tested the differences in mean trust scores following each treatment in pairs, this test will determine if the differences in means are statistically significant among all four treatments.

In order to use this analysis of variance procedure, the observations (trust scores) must be independent and random samples from normal populations with

equal variances. The first assumption of independent samples is met here as participants were randomly split into groups. Although assignment to treatment groups was completely randomized, the amount of people in each treatment is not exactly equal. The amount of people for each treatment ranges from a high of 176 to a low of 130, making these groups roughly equivalent. The second assumption of normality means that the measurement variable of trust is normally distributed within each group. A look at the histograms for these dependent variables of interest (one following each treatment) shows that the shape approximates a bell curve. This indicates normality. The third assumption is that within each group there are equal variances. To consider equal variances, I examined the descriptive statistics for each group. The standard deviations of each group, remembering that the variance is the square of the standard deviation, appear to be roughly equal. All three assumptions of ANOVA, therefore, are met here.

The first part of an ANOVA determines if there is an overall difference among the groups tested. This will result in a significant F test (Rea and Parker 2005, 214). A significant F test means that you can reject the null hypothesis that all the group means are equal. This only means that all the groups are not the same, not that they all differ from each other (Cohen and Lea 2004, 107).

When there are more than two groups being compared, further analysis is required. These are referred to as post-hoc tests. One of the most widely used post-hoc tests is called Tukey's HSD and is recommended when comparing more

than three groups of equivalent sizes (Cohen and Lea 2004, 117). This is the post-hoc test that shall be utilized here, unless otherwise noted. This test will specify the statistically significant differences among the groups.

An F test can be statistically significant even when there is little difference among the sample means, especially if the sample sizes are large (Cohen and Lea 2004, 106). As such, in addition to this test of significance it is helpful to provide an estimate of effect size. This is called eta squared, expressed as η^2. This represents the total variation explained by the grouping of the independent variables and ranges from 0 to 1. This measure is akin to the R-squared statistic in a regression model in that it explains how much of the variance can be explained by this grouping of independent variables and can be interpreted similarly (Cramer 2003, 152).

People Treatments

First, a one-way ANOVA was performed to test the hypothesis that the average trust scores following people treatments were equal. The average trust scores were found to be different across the people treatments, $F(3, 439) = 2.866$, $p = .036$, $\eta^2 = .02$. A significant F test indicates that an overall differences among groups exists (Rea and Parker 2005, 214). Multiple comparisons were then performed using the Tukey method. No relationships among the four treatments were significant at the $p < .05$ level. The mean trust score of the constituents'

feelings treatment was almost statistically significant ($p > .05$) and higher than the personal feelings treatment. This was the relationship that was posited between these two treatments, although none of the differences achieve statistical significance.

(Table 4.2 Here)

Process Treatments

The next ANOVA model analyzed the difference in mean trust scores according to the four process treatment exposed to. There was no significant differences between these means, $F(3, 436) = 1.378$, $p = .249$, $\eta^2 = 01$. The null hypothesis that there is no difference among the mean trust scores according to the process treatment cannot be rejected. Although the means show that the treatments which were hypothesized to cause higher average trust scores actually did, none of these relationships were statistically significant in performing multiple comparison tests post-hoc.

(Table 4.3 Here)

Policy Treatments

The final ANOVA model analyzed the difference in mean trust scores according to the policy treatment exposed to. The average trust scores were found to be different across the policy treatments, $F(3, 434) = 14.414$, $p = .000$, $\eta^2 = .09$. Multiple comparisons were then performed using the Tukey method and the following relationships emerged. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between two groups of variables here. The average trust scores are significantly higher for the people who got the reject pork treatment or the national interest treatment versus the other grouping of take pork treatment and local interest treatment. The average trust score for the reject pork treatment ($M = 6.11$) was almost two full points higher than the take pork treatment ($M = 4.42$), on a scale from 0 to 10. These subsets are exactly as hypothesized, with rejecting pork and national focus affecting trust positively and taking pork and local focus resulting in lower average trust scores.

(Table 4.4 Here)

ANOVA Summary

The results of the ANOVA analysis are interesting in that policy treatments had extremely statistically significant differences between them ($p <$ .000). There were also significant differences among the people treatments. With such interesting findings resulting from the people and policy treatments, it is

somewhat of a disappointment that the process treatments did not have any significant effect on trust.

Overall, the mean levels of trust for the politicians described in these 12 treatments hovered around the mode of 5, which represents neither trust nor distrust. Although there were some components of people, process, and policy which resulted in higher mean levels of trust, none resulted in a mean trust score that was very extreme. The eta squared measures of each ANOVA model are all very small (η^2 = .02, .01, .09). This measure is akin to the R-squared statistic in a regression model in that it explains how much of the variance can be explained by this grouping of independent variables (Cramer 2003, 152). As such, it seems that although the qualities of people, process, and policy tested here have the capability to influence trust on the margins, they do not do so in a wholesale kind of way.

Next, I consider people, process, and policy treatments, in turn. The people treatments did not have a great effect on political trust. Although the overall ANOVA model for the people treatments indicated that the average trust scores were different, upon further analysis no relationships were found to be significant. The mean trust scores following the treatment where a congressman had no previous electoral experience were higher than the mean trust of a congressman who did have previous electoral experience although this difference was not statistically significant. This was the only finding which contradicted

expectations. Perhaps the notion of competence in a congressperson is not thought of as originating with previous office, although other literature, specifically that dealing with quality political candidates, would disagree with such as idea. It may also be that although a political novice lacks competence, he would be trusted more than an "experienced" legislator. There has been previous evidence that citizens think that Congress has a corrupting influence on people (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995, 63). If this is how people perceive of Congress then a member with no experience beforehand might be trusted more than an incumbent.

Nothing significant emerged from the model on process treatments. The mean trust scores were higher for congressmen that engaged in friendly debate and promised not to run a negative campaign, although these differences in mean trust scores were not statistically significant. Perhaps the factors that these process treatments tested were not ones that would engender any differences in trust. This does not mean, however, that process does not matter in relation to political trust. Other prominent scholars have found that process concerns do affect satisfaction with government (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001, 2002). Ultimately, other characteristics of process may be found to have a greater effect on political trust. Moreover, more sharply worded process treatments which utilized emotive language might elicit more significant findings.

The average trust scores of the policy treatments divided very nicely into two statistically significant, distinct subsets, the mean trust scores of rejecting pork ($M = 6.11$) and having a national focus ($M = 5.91$) hanging together with higher mean trust scores, and the taking pork ($M = 4.42$) and local interest ($M = 4.95$) treatments forming the other subset, with lower mean trust scores. This finding is as expected. It provides strong evidence in support of other work which has found that Americans want congresspersons to focus on national interests rather than parochial ones.

In the policy treatments, the explanation behind either accepting or rejecting pork was premised upon the idea of deficit spending. Although this idea of deficit spending cannot be isolated from the simple concept of either taking or rejecting pork, it is interesting that these treatments appeared to have a pretty significant effect on trust. Would the treatments have had the same effect on trust if they included no reference to the rationale behind either taking or rejecting pork? The findings here make this an excellent question for future research.

The fact that a politician who considers himself a representative of the national good rather than just his district influences political trust, and in this case, appears to increase trust in that politician, is truly interesting as well. This has very contemporary relevance because following the recent hurricane disasters in the Gulf Coast the concern has been whether or not the federal government has the money to help rebuild New Orleans in particular. Pet pork projects have

recently received lots of attention for the monies that they take away from a national disaster of this magnitude, such as the "bridge to nowhere" in Alaska which was initially funded to the tune of 223 million dollars and then defunded amid increasing national scrutiny. The results here indicate that a congressman with a national focus rather than a local focus does engender higher levels of political trust. Additionally, a congressman who rejects pork engenders higher levels of trust than one that does not. Congresspersons no doubt walk a fine line between being faithful ombudsmen and bringing money back home, on the one hand, and being guardians of the national good, on the other. That these decisions may affect the political trust prescribed to members of Congress, as the evidence here indicates, might make these decisions easier.

Difference of Means Tests

In order to determine if the treatments affected political trust, I will compare the mean scores of trust following each treatment with its pair. (A visual comparison of means trust scores following each treatment is contained in the Figure 4.1 of the Appendix.) This shall be done with independent groups t-tests. The independent group's t-test is used to compare two means of a population based on independent samples from two groups (Elliott and Woodward 2007, 47). This test is intended for measuring a dependent variable on a quantitative scale when a study has randomly assigned participants into one of two experimental

treatments, in order to test if the independent variables (here, the treatments) have any effect upon the dependent variable (trust) (Cohen and Lea 2004, 49). The dependent variable here being the trust score asked about following each treatment and the independent variables are the treatments received.

The treatments are conceived of as pairs because each concept has two treatments that represent it and the goal is to ascertain if these treatments affect levels of political trust. The first people quality tested is that of competence as measured through previous electoral experience. One treatment has a politician with no previous office holding experience and the other served as a state legislator before being elected to Congress. The second people quality tested was whose opinions a politician uses in taking positions on issues. One treatment has a politician who takes positions based upon his own personal feelings and the other takes positions based upon how his constituents feel. Next are the process treatments. The first process treatment deals with the nature of the campaign a politician has run. In the first treatment, a politician promises not to run any negative campaigns or to attack his opponent on a personal level. In the second treatment, a politician vows to point out all the important differences between himself and his opponent. The second process treatment deals with the nature of debate that a congressman engages in. In the first treatment, a politician always engages in civil and friendly debate. In the second treatment, a politician's behavior in debate is not so civil. Finally, there are the policy treatments. The

first policy factor tested is the idea of pork. The first treatment portrays a congressman who refuses to take pork for his district, while the second treatment portrays a congressman who does accept pork. The other policy factor tested is the idea of where a congressman places his focus. The first treatment portrays a congressman who considers himself a representative for the national interest, rather than just his district, and the second treatment portrays a congressman who considers himself a representative of his specific district.

As such, the treatments are in pairs as they represent two facets of one particular quality being tested for their affect on political trust. In order to determine if the treatments have the hypothesized effect on trust, the means of the trust score following each factor being tested can be compared of in pairs. An independent samples t-test was performed to test the hypothesis that the resulting means of trust scores for each pair of treatments were equal. First, the results of the Levene's test for equality of variances will be reported. If the variances are not significantly different than one another, then it is protocol is to report the pooled-variance t-test results. If the variances are significantly different than one another, the protocol is to report the separate-variance t-test results. This shall be reported for each independent samples t-test which will be performed. In addition to the results of the t-test, the means of the two samples will also be reported (Cohen and Lea 2004, 59).

This analysis allows me to determine if each of these treatments had the hypothesized effect on trust. Moreover, this analysis will enable me to determine if the difference in trust as a result of the treatments received are significantly different. Figure 4.1 in the Appendix summarizes these mean trust scores after each treatment.

People Treatments

The first pair is a people quality, that of competence. Competence here was measured as previous electoral experience, so one politician had it and the other did not. The Levene's test for equality of variances showed that the variances of these two samples were not significantly different, and so the pooled-variance t-test was utilized. The mean trust score following the previous office treatment was 4.93 (SD = 1.85). The mean trust score following no previous office treatment was 5.33 (SD = 2.02). The politician with no previous office holding experience tends to be trusted more than the one who has held previous office. The means between these two treatments, however, are not significantly different, $t(226) = -1.58$, $p > .10$.

The originally hypothesized relationship was that politicians with experience would be trusted more than those with none. This finding does not support that. The mean trust score following the no previous office treatment was higher than that following the previous office treatment, but this difference was

not statistically significant. This, in fact, is the only finding that runs contrary to the expectations of these people, process, and policy treatments. It may be, however, that a politician with prior experience represents a "career politician", and Americans do not generally love the notion of a career politician. In this way, experience may have a negative connotation, which would cause it to have an adverse effect on trust in a politician.

The second people quality was that of whose opinions most affect a politician's position taking. The first treatment presented a congressman who uses his own personal feelings, whereas the second congressman uses his constituents' feelings. The Levene's test for equality of variances indicated that these two sample's variances were statistically different from one another, so the separate-variances t-test will be reported. The mean trust score following the personal feelings treatment was 4.67 (SD = 2.41) and the mean trust score after the constituents' feelings treatment was 5.35 (SD = 1.89). As hypothesized, the politician who uses his constituents' opinions in taking positions on issues is trusted more than the politician who uses his own personal feelings. These means are significantly different from each other, $t(207) = -2.31$, $p < .05$. Because $p < .05$, we can safely assume that these two means are not equal.

Process Treatments

Then, the process treatments were tested. The first of these treatments represented a politician promising to conduct a clean campaign. The second one described a congressman who vowed to point out the important differences between himself and his opponent. The Levene's test for equality of variances indicated that these two samples had significantly different variances, and thus the separate-variance t-test will be reported. The mean trust score following the clean campaign treatment (M = 5.66, SD = 2.28) was not significantly different than the mean trust score following the not clean campaign treatment (M = 5.30, SD = 1.96)), $t(210) = 1.22$, $p > .10$. As expected, there is a higher mean trust for the politician that promises a clean campaign, but the relationship between the trust scores following each of these treatments is not significantly different. These treatments may not have sufficiently described a dirty versus a clean campaign.

The second process quality tested was the nature of debate a congressman engages in. The first treatment presented a congressman who engages in civil debate, while the second treatment here describes a congressman who is not quite as civil in debate. The Levene's test for equality of variances showed that these two samples were not significantly different than one another, so the pooled-variances t-test will be reported. The mean trust score following the civil debate treatment (M = 5.72, SD = 2.09) was not significantly different than the mean trust score after the not civil debate treatment (M = 5.24, SD = 2.28), $t(223) = 1.63$, $p > .05$. Although trust appears higher in regards to a congressperson who

engages in civil debate, there is no statistical significance in the differences in means as a result of these two treatments.

Policy Treatments

Next, let's consider the effect of the policy treatments. The first of these tests the notion of bringing pork home to the district. The first treatment represents a congressman who turns away pork, and the second one describes a congressman who accepted the pork. The Levene's test for equality of variances indicates that the variances of these two samples are significantly different from each other, so the separate-variance t-test results are reported. The mean trust score following the reject pork treatment ($M = 6.11$, $SD = 2.47$)) was significantly different than the mean trust score after the accept pork treatment ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.92$), $t(213) = 5.86$, $p < .001$. The politician who turns away pork project and monies for his district has, on average, higher trust. The average trust for a politician who rejects pork is significantly different than the average trust of the politician who accepts it. This supports the hypothesis. In fact, the mean trust on the reject pork treatment is the highest of all twelve of the mean trust scores. The reject pork treatment resulted in the highest mean trust score.

The second policy characteristic tested was having a national versus a local focus. The first of these treatments describes a congressman who considers himself a representative for the national interest and the second treatment is a

congressman who considers himself a representative of his specific district. The Levene's test for equality of variances shows that the variances in these two samples were not significantly different and so the pooled-variance t-test results will be reported. The mean trust score following the national interest treatment ($M = 5.91$, $SD = 2.26$) was significantly different than the mean trust score following the local interest treatment ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 2.40$), $t(199) = 2.94$, $p < .01$. On average, the politician who works for the national good is trusted more than one who claims to be a representative for his local district, and this difference is statistically significant. This, also, is as hypothesized.

Difference of Means Summary

It should be pointed out that all of the mean trust scores hover around a 5, which represents neither trust nor distrust. This measure was designed to get at a full variety of responses to the trust question and has revealed in Cook and Gronke's research that skepticism is much more the norm than outright distrust. This nation-wide, random sample shows the same tendency. The average trust scores across these twelve treatments ranges from a low of 4.42 to a high of 6.11.

Analyzed in pairs, the analysis shows that the differences in means between the treatments were statistically significant in three of the six pairs. The differences in mean trust scores were significant for the whose opinion treatments, the pork treatments, and the focus treatments. For whose opinion , this means that

a politician who uses his constituents' feelings in taking positions on issues results in a significantly higher mean level of trust versus the politician who uses his own personal feelings. A politician who rejects pork project money for his district also engenders a significantly higher mean level of trust as compared to the politician who accepts said monies and projects. Finally, a politician who focuses on the national good results in a significantly higher level of mean trust as compared to the politician who focuses his attention on his local district.

As a whole, both policy components tested resulted in statistically significant differences in mean trust scores across treatments. One of the people factors tested resulted in statistically significant findings between treatments pairs, and neither of the two process factors tested achieved any significance. Here, in addition to the regression analyses presented in Chapter Three, ideas of policy have the greatest effect upon political trust.

Chapter 5
Conclusions about Political Trust

The initial questions posed here were: What explains why some individuals trust the federal government and others do not? How do people arrive at the decision to trust? In the end, I agree with and my evidence supports the supposition that "political support is in large degree a measure of government performance" (Owen and Dennis 2001, 211). Attitudinal variables such as trust, support, satisfaction, and legitimacy are interrelated and often considered interchangeable, so if political support is a measure of government performance, then trust might be as well. What are the specific elements of government performance, then, that contribute to the evaluation of trust in government? I am positing that perceptions of people, process, and policy make up components of the government and its performance that citizens then evaluate. These evaluations of the people in government, the process of government, and the policy produced by government then influence political trust.

I hypothesized that aspects of the political system itself, specifically the people who serve in office, the process of government, and the resulting policy, would influence political trust. These three aspects have all been offered up as explanations of trust by other scholars and other literature but have never really been tested together for their effect on trust. As a whole, the results of my analysis provide evidence that perceptions of the people, process, and policy of

government do affect people's trust in government. This will be discussed in more detail below.

Clarifying Trust

In this chapter, whenever I talk about trust as a dependent variable, it will be referring to Trust, the first question of the NES trust battery. The simple trust question "How much do you trust the government in Washington to do what is right?" is the closest thing we have to a universal measure of political trust. It is also a single trust question unaffected by any other possible antecedents of trust, which is a criticism that has been leveled at the Trust Scale measure.

A correlation measure between Trust and Trust Scale showed a positive and statistically significant correlation of $r = .81$, n = 550, $p < .01$ (two tailed). Obviously, both of these dependent variables are measuring the same concept or such a strong correlation between the two would not be present. They do perform differently however. My analysis has also indicated that Trust is more difficult to explain than the Trust Scale. The differences in the R-squared statistics of all of the regression models that were run indicate that all of the explanatory variables analyzed here, including people, process, and policy, are able to explain less of the variation in Trust as compared to the Trust Scale, with its four questions. While conceptually similar, Trust and Trust Scale perform differently.

Because the single question of trust is a universally acceptable measure of trust in government and because it measures simple trust without including any other variables which may be antecedents of trust (such as the Trust Scale), I intend to conclude my analysis of the performance of perceptions of people, process, and policy in their ability to explain trust in government with this measure of trust.

Where Does the Evidence Come From?

My methodology enabled me to inquire about and measure trust in two different ways. I employed a survey experiment to investigate whether perceptions of people, process, and policy do influence trust in government and how people, process, and policy worked in relation to each other. In a methodological sense, this research design has much strength. Empirically, it has the combined power of a randomized experiment together with a large and representative national sample survey. This multi-method approach melds together a method often used in the study of political trust, the survey, with a method not usually employed in studying trust, the experiment. Very few studies of political trust using experimental methods have been employed, so my contributions are unique in this sense (Levi and Stoker 2000, 501). Furthermore, experiments offer the strongest support for causal inferences to be made (McDermott 2002, 38). Moreover, this melding together of survey and

experiment provides "distinctive external validity advantages of the representative public opinion survey with the decisive internal validity strengths of a fully randomized, multifaceted experiment" (Sniderman and Grob 1996, 378).

In the national survey that was conducted, participants were asked to respond to various statements that ascertained their sentiments towards the qualities of the people in office, the processes, and the policies. These variables indicate the degree to which an individual is satisfied with the people in office, the process of government and politics, and the general performance and policy. Multivariate models were then applied to test these perceptions of people, process, and policy upon political trust. This analysis of trust focuses on trust in government on the general level.

For the experimental portion of the study, a national sample of randomly selected Americans was exposed to treatments that emphasized different elements of people, process, and policy. Each respondent was read three separate descriptions of a politician, one about personal qualities, one about process factors, and one focusing on policy. One specific attribute of people, process, and policy was presented within each treatment, and people were randomly assigned into these groups. The responding levels of political trust following these treatments were then compared in order to measure the effect of qualities of people, process, and policy. The experimental portion of this research design enabled me to test which specific attributes of people, process, and policy most

influence trust, either in the positive or negative direction. The magnitude of the effect of each of the three indicators of trust was then compared to each other in bivariate statistical models. This analysis of trust focuses on specific trust in an individual politician.

This survey experiment thus provided two avenues to conceptualize and measure political trust as a function of people, process, and policy. The survey questions asked about people, process, and policy in a very broad way. The experiment enabled me to posit and test specific attributes of people, process, and policy. For example, a survey question asked people to respond to the statement "Politicians in the U.S. deserve respect". What criteria a person may use to answer that question is unknown to us. In formulating experimental treatments, though, one of the people attributes tested was competence. Competence was measured as previous electoral experience and a pair of treatments were put together which tested that specific attribute of a people quality. Arguably, electoral experience may not be the exact same thing as competence, but that is how it was operationalized here. More importantly, because of the experimental design and random assignment into treatments, I could ensure that the specific attributes of the treatments affected political trust. Survey questions asked participants to consider people, process, and policy on a global level, while the experimental design tested more specific attributes of people, process, and policy.

One supportive conclusion about the dual methodology is that the two

methods used resulted in a convergence of evidence and findings. The survey and the experiment both revealed that perceptions of policy, whether conceptualized as general statements about policy outcomes or specific policy attributes or behaviors such as taking or rejecting pork, had the greatest effect on political trust.

The State of Political Trust in 2006-2007

The current state of trust in the United States government can be ascertained by looking at the distribution of trust in this nationwide, randomly selected sample. To do so, the Trust measure will be used and the reasons for this were detailed above. This measure of trust is the primary question in the NES trust battery which has been employed as a valid measure of trust in the federal government since the 1950s. This question traditionally has three response categories: just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time. I altered the response categories to include five: always, most of the time, some of the time, rarely, and never. These response categories were adopted from the work of Gershtenson and Plane (2006). These scholars argue that the difference between the three response options is unclear, especially the distinction between just about always and most of the time. They suggest the use of "always" as a response option because it is more absolute. Moreover, offering respondents more

response choices should make for finer distinctions. The response option of "never" is also offered, which it is not in the standard NES trust battery.

The distribution of trust across this sample with these response options approximates a normal curve. At one extreme, 5% of the sample chose "never" (n = 28). About 19% of the sample responded that they "rarely" trust the government (n = 115). The majority of the sample here says that they trust the government "some of the time", which is the answer squarely in the middle between extremes (n = 335, 56%). Next, about 20% of the sample says they trust government "most of the time" (n = 116). Only two people (n = 2) claimed that they "always" trusted the government which accounts for less than 1% of the sample. The low number of people who chose either of the two extreme options is not at all surprising, given their absoluteness.

The distribution of trust across this sample shows that people are not completely without trust. Around 24% of the sample here responded that they rarely or never trust the government to do what is right. The response option of rarely still implies that these people may occasionally trust, just not as much as the people who chose some of the time. The rest of the sample, over 70% of it, had some trust in government, whether it is only some of the time, most of the time, or always. Although the literature has bemoaned the sad state of political trust in the United States, these numbers indicate that political trust is not cause

for concern. Most people surveyed here trust government at least some of the time, and that is good news.

Political Trust is Political

What explains political trust? Individual characteristics such as age, race, gender, education, and so forth, although long posited as affecting trust, have actually been found to have little predictive power. My data confirms this as well. Newton and Norris (1999) assert that political trust is randomly distributed among people with different individual characteristics such as education, income, religion, age, or gender (62). As such, these types of variables should not have any predictive power over political trust. Government performance, these authors argue, affects all individuals, and this is what sets it apart as an explanation of political trust. Likewise, evaluations of governmental performance should then affect trust in government. Political trust is inherently political. Margaret Levi and Laura Stoker, in a review piece on political trust, assert "Whether citizens express trust or distrust is primarily a reflection of their political lives, not their personalities nor even their social characteristics" (2000, 481).

The most recent literature in this subject indicates that political evaluations of government performance are strong predictors of political trust. Hetherington (1998) concludes that the political evaluations of government effectiveness and overall economic evaluations influence trust (799-800). Citrin and Luks conclude

that the components of trust in government are largely political (2001, 24). They argue that congressional approval is the most robust predictor of trust in the federal government. Congressional approval performed very well in the analysis here as well, meaning that it was highly predictive of trust. Likewise, Owen and Dennis (2001) find that several different political evaluations affect trust. The political evaluations that they find influence political trust are perceived governmental power and the personal relevance of government to a citizen (221). Moreover, ideas like fairness, efficiency, having the right priorities, and having a positive perception of the state of the nation also influence trust (221). Most recently, Keele (2007) summarizes that political trust is a reflection of government performance as well. He says that individuals evaluate the performance of the president, Congress, and the economy and adjust their trust in government according to these factors (241).

In James A. Stimson's most recent work on public opinion (2004), he posits that political trust represents "generalized satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the state of things" (154). The "state of things", according to Stimson, includes the very ideas of government performance already mentioned. He says that the national economy is the best gauge of performance (153) and shows that consumer sentiment matches up with trust quite nicely (156). Moreover, he shows that the two indicators of trust in government and Congressional approval track together through time (153-54). Stimson, a well-respected scholar in the

public opinion field, makes a convincing case that trust correlates with satisfaction with government (the president and Congress) and economic performance.

Government performance, then, has most recently and effectively been operationalized as Congressional approval, presidential approval, and overall economic performance. All three of these variables have been examined separately and sometimes together as predictors of trust and none of the three has been found to explain very much of the variation in trust in government. Taken together, however, these are seen as powerful indicators of government performance which have the power to predict trust in government.

These three variables (presidential approval, congressional approval, and economic performance) were also included in my regression models which tested all potential explanations of political trust, including demographics and control variables. In these models, these three variables had mixed success in predicting trust. The economic variable that I used asked people how they were getting along financially these days, which is not exactly the same way that overall economic performance has been measured previously, but it is the closest representation of that idea that was included in my instrument. Presidential and congressional approvals were measured the same way in my survey instrument as they are elsewhere.

In a full regression model including all possible explanations of political trust, the financial condition variable achieves statistical significance in only one version of the model which tests only socioeconomic and demographic variables. Upon adding in other variables, the significance of financial condition disappears. Congressional approval is a significant predictor of trust in all of the regression models it was included in. Presidential approval, however, was not.

If these three variables, Congressional approval, presidential approval, and overall economic performance, have often been put forth as *the* government performance variables which influence trust, then it should be safe to assume they would be stronger predictors of trust than they have proven to be in my data set here. In order to check the strength of Congressional approval, presidential approval, and economic performance as explanations of trust, I ran another regression model with Trust as the dependent variable and these three aforementioned variables as the independent variables.

In a second model, I added my scaled variables of people and policy as independent variables. I included people and policy because these variables performed successfully in the regression models of Chapter Three, and I left out process variables not only because the process scale did not perform very well as a scale but also because the one process variable used in these earlier regression models was not significant in predicting the dependent variable Trust.

(Table 5.1 Here)

The first model with the typical government performance variables, financial condition, Congressional approval and presidential approval, has an R-squared of .12, meaning that these three variables explain 12% of the variation in Trust. Presidential and congressional approvals both have positive and statistically significant relationships with Trust. Those who approve of the performance of Congress and the President are likely to have more trust in the government to do what is right.

The addition of the people and policy variables in the second regression model results in a significantly higher R-squared of .33, as evidenced by the *F* change statistic. Congressional approval maintains its significance, but neither presidential approval nor financial condition is significant. Both the people scale and the policy scale are highly significant and in the hypothesized direction.

This cross sectional evidence suggests that these typical government performance variables did not predict political trust as well as has been previously argued. The first regression model indicates that financial condition, presidential approval, and congressional approval explain 12% of the variation in Trust. The addition of the people and policy scales greatly increases the explanatory power of the model. The R-squared statistic for this second model is almost *triple* the first and the difference between the two is significant. This implies that

perceptions of the people in government and the policy of government are more predictive of trust in government than congressional approval, presidential approval and economic performance. The performance of the coefficients in the regression model also confirms this. In comparing the betas of these variables, the people scale ($\beta = .270$) and the policy scale ($\beta = .316$) are much larger than the beta for congressional approval ($\beta = .091$).

I am arguing that political trust is explained in large part by political evaluations of government performance, much like these other scholars. My conceptualization of political evaluations of government performance, however, is considerably different. I argue that the public reacts to the actors on the political stage (politicians) who conduct politics (the process) and produce policy (policy). These are the three determinants, people, process, and policy, which I have put forth and tested here. The regression analysis just presented indicates that the ideas of people and policy, as I have conceptualized them, are stronger predictors of political trust than even the vetted typical government performance variables. The performance of perceptions of people, process, and policy in predicting trust will be reviewed separately below.

Perceptions of Process Matter the Least

Process is the latest addition to the ways people evaluate government and politics. As Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) argue, when evaluating

government, people's dissatisfaction is related to perceptions of *how* government does its job, not *what* it does (34-5). So process should matter. As long as the process is fair, Americans feel better about government, and this then affects political trust (Owen and Dennis 2001, 220-21; Farnsworth 2003a, 73). Although the previous evidence on this point is strong, I do not find much evidence to support this argument. Process, as I have conceptualized of it here, has the weakest effect on trust of all three of the primary independent variables of interest.

The survey portion of the instrument tested three political statements dealing with perceptions of process. These included 1. Most politicians do a lot of talking by they do little to solve the really important issues facing the country, 2. The political process is fair and open, and 3. Fighting between political parties in Washington prevents our elected officials from getting anything done. Overall, responses to process statements showed more extreme variation than responses to people or policy statements. There were far fewer individuals who chose the neither agree nor disagree option on the questions of process than the questions concerning people and policy. The mode response about politicians doing a lot of talking but little to solve problems is a 5, meaning strongly agree. The mode response to the political process being fair and open is a 2, meaning the most often occurring response was to disagree. The mode response to fighting between political parties prevents anything from getting done was also a 5, indicating

people strongly agree with this idea. These results indicate that people did not feel very positively towards two specific processes of politics or that the political system is open and fair. Obviously, people seemed to think that politicians do lots of talking but take little action and that there is lots of fighting going on between the two major political parties.

In all regression models, process variables were generally the weakest predictors of political trust, as compared to perceptions of people and policy, and were often not even statistically significant. In formulating the process scale, I found that the reliability of said scale was very poor and discontinued its usage immediately. This revealed that the three survey statements that I tested as ideas of process did not appear to be measuring the same concept at all ($\alpha = .37$). This limited the confidence that I had in process to explain much of political trust. This shortcoming, however, lies completely with the researcher and the way in which process was operationalized. This may help explain the uneven performance of process in helping understand trust.

The effects of the process experimental treatments were also negligible and not significant. The process attributes tested were campaigning and debate. As expected, there was a higher mean trust for the politician that promised not to run a negative campaign versus the politician that did not, but the difference between the trust scores following each of these treatments was not statistically significant. Although mean trust appeared higher in regards to a congressperson

who engages in civil debate as compared to one who engaged in uncivil debate, there was no statistical significance in the differences in means as a result of these two treatments. Although a comparison of all four process treatments showed that the treatments which were hypothesized to cause higher average trust scores actually did, none of these differences were statistically significant.

The one consistently significant process variable ("lots of talking") performed differently depending upon the dependent variable being investigated. This variable was a significant predictor of Trust Scale but it was not in the model with Trust as the dependent variable. Ideas of process may not be important for simple trust in federal government to do the right thing, but when it comes to the multifaceted idea of trust in Trust Scale, it does play a significant role. This makes sense in that the Trust Scale dependent variable contains four separate questions that get at the trustworthiness, honesty, wastefulness, and responsiveness of the federal government. Process might matter more when asking people to consider all four of these ideas. An important point to come out of this study is that the ability to explain trust very much depends upon the measure of trust a scholar is using.

It may also be that Americans already feel so inherently negative about the political process that there was nothing new to be found here. As mentioned, responses to the process survey items did not indicate that people have a great deal of confidence in the political process. Perhaps the citizenry *expects*

politicians to run negative campaigns and to engage in uncivil debate. If that is the case, then variables like clean campaigning and civil debate might not have had any measurable effect on political trust simply because people do not believe that the political process really happens like that in reality.

Perceptions of People Matter

Consistent across all analyses performed, the components of people influenced trust. In comparison, the effect of people qualities on trust was second only to that of policy. How people perceive of the people in political office should influence trust in government. The data here support this idea.

The survey portion of the instrument tested three political statements dealing with perceptions of people. These were 1. Politicians generally have good intentions, 2. I have a great deal of confidence in the men and women in this country that either hold or are running for public office, and 3. Politicians in the U.S. deserve respect. These statements were intentionally very general and intended to measure how people perceived of the people qualities of elected officials. As a whole, on matters related to the people serving in political office, this sample had a somewhat positive impression of politicians. On average, they were most likely to think that politicians do have good intentions but they did not have a great deal of confidence in them. A majority of those surveyed did think that politicians deserve respect.

In almost every regression model, all three of these people variables were statistically significant in predicting trust and in the hypothesized directions. This means that the more likely a person is to think that politicians have "good intentions", politicians deserve "respect", and that they have a great deal of "confidence in politicians", the greater her trust will be.

As far as the experimental treatments were concerned, the two people qualities tested were competence as measured through previous elective office and whose opinions a politician uses in taking positions on issues. The difference in means between a politician who had no previous office and the politician who did was not in line with the hypothesized relationship. The politician with no experience was trusted more than the one who did, although the difference between the means of these two treatments was not statistically significant. As hypothesized, the politician who uses his constituents' opinions in taking positions on issues was trusted more than the politician who used his own personal feelings and the difference in these means was statistically significant.

The responses to the generalized survey statements reveal that the more positive that people evaluated the people in politics, the higher their trust in government was. Those who think that politicians deserve respect, that politicians have good intentions, and have confidence in politicians had higher political trust. What are the people qualities, then, that are deserving of trust?

The reactions to the experimental treatments show that electoral experience may not inspire trust, as the politician with no previous experience resulted in a higher mean level of trust. Although this difference was not statistically significant, this is an interesting finding. Perhaps competence is not established through previous office holding experience. Or it may be that citizens do not interpret political experience as worthy of increased trust. It may be, however, that a politician with prior experience represents a "career politician", and Americans do not generally love the notion of a career politician. In this way, experience may have a negative connotation, which would cause it to have an adverse effect on trust in a politician. Political science literature reveals that Americans distrust career politicians. The strong show of support for term limits for Congress indicates this to be true. In a 1998 survey, 68% of people supported term limits for Congress (Hibbing and Thiess-Morse 2002, 90).

The reaction to whose opinions a politician considers in taking positions on issues did matter in regards to political trust. The politician who used his constituents' opinions engendered a higher mean level of trust than the politician who used his own personal feelings, and this difference in means was statistically significant. This finding was as expected as previous research indicates that people like legislators to take on the delegate role.

Perceptions of the people in office, as conceptualized and measured here, do affect trust in government. General satisfaction with the people in office

should increase trust. Competence, at least that as measured through previous elective experience, does not have any significant effect on political trust. Whose opinions a politician takes into account when deciding what positions to take on issues does matter in that the politician who serves as a delegate, listening to his constituents, is trusted more than the politician who serves as a trustee, following his own opinions.

Perceptions of Policy Matter the Most

Policy, as I have conceptualized of it here, consistently had the greatest effect upon political trust of these three primary independent variables. Although the previous empirical evidence regarding policy's effect on satisfaction with or trust in government is mixed, the empirical evidence here is quite clear. In the regression models that come from the survey data, policy ideas had the greatest effect on trust. In the analysis of the experimental portion of this research, policy had the greatest effect on trust. Both methods of investigation yielded the same results, that policy variables, as conceptualized here, had the greatest impact on trust. This convergence between survey and experimental findings should lend confidence to both.

The three policy statements that participants were asked to respond to presented very general ideas of policy outcomes of the government. These were: 1. I am generally satisfied with the public policies the government has produced

lately, 2. All in all, the government does a good job of running its programs, and 3. Things in this country are generally headed in the right direction. These statements did not require participants to make assessments of any specific governmental policy, just to assess their general ideas about the policies produced, the government's running of programs, and the general direction of the nation. As a whole, the numbers show that this sample of people was generally not pleased with the state of things. With each of these three policy statements, majorities of the sample disagreed with any positive sentiment. It can be safely said that this sample of people does not generally seem happy with these broad elements of policy.

In regression models, all three of these policy statements were statistically significant in explaining trust. The more positively one felt about all three of these policy components, satisfaction with public policy, how the government runs its programs, and the direction of the state of the nation, the higher that person's trust was. These three statements all continued to have positive and significant relationships with trust even when considered in conjunction with the other variables of people and process.

Perhaps these sentiments about policy, derived on a more global level, more adequately reflect how everyday citizens evaluate policy outcomes by the government. I have conceptualized that perceptions of policy will concentrate on the outputs of government and politicians; exactly what is being done that can be

measured and felt without requiring intensive knowledge on the part of citizens. The political science literature has found that everyday citizens are not capable of evaluating government according to policy because the knowledge demands are too great. Perhaps this is an artifact of the fact that policy satisfaction is most often measured by asking a citizen what they feel the most pressing policy concern is and then asking them how the government is doing on that policy issue. Citizens may not be quite capable of articulating a pertinent and up to date policy concern and then assessing what the government is currently doing to address said problem, but according to my findings here, how they feel about general policy outcomes has the capacity to affect trust. Since trust is an affective evaluation, which people use subjective criteria to judge, this indicates that a person's general impression of what is going on in government and politics is a subjective piece of the criteria that can affect trust in government.

These evaluations of broad sentiments about policy outcomes in the country do not indicate what a person is specifically thinking about when answering these questions. We cannot know for sure what government program a person is thinking about when they evaluate how the government is running its programs. Are they thinking about Social Security, the military, or something else? Although we do not know that specific information, it may be enough to know that when citizens amass information, they are able to take definite opinions

on general policy concerns and that these evaluations, in turn, affect political trust.

The results from the experimental portion of my research, however, tested very specific elements of policy, so we can be very sure what it is that citizens are reacting to. The two factors of policy that were tested were either taking or rejecting pork monies for the district and having a national focus versus a local focus on the question of representation. In my factor analysis prior to putting my survey instrument into the field, these two variables loaded highly with the policy factor, as I have conceptualized of it here. I also felt that they would provide interesting insight. Indeed, they did. The rejecting pork and national representational focus treatments caused higher mean levels of trust than the accepting pork and local representational focus treatments, and these relationships were statistically significant. According to these experimental results, it appears that citizens find these two policy behaviors, rejecting pork and having a national representational focus, worthy of more trust than the other policy behaviors of taking pork and local representational focus. These results support the original hypothesized relationships. Even when compared to all other of the twelve people, process, and policy treatments, these two policy treatments stood out in their effect on trust. The mean trust levels for the reject pork ($M = 6.11$) and national focus ($M = 5.91$) treatments were the highest two mean trust scores out of all twelve treatments.

These results indicate that policy, as conceptualized and measured here, absolutely affects trust in government. Broad, global policy sentiments influenced trust, and specific ideas of policy, pork and nature of representational focus, affected resulting political trust. Most importantly, when given specific policy information, respondents were able to process the information enough so that it affected subsequent trust evaluations. These results were exactly as hypothesized, with rejecting pork and national focus affecting trust positively and taking pork and local focus resulting in lower average trust scores.

Relevance of Findings and Suggestions for Future Research

People

The characteristics of people that I tested with the experimental design were competence, as measured through previous political experience, and whose opinions a politician uses in taking positions on issues. These are factors which are easy to include in experimental treatments because they are presented in binary fashion. A politician either has previous elective experience or he does not. A politician either uses his own personal opinions or those of his constituents. In reality, of course, there are many gradations of these variables; they are not always so dichotomous in the real world of politics.

Does it matter whether or not a politician takes on a delegate or trustee role of representation? The treatments about whose opinions a politician uses test

these ideas. Reactions to the experimental treatments indicates that it does matter and that people generally trust politicians who take on the delegate role more. At the end of the day, however, political scientists know that most legislators take on either role when it suits them, what has come to be called a politico. Future research might include this idea in experimental treatments in order to ascertain if this politico role has any discernible influence on political trust. Citizens appear to have contradictory expectations of their members of Congress because they want them to take a delegate role but also have a national focus, as was revealed in the study of policy variables.

Of the three primary independent variables that I have sought to test here, perceptions of people presents a great challenge for future researchers. As far as the perceptions of people in office, we know that the morality of a politician does matter for political trust (Levi and Stoker 2000). What does that mean though? What makes one moral and another amoral? These are the types of questions that remain unanswered. The problem is in identifying a way to test morality. How do we, as political scientists, identify and test the subtleties of morality? Honesty, for instance, is an often mentioned characteristic in voters' evaluations of political candidates, and yet we still do not have a way to test honesty. Describing one politician as honest and another as not will no doubt influence trust in that politician, but that gets us nowhere because we would expect that a politician called dishonest would not be trusted very much at all, no matter what. It would

be more helpful to know what makes a politician honest or dishonest. How do citizens come to judge honesty, and how does that then affect political trust? These are continuing challenges for those who are interested in measuring the influence of people on trust in government and political trust.

At the end of the day, this is why experimental research is tough to conduct with respect to the topic of trust. In order to make sure that people are responding to the treatments, they need to be different and not overly biased. But how, then, does the researcher tease out the differences between no elective experience, some elective experience, and a great deal of it when it comes to trust? Because my research indicates that an experimental design can be effective in identifying factors of people, process, and policy that have an effect on trust, scholars must continue to develop ways to test these subtle nuances of people characteristics.

Process

The perceptions of process tested here had the least effect on measures of trust. This was the case in both parts of the methodology. Responses to process statements in the survey were not strong in explaining trust. The process treatments in the experimental part did not cause any statistically significant differences in trust. Other scholars have reported that process variables do affect satisfaction with government, but my data do not support these previous findings.

Perhaps there are other ways to operationalize process that would influence political trust. I felt strongly that I had created accurate measures of process, but apparently that is not the case here. Perhaps perceptions of process do matter, but in comparison to those of people and policy, they appear minor.

Although the expected relationships emerged between the process treatments and trust, they were not of great consequence. The mean level of trust was higher for the politician who engages in civil debate which is quiet and calm versus one who is passionate and vocal, as was expected. Similarly, a politician who promises to run a clean campaign and not run negative ads is trusted more than a politician who vows to point out the differences between him and his opponent. Perhaps these factors did not result in significant differences in mean trust scores because the differences between pairs of treatments were not stark enough. I did not want to use emotive language because I felt that it would bias the way the treatments would be evaluated. Furthermore, it might be the case that these particular parts of process are not ones that shape trust in government and politicians. Future research might continue to find and test other elements of process that are capable of influencing trust.

Policy

My conceptualization of policy was different than almost all other scholarship. Policy entails general government performance and when measured

in this way, it had a substantial effect on trust in government. Future research might consider this when deciding how to measure policy and its effect on people.

The experimental portion of my research allowed me to test two specific attributes of policy, pork and the focus of representation, both of which had significant effects on trust in an individual politician. Although these two attributes are more specific ideas of policy, this suggests that when given the relevant policy information, people are capable of interpreting it because it causes differences in trust which are responsive to the policy information. People are not stupid and obviously the sample of people studied here thinks that policy factors like these matter.

These findings represent important considerations for politicians and future politicians. Members of Congress are evaluated by the manner in which they prioritize national versus local concerns and this includes whether or not they bring home money to the district. Congressmen who pass up pork projects and consider themselves representatives of the national interest are trusted much more than those who do not and these differences are statistically significant. Bringing home pork and representing one's local district are hallmarks of representation in Congress. The data show that these are not policy behaviors that engender trust. Will they continue? Almost undoubtedly. Members of Congress know that elites and monied interests within their districts want pork so they must satisfy these constituents even if some other constituents, namely voters, are pulling in the

opposite direction. Politicians who are paying attention to the political science literature would be wise to note this finding.

Furthermore, although not taking special project monies elicited more trust in a member of Congress, this may change when the nature of whom that congressperson is changes. As the literature points out, people evaluate Congress and its members by different standards (Parker and Davidson 1979). It may be that while Congress is expected to guard the national good, individual members are expected to guard the good of a district and/or state. It is one thing to trust that politician more when it is a hypothetical politician. How would people feel about *their* member of Congress turning down important monies for their state or district? Would they trust a congressperson that made a sacrifice like this on *their* behalf? The evidence here indicated that people trust a congressperson more when he does this, but this research design did not put people in the position of judging their own member of Congress, thus the variable of self-interest was not included. Future research may be able to tease out these differences.

As far as future research is concerned, we must not give up on the ability of the citizenry to evaluate policy and governmental performance writ large. As such, policy is still a warranted inclusion in the study of trust in government, as long as it is conceptualized in a way that makes citizens capable of evaluating it.

Experimental Research and Political Trust

Future experimental research can test different attributes of people, process, and policy for their effect on political trust. My work tested six concepts of people, process, and policy, but there are so many other ways to operationalize these same ideas, that the future is virtually limitless with this methodology. This unique approach to studying trust, a political phenomenon studied mostly through usage of surveys, has proven to be useful and exciting. Oftentimes, survey research has had to include numerous variables just to ensure that a scholar is controlling for the potential influence of other things on trust. Causation is more clearly established in experimental research and that will provide interesting avenues for future research. This will allow us to make far more substantive conclusions about which variables affect political trust.

Relevance of Findings and Trust

The analysis here revealed that citizens are more likely to trust elements of people and policy that do not exist in the real world of politics. The data suggested that a novice politician with no elective experience, who foregoes efforts to bring home the bacon, who focuses on high-minded national issues over parochial local ones, and who adopts a delegate role should be trusted the most of all politicians. In real life, we know that politicians with electoral experience are more likely to get elected and reelected, that members of Congress will continue to bring home the bacon as long as it furthers their careers, that members of

Congress have to pay attention to the folks back home and the attendant local concerns, and that no member ever takes positions on issues that are in line with his constituents all the time.

The very characteristics that were found here to increase trust do not exist in the reality of politics. The type of politician that would be most trusted may represent an ideal type, but he does not represent reality. Should he? That is a very normative question. Some scholars would argue yes, more trust is better for the system. There is no doubt, however, that the American political system can continue to function just like always no matter how much trust people do or do not place in the government.

Moreover, the very characteristics identified in this research as influencing and increasing trust are not compatible. A member of Congress who takes on a delegate role is trusted more than one who does not, and a member of Congress who takes a national focus over a local one is trusted more. These two things cannot simultaneously exist. If a congressperson is supposed to listen to his specific constituency and represent them thusly, then that same congressperson cannot necessarily embrace national issues over local ones. As such, citizens do not appear to have consistent expectations of their politicians.

Perhaps the most important thing learned here simply is that the characteristics of politics and government that people tend to place trust in are not widespread. The types of political attributes which increase trust are not ones that

the system fosters, and vice versa. If citizens think less experienced politicians are more worthy of trust, then why do they keep voting for the same incumbents? The incumbency advantage looms large in elections. If citizens trust members of Congress who abstain from bringing money back to the district, then why do members continue to do it? They do these things because they continue to help them get reelected. Does a politician care if constituents trust him as long as they keep electing him to office? Politicians might like to be trusted but they probably prioritize getting and staying in office ahead of garnering trust with constituents. Citizens might prefer to trust their government and the people who run it but as long as their streets are paved and their communities secure and provided for they'll continue to elect the same typical politicians. The onus of demanding, developing, and maintaining trust between citizens and government lies on the shoulders of both.

Explaining Trust

The original premise of this research was that political trust is a result of political evaluations made in response to these three primary determinants that I am specifying here, people, process, and policy. I believe that the data support this premise. There is remarkable convergence of findings in these two methods. The three elements of people, process, and policy have considerable strength in explaining political trust in the system as a whole and in specific politicians.

Evaluations of people, process, and policy have been found, through analysis of originally collected data, to influence both trust in government and trust in specific politicians. Of the three primary explanatory variables tested here, policy had the strongest influence on political trust. Perceptions of people follow closely behind, while the effect of process is the least powerful of the three.

I am not the first, nor the only scholar to posit that political evaluations affect political trust. Prior to this, presidential approval, congressional approval, and economic performance were the three most important variables of government performance that influence how trusting a citizen is of her government (Erber and Lau 1990; Craig 1993; Lawrence 1997; Orren 1997; Chanley, Rudolph and Rahn 2000; Citrin and Luks 2001). I am articulating a different manner of conceptualizing of government performance: people, process, and policy. When all of these variables were considered in tandem in regression models, perceptions of people and policy performed the best in predicting trust followed by congressional approval. It appears that generalizations about the people and policy facets of government and politics are more predictive of trust than congressional, presidential approval and economic performance. I feel confident, given this evidence and the rest of the analysis presented, that the determinants of people, process, and policy may form a broad explanatory theory of political trust which is based on evaluations of the political system and its parts.

Table 2.1
List of 29 People, Process, and Policy Variables included in Pretest
Explanation of Winnowing Process
Factor Analysis of 12 People, Process, and Policy Variables from Pretest
Final 12 Factors and Factor Loadings

On a scale from 1 to 5, 5 being very important, 4 being somewhat important, 3 being neither important nor unimportant, 2 being somewhat unimportant, and 1 being very unimportant, how important are the following qualities in deciding whether or not you trust a politician, in this case a Member of Congress. Please circle your responses.

Whether or not he brings his religious beliefs
to decision-making

Whether or not he has held previous political office

Whether or not he moves to Washington DC
once elected

Whether or not he is principled, standing up for
what he believes in

Whether or not he is like you

Whether or not he is married and has a family

Whether or not he has charisma

Whether or not he goes to church

Whether or not he is independently wealthy

Whether or not you believe that he is honest

Whether or not he has admitted character weaknesses

Whether or not he is in politics to represent himself
or his constituents

Whether or not he is willing to compromise
in order to get things done

Whether or not he conducts clean campaigns,
free of mudslinging or negativity

Whether or not he is willing to work with the president
regardless of political party

Whether or not he engages in civil and friendly
debate on the issues

Whether or not he accepts campaign contributions
from special interests

Whether or not he is a "career politician"

Whether or not he represents everyday Americans

Whether or not he is supportive of his own political party

Whether or not he works to limit the influence
of special interests

Whether or not the economy is performing well

Whether or not he supports a strong and active role
for the federal government

Whether or not he supports the government
spending more money than it has

Whether or not he brings money and projects
to his district

Whether or not he focuses attention on the good of the
entire country over the good for particular places

Whether or not the government is effective in dealing
with important problems in society

Whether or not he works to spend the government's money efficiently

Whether or not he supports a government that is not inefficient or wasteful

Explanation of Winnowing Process

1. After beginning with 29 variables, I eliminated any variable which, on average, was not ranked as somewhat or very important in deciding whether or not a politician should be trusted. This resulted in six variables falling out of the model.
2. With 23 variables left, I then made the choice to remove any variables which did not correlate with any one factor at .5 or above. So if a variable factored strongly with more than one of the factors, I discarded it. Additionally, if a variable did not factor with any of the factors at .5 or above I discarded it.
3. Next, I considered how the remaining variables could be operationalized. Because these variables were to be ultimately turned into experimental treatments, I needed to be able to operationalize them as clearly and succinctly as possible. If that were not possible for a variable, that variable got discarded.
4. The final model contains 12 variables:

Factor Analysis of 12 People, Process, and Policy Variables from Pretest

	Component 1 – Policy	**Component 2 – Person**	**Component 3 – Process**
Previous Office	.001	**.620**	-.295
Principled	.111	**.659**	-.226
Charisma	.086	**.576**	-.183
Support Party	.221	**.669**	-.081
Compromise	.192	.086	**-.642**
Clean Campaign	.157	.264	**-.739**
Work with President	.277	.432	**-.625**
Debate	.316	.171	**-.747**
Special Interests	**.653**	.109	-.124
Deficit Spending	**.694**	-.051	-.279
Pork	**.696**	.282	-.341
National Interest	**.659**	.386	-.305

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis
Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization

Final 12 Factors and Factor Loadings

People – previous office (.62), principled (.66), charisma (.58), and support his party (.67)

Process – compromise (.64), clean campaign (.74), work with the president (.63), and debate (.75)

Policy – pork (.70), national interest (.66), special interests (.65), and deficit spending (.69)

Table 3.2
Frequency Tables of the First Three Variables of People

Politicians generally have good intentions.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	44	7%
Disagree	118	20%
Neither agree nor disagree	195	33%
Agree	210	35%
Strongly agree	28	5%
	N = 595	

I have a great deal of confidence in the men and women in this country that either hold or are running for public office.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	69	12%
Disagree	189	32%
Neither agree nor disagree	196	33%
Agree	120	20%
Strongly agree	17	3%
	N = 591	

Politicians in the U.S. deserve respect.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	58	10%
Disagree	93	16%
Neither agree nor disagree	149	25%
Agree	206	35%
Strongly agree	87	15%
	N = 593	

Table 3.3
Frequency Tables of the First Three Variables of Process

Most politicians do a lot of talking but they do little to solve the really important issues facing the country.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	28	5%
Disagree	56	9%
Neither agree nor disagree	94	16%
Agree	200	34%
Strongly agree	218	37%
	N = 596	

The political process is fair and open.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	83	14%
Disagree	161	27%
Neither agree nor disagree	154	26%
Agree	153	26%
Strongly agree	41	7%
	N = 592	

Fighting between political parties in Washington prevents our elected officials from getting anything done.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	35	6%
Disagree	62	11%
Neither agree nor disagree	59	10%
Agree	175	30%
Strongly agree	262	44%
	N = 593	

Table 3.4
Frequency Tables of the First Three Variables of Policy

I am generally satisfied with the public policies the government has produced lately.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	162	27%
Disagree	185	31%
Neither agree nor disagree	130	22%
Agree	103	17%
Strongly agree	15	3%
	N = 595	

All in all, the government does a good job of running its programs.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	103	17%
Disagree	211	36%
Neither agree nor disagree	166	28%
Agree	90	15%
Strongly agree	23	4%
	N = 593	

Things in this country are generally headed in the right direction.

	Frequency	Valid Percent
Strongly disagree	149	25%
Disagree	176	30%
Neither agree nor disagree	135	23%
Agree	115	19%
Strongly agree	20	3%
	N = 595	

Table 3.5
OLS Regression Models – People Variables (good intentions, confidence in politicians, and respect)

Variables	**Model 1 DV = Trust Scale**	**Betas**	**Model 2 DV = Trust**	**Betas**
Constant	4.192 *** (.229)		1.650 *** (.107)	
Good intentions	.310 *** (.069)	.194	.141 *** (.032)	.187
Confidence in politicians	.406 *** (.071)	.252	.174 *** (.033)	.231
Respect	.256 *** (.059)	.187	.109 *** (.028)	.170
	N = 533 R-squared = .25		N = 577 R-squared = .21	
# $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$				

Table 3.6
OLS Regression Models – Process Variables (lots of talking, fair and open, and fighting between parties)

Variable	**Model 1 DV = Trust Scale**	**Betas**	**Model 2 DV = Trust**	**Betas**
Constant	5.270 *** (.210)		2.279 *** (.098)	
Lots of talking	.222 *** (.060)	.156	.076 ** (.028)	.114
Fair and open	.445 *** (.057)	.316	.194 *** (.026)	.293
Fighting between parties	.035 (.055)	.027	-.036 (.026)	-.058
	N = 535 R-squared = .14		N = 579 R-squared = .11	
# $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$				

Table 3.7
OLS Regression Models – Policy Variables (satisfied with public policy, running programs, and headed in right direction)

Variables	**Model 1 DV = Trust Scale**	**Betas**	**Model 2 DV = Trust**	**Betas**
Constant	4.855 *** (.173)		1.887 *** (.078)	
Satisfied with public policy	.204 ** (.069)	.141	.116 *** (.031)	.173
Running programs	.420 *** (.067)	.278	.174 *** (.031)	.246
Headed in right direction	.270 *** (.067)	.192	.125 *** (.030)	.190
	N = 540 R-squared = .25		N = 583 R-squared = .25	
# $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$				

Table 3.8
OLS Regression Models – All 9 Variables of People, Process, and Policy

Variable	**Model 1** DV = Trust Scale	**Betas**	**Model 2** DV = Trust	**Betas**
Constant	3.323 *** (.247)		1.386 (.116)	
Good intentions	.208 ** (.066)	.130	.089 ** (.031)	.119
Confidence in Politicians	.158 * (.073)	.099	.056 (.034)	.074
Respect	.178 ** (.058)	.130	.074 ** (.027)	.116
Lots of Talking	.194 *** (.054)	.139	.065** (.025)	.099
Fair and open	.079 (.059)	.056	.027 (.027)	.042
Fighting between Parties	.021 (.050)	.016	-.042 (.023)	-.069
Satisfied with Public policy	.069 (.069)	.048	.071 * (.031)	.106
Running programs	.297 *** (.069)	.194	.138 *** (.032)	.193
Headed in right Direction	.213 ** (.066)	.151	.088 ** (.030)	.135
	N = 515 R-squared = .36		N = 555 R-squared = .32	
# $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$				

Table 3.9
OLS Regression Models – Indexed Variables of People and Policy, Process Variables Entered Separately

Variables	**Model 1 DV = Trust Scale**	**Betas**	**Model 2 DV = Trust**	**Betas**
Constant	3.382 *** (.243)		1.407 *** (.114)	
People Scale	.186 *** (.026)	.285	.075 *** (.013)	.247
Policy Scale	.185 *** (.025)	.313	.095 *** (.012)	.348
Lots of Talking	.187 ** (.053)	.133	.063 * (.025)	.096
Fighting Between Parties	.023 (.050)	.017	-.042 (.023)	-.067
Fair and Open	.081 (.059)	.058	.029 (.027)	.044
	N = 515 R-squared = .35		N = 555 R-squared = .32	
# $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$				

Table 3.10
OLS Regression Models with All Explanatory Variables of Trust
DV = Trust Scale

Variables	**Model 1 – SES Variables**	**Model 2 – Add party id, attachment, ideology**	**Model 3 – Add political variables**	**Model 4 – Add religious variables**	**Model 5 – Add people, process, and policy**
Constant	6.009 *** (.438)	6.293 *** (.562)	6.959 *** (.669)	6.718 *** (.725)	3.207 *** (.734)
Age	.002 (.005)	.002 (.006)	.004 (.006)	.003 (.006)	-.001 (.005)
Race	.318 (.237)	.173 (.285)	.087 (.193)	.137 (.279)	.147 (.242)
Education	.079 # (.047)	.074 (.056)	.086 (.055)	.084 (.057)	.059 (.050)
Income	.060 (.058)	.077 (.069)	.090 (.067)	.098 (.068)	.098 # (.059)
Gender	-.034 (.163)	.092 (.199)	.084 (.193)	.028 (.197)	-.053 (.172)
Financial condition	.327 ** (.119)	.146 (.149)	.094 (.145)	.108 (.146)	.013 (.127)
Democrat		-.551 (.356)	-.535 (.358)	-.479 (.365)	-.275 (.318)
Ideology		-.064 (.158)	-.025 (.155)	-.002 (.157)	-.016 (.137)
Strong Repub		.304 (.345)	.066 (.339)	.080 (.340)	.082 (.295)
Strong Dem		-.129 (.316)	-.066 (.309)	-.102 (.311)	-.180 (.270)
Congressional approval			.552 *** (.121)	.557 *** (.121)	.248 * (.111)
Presidential approval			.100 (.141)	.070 (.143)	-.076 (.131)
Political interest			-.063 (.132)	-.063 (.133)	-.013 (.115)
Can trust be			-.293	-.300	-.375 #

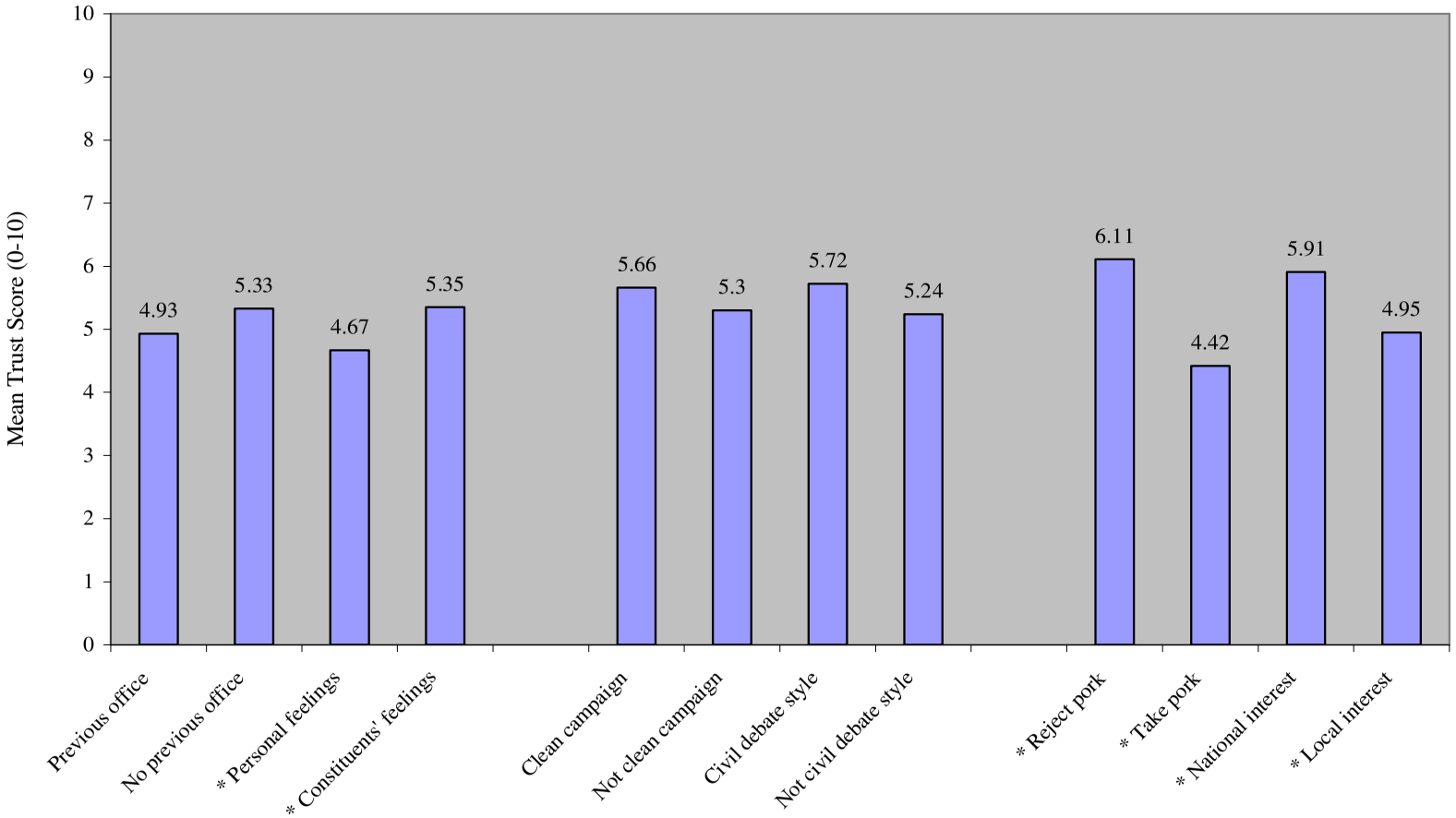
increased?			(.236)	(.238)	(.208)
Catholic				-.004 (.202)	-.010 (.176)
Religious service attendance				.070 (.052)	.058 (.046)
Biblical literalism				-.036 (.175)	.117 (.154)
People Scale					.192 *** (.039)
Policy Scale					.150 *** (.040)
Lots of Talking					.196 ** (.071)
	R-squared = .05	R-squared = .10	R-squared = .19	R-squared = .19	R-squared = .40
# $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$					

Table 3.11
OLS Regression Models with All Explanatory Variables of Trust
DV = Trust

Variables	**Model 1 – SES Variables**	**Model 2 – Add party id, attachment, and ideology**	**Model 3 – Add political variables**	**Model 4 – Add religious variables**	**Model 5 – Add people, process, and policy**
Constant	2.396 *** (.204)	2.560 *** (.266)	2.776 *** (.319)	2.642 *** (.346)	1.059 ** (.357)
Age	.002 (.002)	.002 .003	.003 (.003)	.002 (.003)	.001 (.003)
Race	.201 # (.111)	.125 (.135)	.081 (.131)	.105 (.133)	.116 (.118)
Education	.032 (.022)	.027 (.027)	.029 (.026)	.028 (.027)	.016 (.024)
Income	.011 (.027)	.019 (.033)	.026 (.032)	.028 (.033)	.029 (.029)
Gender	.012 (.076)	.068 (.094)	.069 (.092)	.045 (.094)	.008 (.084)
Financial condition	.078 (.056)	-.011 (.071)	-.038 (.069)	-.030 (.070)	-.073 (.062)
Democrat		-.277 (.168)	-.239 (.171)	-.217 (.175)	-.119 (.155)
Ideology		.037 (.075)	.063 (.074)	.071 (.075)	.075 (.067)
Strong Repub		.213 (.163)	.092 (.162)	.100 (.162)	.106 (.144)
Strong Dem		-.122 (.149)	-.112 (.147)	-.126 (.148)	-.158 (.132)
Congressional approval			.226 *** (.058)	.228 *** (.058)	.089 # (.054)
Presidential approval			.083 (.067)	.071 (.068)	-.013 (.064)
Political interest			.001 (.063)	.000 (.063)	.025 (.056)
Can trust be increased?			-.129 (.113)	-.136 (.114)	-.156 (.101)
Jewish				.023	.115

				(.313)	(.277)
Catholic				.021 (.098)	.017 (.087)
Religious service attendance				.034 (.025)	.030 (.022)
Biblical literalism				-.003 (.085)	.063 (.075)
People Scale					.077 *** (.019)
Policy Scale					.086 *** (.020)
Lots of talking					.045 (.035)
	R-squared = .03	R-squared = .09	R-squared = .16	R-squared = .17	R-squared = .36
# $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$					

Figure 4.1 Mean Trust Scores Following People, Process, and Policy Treatments



Treatment (Those with an asterisk are pairs of treatments that are significantly different at the p < .05 level)

Table 4.2
ANOVA Table – People Treatments (previous office, no previous office, personal feelings, constituents' feelings)
DV = Trust Score

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	36.340	3	12.113	2.866	.036
Within Groups	1855.629	439	4.227		
Total	1891.968	442			

Table 4.3
ANOVA Table – Process Treatments (clean campaign, not clean campaign, civil debate, not civil debate)
DV = Trust Score

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	19.419	3	6.473	1.378	.249
Within Groups	2048.561	436	4.699		
Total	2067.980	439			

Table 4.4
ANOVA Table – Policy Treatments (reject pork, take pork, national interest, local interest)
DV = Trust Score

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	220.836	3	73.612	14.414	.000
Within Groups	2216.497	434	5.107		
Total	2437.333	437			

Table 5.1
OLS Regression Model – Government Performance Factors and People and Policy Scales
DV = Trust

Variables	**Model 1 – Typical Government Performance Variables**	**Model 2 – Add People and Policy Scales**
Constant	3.070 *** (.036)	1.592 *** (.124)
Financial condition	-.005 (.046)	-.059 (.042)
Presidential approval	.184 *** (.036)	.046 (.036)
Congressional approval	.215 *** (.040)	.087 * (.037)
People scale		.081 *** (.013)
Policy scale		.086 *** (.013)
	N = 561 R-squared = .12	N = 533 R-squared = .33
# $p < .10$ * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$		

Missing values excluded listwise

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