PULLING APART AT THE POLES: THE DELETERIOUS EFFECT OF
PARTISAN ANTIPATHY ON TRUST IN GOVERNMENT

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By

Kelley Renee Schneider, B.A.

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Kelley Renee Schneider, B.A.
Thesis Advisor: Andreas Kern, Ph.D.

ABSTRACT

Trust in government has been declining since the latter half of the 20th century, while political polarization has been on the rise. This paper examines the history of trust in institutions in the United States, and analyzes the relationship between political ideology and trust in government using data from the Pew Research Center. The results of this analysis show that ideology is the strongest predictor of trust in government, with liberal respondents trusting the government more, and conservative respondents trusting the government less; however, party affiliation has a different effect for each ideology, which may lend insight into voter mindsets surrounding the 2016 election. Additionally, while education impacts trust, such effect is minimal compared to that of ideology. Lastly, scope considerations such as the quality of e-government services (indicative of state governments’ transparency and responsiveness) are insignificant across all models. Based on the results of the analysis, this paper then recommends a three-pronged course of action to reduce political polarization, to in turn lessen the effect of ideology on trust. This approach consists of recommendations for political elites, the media, and grassroots organizations, the lattermost of which is based on a field study in Iowa. These policy recommendations strive to tackle political polarization in order to lay the foundation for rebuilding trust in institutions in the United States.
To Mom, Dad, John, Rachel, Igor and Grandparents.

And to the people of Waterloo and towns like it.
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1. INTRODUCTION

From the halls of Congress to the living rooms of Iowa, conversations on “trust in government” are on the rise, even as this trust has fallen precipitously since the mid 20th century. Many factors have been cited as the reason for decline of trust in institutions, namely the fallout from Vietnam and Watergate, the government’s relationship with the media, rising socioeconomic inequality, and the Third Industrial Revolution. Trust is multifaceted: all of these factors, in addition to myriad others, have contributed to declining trust in government. Institutions that do not have the trust of citizens cannot operate with optimum efficacy, which creates a vicious cycle of declining capability and trust. It is therefore necessary to diagnose the current drivers of institutional trust in U.S. society in order to begin to restore some of what has been lost. Notably, the decline of trust in government has paralleled the meteoric rise of political polarization. The primary research question that this paper explores is the extent to which this polarization is linked to trust in government. To address this question, this paper not only analyzes the impact of partisan ideology on government, but also the extent to which e-government (a means for state governments to communicate with their constituents and provide essential services) could help rebuild trust.

Through analyzing data from the Pew Research Center, the link between partisanship and trust in institutions is apparent: more liberal ideologies correspond to higher levels of trust in government, whereas more conservative ideologies correspond to lower levels of trust in government. Interestingly, the effect on trust is different for liberals that are affiliated with the Democratic party than it is for respondents who simply identify as “liberal.” For conservatives, however, the effect on trust is the same, suggesting that 1) this is an issue in which the conservative base is undivided, or 2) Donald Trump’s outsider victory in the 2016 Republican primaries successfully unified the party on this issue. Across all models, partisan ideology is the strongest predictor of trust in government. While there are statistically significant education effects, these effects are miniscule compared to the impact of partisanship. Furthermore, e-government does not have a significant effect on trust, suggesting that policymakers and those working to restore trust in institutions should first work to combat polarization in helping to restore this trust.

There are two such ways in which those from both inside and outside the political system can work to restore trust in government. Inside the political machine, politicians and pundits should focus
on substantive, policy-based issues and more concretely delineate facts and reporting from opinions and analysis. Outside the system, grassroots efforts should build on the work already being done to foster political dialogue across party lines. To develop an effective method for this type of dialogue, I ran a workshop series in Iowa called “The Unity Project,” the results for which highlight ways in which discussion can be structured to reduce polarization and entrenchment. On the whole, by beginning to incorporate the policy recommendations highlighted in this paper, U.S. society can begin to chip away at political polarization, laying the foundation for rebuilding trust in institutions.

2. THE STATE OF TRUST IN POST-20\textsuperscript{TH} CENTURY UNITED STATES

2.1 20th Century Legacy: The Decline of Trust in Institutions

The 20\textsuperscript{th} century was a time of upheaval in the United States, from World Wars, to the Depression, to the Civil Rights Movement, to the Space Race and putting a man on the moon (to name a few). While American confidence in institutions was fraying at the seams, Presidents Johnson and Nixon took to this fabric with shears during the Vietnam War and Watergate. The missteps made during these two administrations, among other factors such as an increasingly scrutinizing media environment and an increase in socioeconomic inequality, have pushed trust in institutions into a downward spiral, from which the United States still has not recovered.

2.2 Why Has the Trust Downfall from Vietnam & Watergate Lasted?

When pollsters began asking about trust in government in 1958, nearly three-quarters of Americans had confidence in the federal government to do the right thing “\textit{all or most of the time.”}\textsuperscript{1} Two decades later, this level had dropped to only about one-quarter of Americans, with the sharpest dips occurring after the Vietnam War and Watergate scandal.\textsuperscript{2} While it is generally accepted that these two events played a significant role in declining trust, scholars disagree as to why trust has continued to decline, with blame being spread to the media, wealth inequality, and the Third Industrial Revolution.

\footnote{2} \textit{Ibid.}
In large part in reaction to the scandals of the 1960s and 70s, hostility between the press and the government increased. Additionally, consumer-driven media and the advent of television created a media environment that was increasingly reactive and entertainment-based, resulting in political coverage that is conflict-driven and largely lacks the context surrounding scandals and failures within government.³ This is not only the fault of the media, but of a populace whose attention span is getting shorter by the day, and who demand – via their viewership – that the news prioritize entertainment over information. As Postman writes, “[I do not mean to] imply that television news deliberately aims to deprive Americans of a coherent, contextual understanding of their world. I mean to say that when news is packaged as entertainment, that is the inevitable result.”⁴ For the many Americans who get their information from watching CNN over C-SPAN, media soundbites and political analysts’ opinions will necessarily color their understanding of public servants and government projects. When these opinions are largely hostile, it is unsurprising that trust has continued to decline. This is not to disparage the media, which plays a critical watchdog role in the political system. Nonetheless, it is necessary to account for the correlation between an increase in tensions between the press and politicians, and the decrease in public trust in government.

Rising income inequality has also been cited as a factor in the erosion of trust in society. While Americans may not be aware of the extent of income inequality,⁵ they are generally aware of its existence, which can lead to feelings that the “system is not working.” And when the body in charge of carrying out this “system” is the government, it is unsurprising that inequality and trust are negatively correlated. Indeed, there is even no majority opinion on whether or not the government should have a role in reducing income disparities, according to the University of Chicago’s AP-NORC’s Center for Public Affairs Research.⁶ Scholars disagree if this is due to

³ Ibid.
citizen disaffection or to whether or not Americans see inequality as a critical issue. Further complicating the picture, a study by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) finds that inequality at the bottom of the income distribution lowers trust in government more than income inequality at the top of the income distribution. Regardless of which of the above theories is correct, a potential problem with supposing a causal relationship between inequality and trust in government holds: trust in government is low across both economic “winners” and “losers.” Joseph Nye notes this disparity, and instead proposes that: “...[T]his lack of a direct connection between economics and expressed attitudes suggests the need for explanations that are more general, ideological, or reflective of the broad public mood.” Therefore, while inequality may be a factor in the erosion of trust, it is but one piece of the larger puzzle that includes other social, economic, and political factors.

One of these possible economic factors is the Third – and coming Fourth – Industrial Revolution. The “Third Industrial Revolution” is the term that some scholars use to describe the period when advanced technologies started to replace manufacturing jobs, resulting in many low-skilled employees being put out of work. Joseph Nye notes that “Americans have responded to [The Third Industrial Revolution] by creating jobs, albeit often at low wages. Europeans have responded to it by real wage increases, but with 10 to 12 percent unemployment—and in some countries, 20 percent youth unemployment.” Regardless of the attempted solution, this economic upheaval, spurred by the decline in unions, has created social turmoil, often revealing the underbelly of nativism and racism in the United States. This turmoil in turn erodes trust amongst citizens and trust in institutions. Similar to the inequality theory outlined above, this theory has merit, but

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4 Ibid., p. 105.

5 Ibid., p. 104.

cannot be the only explanation for declining trust, due to trust being low for both economic “winners” and “losers.” Nonetheless, it will be important to monitor trust in institutions for different socioeconomic groups as society grapples with The Fourth Industrial Revolution (the dawn of AI and deep learning technologies), as a split between high- and low-skilled workers may be increasingly possible as more low-skilled jobs are automated.

2.3 Armed Against Distrust: The Military Exception

The one notable exception to declining trust in government has been the military. Contrary to other institutions, trust in the military has actually increased since the 1970s, from 27% to 44% of Americans today having a “great deal” of trust in the armed forces.\textsuperscript{13} There is much speculation on the reasons for this trust: the military is composed of a diverse cast of citizens, making it more relatable to the public; the military spends significantly on positive communications campaigns;\textsuperscript{14} the military protects our national security, which is valued across party lines, etc. Like the origins of distrust, there are many multifaceted reasons for trust in the military: it is perceived as effective and more technologically advanced than other areas of government, draws from a wide public, and is socially accepted as protecting American freedom and national interests, particularly post-9/11.\textsuperscript{15} What can other institutions learn from the military to help shore up trust? In order to answer this question, it is first necessary to understand what trust actually is, and the different ways in which institutions can influence it. As will be expanded upon below, trust is a multifaceted problem that therefore requires a compound solution.

3. EVALUATING TRUST AND FORMULATING HYPOTHESES

3.1 So What is Trust, Anyways?

Despite its decline, the concept of “trust” has been historically nebulous. Indeed, when pollsters ask Americans questions on their trust in government, different respondents might have different conceptions of trust, which may make this already ambiguous concept even harder to analyze.

\textsuperscript{13} Confidence in Institutions, Gallup. Web.
Scholars Lewis and Weigert note that trust is both inherently risky and inherently necessary, stating that “[a]lthough trust in general is indispensable in social relationships, it always involves an unavoidable element of risk and potential doubt. We would not have to accept this risk if there were some functional alternative to trust.” Lewis and Weigert also highlight that trust has social, cognitive, and behavioral components, which in turn create different types of trust: “The existence of these different types of trust is theoretically comprehensible from a sociological viewpoint. The comparative strength and importance of the cognitive versus the emotional base of trust vary depending on the type of social relationship, situation, and system under consideration.” Lewis and Weigert laid the foundation for more concrete segmentation under Welch, Hinnant, and Moon, who divided trust into three channels:

1. **Fiduciary Trust**: actors entrust principles to represent them, and balance of power is asymmetrical in favor of these representative principles.

2. **Mutual Trust** is interpersonal in nature, and more symmetric. Trust in this channel does not necessarily equate to cooperation.

3. **Social Trust** considers interpersonal relationships to be shaped by social factors. Socialization is an important consideration for how individuals act.

In analyzing trust in institutions (and how it can be improved), it is important to consider the unique role that each type of trust mentioned above plays in establishing trust between a government and its citizens. Fiduciary trust is the area in which governments have the most control over the outcome. As mentioned above, the balance of power favors the representative party – in this case the government. Here, the government can control the quality of the services, which builds trust with citizens more efficiently than if a government tried to influence personal relationships or the social context in which government is received. Importantly, in establishing fiduciary trust, particularly though technology (which can directly reach a wide audience), the government may

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17 Ibid.
be able to positively influence mutual and social trust (technology gives citizens direct access and interaction points with the government, establishing a degree of mutual trust, and if they are satisfied with the government, communities may begin to view government more favorably, improving social trust).

3.2 Polarization, Tech, and Trust: Scope Considerations Based on E-Gov Services

While technological advances have increased government capacity and reach, conclusive research on technology and trust in institutions is limited. The launch of e-gov services at the turn of the 21st century prompted researchers to do a preliminary dive into the role of technology in trust in government. Notable scholars in this field, from Carter to Tolbert to West, have shown through their modeling that when run effectively and when used by citizens who have the desire and capacity to take advantage of these services, e-gov has a neutral to positive effect on institutions (notably, the results that showed a neutral effect changed when respondents were primed with a reminder about these services).19 In all of the aforementioned articles, the definition of e-gov focuses on citizens’ use of government websites.

However, this research has not since been comprehensively updated or monitored, particularly given many politicians’ focus on using platforms such as twitter to communicate with their constituents.20 Given that 77% of Americans go online on a daily basis,21 the novelty of e-gov services may have worn off, having been overridden instead by partisan messaging on social media.22 Some scholars challenge the notion that social media has contributed to political

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22 In an interview with Wired, Eli Parsier, author of The Filter Bubble, a book about how social media algorithms can shape preferences, noted that “Because it’s relevant to so many people, this conversation about how the News Feed shapes what we get to know, and how unintended biases in those algorithms can have enormous effects, is happening more broadly. You don’t have to be an engineer to understand how powerful that is.” See: Hempel, Jesse. “Eli Parsier Predicted the Future. Now He Can’t Escape It.” Wired, 24 May 2017. Web.
polarization. A 2017 study at Brown University found that an increase in political polarization was most significant for those who used social media the least, and Bill Bishop’s *The Big Sort* puts much more emphasis on geographic sorting as the primary cause (and result of) political polarization. Whatever its origins, political polarization is here to stay, and may impact trust in institutions more heavily than in previous research. It is against this background that this paper adds a scope consideration of the extent to which e-gov services can overcome political polarization to improve trust in institutions. Importantly, technology scope considerations are looking at e-gov services only, and not at social media platforms or channels, which given their user-driven mediums are a separate topic and outside the scope of this paper. Instead, this paper aims to explore the relationship between partisanship and trust, and the extent to which government actions influence trust in institutions.

I will use the above three definitions of trust, in addition to the outlined scope considerations, in conducting my analysis on how political partisanship impacts trust, and whether or not improving government technological services can help improve trust in institutions. Given the history and current literature on the topic, I hypothesize the following:

3.3 Hypotheses

- H1: Strength of partisanship will be the strongest predictor of trust in government.
- H2: Higher use of e-gov services will correspond to increased levels of trust in government.
- H2: Correlation of e-gov services and trust will be less significant than the correlation between partisanship and trust.

Through testing these hypotheses, I hope to show the driving forces behind trust in institutions, and the extent to which partisanship can impact trust. The strength of the relationship between political ideology and trust is of particular importance, as it informs the type of solutions that policymakers must undertake in bolstering trust in government. If the effect of ideology on trust

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is insurmountable (which would be evidenced both by the effect of ideology on trust and also by
the significance of e-gov services, which may help improve fiduciary trust and therefore boost
trust as a whole), then policymakers must first combat ideological entrenchment in order to be able
to effectively convey messaging that improves trust in institutions.

4. DATA AND EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

4.1 The Data

The dataset I am using to analyze the above hypotheses is the Pew Research Center, 2015
Governance Survey. The data was collected from August 27 to October 4th, 2015. The population
is a representative sample of American adults ages 18+. The survey was conducted for 6,004
individuals in all 50 states and responses have been weighted to account for underrepresented
groups. To better analyze whether institutions can impact fiduciary trust, I have also encoded an
additional variable that ranks each state’s e-gov capacity (a platform in which many citizens now
interact with the government) on a scale from 1-8 (with 8 being associated with an “A,” the highest
score given out), based on results from The Center for Digital Government’s 2016 Digital States
Survey. The Digital States Survey “evaluates states’ use of technology to improve service delivery,
increase capacity, streamline operations and reach policy goals and assigns each state a grade
based on quantifiable results,” making it a sound measurement of states’ e-gov capacities. Using
this data, I aim to analyze the relative effects of partisanship and citizens’ trust in government,
controlling for household factors such as gender, education, region, and income. Secondarily, I
aim to analyze whether better state government services platforms break ideological barriers due
to their potential impact on fiduciary trust. Overall, this analysis will lend insight into how strong
partisan holds on trust are, which will in turn inform the steps that U.S. institutions can take in
combating pervasive mistrust in society.

Variables to Note

The primary variables of interest are as follows:

- Dependent Variable: trust

States-Survey-2016-Results.html
Measures respondents’ level of trust in government. Respondents answered the following question on a 1-4 scale (1 being ‘just about always’): How much of the time do you think you can trust the government in Washington to do what is right? Just about always, most of the time, or only some of the time?

- **Independent Variable: “ideo” (ideology)**
  Measures respondents’ partisan ideology. Respondents ranked their partisanship on the following scale: 1) very conservative; 2) conservative; 3) moderate; 4) liberal; 5) very liberal.

- **Independent Variable: Democrat**
  Dummy variable that categorizes respondents who are affiliated with the Democratic party. This variable is adapted from the party affiliation question in the Pew survey, and is included to account for differences in attitudes for party affiliation versus ideological affiliation.

- **Independent Variable: Republican**
  Similar to the “Democrat” variable above, “Republican” categorizes respondents who are affiliated with the Republican party, and is included in consideration of effects for party versus ideology. Democrat and Republican were the only two party variables included in the final models, as “Independent” and “Other” affiliations did not differ significantly from the baseline models without party controls.

- **Independent Variable: state_score (State technology capacity)**
  A ranking of a state’s digital infrastructure, as defined by the 2016 Digital States Survey. This variable is included to account for quality of services enacted through tech platforms (i.e. to account for potential effects of e-gov regarding fiduciary trust). States were scored with letter grades from “A” to “C-,” which were then coded numerically from 8 to 1 (with 8 representing “A” and 1 representing “C-”).

- **Control Variables: education, sex, income, religion, “weight”**
  The above variables control for differences commonly observed across education levels, socioeconomic status, and sex. Additionally, religion’s focus on community and its prevalence in more conservative states risked causing omitted variable bias, so I have controlled for religious effects as well. Lastly, all final models include Pew’s weights, which are designed to make the respondent pool more representative of overall U.S. demographics.
4.2 Modeling Partisanship’s Effect on Trust

4.2.1 OLS Model

Table A below shows the results from a simple OLS regression, highlighting the general effect of partisanship on polarization:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>No Party Controls</th>
<th>Control for Democrats</th>
<th>Control for Republicans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>-0.0770***</td>
<td>-0.0518***</td>
<td>-0.0636***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0105)</td>
<td>(0.0110)</td>
<td>(0.0112)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Technology</td>
<td>0.00986</td>
<td>0.00932</td>
<td>0.00986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td>(0.00690)</td>
<td>(0.00683)</td>
<td>(0.00687)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (for male)</td>
<td>0.0200</td>
<td>0.00560</td>
<td>0.0212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0196)</td>
<td>(0.0196)</td>
<td>(0.0196)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-0.00260</td>
<td>-0.000285</td>
<td>-0.00285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00568)</td>
<td>(0.00564)</td>
<td>(0.00567)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.00865**</td>
<td>0.00626</td>
<td>0.00704*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.00414)</td>
<td>(0.00415)</td>
<td>(0.00416)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.911***</td>
<td>2.904***</td>
<td>2.851***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.133)</td>
<td>(0.135)</td>
<td>(0.134)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>5,662</td>
<td>5,662</td>
<td>5,662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>0.054</td>
<td>0.038</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above OLS regression also controls for all religions in the Pew survey, but none were statistically significant.
Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

As observed in the regression above, political ideology has a significant impact on trust in government; indeed, ideology is the strongest predictor of trust in government. Liberalism is correlated with higher levels of trust in government, whereas conservatism is correlated with lower
levels of trust in government. This relationship holds even when controlling for political party in addition to ideology. These results suggest that declining trust in government – particularly for conservatives – is more deeply rooted than in mere political messaging from party elites (although the polarized nature of this messaging is certainly problematic and likely contributes to declining trust).

Interestingly, the “State Tech Capacity” variable was not remotely significant, suggesting that states with the potential for higher levels of fiduciary trust did not actually see this trust actualize. While there are limits to the Digital States dataset, the lack of any relationship between trust and e-gov services suggests that those wanting to improve trust in government should look beyond merely improving government services, which will be discussed further in Section 5 below.

4.2.2 Ordered Probit Models

While the above OLS regression shows the general relationship between trust and ideology, observing the marginal effects after running an ordered probit model can quantify the precise effects of political ideology on trust by allowing the effect on trust to vary for different levels of ideology. In the tables below, the “Ordered Probit” column shows the results from the original ordered probit regression. The “Trust Level (including “No Trust”) columns show the marginal effects on trust of moving up one level on the ideology scale (making one more liberal), with these levels defined as:

- **High**: trusts the government to do the right thing “just about always”
- **Medium**: trusts the government to do the right thing “most of the time”
- **Low**: trusts the government to do the right thing “only some of the time”
- **No Trust**: trusts the government to do the right thing “never”

Overall, the results in all three tables – Ideology Only, Controlling for Democrats, and Controlling for Republicans – reflect the trends observed in the OLS regression: ideology is the strongest predictor of trust in government. Specific results for each model are highlighted below.
### Table B: Marginal Effects, Ideology Only

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Ordered Probit</th>
<th>Trust Level High</th>
<th>Trust Level Medium</th>
<th>Trust Level Low</th>
<th>No Trust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>-.1991022***</td>
<td>0.00931***</td>
<td>0.0407***</td>
<td>-0.00954***</td>
<td>-0.0405***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.0170905)</td>
<td>(0.000991)</td>
<td>(0.00367)</td>
<td>(0.00171)</td>
<td>(0.00350)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State Technology Capacity</td>
<td>.0148343</td>
<td>-0.000693</td>
<td>-0.00304</td>
<td>0.000711</td>
<td>0.00302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.0109314)</td>
<td>(0.000517)</td>
<td>(0.00224)</td>
<td>(0.000535)</td>
<td>(0.00222)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (for male)</td>
<td>.0147471</td>
<td>-0.000689</td>
<td>-0.00302</td>
<td>0.000707</td>
<td>0.00300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.031729)</td>
<td>(0.00148)</td>
<td>(0.00649)</td>
<td>(0.00152)</td>
<td>(0.00646)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>-.0441361***</td>
<td>0.00206***</td>
<td>0.00903***</td>
<td>-0.00212***</td>
<td>-0.00898***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.010832)</td>
<td>(0.000511)</td>
<td>(0.00224)</td>
<td>(0.000610)</td>
<td>(0.00221)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>.0141991**</td>
<td>-0.000664**</td>
<td>-0.00291**</td>
<td>0.000681**</td>
<td>0.00289**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.0065931)</td>
<td>(0.000314)</td>
<td>(0.00135)</td>
<td>(0.000338)</td>
<td>(0.00134)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>5,662</td>
<td>5,662</td>
<td>5,662</td>
<td>5,662</td>
<td>5,662</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above results also control for all religions in the Pew survey, but none were statistically significant.

Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The results in Table B confirm the OLS results that a more liberal ideology is associated with more trust in government, whereas a more conservative ideology is associated with lower levels of trust. Interestingly, using an ordered probit model renders the “education” variable significant, although the marginal effect is very low – between 0.2% and 0.9% probability of moving to another trust level. “State technology capacity” is also still insignificant, suggesting that better e-gov services do not automatically correlate to higher levels of trust. Additionally, with the different marginal effects for different trust levels, it is evident that the relationship between ideology and trust is non-linear; that is, that the impact of ideology on trust varies for each level of trust. For example, a one-unit increase away from the political ideology mean (making one more liberal) is associated with a 4.07% *increase* in probability that the individual will have a “medium” level of trust in government, but a 4.05% *decrease* in probability that this same individual will have no trust in
government. The overall direction of these results hold when controlling for political party affiliation.

Table C: Marginal Effects, Controlling for Democrats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Ordered Probit</th>
<th>Trust Level High</th>
<th>Trust Level Medium</th>
<th>Trust Level Low</th>
<th>No Trust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
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<td>0.0278***</td>
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<td>(0.0038)</td>
<td>(0.0014)</td>
<td>(0.0037)</td>
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<td>-0.0213***</td>
<td>-0.0875***</td>
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<td>(.0381)</td>
<td>(.0021)</td>
<td>(.0081)</td>
<td>(.0038)</td>
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<td>(.0005)</td>
<td>(.0022)</td>
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<td>Education</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(0.0005)</td>
<td>(0.0022)</td>
<td>(0.0006)</td>
<td>(0.0022)</td>
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<td>5,662</td>
<td>5,662</td>
<td>5,662</td>
<td>5,662</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above results also control for all religions in the Pew survey, but none were statistically significant.
Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Controlling for Democrats (i.e. accounting for potential differences in party affiliation versus ideological affiliation) confirms the overall findings from the OLS regression and baseline ordered probit model. While the magnitude of the effects decreases, the impact of ideology on trust is still highly statistically significant. Interestingly however, the marginal effects show that party affiliation does matter: strong Democrats have a higher probability of moving to a “High” or “Medium” level of trust than strong ideological liberals (“strong” referring to a one-unit increase on each respective scale). Additionally, strong ideological liberals are more likely than strong Democrats to move into the “Low” or “No Trust” levels. This may be due to the split on the left
that was evident in the 2016 Democratic primaries: voters that were loyal to the Democratic party favored Hillary Clinton, while those who were ideologically left, but Independent, favored Bernie Sanders, who was ideologically more liberal and whose campaign platform highlighted how U.S. institutions such as Wall Street and Congress perpetuate economic inequality and injustice. As the Pew poll was conducted in 2015, it likely reflects these divisions on the left, as evidenced by the results above.

Table D: Marginal Effects, Controlling for Republicans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Ordered Probit</th>
<th>Trust Level High</th>
<th>Trust Level Med</th>
<th>Trust Level Low</th>
<th>Trust Level No Trust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>(0.0038)</td>
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<td>0.003</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capacity</td>
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<td>(0.0005)</td>
<td>(0.0022)</td>
<td>(0.0005)</td>
<td>(0.0022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex (for male)</td>
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<td>-0.0037</td>
<td>0.0009</td>
<td>0.0037</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Income</td>
<td>0.0118</td>
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<td>-0.0024</td>
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<td>(0.0066)</td>
<td>(0.0003)</td>
<td>(0.0014)</td>
<td>(0.0003)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Observations</td>
<td>5,662</td>
<td>5,662</td>
<td>5,662</td>
<td>5,662</td>
<td>5,662</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above results also control for all religions in the Pew survey, but none were statistically significant. Robust standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

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Similar to controlling for Democrats, controlling for Republicans produces significant results that, while smaller in magnitude, nonetheless show that ideology is the strongest predictor of trust in government. Notably, the marginal effects on level of trust are similar for ideological conservatives and party Republicans for all trust levels, which may be due to two reasons. First, the 2016 Republican nominee, Donald Trump, was ideologically conservative but a party outsider (i.e. ideologically conservative, but not historically politically Republican). Thus, when he ran under the party label, the party may have moved itself to align with his views, rather than maintaining a party-versus-ideology split. Second, the similarities in trust levels may also suggest that trust in government is not an issue in which there is a split between the Republican party and conservative ideology. This may explain why a political outsider was able to take over the Republican party nomination, as mistrust in institutions appear to be endemic in the party, suggesting that mainstream candidates that are “in the system” will hold less clout with voters. This was evident in the 2016 primary cycle, when establishment-backed candidates such as Jeb Bush and Marco Rubio suffered from consistently low polls, while party outsiders like Ted Cruz and Donald Trump dominated the campaign. Overall, while the results show different findings for ideology versus party on the Left and Right, an ordered probit model confirms that ideology has a significant impact on trust in government.

4.3 Implications for Hypotheses

- **H1: Strength of partisanship will be the strongest predictor of trust in government.**

The results from the ordered probit above confirm my prediction that partisanship is the most significant predictor of trust in government. This means that policymakers wishing to improve trust in institutions must find a way to either work within our polarized construct, or find a way to decrease polarization (expanded upon in Section 5).

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H2: Higher use of e-gov services will correspond to increased levels of trust in government.
The “State Technology Capacity” variable was insignificant across all models, revealing that higher levels of e-gov services do not necessarily impact the level of trust in government. However, while I cannot confirm this hypothesis, I also cannot outright reject it, as my analysis is based off one variable due to data availability. More extensive data and polling on e-gov services and trust may lead to a different conclusion.

H3: Correlation of e-gov services and trust will be less significant than the correlation between partisanship and trust.
Partisan ideology was the strongest predictor of trust in government, both over e-gov services (which were not significant), and over other factors such as education, which only had a small effect on trust. As such, this hypothesis is confirmed.

4.4 Limitations of Empirical Analysis
While several themes are emerging from the above analysis, the results have limitations that may impact policy implications and recommendations. First, as with many social science analyses, it is not possible to determine correlation versus causation for political ideology and trust: do those that trust the government less sort themselves into having a conservative ideology (i.e. aligned with Republicans, a small government party), or does being conservative/Republican deepen one’s distrust of government? Despite this uncertainty, the results show that partisanship and trust are correlated, and it is this correlation that must be addressed in efforts to improve trust in institutions.

Second, I would have liked to include a more robust measure for states’ digital capacities. While the Digital States Survey provides a concrete overview of state e-gov service levels, including the following variables would make my analysis more detailed and therefore more accurate: state spending on e-gov services (past, actual, and projected), staff size of state technology offices, user traffic for e-gov service websites, and/or whether state governments offer lessons in how to use e-gov services. While there is not currently a dataset with these variables, including these questions
in further public opinion research will lend more insight into the relationship between e-gov and trust.

Despite these limitations, the results of my analysis are robust enough to guide policy intervention recommendations, as the focus of this paper is exploring partisanship’s impact on trust in institutions and potential solutions to declining trust. Ideology’s impact on trust in institutions should be cause for concern for any stable democracy. If citizens from one party (particularly in a two-party system) do not trust the government to act in the best interests of its citizens, any initiative by this party will be construed as purely politically-motivated, which can undermine the efficacy of the government. Suggestions for how to rebuild some of this trust are outlined below in Section 5.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS
The empirical results in Section 4 of this paper highlight the necessity of combatting polarization to reduce the impact of ideology on trust in institutions. Policy efforts in this area should include both those within the “system” (party elites, political analysts, and the media), who should use their platforms to dispel partisan antipathy, and also those outside the “system,” where grassroots efforts can restore trust across the political aisle at the local level. By following the three-pronged approach outlined below, the United States can begin to address political polarization, which can slowly, in turn, lay the foundation for improving trust in institutions.

5.1 Political Elites Should Embrace a Policy Platform
Despite the efficacy of ad-hominem attacks in stirring voters’ emotions, political analysts have long observed that in elections, citizens are most interested in what the candidates propose to make their (voters’) lives better. In other words, citizens care about policy. Politicians and party elites should therefore take the cue from their constituents and focus their strategy on promoting the benefits of their policies. In doing so, these politicos should attack their opponent’s ideas on a

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\[\text{Patterson contrasts this interest with journalists’ and party elites’ main focus, which is on how the candidate is going to win the election. See: Patterson, Thomas E. Out of Order. Random House LLC: 2011. Print.}\]
substantive basis, as calls of being “un-American” or “wanting to bring this country down” serve only to foment mistrust and antipathy among voters. Partisans derive their opinions from political elites, and political elites must take this responsibility seriously.

This recommendation seems perhaps naively optimistic: politicians in the United States use emotional appeals to rouse their voter bases and encourage turnout. However, keeping such appeals substantive does not have to come at the expense of electoral victory. A study published in the American Journal of Political Science in 2011 showed that even with negative, uncivil campaigning, “relevant” advertisements – those that dealt with issues related to governing – were more effective at swaying voters than “irrelevant” messaging – those that focused on personal shortcomings. In the end, the social and economic context surrounding each political campaign varies greatly, but constituent concerns stay relatively grounded: voters care about how the actions of each candidate will affect their livelihood. Politicos should therefore use emotional appeals to highlight the impact of their policies, rather than call into question the “American-ness” of their opponent’s intentions.

5.2 News Media Must Improve Delineation Between Reporting and Analysis

News media is similarly beholden to the public, but through viewership instead of votes. It also plays a critical watchdog role on government, for which impartiality is paramount. This impartiality has been deteriorating, as cable news networks air opinion shows and news shows back-to-back during prime time, increasing the chance of muddying the distinction between the two in the minds of American viewers. To this end, media outlets must more obviously delineate between their reporting and their analysis segments. In 2017, Fox News had the highest viewership amongst cable television networks, and Sean Hannity, a primetime host, was the highest-rated cable news show of the year, averaging over 3 million viewers per night. On the left, analyst Rachel Maddow of MSNBC posts similar numbers, competing with (and sometimes beating)

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Hannity for the top spot. The problem is that hosts like Hannity and Maddow are not journalists, they are political commentators. And when these analysts are aired in primetime, in a similar format to more formal news reports, the American public is at risk of conflating fact with opinion. As previously mentioned, networks are beholden to ratings, and are therefore unlikely to bump their most popular shows from primetime. However, networks should better delineate commentators like Hannity and Maddow as analysts sharing their opinions, instead of as reporters presenting the news. 

Further complicating partisanship in the media is the current Trump administration’s efforts to discredit the “mainstream media.” These attacks on the media are unprecedented, and not only fuel a cycle of distrust between the media and the White House, but also polarize the role of the press for American citizens. This makes the impartiality of journalism – and the delineation of fact versus opinion – even more important in order to maintain credibility to a divided public. While analysis and opinion can never be fully separated from strict reporting, news networks should take care to highlight where and when the divisions occur. Such delineation would be mutually beneficial, helping citizens’ understanding of political issues, and protecting networks’ credibility against a hostile administration.

5.3 Grassroots Organizations Must Help Bridge the Partisan Divide

In today’s polarized environment, community organizations have a particular responsibility in bridging the partisan divide to restore trust and dialogue among their community members. Many organizations, such as “Hi From the Other Side” and “Better Angels” are making strides in this area, bringing people from different political ideologies together to engage in conversation.

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32 One possible means of achieving this would be establishing an independent commission to certify certain sources as “official” news. However, there are significant censorship and independence problems to this proposal, and so this paper will not address this particular solution.


34 There is a substantial policy discussion to be had on how to address this issue, but such discussion is outside the scope of this paper.

35 “Hi From the Other Side” matches individuals from different political parties together for one-on-one conversations, whereas “Better Angels” hosts community workshops focused on political
October 2017, I was able to go into the field to test a similar intervention: a workshop series designed to foster civic education and civil dialogue across party lines. The results of this fieldwork suggest that exploring complex issues in a bipartisan manner is a path to reducing partisan antipathy.

5.3.1 Intervention Test: The Unity Project
I launched “The Unity Project” (TUP) in conjunction with a grant from Georgetown University’s Baker Center for Leadership and Governance. TUP is an organization dedicated to restoring civil dialogue and civic education in the United States, and was launched through a series of 5 workshops in Waterloo, IA in October 2017. The results from the exit survey of this workshop series give insight into ways in which partisan barriers can be broken down in order to restore trust in institutions in the United States.

Workshop Participants and Topics
TUP is a community-focused organization, and therefore partnered with a local group, The Cedar Valley Interfaith Council (CVIC), to recruit participants and expert speakers for the series. In addition to members from CVIC, TUP recruited speakers from local businesses, government, nonprofits, and educational institutions.

These speakers presented on their areas of expertise to between 8-18 participants for each workshop, recruited from the local community. Recruitment methods included flyering in public dialogue and negotiation skills. See their respective websites at:

Learn more about the organization at The Unity Project’s website:
http://www.the-unity-project.org/

Learn more about the Cedar Valley Interfaith Council (CVIC) at
https://www.facebook.com/Cedar-Valley-Interfaith-Council-1084390901641825/

Organizations included: Diamond V Corporation, The International Traders of Iowa, The Internet Education Alliance, The Iowa House of Representatives, The Iowa State Senate, The League of Women Voters, Black Hawk County, NAACP Black Hawk County, The University of Northern Iowa (UNI), and The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh.
spaces, as well as targeted outreach to religious and political organizations, including but not limited to the Black Hawk Country Republicans, the American Democracy Project at UNI, and local churches such as the Masjid Alnoor Islamic Center and Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church. There were 38 total participants in the project, including both attendees and speakers. The majority of attendees were white and post-college age, and many were senior citizens.

I determined the workshop topics with the guidance of Waterloo Mayor Quentin Hart after a meeting in May 2017, and they were subsequently confirmed by representatives from CVIC. The topics were designed to be those most salient to the Black Hawk County community, while still being nuanced enough that participants could engage in rational political dialogue. Appendix B goes into detail on these topics.

**Workshop Structure**

While the topics varied greatly, the workshops stuck to a similar structure that addressed both of TUP’s goals: civil dialogue and civic education. First, expert speakers from both sides of the aisle would give an overview of their position, before having a facilitated conversation about the points on which they agreed before taking questions from the audience. Second, participants would get into groups of 2-4 people and work to solve a real-life case study that tackled the issues that the speakers addressed. For example, during the “Federal v. Local Government” workshop, the case study was an adaptation of an article by the Guardian on the Hookworm Virus in Lowndes County, Alabama (See Appendix A). Finally, the group would come back together at the end of the session to discuss their thoughts on and solutions to the case studies.

**Workshop Results and Exit Survey**

After the workshop series ended, I distributed an exit survey to the 38 participants via email, and 16 participants responded. Their insights helped illuminate trends observed in the workshops, in addition to suggesting policy avenues for restoring trust in government.

"For example, at The Waterloo Center for the Arts, the Waterloo and Cedar Falls libraries, and the YMCA."
First, during the workshops, the desire for education was immediately apparent: from the start of the first speaker during the first session, participants pulled out notepads and pencils and began to take notes. This was particularly revelatory given the demographics of the attendees: there was a significant interest among retired and post-college adults for further civic education, which is an initiative that local governments should consider implementing. Exit survey results supported this interest in education, with 70% of participants agreeing that “the workshops helped them better understand a point of view different to their own” (Figure A).

Second, contrary to conventional public opinion scholarship, a number of participants did change their mind on a topic. Since the 1970s, researchers have shown repeatedly that we (all) suffer from “myside bias,” that is, a blindness to one’s own opinions. This usually causes people to entrench

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themselves in their own view following an argument, rendering debates largely ineffective at changing people’s minds. Whether it was due to an educational focus, nuanced discussions on the case studies, or selection bias of people who were willing to listen being the ones to attend, the workshops did influence participants’ views, with 31% of survey respondents changing their mind on at least one topic (Figure B).

"Agree or disagree: the workshop(s) helped me change my mind about at least one topic."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure/Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure B: TUP Viewpoint Results

As mentioned above, this result may be due to factors such as selection bias. Nonetheless, it shows the potential significant impact of education and focusing on nuanced approaches during political conversations. The structure of the workshops was essential in promoting this type of dialogue, and facilitators and policymakers alike should consider emulating this format when engaging citizens in political dialogue, which I will expand upon below.

Limitations of The Unity Project

There are three main limitations in TUP’s methodology. First, selection bias was very likely present among participants. The workshop series was advertised as an avenue for political dialogue
and learning about “the other side’s” perspectives, and so attendees were those already interested in engaging with the other side. This likely biased the results. Second, participants did not make up a representative sample of the community population. Participants were largely white and of retired age. While there were a variety of political beliefs in the room, general opinion skewed left, with more diversity between the populist and neoliberal left than between Clinton and Trump supporters. Lastly, sample size was small, and therefore this data should be treated as that from a focus group instead of a survey. Despite TUP’s limitations, the results show a potential path forward for engaging in political dialogue across the ideological aisle that policymakers should explore. If participants in the workshops changed their opinions on topics such as international trade and criminal justice reform, it is also possible that citizens could begin to change their opinion on trusting government, if they are given the resources and platform in which to do so.

After evaluating The Unity Project, I have come up with 4 points as to what made the workshops so effective. This is a model that grassroots organizations working in similar fields could use to begin to restore trust amongst citizens in their local communities:

1. **The workshops had expert speakers from both sides of the aisle on every topic.** One primary concern of participants going into the workshop series was that the information would be one-sided or biased. Having speakers from both sides of the aisle gave credibility to the workshops and to the spirit of education (instead of debate) across the aisle.

2. **The workshop topics were complex.** Instead of choosing topics to which participants may have had an immediate, immovable reaction (e.g. abortion), the workshops focused on issues that were salient to the community, but for which many citizens do not understand the full policy history, such as international trade and criminal justice reform. This allowed workshop participants and speakers to come from a place of education rather than debate, and helped remove political party from the spotlight.

3. **Workshop speakers highlighted points of agreement.** The lecture portion of the workshops focused on identifying points of agreement between the speakers on the left and right, rather than being focused around a debate and who had the “winning” points. With a
“right answer” being removed from the conversation, speakers from different political persuasions could discuss where their parties found common ground, which opened the door for participants to have similar discussions.

4. **Guiding discussion through case studies.** After the lecture portion of the workshops, discussion was guided via a real-world case study. These cases were carefully chosen and were focused on broad, nonpartisan problems facing a real community in the United States. Participants then used the information from the lectures to try and “solve” the case (insofar as large, societal problems are able to be solved in an hour’s worth of discussion). Choosing complex cases from the real world took the focus off the Democrat and Republican perspectives of solutions, and instead pushed participants to reflect on what they would want for their own community, if they were in a similar situation.

The four points above highlight a formula that helped The Unity Project establish a workshop series that overcame extreme partisan leanings in a politically-charged society. While there was selection bias towards those who favor dialogue, the structure of the workshops was nonetheless effective in this environment, and community organizations and universities should consider using this workshop format to pilot their own dialogue sessions in their local communities.

TUP’s success aside, the myriad bipartisan movements that have emerged in the past decade are evidence that Americans are growing weary of the degree of political polarization in society.41 By following the recommendations outlined above, members of society from all levels can begin to combat political polarization, laying the grounds for improving trust. While grassroots efforts are effective, they can only go so far without systemic change. This is where the role of political elites and the media is essential: they must lead by example in elevating political discussion to the policy level, and in refraining from deceiving their audience by separating fact from opinion. This three-pronged approach to combatting polarization will probably not remove ideology as a determining factor in trust, but it will hopefully help lessen the effect of partisanship. After all, the whole of

41 In addition to “Hi from the Other Side” and “Better Angels,” mentioned above, groups such as The Village Square (https://tlh.villagesquare.us/) are focusing on community bipartisan initiatives.
society stands to gain when institutions can operate effectively and help the populations that they were created to serve.

6. CONCLUSION
Partisanship is seeping into all aspects of American life, and trust in government is no exception. In spite of efforts made by governments to improve their services via e-gov platforms, there has still been a decline in trust in institution in the United States that is more correlated with political party than with the government’s execution of its duties. This should alarm policymakers on both sides of the aisle, because a government without trust cannot carry out its duties effectively and risks losing its legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens. The findings in this paper highlight the significant impact of partisan ideology on trust, and also suggest that better e-gov services do not necessarily repair the lack of trust in government. Those working to improve trust in government must therefore work within this polarized context to encourage political actors to focus on substantive issues and separate fact from opinion; indeed, there are political rewards to be reaped from doing so. Grassroots organizations should combat this problem at the local level through community-based initiatives that bring people out of their social media bubbles and into a common space to discuss issues across the partisan divide. The differing effects for liberals and conservatives also suggest distinct approaches to mitigating partisanship. While conservatives may be more responsive to direction from Republican leadership on bipartisan dialogue, liberals may have to work with community organizations or with other thought leaders outside the Democratic party label in order to be able to garner support for decreasing polarization.

These suggested initiatives also open the way for further research on this issue; namely examining which types of policy interventions are most effective at restoring – and maintaining – both depolarization and trust, and also exploring how efficacy in different types of government services – not just in e-gov – impacts trust in institutions. The current impact of ideology on trust suggests that the U.S. needs to prioritize tackling polarization in order to be able to have an impact on trust in government. While the policy solutions to polarization outlined in this paper do not guarantee an increase in trust in government, if acted on effectively, these policies clear one of the major obstacles to trust in institutions, political ideology, which in turn lays the foundation for governments to rebuild confidence in institutions and highlight the ways in which they operate
effectively. By continuing to broaden the literature on not just the relationship between ideology and trust, but also on what policymakers can do to begin to improve this trust, society may begin to reverse the declining trust in government that has trended over the past half a century. In the end, trust in institutions is in the best interests of both the politicians and the people they serve. While trust should not be blind, it is nonetheless necessary for effective governance, and society must come together across the ideological divide to begin to rebuild and restore trust in institutions.
7. APPENDIX A: TUP CASE STUDY EXAMPLE

The document below is an example of the type of case study used in the TUP workshops. Other grassroots organizations can use this type of complex case study to foster dialogue that is solutions-oriented, and not immediately partisan, in order to conduct conversations across party lines.

Hookworm, a Disease of Extreme Poverty, is Thriving in the US South. Why?
Adapted from an article in The Guardian by Ed Pilkington, published September 5, 2017.

Children playing feet away from open pools of raw sewage; drinking water pumped beside cracked pipes of untreated waste; human feces flushed back into kitchen sinks and bathtubs whenever the rains come; people testing positive for hookworm, an intestinal parasite that thrives on extreme poverty. These are the findings of a new study into endemic tropical diseases in Alabama.

More than one in three people (34%) sampled in Lowndes County, Alabama tested positive for traces of hookworm, a gastrointestinal parasite that was thought to have been eradicated from the US decades ago. The study was carried out by the National School of Tropical Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine in conjunction with Alabama Center for Rural Enterprise (ACRE), a non-profit group seeking to address the root causes of poverty.

The parasite, better known as hookworm, enters the body through the skin, usually through the soles of bare feet, and attaches itself to the small intestine where it sucks the blood of its host. It causes iron deficiency and anemia, weight loss, tiredness and impaired mental function, especially in children. Hookworm was rampant in the deep south of the US in the earlier 20th century, helping to create the stereotype of the lazy and lethargic southern redneck. As public health improved, most experts assumed it had disappeared altogether by the 1980s.

Lowndes County is the home state of the U.S. Attorney General, Jeff Sessions, and a landmark region in the history of the nation’s civil rights movement. The average income is just $18,046 (£13,850) a year, and almost a third of the population live below the official US poverty line. 74% are African American.

Lowndes County suffers from an extreme lack of waste disposal infrastructure. Some 73% of residents included in the Baylor survey reported that they had been exposed to raw sewage washing back into their homes as a result of faulty septic tanks or waste pipes becoming overwhelmed in torrential rains.
Aaron Thigpen, a community activist who helped with the study, has highlighted the perils of piping sewage from homes and dumping it in the open just a few feet away. “They are disgusted about it, they’re sick and tired of living like this, but there’s no public help for them here and if you’re earning $700 a month there’s no way you can afford your own private sanitation.”

He added that people were afraid to report the problems, given the spate of criminal prosecutions that were launched by Alabama state between 2002 and 2008 against residents who were open-piping sewage from their homes, unable to afford proper treatment systems. One grandmother was jailed over a weekend for failing to buy a septic tank that cost more than her entire annual income.

“People are scared. They don’t like to speak out as they’re worried the health department will come round and cause trouble,” Thigpen said.

The challenge to places like Lowndes County is not to restore existing public infrastructure, because there is no public infrastructure here to begin with. Catherine Flowers, the founder of ACRE, estimates that 80% of the county is uncovered by any municipal sewerage system, and in its absence people are expected – and in some cases legally forced – to provide their own.

Even where individuals can afford up to $15,000 to install a septic tank – and very few can – the terrain is against them. Lowndes County is located within the “Black Belt”, the southern sweep of loamy soil that is well suited to growing cotton and as a result spawned a multitude of plantations, each worked by a large enslaved population. The same thing that made the land so good for cotton – its water-retaining properties – also makes it a hazard to the thousands who still live on it today. When the rains come, the soil becomes saturated, overwhelming inadequate waste systems and providing a perfect breeding ground for hookworm.

The results of this study have prompted the National School of Tropical Medicine to increase the scope of their study beyond the South. Dr. Peter Hotez, Dean of the school, estimates that as many as 12 million Americans could be suffering from neglected tropical diseases in poor parts of the South and Midwest.

Discussion Questions:
1. Who are the stakeholders in solving the health crisis in Lowndes?
2. Discuss the responsibility of each entity in helping Lowndes:
   - Federal government
   - State government
   - County government
   - Local organizations
3. What are the current barriers to helping counties like Lowndes, and how can we overcome them?
4. If a similar problem were found in parts of the Cedar Valley, would your answer to any of the questions above change? If so, why?
8. APPENDIX B: TUP WORKSHOP TOPICS

The workshops took place on a weekly basis over the course of the month of October. Through conversations with Waterloo Mayor Quentin Hart and members of CVIC, The Unity Project focused on topics that were both nuanced and salient to the local community. Grassroots organizations can use the topics below as an example of subjects that worked well for a community in generating complex discussion that was not inherently partisan.

TUP Workshop Topics

- **Federal v. Local Government** (October 1, 2017): Participants explored the responsibility of federal versus state governing bodies and how community organizing can have an impact.

- **International Trade** (October 8, 2017): Discussions centered around the impact of international trade on the job market, how Black Hawk County has been affected, and solutions to help those out of work get the training they need for the future.

- **“Fake News”** (October 15, 2017): Speakers emphasized the misconceptions surrounding all sides of “Fake News,” in addition to ways to verify online sources and get more accurate information.

- **Criminal Justice Reform** (October 22, 2017): Participants discussed ways to work across the aisle to ensure equality and security in their community. Conversations addressed ongoing bipartisan initiatives as well as the need for equal punishments for the same crimes.

- **Where do we go from here?** (October 29, 2017): The final workshop was a communal lunch that went over the initial findings from the workshop, and included a postcard-writing campaign to raise awareness about the project and the desire for bipartisan political initiatives.
9. REFERENCES


