

Expressions of Distrust: Third party Voting and Cynicism in Government¹

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American political history is replete with new parties and politicians who campaign on the platform that the major parties are failing to address the major issues of the time. They appeal to voters who believe current office-holders are corrupt, incompetent, insensitive, or all of the above. From the Know-Nothings to the Progressives to, most recently, United We Stand America, the campaign to restore the public's trust in the national government from outside the two-party system has been ongoing. Although third parties have used congressional elections in attempting to effect change in the American political system, elections for the presidency are likely to be ones that focus the nation's attention on third party movements. Since 1952, three independent third party presidential candidates have garnered more than 5% of the popular vote: George Wallace, John Anderson, and H. Ross Perot.

All three candidates had an impact on the electoral outcomes. Wallace succeeded in winning 46 electoral votes and almost fourteen percent of the popular vote (Canfield 1984; Coverse, Miller, Rusk, and Wolfe 1969). Anderson polled only 6.6 percent of the popular vote, but most of those voters were people who would have otherwise voted for Carter, a block of voters Carter desperately needed given the closeness of the race (Fresia 1986; Golubovskis 1981; Rhode, Aldrich, and Abramson 1983). Although he finished with no electoral votes, Perot garnered support from

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nineteen percent of the voters, which may have been instrumental in the election of Bill Clinton (Gillespie 1993; Ceaser and Busch 1993).

Although each of these elections contains unique elements, one can perceive an undercurrent of citizen distrust runs through all three. Was the lack of trust in the national government an important component in the decisions of those who supported and voted for third party candidates in each of these three presidential campaigns? This is the question we propose to answer in the course of this paper.

Literature Review and Theory

Although questions of citizen trust in the ability of the national government to handle the issues of the time have been raised since the first presidential elections (Rossiter 1966), using journalistic accounts of the salient issues as a measure is not an empirically rigorous method of measurement. One of the first attempts to quantify trust was the Detroit poll conducted by Aberbach and Walker (1970). Using a series of questions about both national and local governments, Aberbach and Walker found educational, racial, and income differences in levels of trust. They found that the overall level of government trust, whether national or local, was fairly low among both blacks and whites.

The work of Arthur Miller (1974, 1983, 1990a, 1990b) represents a significant step in measuring trust in the voting public. Using multiple questions from the American National Election Studies (ANES), Miller produced the first time-series analyses of trust levels. He found a pattern of decreasing trust in government throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The early years of the Reagan presidency resulted in a temporary increase in the level of trust, but the increase quickly dissipated, and trust levels began to fall again in the mid-1980s. Miller also found that distrust was more prevalent among blacks than whites. Since African-Americans are underrepresented in positions of political power (Bobo 1990), it is not surprising that they would be less trusting of the political system. Although some researchers have

questions about the validity of Miller's measures (Citrin 1974; Citrin and Green 1986), the durability of the index over time provides substantial support for its use².

The phenomenon of decreasing trust in the national government's ability to perform up to citizens' expectations is not unique to the United States. Miller and Listhaug (1990) developed a cross-national study that compared levels of trust in Sweden, Norway, and the United States over twenty-two years. The data show trust levels decreasing in all three countries at roughly the same rates in the late-60's and early-70's. By the mid-70's, the trends diverge. Norway shows a resurgence of trust, while the US and Sweden continue to decline. Miller and Listhaug conclude a significant factor in the divergence is the structure of the political system. The obstacles facing new parties wishing to enter the political arena in Norway are few compared to Sweden and the US. The more flexible Norwegian political system allowed several new parties to emerge, and the emergence of each new party coincides with renewed citizen trust in the Norwegian government.

If the emergence of new parties is one expression of voter discontent, then it appears the Norwegian system allows voters to register their distrust at the polls more easily than in the US or Sweden. The difficulty in forming new parties in a more rigid system only exacerbates the problem--voters feel distrustful of the government, but they can find no viable alternatives on the ballot. Lacking an alternative, the voters become increasingly frustrated and distrustful of a system that does not allow them to express their opinions.

What are the eventual outcomes of this build-up of distrust in a rigid system like the United States? One possibility is the emergence of a single-election, third

² The validity argument centers on the question of what the trust index actually measures. Miller (1974, 1983) argues the index measures trust in government as an institution rather than trust of individual political figures. Citrin (1974) and Citrin and Green (1986) argue the measures are tapping into feelings of distrust about current political leaders, rather than distrust of the government as a whole. We hope to resolve a portion of this controversy in the course of our discussion.

party candidate (Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus 1984). The candidate is an expression of the frustration the voters have with the rigid two-party system. As voters continue to feel that the major issues are not being addressed, they may be more likely to support third party candidates in upcoming elections. There is evidence to support this hypothesis (Howell and Fagan 1988; Chressanthis 1990; Chressanthis and Shaffer 1993; Howell 1994). Using state-level data from 1976 to 1988, Chressanthis and Shaffer found third party vote can be modeled using measures of alienation, ideological disparity (measured as the mean difference between the state's US House members and the US House as a whole)³, income growth, crime rate⁴, and the ratio of independents to partisans. They found increasing levels of crime, alienation, and independents, in combination with low rates of income growth, result in higher levels of voting for third party candidates (Adjusted R²=0.72). Both the income growth and crime rate variables were significant (p<0.10) and in the appropriate directions. Chressanthis and Shaffer conclude that third party voting is connected to the government's ability to address salient issues.

We believe that similar processes may be at work on a national level in voting for the president. While certainly not the only explanation for choosing a third party candidate (i.e. race played a large role in the 1968 presidential election), voters may translate feelings of distrust into support for candidates outside the traditional two-party system. Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus (1984) tested the trust items with all third party candidates from 1968 through 1980, and they found the trust index⁵ had a limited but significant influence on third party voting. They also found the scale's impact increased monotonically over the years investigated (p. 181). Although they

³ This measure is included as a test of Miller's (1974) hypothesis regarding ideologically extreme voters and their cynicism about politics.

⁴ Income growth and crime rate are included as measures of issues that are important to voters.

⁵ Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus refer to the trust index as the political disaffection scale, but their scale is composed of the same four questions as the traditional trust in government scale.

found only a limited impact for the trust scale, it must be noted that their analysis includes two elections, 1972 and 1976, in which there were no major third party candidates running, which may well have decreased the statistical strength of the scale.

The foregoing theoretical arguments for voter distrust and the emergence of third parties mesh well. To ascertain the effects of varying degrees of trust in government on voting in presidential elections, we develop and test the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis: Trust level has an effect on the probability of voting for a major third party presidential candidate independent of socio-economic status, education, voter opinion of the candidates, and partisan identification.

Methodology

To test this hypothesis, we use Miller's (1974) Index of Trust in Government (TIG) from the ANES samples from 1968, 1980, and 1992. The TIG index is a scale of cynicism measuring attitudes towards the government, ranging from low trust to high trust; the ANES asks questions designed to capture feelings about whether one can trust the government to do what is right, whether it is run for the benefit of a few big interests or all people, whether government officials are crooked, and whether and to what extent the government wastes tax money.

Low levels of trust in government may not be the only factors influencing the support of third party presidential candidates. To test the hypothesis, we employ a multivariate model. In order to isolate the effects of trust in government on vote choice, it is important to account for other potential explanations. To that end, we include several commonly accepted predictors of vote choice in the model (Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes 1960; Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus 1984; Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980).

Findings and Analysis

To test the impact of trust in government in the context of competing explanations of vote choice, we begin with a bivariate analysis of variance predicting vote with the eight-point trust scale and a correlation of the trust scale and third-party voting. Table 1 presents the findings from that procedure.

Table 1: Bivariate Tests of Trust and Third Party Vote Choice

Independent Variable: Trust Dependent Variable: Vote Choice				
	Overall	1968	1980	1992
Correlation Coefficient	-0.2215**	-0.3635**	-0.1240**	-0.1930**
F-Test	170.02	131.52	13.59	60.26
Prob>F	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001
Bartlett's Chi-Square	284.88	45.96	30.45	112.16
Prob>Chi-Square	0.001	0.001	0.001	0.001

**=significant at $p < 0.01$ or better.

The bivariate tests show significant differences between trust levels of third party and major-party voters. As the level of trust increases, the probability of voting for a different candidates (third party vs. non-third party) decreases. This pattern is true in the combined as well as each of the individual years. The initial results demonstrate third party voters are significantly more distrustful of government in all three elections when compared to major-party voters.

Although the initial evidence indicates third party voters are more distrustful of government than major-party voters, there are several other explanatory variables that may account for these differences. In order to test the strength of the trust-vote relationship, we need to employ a multivariate model. Given that the dependent variable is dichotomous (vote for third party candidate/vote for non-third party candidate), logistic regression⁶ is an appropriate test of the model (See

⁶ See DeMaris (1990 and 1992); Hosmer and Lemeshow (1989); Morgan and

Appendix II for a detailed explanation of the model). These results are presented in Tables 2 and 2a⁷.

Table 2: Logistic Regression for Third Party Voting
Dependent Variable: Vote for Third-party Candidate

	1968		1980		1992	
N	877		996		1706	
Chi-Square	318.62		172.79		477.05	
Hosmer Lemeshow Fit	0.00001		0.00001		0.0001	
Pseudo R ²	0.5849		0.3217		0.3315	
Variables	Coeff.	% Change	Coeff.	% Change	Coeff.	% Change
Previous 3P Vote	(1)	(1)	0.181	---	1.989***	100%
Trust Scale	-0.459***	-37%	-0.376**	-31%	-0.307***	-26%
3P Thermometer	0.062***	6%	0.064***	7%	0.072***	7%
R Thermometer	-0.035***	-3%	-0.021***	-2%	-0.008*	-1%
D Thermometer	-0.011	---	-0.008	---	-0.019***	-2%
Age	-0.012	---	-0.011	---	-0.009	---
Income	0.357	---	0.264	---	0.214*	24%
Education	0.266	---	0.315**	37%	0.055	---
Race	(2)	(2)	-1.735	---	-0.919*	-60%
Gender	-0.818*	-56%	-0.154	---	-0.455**	-37%
Personal econ-past	0.045	---	0.055	---	-0.139	---
Personal econ-future	0.079	---	-0.176	---	0.010	---
National econ-past	-0.543	---	-0.922	---	0.241	---
National econ-future	-0.549	---	-0.056	---	-0.201	---
Region	0.494*	64%	0.455	---	-0.592**	-45%
Rural/urban	-0.133*	-13%	0.018	---	-0.316*	-27%
Interest in outcome	0.534*	71%	0.313*	36%	0.221*	24%
Saliency of R Cand	-0.043	---	0.038	---	0.023	---
Saliency of D Cand	0.201	---	-0.074	---	0.016	---
Partisan ID Strength	-0.134*	-13%	-0.254*	-22%	-0.236**	-24%

*=significant at $p < 0.05$ **=significant at $p < 0.01$

***=significant at $p < 0.001$

Percentage changes calculated as $([e^{\text{logit coefficient}} - 1] * 100)$ (see DeMaris 1992). Non-significant variables have no change listed.

(1) Previous third-party vote predicted third-party vote perfectly, so it was dropped.

(2) Since no African-Americans in the ANES sample voted for George Wallace, the race variable was dropped from the 1968 analysis.

Teachman (1988); Strauss (1992); Aldrich and Nelson (1984); Gilbert (1993); and Liao (1994).

⁷ Due to listwise censorship in the the analysis, the overall N's in the following analyses are smaller than the actual sample size for each year.

Table 2a.: Classification Tables for Logistic Regression for Third Party Voting

	1968		1980		1992	
	Classified		Classified		Classified	
Observed	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive
Negative	778	17	912	8	1393	58
Positive	29	53	59	17	161	94
Model Sensitivity	64.63%		22.37%		36.86%	
Model Specificity	97.86%		99.13%		96.02%	
False Positive	2.14%		0.87%		4.08%	
False Negative	35.37%		77.63%		63.14%	
Pos. Predictive Value	75.71%		68.01%		61.84%	
Neg. Predictive Value	96.41%		93.92%		89.64%	

Tables 2 and 2a provides striking and confirmatory results. It presents the results of the logistic regression analysis employing the trust in government scale; accordingly, the results of each of the three equations (one for each election) are somewhat comparable. The results of the analysis show substantial predictive ability--the pseudo R²s and Hosmer-Lemeshow Fit tests all demonstrate the models are effective in predicting the likelihood of voting for a third party candidate.

What is most remarkable about the results is the strength of the trust index in predicting third party voting. Even in the context of other explanatory variables, the Trust In Government scale is a statistically significant predictor of voting for all three candidates. Furthermore, the effects of low levels of trust in government exist in addition to statistically significant effects of several of the other standard predictors of voting behavior. The strength of the trust variable is especially noteworthy given the inclusion of the feeling thermometers for the three candidates, which are generally considered to be the best predictors of vote choice.

Across all three elections, there are several common predictors of third party voting besides trust levels. Not surprisingly, independents and weakly attached voters are more likely to vote for third party candidates than strong partisans. When third party candidates appeal to “traditional American values” as in 1968 and 1992, rural voters are more likely to vote third party than urban voters. Another

intriguing result is the interest in the election coefficients. In all three elections, third party voters were more interested in the outcome of the election when compared to their major party colleagues. If interest can be equated at some level with likelihood to gather information, this result may indicate third party voters are more informed (at some level) than major party voters. While a further test of this outcome is beyond the scope of this paper, it raises some interesting questions.

The lack of significance for the race variable can be explained by two factors. In 1968, not a single African-American voted for George Wallace. While this is not a surprise, it forces the race variable out of the model, as it predicts failure perfectly. The second explanatory factor is the extremely strong connection between the Democratic party and the African-American community. African-Americans scored significantly higher on the party identification strength variable than whites ($t=8.57, p<0.01$) across all three elections. In addition, virtually all of the African-Americans in the three years considered themselves Democrats. These factors apparently kept African-Americans solidly in the Democratic fold and drastically reduced the desire to switch to a third-party candidate.

We have demonstrated that trust in government is related to voting for third party presidential candidates in the 1968, 1980, and 1992 presidential elections. This finding holds even in light of the statistically significant effects of other common explanations of vote choice. There are, however, other possible explanations for the results. One possible explanation for the significance of the trust index is the Citrin/Citrin & Green thesis--the index may simply be measuring distrust of the incumbent president rather than distrust of government as an institution and/or a process. This argument, often used to refute much of the work on trust, bears further examination.

To test the incumbency question, we recast the logistic model as a test of incumbency voting. For each election, the dependent variable was whether or not

the individual voted for the incumbent president or the incumbent's successor (i.e., Hubert Humphrey). The results are presented in Tables 3 and 3a.

Logistic Regression for Incumbent Voting
Dependent Variable: Vote for incumbent-party candidate

	1968		1980		1992	
N	958		996		1706	
Chi-Square	648.52		401.17		934.58	
Hosmer Lemeshow Fit	0.648		0.0356		0.00001	
Pseudo R ²	0.5474		0.3625		0.4885	
Variables	Coeff	% Change	Coeff	% Change	Coeff	% Change
Trust Scale	0.112	---	0.119	---	0.009	---
3P Thermometer	-0.015***	-2%	-0.005	---	-0.027***	-3%
R Thermometer	-0.043***	-4%	-	-4%	0.076***	8%
			0.036***			
D Thermometer	0.094***	10%	0.058***	6%	-0.043***	-4%
Age	0.023**	2%	0.022***	2%	0.017**	2%
Income	0.477***	61%	0.252*	29%	0.235**	27%
Education	-0.051	---	-0.011	---	0.345***	41%
Race	0.554***	78%	0.419***	43%	-1.101*	-67%
Gender	0.131	---	-0.082	---	0.163	---
Personal econ-past	-0.616**	-46%	-0.031	---	-0.044	---
Personal econ-future	0.014	---	-0.167	---	-0.018	---
National econ-past	0.046	---	-0.139	---	-0.281	---
National econ-future	-0.263	---	-0.089	---	0.257*	29%
Region	-0.651*	-48%	-0.021	---	-0.311	---
Rural/urban	0.203	---	-0.184	---	0.132	---
Interest in outcome	0.202	---	0.463*	59%	0.175	---
Saliency of R Cand	-0.197**	-18%	0.121	---	-0.064	---
Saliency of D Cand	0.291***	34%	-0.032	---	0.054	---
Partisan ID Strength	0.548***	73%	0.318**	37%	-0.003	---

*=significant at $p < 0.05$ **=significant at $p < 0.01$ ***=significant at $p < 0.001$

Percentage changes calculated as $([e^{\text{logit coefficient}} - 1] * 100)$ (see DeMaris 1992). Non-significant variables have no change listed.

Table 3a: Classification Tables for Logistic Regression for Incumbent Voting

	1968		1980		1992	
	Classified		Classified		Classified	
Observed	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative	Positive
Negative	601	61	690	63	1196	86
Positive	58	238	109	134	129	295
Model Sensitivity	80.41%		55.14%		69.58%	
Model Specificity	90.79%		91.63%		93.29%	
False Positive	9.21%		8.37%		6.71%	
False Negative	19.59%		44.86%		30.42%	
Pos. Predictive Value	79.60%		68.02%		77.43%	
Neg. Predictive Value	91.21%		86.36%		90.26%	

The results of the incumbency analysis lend credence to our previous arguments. The trust index is not a significant predictor of incumbency voting in any of the three elections under examination. Even if we drop the significance threshold to $p < 0.15$, only one election (1968) reaches significance, and the impact of the index is still limited to percentage change of 11% for each change in the trust index.

We have addressed one of more common arguments against the use of the trust index to predict vote choice. Another argument (Citrin 1974; Citrin and Green 1986) is that the index has little long-term durability. If the trust index is affected by trust (or lack thereof) in current political figures, then the ups and downs of incumbent politicians should be mirrored by similar fluctuations in the trust index.

To test the question of durability, we used 1990-1992 ANES Panel Study. In the first test, we compared the trust index scores from the post-1990 and post-1992 surveys. The correlation between the two indices was 0.699, indicating the scores were reasonably stable. A t-test also indicated the scores were not significantly different ($t=0.1902$).

Table 4: Bivariate Table of Trust Index Stability Using 1990-1992 Panel Data

1992 Trust Index - 1990 Trust Index	Frequency	Percent of Total
-4	24	2.21%
-3	44	4.06%
-2	72	6.64%
-1	179	16.50%
0	504	46.45%
+1	164	15.12%
+2	80	7.37%
+3	18	1.66%

In Table 4, a positive score shows the trust index went up from 1990 to 1992, while a negative score shows the index score went down between 1990 and 1992. Overall, 46.5% of those surveyed had the same score in 1990 and in 1992. In addition, 78% of the 1990 and 1992 scores were either the same or within one point of each other. Only 7.9% of those surveyed had index differentials of three or more points. Of those with different scores, 24.2% became more trustful, while 29.4% became less trustful⁸.

As a second test of the stability of the index, we used a multivariate model to test for long-term durability. Drawing the trust scores from the 1990 wave, we attempted to predict 1992 vote choice using the same set of independent variables used in the previous analyses. The results of the panel study analysis are presented in Table 4a.

⁸ Although we conducted a variety of tests, the only variable that accurately predicted changes in the index scores was strength of partisan identification, and this was only successful in predicting whether or not change would occur, not the overall degree of change.

Table 4a: Logistic Regression for 1990-1992 Panel Voting
 Dependent Variable: Vote for third-party candidate

N	573	
Chi-Square	102.96	
Hosmer Lemeshow Fit	0.00001	
Pseudo R ²	0.5622	
Variables	Coefficient	% Change
Trust Scale--1990	-0.346***	-29%
3P Thermometer	0.033***	3%
R Thermometer	-0.004	---
D Thermometer	-0.016*	-2%
Age	-0.012	---
Income	0.001	---
Education	-0.041	---
Race	-1.826*	-84%
Gender	0.666*	95%
Personal econ-past	-0.002	---
Personal econ-future	0.1002	---
National econ-past	0.053	---
National econ-future	-0.236	---
Region	-1.261**	-72%
Rural/urban	0.011	---
Interest in outcome	0.086	---
Saliency of R Cand	0.071	---
Saliency of D Cand	0.056	---
Partisan ID Strength	-0.295*	-22%

*=significant at $p < 0.05$ **=significant at $p < 0.01$ ***=significant at $p < 0.001$
 Percentage changes calculated as $(e^{\text{logit coefficient}} - 1) * 100$ (see DeMaris 1992). Non-significant variables have no change listed.

Table 4a.: Classification Tables for Logistic Regression for 1990-1992 Panel Voting

Observed	Classified	
	Negative	Positive
Negative	486	9
Positive	66	12
Model Sensitivity	15.38%	
Model Specificity	98.18%	
False Positive	1.82%	
False Negative	84.62%	
Pos. Predictive Value	57.14%	
Neg. Predictive Value	88.14%	

The results of the panel analysis demonstrate the long-term durability of the trust index. The trust scores from 1990 are significant predictors of third party voting in 1992 ($p < 0.001$). In fact, the trust index in 1990 shows a greater impact than

the index in 1992 (see Table 2), an unusual result that is worthy of further examination at a later time. Most of the other variables perform at essentially the same levels as the original 1992 model, and the overall fit of the model improved significantly. Given these results, it is safe to conclude the trust index is a reasonably stable measure of citizen attitudes towards the institutions and processes of government as an entity⁹.

As a final test of the trust hypothesis, we used a multinomial logistic regression to compare Democratic, Republican, and third party voters. Since no natural ordering of the dependent variable was easily ascertained, we elected to use a non-ordered multinomial logit rather than a conditional logit model (DeMaris 1992; Menard 1995).

The multinomial model will allow us to examine how third party voters compare to Democratic and Republican voters independently. For each analysis, the cases in the baseline category were third party voters. Consequently, the coefficients show the differences between the Democratic voters and third party voters in the first set of columns and the differences between Republican voters and third party voters in the second set of columns. The results of the analysis are presented in Tables 5a, 5b, and 5c.

⁹ We concede that individual political events (Watergate, Iran-Contra, etc.) can have a substantial impact on voter trust levels. We would argue, however, that these effects, when they occur, create long-term decreases in trust levels that are not easily repaired.

Table 5a: Multinomial Regression for Third Party Voting--1968
 Dependent Variable: Vote
 Baseline Category: Third Party Voters

		1968		
N		730		
Chi-Square		1148		
Pseudo R ²		0.8162		
Variables	Democratic Voters as Compared to Third Party Voters		Republican Voters as Compared to Third Party Voters	
	Coefficient	% Change	Coefficient	% Change
Previous 3P Vote	-0.799	---	-0.065	---
Trust Scale	0.628***	87%	0.629***	88%
3P Thermometer	-0.117***	-11%	-0.117***	-11%
R Thermometer	0.001	---	0.145***	16%
D Thermometer	0.1454***	11%	-0.027*	-3%
Age	0.025	---	0.018	---
Income	-0.157	---	-0.228	---
Education	0.499*	65%	0.687**	98%
Race	0.688***	100%	(1)	(1)
Gender	0.151	---	0.179	---
Personal econ-past	-0.418	---	0.719	---
Personal econ-future	-0.735	---	-0.703	---
National econ-past	0.595	---	0.617	---
National econ-future	-1.914*	-97%	-1.945*	-98%
Region	-1.305*	-66%	-1.349	-74%
Rural/urban	0.001	---	0.568	---
Interest in outcome	-0.354	---	-0.678	---
Saliency of R Cand	-0.072	---	0.557**	75%
Saliency of D Cand	0.176	---	-0.232	---
Partisan ID Strength	0.692**	99%	0.296	---

*=significant at $p < 0.05$ **=significant at $p < 0.01$ ***=significant at $p < 0.001$

Percentage changes calculated as $([e^{\text{logit coefficient}} - 1] * 100)$ (see DeMaris 1992).

Non-significant variables have no change listed.

(1) Race predicts perfectly, so it was dropped from the model.

Table 5b: Multinomial Regression for Third Party Voting--1980
 Dependent Variable: Vote
 Baseline Category: Third Party Voters

		1980		
N		682		
Chi-Square		731.51		
Pseudo R ²		0.5607		
Variables	Democratic Voters as Compared to Third Party Voters		Republican Voters as Compared to Third Party Voters	
	Coefficient	% Change	Coefficient	% Change
Previous 3P Vote	-0.045	---	-0.017	---
Trust Scale	0.398*	49%	0.328*	39%
3P Thermometer	-0.074***	-7%	-0.084***	-8%
R Thermometer	-0.02*	-2%	0.078***	8%
D Thermometer	0.069***	7%	-0.023**	-2%
Age	0.038**	4%	0.035**	4%
Income	-0.157	---	0.051*	5%
Education	-0.349*	-29%	-0.081	---
Race	1.34	---	-0.665	---
Gender	0.149	---	0.167	---
Personal econ-past	-0.184	---	-0.152	---
Personal econ-future	-0.207	---	-0.018	---
National econ-past	-0.011	---	0.141	---
National econ-future	0.008	---	0.084	---
Region	0.325	---	0.381	---
Rural/urban	-0.553	---	0.381	---
Interest in outcome	0.497	---	0.347	---
Saliency of R Cand	0.047	---	0.052	---
Saliency of D Cand	0.009	---	0.052	---
Partisan ID Strength	0.482*	62%	0.236	---

*=significant at $p < 0.05$ **=significant at $p < 0.01$ ***=significant at $p < 0.001$

Percentage changes calculated as $([e^{\text{logit coefficient}} - 1] * 100)$ (see DeMaris 1992).
 Non-significant variables have no change listed.

Table 5c: Multinomial Regression for Third Party Voting--1992
 Dependent Variable: Vote
 Baseline Category: Third Party Voters

		1992		
N		1357		
Chi-Square		1718.21		
Pseudo R ²		0.6107		
Variables	Democratic Voters as Compared to Third Party Voters		Republican Voters as Compared to Third Party Voters	
	Coefficient	% Change	Coefficient	% Change
Previous 3P Vote	0.637	---	0.624	---
Trust Scale	0.504***	66%	0.397***	49%
3P Thermometer	-0.081***	-8%	-0.095***	-9%
R Thermometer	-0.025***	-2%	0.087***	9%
D Thermometer	0.092***	10%	-0.029***	-3%
Age	0.024**	2%	0.028***	3%
Income	-0.178	---	-0.143	---
Education	-0.008	---	0.206*	23%
Race	0.6926**	100%	0.330	---
Gender	0.5278	69%	0.306	---
Personal econ-past	-0.083	---	-0.126	---
Personal econ-future	-0.134	---	-0.177	---
National econ-past	0.019	---	-0.049	---
National econ-future	0.004	---	-0.058	---
Region	0.416	---	0.459	---
Rural/urban	0.532*	70%	0.436	---
Interest in outcome	0.071	---	-0.223	---
Saliency of R Cand	0.008	---	-0.092	---
Saliency of D Cand	0.042	---	0.078	---
Partisan ID Strength	0.147	---	0.009	---

*=significant at $p < 0.05$ **=significant at $p < 0.01$ ***=significant at $p < 0.001$

Percentage changes calculated as $([e^{\text{logit coefficient}} - 1] * 100)$ (see DeMaris 1992).
 Non-significant variables have no change listed.

In all three elections, the results again support our hypothesis. Voters with low levels of trust are consistently more likely to vote third party than for either of the major parties, and the results are all significant at $p > 0.05$ or better. The only

other predictors to show such consistency are the thermometer scales for the third party and Democratic candidates¹⁰, a result consistent with previous research.

In all of our analyses, we have found consistent support for the use of the trust index as a predictor of third party voting. The results have clearly demonstrated the long-term durability of the index, and we have shown that the index is not merely a predictor of trust in the incumbent government.

Our analysis indicates trust levels have a significantly greater impact than the results found by Rosenstone, Behr and Lazarus (1984). This apparent discrepancy can be explained through a combination of factors. First, the analysis of Rosenstone et al. covers four elections, but major third party challenges are only mounted in two of these (1968 and 1980). The inclusion of two elections in which distrustful voters were limited to either abstaining or holding their collective noses and voting for a major candidate will clearly drive down the overall statistical significance of the analysis. If distrust continues to have proportionally more impact on the voting process over time as found by Rosenstone (p. 181), the increased impact of the trust scale in our analysis is partially explained by the inclusion of the 1992 election. The final factor we consider important is a methodological difference with Rosenstone. In their analysis, Rosenstone, Behr, and Lazarus chose to alter the standard conception of the trust index by weighting using factor analysis techniques, an alteration we consider unnecessary.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research

The role of trust in government has implications for the democratic process. Low levels of trust may be a major factor when third party candidates decide whether or not to run for office. Low levels of trust, combined with the rigidity of the two party system, may make voters increasingly frustrated with the political system as a

¹⁰ The Republican thermometer is significant in all of the cases except one, the comparison between third party voters and Democratic voters in 1968.

whole. The desire for change was made apparent through the support for both Ross Perot and Colin Powell, yet Perot (and potentially Powell) supporters found themselves thwarted by a rigid, inflexible, electoral system that made a third party candidacy virtually impossible.

Given the choice of two parties, both of whom seem unable to correct the fundamental problems in the structures of government, many distrustful voters may choose to abstain from the process altogether¹¹. They may view both parties as conducting “business as usual” without any showing a real desire to change the process itself¹². Abstention from the process may, in turn, promote a “cynicism from without.” These cynics could register their disdain by occasionally voting for those rare (every twelve years or so by our sampling) candidates that are able to capture and to channel such angst into a presidential campaign.

Although we would never presume to propose drastic changes in the electoral system (dare we say proportional representation?), such a change might help to restore public trust in the institutions and processes of government. In fact, Miller and Listhaug (1990) strongly suggest this was the case in Norway. Extending this analysis to other nations such as Germany and the United Kingdom may shed even more light on the effects of trust in government.

As with any other research endeavor, we do not claim to be laying to rest the question of the effects of lowered confidence and trust in governmental processes.

Although the research presented here begins to explain the relationship between

¹¹ In the 1992 ANES, over 20% of Perot voters said they would abstain rather than vote for either Clinton or Bush.

¹² There are almost too many examples of this problem, but we believe the public’s desire for fundamental structural change can be seen in the term limits movement, the pressure to reform lobbying and funding practices, and the balanced budget amendment. In these three cases, the public is demanding change that would affect the basic organizational and structural processes in government. It is also worth noting that all three of these issues are, in many ways, non-partisan. The public does not seem to see one party as supporting all of the changes and the other as opposing them. Rather, they see individual politicians from both parties supporting and opposing the changes they desire.

decreasing trust and voting for third party candidates, there are many questions that remain unanswered. A quick examination of the 1992 ANES finds that decreasing levels of trust in government increases the strength of support for term limits on members of Congress ($F=3.88, p<0.0004$), as well as increasing support for raising taxes to balance the budget ($F=2.38, p<0.025$). What is the mechanism by which voters communicate these preferences, and why do major third party candidates seem to be able to pick up these preferences more rapidly than the major party candidates? These are just a few of the questions that future research should address.

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Appendix I: Trust In Government Questions from ANES

1--How much of the time do you think you can trust the government to do what is right? (Always/Some of the time/Rarely or Never)

2--Would you say that the 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? (All the People/Big Interests)

3--Do you think that quite a few of the people running the government are a little crooked, not very many are, or do you think hardly any of them are crooked at all? (Hardly Any/A Few/Quite A Few)

4--Do you think that the people in the government waste a lot of money we pay in taxes, waste some of it, or don't waste very much of it? (Waste A Lot/Waste Some/Not Much)

Appendix II--Description of Full Logistic Regression Model

Y = Vote for third-party candidate (0 = no, 1 = yes)*

X₁ = Vote in previous election (0=major party candidate, 1=third party)

This variable is included to differentiate between those voters who consistently support small third parties (Libertarians, etc.) from voters who either previously voted for a major party or chose to abstain.

X₂ = Trust in Government Index (0 to 8, low trust to high trust)

X₃ = Feeling thermometer, Third party candidate (0-100)

X₄ = Feeling thermometer, Republican candidate (0-100)

X₅ = Feeling thermometer, Democratic candidate (0-100)

The feeling thermometers are included because they are the best overall predictors of vote choice. We wanted to make the test as difficult as possible for the trust index, and including the thermometers certainly raises the probability the index will not succeed.

X₆ = Age measured in years

X₇ = Income category (1 to 5, low to high)

X₈ = Education category (1 to 6, low to high)

X₉ = Race (1 = Black, 0 = All Others)

X₁₀ = Gender (0 = Male, 1 = Female)

The demographics are included as common predictors of vote choice.

X₁₁ = Personal economic condition compared to past year (2=better, 1=same, 0=worse)

X₁₂ = Personal economic condition in the next year (2=better, 1=same, 0=worse)

X₁₃ = National economic condition compared to past year (2=better, 1=same, 0=worse)

X₁₄ = National economic condition for next year (2=better, 1=same, 0=worse)

The retrospective and prospective questions are included in the model as tests of the Lewis-Beck hypotheses regarding economic voting.

X₁₅ = Region (1=South, 0=other)

The region variable is included primarily to control for Wallace in the 1968 election, but also to control for the unique politics of the South as a whole.

X₁₆ = Rural/urban residence (1=rural, 0=urban)

X₁₇ = Interest in election outcome (1= little/none, 0= very/somewhat)

X₁₈ = Salience of Republican candidate (0-10, low to high)

X₁₉ = Salience of Democratic candidate (0-10, low to high)

Salience and interest were included as crude measures of information about the election and the candidates involved. Salience scores were not available for the 1968 election for Wallace, so we chose not to include third party salience.

X₂₀ = Strength of party identification (2 = Strong, 1 = Moderate, 0 = Low)

*In the incumbency analysis, the dependent variable was coded 0 = vote for challenger, 1 = vote for incumbent.

*In the panel analysis, the trust scale used is from 1990 to predict the 1992 presidential vote.

*In the multinomial analysis, the dependent variable was coded 0 = vote for third party, 1 = vote for Democratic candidate, 2 = vote for Republican candidate.