

# Attitudes concerning Social Welfare and Ambivalence concerning the Role of Government

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*Evidence suggests that mistrust of government contributes directly to a lack of support for social welfare programs. An alternative explanation, however, is that many citizens are ambivalent concerning government and the role that it should play in society today and, as result, are less likely to support such programs. Based on our analysis of data from a 2004 telephone survey of Florida residents, we conclude that, first, ambivalent feelings concerning the federal, state, and local levels of government in the United States are fairly common; second, ambivalence has consequences for people's opinions on matters of public policy—specifically, those with conflicted feelings are less likely to endorse progressive action in the social welfare realm; third, self-identified conservatives tend to be more ambivalent concerning government than liberals; and finally, the observed negative relationship between ambivalence and social welfare liberalism is especially pronounced among conservatives.*

Attitudes concerning social welfare policy at the mass level have been a topic of interest for scholars of public opinion for decades (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, and McPhee 1954; Campbell *et al.* 1960; Green, Palmquist, and Schickler 2002; Hetherington 2005; Layman and Carsey 2002; Rudolph and Evans 2005; Stonecash 2000). Recently, some have suggested that declining public trust in government has led to a weakening of social welfare liberalism among Americans (Hetherington 2005; Rudolph and Evans 2005). While there is evidence to support this claim, there is an alternative explanation. Many Americans may, in fact, be ambivalent concerning the role that government should play in society, and this state of affairs may be driving attitudes concerning social welfare. *Ambivalence* results when an individual simultaneously

1 possesses positive and negative evaluations of an attitude object  
2 (Alvarez and Brehm 1995, 1997, 1998; Cacioppo and Berntson 1994;  
3 Craig, Kane, and Martinez 2002; Klopfer and Madden 1980; McGraw,  
4 Hasecke, and Conger 2003; Priester and Petty 1996; Thompson, Zanna,  
5 and Griffin 1995). This article presents evidence that such conflict  
6 surrounding personal evaluations of government does indeed result in  
7 decreased support for social welfare.

8 Hetherington (2005, 3) asserts that “declining political trust has  
9 played the central role in the demise of progressive public policy in the  
10 United States over the last several decades.” Whereas some analysts  
11 believe there has been a shift to the right in public opinion since the 1960s,  
12 the evidence suggests otherwise. Instead, the erosion of public trust  
13 has supposedly made people less likely to support health-care reform,  
14 antipoverty and race-targeted programs, and other initiatives not  
15 because they oppose those initiatives in principle, but because they  
16 mistrust the “delivery system,” i.e., they “simply do not think the federal  
17 government is up to the task” (Hetherington 2005, 5). Furthermore,  
18 Rudolph and Evans (2005) found the relationship between mistrust  
19 and opposition to progressive social welfare policy to be greater among  
20 conservatives, for whom government spending of any sort (except on  
21 programs related to defense and national security) might be considered a  
22 violation of their fundamental ideological beliefs. While these arguments  
23 are compelling, as we show, there is reason to suspect that popular  
24 attitudes toward government may be too complex to be captured by  
25 conventional, bipolar measures of political trust. Thus, just as our earlier  
26 research has uncovered a nontrivial degree of ambivalence in citizen  
27 attitudes regarding a number of policy issues (including abortion, gay  
28 rights, and social welfare), we believe that much of what is characterized  
29 as mistrust is actually ambivalence concerning the role that government  
30 should play in society today. Therefore, perhaps, a lack of support  
31 for progressive social welfare policy is actually better explained by  
32 ambivalence concerning government.

33 The questions we pose are as follows. First, is opposition to  
34 “progressive public policy,” at least within the realm of social welfare,  
35 associated with ambivalence concerning government in the United States  
36 even when trust is held constant? Second, is that relationship stronger  
37 among conservatives, liberals, or neither? Findings suggest that (1)  
38 ambivalence concerning the role of government in society is fairly

1 common; (2) social welfare liberalism is less a function of trust than of  
2 ambivalence; (3) the effects of ambivalence concerning government on  
3 attitudes concerning social welfare are independent of other important  
4 factors, including feelings concerning perceived beneficiaries, core  
5 values, ideology, party identification, race, gender, and income; and (4)  
6 while the effects of political trust on social welfare liberalism do not vary  
7 across ideology, the impact of ambivalence is more pronounced among  
8 conservatives. Before moving on to the analysis, we review briefly the  
9 concept and measurement of ambivalence in general, and then outline  
10 our theory concerning ambivalence concerning government in particular  
11 and its relation to attitudes concerning social welfare.

### 12 13 **Conceptualizing and Measuring Ambivalence**

14  
15 Researchers traditionally have assumed that attitudes can be  
16 measured as if they lie somewhere along a bipolar continuum that  
17 ranges from positive (or favorable) to negative (or unfavorable), with a  
18 neutral point in between (Eagly and Chaiken 1993; Thurstone 1928;  
19 Thurstone and Chave 1929). This unidimensional view conforms to our  
20 intuitive sense that people tend to think in bipolar terms concerning  
21 most things. When they watch a movie or eat a meal, they usually  
22 classify it as either “good” or “bad” (or, representing the continuum’s  
23 neutral point, as “so–so”). Similarly, in the political and social realm,  
24 individuals and institutions are often described as being “trustworthy,”  
25 or “untrustworthy.” On the surface, describing something as both one  
26 thing *and* the other seems counterintuitive. Yet in real life, we can,  
27 and do, evaluate objects as if they contained separate components.  
28 Politicians are seen as being liberal on some issues but conservative on  
29 others (Abelson *et al.* 1982), with the summation of these perceptions  
30 presumably telling us whether they fall, overall, into one category or the  
31 other. Feldman (1995, 266) describes this process as the “distributions  
32 of considerations” and argues that an opinion expressed in response to  
33 a survey question provides only an estimate of the central tendency of  
34 an individual’s attitudes or beliefs on that subject.

35 The concept of ambivalence is not new (Kaplan 1972; Scott 1969),  
36 especially to social psychologists who have often used experimental data  
37 to demonstrate empirically the existence of an ambivalence dimension  
38 based on the assumption that attitudes can indeed contain separate

1 positive and negative components (Armitage and Conner 2000;  
2 Hodson, Maio, and Esses 2001; Katz and Hass 1988; Klopfer and  
3 Madden 1980; Priester and Petty 1996; Thompson, Zanna, and Griffin  
4 1995). While ambivalence is frequently taken into account in attitudinal  
5 research generally (Ajzen 2001), the study of ambivalence with regard to  
6 political objects is only recently becoming more frequent.

7 Feldman and Zaller (1992) were the first political scientists to  
8 address extensively the phenomenon of ambivalence. They asked survey  
9 respondents to state whatever thoughts came to mind as they answered  
10 two traditional closed-ended social welfare policy questions. Based on  
11 the mixture of answers given, and on similar findings reported by other  
12 scholars (Hochschild 1981), the authors concluded that “[m]ost people  
13 possess opposing considerations on most issues, that is, considerations  
14 that might lead them to decide the issue either way” (Zaller 1992; Zaller  
15 and Feldman 1992, 585). This is the *ambivalence axiom* and, according  
16 to them, it helps to account for the response instability so often  
17 associated with surveys of ordinary citizens (Converse 1964).

18 After 1992, research in political science soon began to uncover  
19 evidence of ambivalence in a number of areas. Based on the analysis  
20 of error variances in heteroskedastic models of binary choice, Alvarez  
21 and Brehm (1995) found substantial ambivalence in public opinion  
22 concerning abortion rights, an issue usually thought to be “easy” enough  
23 for most people to take either one position or the other (Abramowitz  
24 1995). Yet many pro-choice and pro-life supporters express some level of  
25 ambivalence concerning abortion rights under certain circumstances  
26 (Craig, Kane, and Martinez 2002). Moreover, there is accumulating  
27 evidence that some citizens are ambivalent concerning other supposedly  
28 “easy” targets, including the IRS (Alvarez and Brehm 1998), gay rights [2]  
29 (Craig *et al.* 2005), social welfare (Gainous 2008), political parties  
30 (Greene 2005; Pinard 2005), political institutions (McGraw and Bartels  
31 2005), and America itself (Citrin and Luks 2005). Political science  
32 researchers have also begun to demonstrate that ambivalence affects  
33 the cognitive processes that shape political decision making. Ambivalent  
34 respondents have less stable policy preferences over time (Craig,  
35 Martinez, and Kane 2005), make their vote decisions later (Lavine and  
36 Steenbergen 2005), base those decisions on different kinds of information  
37 (Basinger and Lavine 2005), and are more likely to deviate from their  
38 preelection vote intentions (Fournier 2005). In short, people who feel

1 simultaneously positively and negatively about the same political object  
2 (policy positions, groups, or candidates) often think and behave  
3 differently than others.

#### 4 **Political Trust, Ambivalence concerning Government and** 5 **Social Welfare Attitudes** 6

7  
8 Scholars have devoted significant effort to identifying and explaining  
9 both the factors most responsible for declining levels of trust in  
10 government (Citrin 1974; Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2001; Keele 2007;  
11 Miller 1974) and the behavioral consequences of political (mis)trust.  
12 In the latter vein, high levels of mistrust (or cynicism) appear to be  
13 associated with reduced citizen compliance with government mandates  
14 (Levi 1997; Tyler and Degoey 1995), a greater willingness to disobey  
15 the law (Norris 1999b), more cheating on taxes (Scholz and Lubell 1998),  
16 and an increased likelihood of voting for challengers and third-party  
17 candidates (Hetherington 1999). Political trust also matters because it  
18 affects citizens' attitudes concerning the proper balance of power in the  
19 American federal system (Hetherington and Nugent 2001) and shapes  
20 their attitudes regarding various aspects of domestic policy (Chanley,  
21 Rudolph, and Rahn 2000; Hetherington and Globetti 2002). Specifically,  
22 Hetherington (2005) argues that diminished support for social welfare  
23 liberalism in the United States is partly the result of lower levels of trust  
24 in government since the 1960s. After all, government is the delivery  
25 system for income redistribution, health insurance for the poor and  
26 the elderly, unemployment benefits, and other benefits that accrue (and  
27 might accrue) from a generous social welfare system. If large segments  
28 of the public believe that the delivery system is broken, public support  
29 for liberal social welfare policies might be weakened, notwithstanding  
30 citizens' conceptions of economic justice or beliefs concerning how  
31 deserving the truly needy are. Accordingly, Hetherington sees an  
32 important connection between the parallel decline in political trust and  
33 the decline in support for social welfare.

34 However, reinterpretations of the meaning of standard measures of  
35 political trust have raised questions concerning whether most Americans  
36 are actively mistrustful of government. Cook and Gronke (2005), for  
37 instance, maintain that the absence of trust does not necessarily imply the  
38 presence of cynicism (or mistrust). While large numbers of Americans

1 believe that “the government in Washington can be trusted to do what is  
2 right” only some of the time (or never), it does not necessarily follow that  
3 those same people believe that government can always be counted on to  
4 do what is wrong. Rather, many people who score low on conventional  
5 measures of trust are actually somewhere near the middle of a  
6 unidimensional scale running from hostile mistrust to pollyanic trust.  
7 Cook and Gronke suggest that the median American is more of a skeptic  
8 than a pure cynic.

9 Cook and Gronke’s observation that a dichotomy of trust and  
10 mistrust fails to capture the true beliefs of many citizens is an important  
11 one, and is broadly consistent with portraits of “critical citizens” in  
12 Western democracies who are mobilized to participate by their beliefs  
13 that incumbent politicians are not as responsive as they should be. In  
14 fact, the relationship between institutional confidence and political  
15 participation appears to be fairly weak (Norris 1999a, 260), with the pool  
16 of active participants including trusting, skeptical, and cynical citizens  
17 roughly in proportion to their share of the overall population. Moreover,  
18 the skeptic’s true beliefs concerning government may be more complex  
19 than can be represented simply as the middle position on a continuum.  
20 Such skepticism may reflect ambivalence on the part of citizens who, at  
21 various times in their lives, have been both satisfied and disappointed  
22 in how government served them as individuals or addressed pressing  
23 national issues. Indeed, McGraw and Bartels (2005) discovered that  
24 *cognitive* ambivalence toward each of the three branches of the national  
25 government was relatively common among the American public in the  
26 late 1990s and, furthermore, that ambivalence concerning political  
27 institutions was basically unrelated to ideology or partisanship.

28 While McGraw and Bartels provide a starting point, these authors  
29 do not discuss how ambivalence relates to and structures attitudes  
30 concerning other objects. We concur with Hetherington (2005) that  
31 feelings concerning the delivery system are a likely source of attitudes  
32 concerning social welfare policy; nevertheless, it is possible that people’s  
33 attitudes are not as simple as bipolar estimates of trust would suggest. In  
34 particular, many of those who are forced to one side of a traditional trust  
35 scale may have mixed feelings concerning government and its ability to  
36 address important public policy concerns. Our argument is that people  
37 who are ambivalent concerning government, that is, people with both  
38 positive and negative feelings concerning the delivery system, are likely to

1 be less confident in the system's efficacy. In other words, mixed feelings  
2 should result in individuals having doubts concerning the ability of  
3 government to effectively administer programs and, consequently,  
4 reduce support for the program itself.

5 Here, we employ a measure of ambivalence adapted from Kaplan's  
6 (1972) method of gauging simultaneously conflicting reactions to a single  
7 object. Unlike McGraw and Bartels (2005), we do not distinguish  
8 between attitudes toward different branches of the national government;  
9 rather, we search for ambivalence across *levels* of government: national,  
10 state, and local. This is especially useful as we seek to compare the impact  
11 of trust and ambivalence on attitudes regarding one aspect of public  
12 policy concerning which there is considerable discord regarding the  
13 proper role of government in general, and of the national government in  
14 particular.

### 15 16 **Data and Measurement**

17  
18 The data used here are from a statewide telephone poll conducted  
19 between May 10 and 22, 2004 by the Florida Voter polling organization.  
20 Our analysis is based on completed interviews with 607 respondents  
21 who were randomly selected from a list of registered voters in the  
22 state of Florida. A total of 67 questions were asked in the survey,  
23 which included measures of political trust, ambivalence concerning  
24 government, social welfare liberalism, and a variety of control variables.  
25 The margin of error is plus or minus four percentage points.<sup>1</sup>

26 No state is a perfect microcosm of the entire country, but Florida's  
27 population—from its small towns and rural areas in the north, to the  
28 retirement communities in the southeast, to the I-4 Corridor and  
29 Disney World in between—is quite diverse in ethnicity, educational  
30 achievement, source of economic livelihood, and political culture. In  
31 recent elections, Florida has mirrored closely the national pattern and  
32 has been pivotal in determining the outcome of national elections.  
33 Moreover, the frequencies on important independent variables that we  
34 report below are generally similar to published results from national and  
35 other surveys. State-level studies such as this one also permit researchers  
36 to test new measures and methods, including measures of attitudes  
37 related to a single state's political institutions or climate. Thus, while  
38 results from our sample are statistically generalizable only to the

1 population of Florida's registered voters, we have no reason to expect  
2 that the magnitude of the *relationships between* key variables is  
3 significantly weaker (or stronger) than in other states or the nation as  
4 a whole.

5  
6 **Dependent Variable: Social Welfare Liberalism**

7 *Social welfare liberalism* was measured by combining positive and  
8 negative responses to a series of questions involving a range of social  
9 welfare issues. Many Americans undoubtedly think of "social welfare"  
10 in terms of government checks, food stamps, subsidized housing,  
11 and the like; indeed, it is often defined as involving programs designed  
12 to ameliorate the social and economic disadvantages experienced by  
13 less fortunate members of society (Sniderman and Piazza 1993).  
14 Conceived more broadly, social welfare includes the allocation of  
15 benefits such as good schools, retirement income, and medical care  
16 to poor and nonpoor alike. Our measure is based on this broad  
17 conceptualization. Respondents were first given the following  
18 introduction:

19  
20 I'm now going to read you a series of statements about the kinds  
21 of things some people think the government should be doing to  
22 address certain problems that are facing the country. After each,  
23 I'd like you to rate the statement on a 4-point scale to indicate  
24 how positively you feel toward it. If you do not have any  
25 positive feelings, give it the lowest rating of 1; if you have some  
26 positive feelings, rate it a 2; if you have generally positive  
27 feelings, rate it a 3; and if you have extremely positive feelings,  
28 rate it a 4. Please rate each statement based solely on how  
29 positively you feel about it, while ignoring or setting aside for  
30 the moment any negative feelings you may have. The first  
31 statement is. . . .

32  
33 The statements were then read and respondents were asked to rate  
34 each one separately. The specific aspects of social welfare policy (based  
35 on questions from the American National Election Studies (ANES) as  
36 well as recent news stories) that respondents were asked to evaluate are  
37 as follows:

38 The government should. . . .

- 1 • ensure that every citizen has adequate medical insurance;
- 2 • provide programs to help homeless people find a place to live;
- 3 • ensure that every child has access to a good education;
- 4 • provide programs that improve the standard of living of poor
- 5 Americans;
- 6 • see to it that everyone who wants a job has one;
- 7 • provide childcare programs to assist working parents;
- 8 • ensure that the retirement benefits that citizens have built up over the
- 9 years are protected.

10  
11 Following several filler questions (including party identification,  
12 political trust, and values indicators), the introduction was repeated  
13 except with the words “positive” and “positively” replaced by  
14 “negative” and “negatively.” Respondents were then asked to assess the  
15 same battery of policy items as before.

16 A 14-item additive index of social welfare liberalism was calculated  
17 by taking the sum of both positive and inverted negative responses  
18 (centered between 0 and 1) to the policy questions.<sup>2</sup> Although this  
19 inversion was intended to make the substantive direction of these  
20 responses consistent, we recognize that there may be some variation in  
21 how people respond to positive and negative question frames (Abelson  
22 *et al.* 1982; Conover and Feldman 1986; Ottati, Steenbergen, and Riggle  
23 1992). To verify the validity of our measure that combines answers to  
24 the two frames, we conducted reliability analyses of the positive feelings  
25 alone ( $\alpha = .83$ ), the inverted negative feelings alone ( $\alpha = .87$ ),  
26 and the overall index ( $\alpha = .87$ ). We also ran separate regressions for  
27 positive and inverted negative feelings using the standard predictors of  
28 attitudes concerning social welfare (discussed in greater detail below). If  
29 the combined measure is valid, we would expect to see similar results for  
30 the magnitude and reliability of estimates across models. This is indeed  
31 the case, with the only meaningful difference being that income is a  
32 reliable predictor only in the positive feelings model.

33 Our findings reinforce the notion that Americans are more likely to  
34 support distributive than redistributive social welfare programs. In  
35 Table 1, we see that government efforts to provide a quality education  
36 for children and to protect citizens’ retirement benefits are the most  
37 popular among registered voters in Florida, while programs to assist the  
38 homeless and to ensure that everyone has a job are endorsed less often.  
39 The relative popularity of these policies aside, however (and according

**Table 1. Distribution of Responses and Factor Loadings for Social Welfare Liberalism**

Policy area	Mean score	Standard deviation	Percent liberal	Factor loading
Medical	6.61	1.79	72.7	.78
Homeless	5.82	1.69	55.0	.78
Education	7.18	1.33	83.5	.66
Standard of living	6.00	1.61	59.6	.79
Job guarantee	5.82	1.85	54.9	.79
Child care	5.95	1.82	59.1	.73
Retirement benefits	7.13	1.35	81.7	.53

*Note:* Data are from a statewide (Florida) survey of registered voters conducted in May 2004. Table entries indicate (1) mean score for each item (ranging between 2 and 8, with higher scores reflecting positive feelings); (2) associated standard deviation; (3) percentage of respondents with scores above the scale midpoint (more positive than negative); and (4) loadings based on a principal components factor analysis, varimax rotation. Missing values were replaced using multiple imputation (N = 607; see note 1).

to the figures displayed in column 3, respondents felt more positively than negatively concerning *all* of them<sup>3</sup>), a principal-components factor analysis revealed that all seven load on a single factor, six of them (retirement benefits is the exception) quite strongly.<sup>4</sup>

**Independent Variables: Trust and Ambivalence**

Political trust is measured by an additive index constructed from two questions modeled after standard ANES trust indicators (how often those who run the government can be trusted, whether government is run by a few big interests or for the benefit of all citizens), plus one question that asked respondents which of two statements came closer to representing their own views: that government is almost always wasteful and inefficient, or that it often does a better job than people give it credit for. (See Appendix for complete question wordings.<sup>5</sup>) Alpha is .59, with both single items and the full index centered between 0 and 1. We also included a single question to capture one’s “active” trust or mistrust of government based on Cook and Gronke (2005). Respondents were asked to locate themselves on a unidimensional scale ranging from 0 (“government can almost always be counted on to do

1 the wrong thing”) to 10 (“government can almost always be counted on  
2 to do the right thing”).

3 Our measure of *affective* ambivalence concerning government—as  
4 distinct from the cognitive aspect captured by McGraw and Bartels  
5 (2005)—is based on experimental work done by social psychologists  
6 and subsequently adapted for use in surveys by Craig, Kane, and  
7 Martinez (2002). The technique is a version of the semantic differential  
8 (Osgood, Suci, and Tannenbaum 1957), as modified by Kaplan (1972)  
9 in an effort to show that people’s overall attitudes comprise both  
10 positive and negative elements. To separate the two, Kaplan divided  
11 semantic differential scales at the neutral point and asked respondents  
12 to indicate *both* how positively *and* how negatively they viewed an  
13 attitude object. For the present study, Kaplan’s language was adapted  
14 to accommodate the limitations of a telephone survey. Immediately  
15 following the social welfare battery described above, the identical  
16 format was used for a second set of questions:

17  
18 Next, I’d like to do the same thing except with a list of different  
19 *government institutions* and *groups* that are active in politics. Once  
20 again: If you do not have any positive feelings toward the  
21 institution or group, give it the lowest rating of 1; if you have some  
22 positive feelings, rate it a 2; if you have generally positive feelings,  
23 rate it a 3; and if you have extremely positive feelings, rate it a  
24 4. Please rate each institution or group based solely on how  
25 positively you feel about it, *while ignoring or setting aside for the*  
26 *moment any negative feelings you may have*. The first group is . . .

27  
28 Positive feelings were then measured regarding (1) the federal  
29 government in Washington; (2) the state government in Tallahassee;  
30 and (3) local government in the city or town where you live. After some  
31 filler questions (Thompson, Zanna, and Griffin 1995), negative feelings  
32 toward the different levels of government were assessed according to the  
33 same 1 to 4 scale.<sup>6</sup>

34 Because Kaplan’s (1972) model for measuring ambivalence fails  
35 to account for the presence of polarized beliefs, we calculated an  
36 ambivalence score for each level of government using an algorithm  
37 developed by Thompson, Zanna, and Griffin (1995):

38  
39 
$$\text{Ambivalence} = [(P + N)/2] - |P - N|$$

1 where P is the positive reaction score and N is the negative reaction  
2 score. Scores for each item range from  $-0.5$  (“extremely” positive and  
3 no negative feelings, or “extremely” negative and no positive) to  $+4.0$   
4 (“extremely” positive *and* negative feelings for the same statement).  
5 In the analysis here, scores of  $-0.5$  and  $0.0$  (“generally” positive and no  
6 negative, or vice versa) are both considered to reflect an absence of  
7 ambivalence. Our multivariate models of social welfare liberalism were  
8 tested using separate measures of ambivalence toward federal, state,  
9 and local government, as well with an index that combined the three  
10 indicators ( $\alpha = .61$ ).

### 11 **Control Variables**

12 The literature suggests that certain core values are associated with  
13 citizens’ attitudes concerning social welfare (Feldman 1988; Feldman  
14 and Steenbergen 2001; Feldman and Zaller 1992; Goren 2001; McCann  
15 1997). We expect to find that a general commitment to *egalitarianism* (not  
16 necessarily tied to economic leveling) is positively correlated, and that  
17 *economic individualism* (defined as a belief in the freedom to accumulate  
18 wealth) is negatively correlated with support for social welfare.<sup>7</sup> To  
19 measure these concepts, respondents were read a series of companion  
20 statements and asked to say which came closer to their own opinion (see  
21 Appendix). For egalitarianism, the choices centered on whether the  
22 country would benefit from (1) treating people more equally or (2)  
23 worrying less about making sure that everyone receives equal treatment.  
24 For economic individualism, the contrast involved (1) support for an  
25 activist government to ensure that people have jobs and to deal with  
26 complex economic problems versus (2) endorsement of the free market  
27 and the idea of letting each person get ahead on his own. The two sets of  
28 items were combined into indices with scores centered between 0 and 1  
29 (high values reflecting stronger support for individualist or egalitarian  
30 values).<sup>8</sup> Respondents were also asked to indicate the importance they  
31 attached to various goals that the nation might choose to pursue,  
32 including both equality and a free marketplace.<sup>9</sup>

33 Prior research has also embraced the idea that individuals’ attitudes  
34 are shaped by feelings as well as cognitions (Breckler and Wiggins 1989;  
35 Esses, Haddock, and Zanna 1993; Millar and Tesser 1986). Studies  
36 suggest that feelings concerning the perceived beneficiaries of social  
37 welfare provide an affective base for attitudes concerning such policy  
38

1 (Bobo and Kluegel 1993; Cook and Barrett 1992; Gilens 1995; Kinder  
2 and Winter 2001; Nelson 1999; Sniderman, Brody, and Tetlock 1991;  
3 also see Jacoby 2005). Apart from the obvious (poor people), many  
4 citizens think of African Americans as being among the principal  
5 beneficiaries of governmental welfare programs. Accordingly, *feelings*  
6 *about welfare beneficiaries* are measured by an index based on answers  
7 to four questions tapping respondents' positive and negative affect  
8 toward "poor people" and "blacks." As with our measure of social  
9 welfare liberalism, we simply inverted negative scores and added them  
10 to the positive responses, then centered the overall index between 0 and  
11 1 (alpha = .77 for positive feelings, .87 for negative feelings, .70 for the  
12 four items together).

13 We also anticipate that *ideology* will, first, affect citizens' social  
14 welfare attitudes directly (conservatives being less supportive) and  
15 second, based on Rudolph and Evans (2005), condition the relationship  
16 between trust, ambivalence concerning government, and governmental  
17 ambivalence on one hand, and social welfare liberalism on the other. It  
18 is measured by respondents' self-placement on a scale ranging from 1  
19 (very liberal) to 7 (very conservative). *Partisanship* is captured using  
20 the traditional seven-point scale, with Democrats expected to be more  
21 supportive of social welfare than Republicans.<sup>10</sup> Other control variables  
22 in our multivariate analyses are *income* (Goren 2001), *race* (Bobo and  
23 Kluegel 1993; Gilens 1995; Kinder and Winter 2001; Tate 1994), and  
24 *gender* (Gilens 1988; Goren 2001; Kaufmann and Petrocik 1999), with  
25 the affluent, blacks, and women more likely than those with lower  
26 incomes, nonblacks, and men, respectively, to score high on social  
27 welfare liberalism.<sup>11</sup>

## 28 Results

29  
30  
31 From the results shown in the top portion of Table 2, it is clear that  
32 voters in Florida, like their counterparts throughout the country, are not  
33 confident that government authorities can be trusted to perform their  
34 jobs effectively and to represent the best interests of the general public in  
35 doing so. These indicators were designed to tap citizens' beliefs about  
36 government as a whole, rather than about the national government  
37 specifically (which is why the first item refers to "the people who run our  
38 government" rather than ANES' "the government in Washington"), and

**Table 2. Distribution of Responses for Political Trust, Active Trust/Mistrust, and Ambivalence concerning Government**

	Mean score	Standard deviation	Percent mistrusting/ambivalent
Political trust			
Do what is right	.44	.25	63.1
Big interests	.31	.37	65.4
Government wasteful	.48	.39	44.0
Political Trust Index	.41	.25	64.6
Active trust/mistrust			
Wrong thing/right thing ambivalence	5.12	1.65	73.0
Federal government	1.22	1.03	77.1
State government	1.10	1.09	69.5
Local government	1.09	1.11	68.7
Ambivalence index	3.41	2.43	88.3

*Note:* Data are from a statewide (Florida) survey of registered voters conducted in May 2004. Table entries indicate (1) mean score for each item (ranging between 0-1 for individual trust items as well as the overall index, 0-10 for active trust/mistrust, -.5 and +4.0 for ambivalence items, -1.5 and +12.0 for the ambivalence index); (2) associated standard deviation; and (3) percentage of respondents with scores below the midpoint for trust, at or below the midpoint for active trust/mistrust, and above zero for ambivalence. Missing values were replaced using multiple imputation (N = 607; see note 1).

so we are hesitant to make any direct comparisons with studies that focus on the top tier in the U.S. federal system. We also concede the arbitrariness of our decision to use item midpoints as the threshold for determining who is mistrustful (or cynical) and who is not. With these caveats in mind, however, it is interesting to note that the percentage of respondents identified as mistrusting according to our alternative-choice measure of trust (Government Wasteful) is substantially lower than on the remaining two items. This suggests that the American public may not view its government as negatively as we are sometimes led to believe by the ANES trust index and similar measures. Indeed, our version of the Cook and Gronke (2005) active trust/mistrust question confirms that many more people fall near the middle than at either positive or negative extreme. When asked to locate themselves on a scale ranging from 0 (active mistrust) to 10 (active trust), 53.2 percent selected the midpoint of 5 ("government is right about half of the time and wrong the other

1 half”) and another 14.9 percent were positioned at either 4 or 6. These  
2 findings raise doubts concerning what it is that traditional trust  
3 questions, which often portray Americans today as deeply cynical, are  
4 actually measuring.

5 Ambivalence involves a combination of positive *and* negative  
6 feelings, and our data reveal that many Florida voters do experience  
7 conflict—especially toward the government in Washington (77.1 percent  
8 with scores greater than zero), but to a considerable extent toward state  
9 (69.5 percent), and local government (68.7 percent) as well. People who  
10 are ambivalent concerning one level of government also tend to be  
11 ambivalent concerning the others (tau-b for national-state is .382, for  
12 national-local .154, and for state-local .282, all coefficients significant at  
13  $p < .05$ ). Although these relationships are far from overwhelming, they  
14 are strong enough that we have combined the three measures into a single  
15 index ( $\alpha = .61$ ) for the analyses that follow. For the index, 88.3  
16 percent of respondents have scores greater than zero, providing evidence  
17 that most are not resolutely cynical, but rather harbor mixed feelings  
18 about government at all levels.

19 We should note that our measures of political trust, active trust/  
20 mistrust, and ambivalence concerning government capture three  
21 distinct orientations. Trust and active trust/mistrust are positively  
22 correlated (tau-b = .317,  $p < .01$ ), although not to the degree that one  
23 might expect if the two indicators were tapping the same attitude. Also,  
24 neither is correlated with ambivalence, which is an interesting finding in  
25 its own right: ambivalence is as common among citizens who exhibit a  
26 generally positive view of government as it is among those whose overall  
27 outlook tends to be more negative.<sup>12</sup>

28 As for the relationship between these variables and social welfare  
29 liberalism, our findings are a bit of a surprise. The bivariate correlations,  
30 shown in Table 3, indicate that neither political trust nor active trust/  
31 mistrust is associated, at conventional levels of significance, with citizens’  
32 attitudes concerning social welfare policy. In fact, the (very weak)  
33 relationships we see run in the opposite direction from predictions based  
34 on Hetherington’s work: that is, support for social welfare programs is  
35 more likely to be found among those with lower rather than higher levels  
36 of trust, active or otherwise.<sup>13</sup> In line with our expectations, however,  
37 ambivalence concerning government is negatively (if not particularly  
38 strongly) associated with social welfare liberalism. The surprise in this

**Table 3. Bivariate Correlations between Political Trust, Active Trust/Mistrust, Ambivalence concerning Government, and Social Welfare Liberalism**

	Social welfare liberalism
Political trust	
Do what is right	-.01
Big interests	-.05
Government wasteful	-.01
Political trust index	-.04
Active trust/mistrust	
Wrong thing/right thing	-.06
Ambivalence	
Federal government	-.06*
State government	-.11*
Local government	-.10*
Ambivalence index	-.11*

*Note:* Data are from a statewide (Florida) survey of registered voters conducted in May 2004. Table entries are Kendall's tau-b, with an asterisk (\*) indicating significance at  $p < .05$  (2-tailed test). Missing values were replaced using multiple imputation ( $N = 607$ ; see note 1).

instance is that there is so little difference in the magnitude of the three individual coefficients. We anticipated that ambivalence concerning the federal government would have the greatest impact because it is Washington that is primarily responsible for the kinds of programs represented in our social welfare liberalism index. As it happens, the federal coefficient is actually a little weaker than its state and local counterparts.

As Table 4 shows, these relationships hold up fairly well in a multivariate setting. In the ordered logit model, neither traditional political trust nor active trust/mistrust has any impact on social welfare liberalism, while opposition to progressive programs continues to be greater, *ceteris paribus*, among respondents who are more ambivalent concerning government (as measured by the three-item index). Liberal views on social welfare are especially likely to be found among those with positive feelings concerning blacks and poor people, a strong commitment to egalitarian values, a belief that equality is an important societal goal, less support for economic individualism, plus African Americans and Democratic identifiers. While ordered logit coefficients

**Table 4. Modeling Social Welfare Liberalism**

	Standard	95%	Confidence
Coefficient error interval			
Political Trust Index	.08	.34	-.58 to .74
Active trust/mistrust	.02	.05	-.07 to .12
Ambivalence about government	-.09	.03	-.15 to -.03
Feelings/Beneficiaries	2.75	.36	2.04 to 3.06
Economic individualism	-1.92	.26	-2.43 to -1.41
Individualism importance	-.05	.26	-.55 to .46
Egalitarianism	.74	.26	.22 to 1.26
Egalitarianism importance	1.60	.27	1.07 to 2.13
Ideology	-.07	.05	-.17 to .03
Republican	-.15	.21	-.57 to .26
Democrat	.40	.19	.02 to .78
Black	.93	.27	.39 to 1.47
Female	.06	.15	-.23 to .35
Income	.06	.08	-.09 to .21
-2 log likelihood	3,658.24		
Nagelkerke Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.39		
N	607		

*Note:* Data are from a statewide (Florida) survey of registered voters conducted in May 2004. Table entries are ordered logit estimates (threshold levels not shown), associated standard errors, and 95 percent confidence intervals. Missing values were replaced using multiple imputation (N = 607; see note 1).

are more difficult to interpret than linear regression and binary logit coefficients, it is fair to say that the effect of ambivalence is weak compared to the effects of other variables.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, unlike traditional trust and active trust/mistrust, the impact of ambivalence is statistically discernible from zero, and its inclusion contributes to a more complete model of social welfare liberalism.<sup>15</sup>

One possible explanation for our failure to observe a relationship between traditional political trust (as well as active trust/mistrust) and social welfare liberalism is suggested by the work of Rudolph and Evans (2005). These authors found opposition to both distributive and redistributive spending to be greater among conservatives, for whom government spending of any sort (except perhaps on programs related to defense and national security) might be considered a violation of their fundamental ideological beliefs. In our data (see Table 5), liberals and conservatives<sup>16</sup> differed in their respective levels of trust (active and

**Table 5. Difference of Means for Political Trust, Active Trust/Mistrust, Ambivalence concerning Government, and Social Welfare Liberalism by Ideology**

	Liberals	Conservatives	<i>t</i>	P-Value
Political trust				
Do what is right	.38	.47	3.51	.00
Big interests	.19	.37	4.86	.00
Government wasteful	.44	.49	1.19	.24
Political trust index	.34	.44	4.17	.00
Active trust/mistrust				
Wrong thing/right thing	5.02	5.10	-1.00	.32
Ambivalence				
Federal government	1.13	1.25	1.20	.23
State government	.84	1.20	3.24	.00
Local government	.98	1.14	1.40	.16
Ambivalence Index	2.94	3.59	2.57	.00
Policy preferences				
Social welfare liberalism	.80	.70	-5.07	.00

*Note:* Data are from a statewide (Florida) survey of registered voters conducted in May 2004. Table entries are mean scores (centered between 0 and 1 for political trust and social welfare liberalism), along with the associated *t*-statistics and probability (equal variances assumed) that we cannot reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between liberals and conservatives on these items. Missing values were replaced using multiple imputation (N = 607; see note 1).

otherwise), ambivalence, and social welfare liberalism. Presumably as a result of Republican majorities in both Washington and Tallahassee at the time of our survey (Citrin and Luks 2001; Keele 2005), conservatives exhibited higher levels of traditional trust—but not of active trust, where the two groups were statistically the same<sup>17</sup>—than liberals. Conservatives also were more ambivalent (significantly so on the overall index and on feelings toward the state government in Tallahassee) and, as expected, less supportive of social welfare programs. None of this tells us, however, whether ideology plays the moderating role hypothesized by Rudolph and Evans.

Just as we were unable to replicate Hetherington's (2005) observed relationship between trust and social welfare liberalism, the results outlined in Table 6 provide no evidence that this relationship is stronger among conservatives (who have the most to lose, at least symbolically,

**Table 6. Testing for the Moderating Effects of Ideology**

	Coefficient	Standard error	95% Confidence interval
Political Trust Index	.06	.34	-.60 to .72
Active trust/mistrust	.02	.05	-.07 to .12
Ambivalence about government	-.09	.03	-.15 to .02
Feelings/Beneficiaries	2.68	.38	1.94 to 3.42
Economic individualism	-1.93	.27	-2.47 to -1.40
Individualism importance	-.05	.26	-.55 to .46
Egalitarianism	.79	.27	.27 to 1.31
Egalitarianism importance	1.62	.28	1.07 to 2.16
Republican	-.22	.21	-.63 to .19
Democrat	.36	.19	-.02 to .74
Black	.89	.27	.35 to 1.42
Female	.09	.15	-.20 to .37
Income	.05	.08	-.10 to .20
Conservative	-.11	.16	-.43 to .20
Conservative × Political Trust	-.00	.20	-.39 to .38
Conservative × Active Trust/Mistrust	.02	.02	-.02 to .07
Conservative × Ambivalence	-.03	.02	-.07 to .00
-2 log likelihood	3,656.83		
Nagelkerke Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.40		
N	607		

*Note:* Data are from a statewide (Florida) survey of registered voters conducted in May 2004. Table entries are ordered logit coefficients (threshold levels not shown), associated standard errors, and 95 percent confidence intervals. Missing values were replaced using multiple imputation (N = 607; see note 1).

when government spending rises) than among liberals. The main effects of the trust and active trust variables are statistically trivial, as are their interactions with the dummy variable for conservative ideology. The same is not true for ambivalence, however, as the sign of the conservative × ambivalence interaction is in the expected (negative) direction and significant; in other words, the impact of governmental ambivalence on social welfare attitudes is more pronounced among conservatives than among moderates and liberals. The main effect of ambivalence is once again apparent, indicating that support for social welfare programs is weaker even among nonconservatives who express mixed positive and negative feelings concerning government in the United States.

## Conclusion

1  
2  
3 In our view, these findings amplify both the well-developed literature  
4 on political trust and the emergent literature in political science on  
5 ambivalence. First, the frequency and effect of ambivalence (or mixed  
6 feelings) concerning government itself reinforces recent research  
7 suggesting that a dichotomy of trust and cynicism may not fully capture  
8 the complexities of citizens' beliefs concerning their government. There  
9 is no doubt that traditional measures registered much lower levels of  
10 political trust from the late 1960s through the 1990s than they did in the  
11 late 1950s and early 1960s, but we think there is now doubt concerning  
12 whether those trends were capturing an increase in outright cynicism  
13 concerning government—as feared by Miller (1974)—or simply a  
14 growing skepticism (Cook and Gronke 2005). If the latter is the case, the  
15 loss of trust since the 1960s may not be as serious a development as some  
16 have thought and, viewed through the lens of those who see a growth in  
17 the number of “critical citizens,” it may reflect a politically healthy degree  
18 of concern that motivates some forms of mass political participation in  
19 segments of the mass public.

20 There is some evidence from the 1940s and 1950s that many  
21 Americans were ambivalent concerning government in the sense of  
22 possessing mixed positive and negative beliefs and/or feelings [Hyman  
23 and Sheatsley (1950) 1954; Mitchell 1959]. Without long-term trend data,  
24 we cannot determine how much this has changed over the past 50-60  
25 years, but our direct measures of affective ambivalence leave little doubt  
26 that ambivalence concerning government at the federal, state, and  
27 local levels is a fairly common phenomenon in contemporary American  
28 politics (also see McGraw and Bartels 2005). Moreover, while neither  
29 traditional nor revised measures of political trust appear to be a primary  
30 source of support for social welfare programs in our data, ambivalence  
31 does have a significant if modest impact: citizens with conflicted feelings  
32 about government are less likely to endorse progressive policy action  
33 in the social welfare realm, and that appears especially true among  
34 conservative identifiers (Rudolph and Evans 2005).

35 Especially given that (1) our data are from a single state rather than  
36 the nation as a whole, and (2) several of our key indicators differ from  
37 those employed by other scholars, it obviously would be premature  
38 for us to reject the Hetherington thesis (either in its original form or as

1 amended by Rudolph and Evans) altogether. We do believe, however,  
2 that it is imperative for scholars to continue investigating citizens'  
3 conflicting views concerning governmental leaders and institutions (and  
4 many other things), the extent to which such ambivalence can help us  
5 to understand better the post-1964 era of diminished public trust, and  
6 the impact that both cognitive and affective ambivalence have on a  
7 range of other political attitudes and behaviors. The consequences of  
8 ambivalence, in particular, warrant closer examination. For now, it  
9 appears that ambivalence concerning government reduces the likelihood  
10 of support for social welfare programs, especially among people who  
11 normally oppose higher levels of governmental activity and spending in  
12 those areas. We suspect that this may turn out to be only the tip of the  
13 iceberg.

## 14 Appendix

15  
16  
17 Question wordings for most variables in our analysis are provided  
18 below. High scores reflect greater trust, ambivalence, and active trust  
19 of government; greater liberalism on social welfare issues; stronger  
20 commitment to individualism and egalitarianism; more positive  
21 feelings toward welfare beneficiaries; conservative self-identification;  
22 Democratic partisanship; and black, high income, and female on  
23 demographics.

### 24 Political Trust

25  
26 (1) How much of the time do you think you can trust the people who  
27 run our government to do what is right—just about always, most of the  
28 time, only some of the time, or almost never? (2) Would you say the  
29 government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for  
30 themselves, or that it is run for the benefit of all the people? Do you feel  
31 strongly or not so strongly about this? (3) Next, I'm going to read two  
32 statements and ask you to tell me which one comes closer to your own  
33 opinion. You might agree to some extent with both, but we want to  
34 know which one is closer to your views: Government is almost always  
35 wasteful and inefficient; or Government often does a better job than  
36 people give it credit for. Do you feel strongly or not so strongly about  
37 this? (*Answers to the second and third items were originally coded from 1*  
38 *to 5, with those who offered a "mixed" response placed in the middle.*)

1 **Affective Ambivalence about Government**

2 See text for complete wordings.

3  
4 **Active Trust/Mistrust of Government**

5 People have different views about how well government works.  
6 Imagine a scale with scores ranging from zero through 10, where “0”  
7 means that government can almost always be counted on to do the  
8 *wrong thing*, “10” means that government can almost always be counted  
9 on to do the *right thing*, and “5” means that government is *right about*  
10 *half of the time and wrong the other half*. Where on this scale would you  
11 place yourself?  
12

13 **Social Welfare Liberalism**

14 I'm now going to read you a series of statements about the kinds of  
15 things some people think the government should be doing to address  
16 certain problems that are facing the country. After each, I'd like you  
17 to rate the statement on a 4-point scale to indicate how *positively*  
18 [*negatively*] you feel toward it. If you do not have any positive [*negative*]  
19 feelings, give it the lowest rating of 1; if you have some positive  
20 [*negative*] feelings, rate it a 2; if you have generally positive [*negative*]  
21 feelings, rate it a 3; and if you have extremely positive [*negative*] feelings,  
22 rate it a 4. Please rate each statement based solely on how positively  
23 [*negatively*] you feel about it, *while ignoring or setting aside for the*  
24 *moment any negative [positive] feelings you may have*. The first  
25 statement is . . . (1) The government should ensure that every citizen  
26 has adequate medical insurance. (2) The government should provide  
27 programs to help homeless people find a place to live. (3) The  
28 government should ensure that every child has access to a good  
29 education. (4) The government should provide programs that improve  
30 the standard of living of poor Americans. (5) The government should  
31 see to it that everyone who wants a job has one. (6) The government  
32 should provide child care programs to assist working parents. (7) The  
33 government should ensure that the retirement benefits that citizens have  
34 built up over the years are protected.  
35

36 **Economic Individualism**

37 [Which of the following statements is closer to your own opinion?]

38 (1) The government should see to it that every person has a job and a

1 good standard of living; or The government should just let each person  
2 get ahead on their own. Do you feel strongly or not so strongly about  
3 this? (2) We need a strong government to handle today's complex  
4 economic problems; or The free market can handle these problems  
5 without government being involved. Do you feel strongly or not so  
6 strongly about this? (*Answers were originally coded from 1 to 5, with*  
7 *those who offered a "mixed" response placed in the middle.*)  
8

### 9 **Egalitarianism**

10 [Which of the following statements is closer to your own opinion?]  
11 (1) We have gone too far in pushing equal rights in this country; or We  
12 should do more to make sure that everyone is treated equally. Do you  
13 feel strongly or not so strongly about this? (2) If people were treated  
14 more equally in this country, we would have many fewer problems; or  
15 This country would be better off if we worried less about how equal  
16 people are. Do you feel strongly or not so strongly about this? (*Answers*  
17 *were originally coded from 1 to 5, with those who offered a "mixed"*  
18 *response placed in the middle.*)  
19

### 20 **Importance of Core Values**

21 As you know, not everyone agrees on the different goals or values  
22 that our nation ought to pursue. I'm going to list three different goals and  
23 have you tell me how important each of them is to you personally. (1) The  
24 first goal is equality, by which we mean a narrowing of the gap in wealth  
25 and power between rich and poor. How important is equality to you—  
26 extremely important, important, only somewhat important, or not  
27 important at all? . . . (2) And the third goal is a free marketplace,  
28 by which we mean all citizens having a chance to get ahead on their  
29 own without the government getting involved. How important is a free  
30 marketplace to you—extremely important, important, only somewhat  
31 important, or not important at all? (Note: The second goal, not examined  
32 in this paper, had to do with "traditional values, by which we mean  
33 encouraging people to live their lives according to a higher moral code.")  
34

### 35 **Feelings about Welfare Beneficiaries**

36 [Asked as part of the same batteries of questions that were used to  
37 measure social welfare liberalism and ambivalence about government;  
38 see above for exact wording.] Positive and negative feelings toward (1)  
39 poor people and (2) blacks.

1 **Ideology**

2 We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. On  
3 a scale of one through seven, where “1” is very liberal and “7” is very  
4 conservative, where would you place yourself on this scale or haven’t  
5 you thought much about this?  
6

7 **Party Identification**

8 Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a  
9 Republican, a Democrat, an Independent, or what? (If Republican or  
10 Democrat) Would you call yourself a strong (Republican/Democrat) or  
11 a not very strong (Republican/Democrat)? (If Independent) Do you  
12 think of yourself as closer to the Republican Party or to the Democratic  
13 Party?  
14

15 **Race**

16 Is your race ± or ethnic identity white, African-American, Hispanic,  
17 or something else?  
18

19 **Income**

20 Again, I want to thank you for your cooperation on this completely  
21 confidential survey? Would you say your household’s approximate  
22 yearly income bracket is . . . (1) less than \$10,000; (2) between \$10,000  
23 and \$30,000; (3) between \$30,000 and \$50,000; (4) between \$50,000 and  
24 \$70,000; (5) \$70,000 or more?  
25

26 **Gender**

27 [Recorded by the interviewer without asking, unless it was necessary  
28 to do so.]  
29

30 **Notes**

31  
32 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 2006 Annual Meeting of the American  
33 Political Science Association, Philadelphia. We appreciate helpful comments by John Transue and  
34 *Politics and Policy’s* anonymous reviewers.

35 <sup>1</sup>Up to four callbacks were made to each working number in an effort to obtain a completed  
36 interview. Using the American Association for Public Opinion Research’s final disposition  
37 standards (AAPOR 2000); also see [http://www.aapor.org/uploads/Standard\\_Definitions\\_04\\_08\\_](http://www.aapor.org/uploads/Standard_Definitions_04_08_Final.pdf)  
38 [Final.pdf](http://www.aapor.org/uploads/Standard_Definitions_04_08_Final.pdf)), the response rate was 39.2 percent, yielding a total of 607 completed interviews.  
39 Additional information regarding the survey can be obtained from the Florida Voter polling

1 organization. We addressed the pervasive problem of missing data in analyses of survey research  
2 by using a multiple imputation process. Using this procedure, five replicate datasets were created  
3 based on the data, where the missing data in each replication are substituted with draws from the  
4 posterior distribution of the missing value conditional on observed values (Little and Rubin 1987;  
5 see also Horton and Lipsitz 2001). The analyses that follow are based on the mean results of the five  
6 replicate imputed datasets.

7 <sup>2</sup>A separate indicator of the sum of positive and inverted negative responses for each policy issue  
8 was also created for descriptive purposes in the following section.

9 <sup>3</sup>This is not to say that different question wording, or a listing that included more controversial  
10 government programs—such as food stamps or race-targeted spending (Jacoby 2005)—would  
11 produce the same results.

12 <sup>4</sup>The eigenvalue for this factor was 3.696, explaining 52.8 percent of the variance.

13 <sup>5</sup>Because the item regarding governmental waste and inefficiency may be unfamiliar to most  
14 scholars researching on political trust (and different from the 4-item ANES index utilized in  
15 Hetherington (2005), we also ran our analyses using just the “trust government” and “few big  
16 interests” questions. Results did not differ in any significant way from what is reported below.

17 <sup>6</sup>This battery (and its negative counterpart) also measured citizens’ feelings toward the Republican  
18 Party, the Democratic Party, poor people, blacks, and whites.

19 <sup>7</sup>Other core values may be important as well. For example, Feldman and Steenbergen (2001, 659)  
20 found that *humanitarianism*, defined as “the belief that people have responsibilities toward their  
21 fellow human beings and should come to the assistance of others in need” also is a significant  
22 predictor of support for social welfare.

23 <sup>8</sup>Although inter-item correlations ( $\tau\text{-}b = .16$  for individualism,  $.22$  for egalitarianism,  $p < .01$  in  
24 each instance) were not as high as we might have liked, they were sufficient to warrant our using  
25 the two indices in our analysis.

26 <sup>9</sup>Research points to the existence of value hierarchies (Jacoby 2002; Rokeach 1973; Schwartz  
27 1992). If social welfare attitudes are shaped, in part, by egalitarian and individualist values  
28 (Feldman 1988; Feldman and Steenbergen 2001; Feldman and Zaller 1992; Goren 2001; McCann  
29 1997), and if many place greater importance on one as opposed to the other, it is reasonable to  
30 expect that the latter will contribute to the structure of their attitudes concerning social welfare.

31 <sup>10</sup>Separate dummy variables were created for Democrat and Republican identification (0 = not  
32 Democrat and 1 = Democrat, 0 = not Republican and 1 = Republican). All independents and  
33 independent leaners were coded as 0.

34 <sup>11</sup>Race is a dummy variable coded 1 for black, 0 for nonblack. Because Latinos in the aggregate are  
35 more liberal, at least on certain issues, than whites (Alvarez and Bedolla 2003; DeSipio 1996;  
36 Uhlaner, Gray, and Garcia 2000; Welch and Sigelman 1993), we might normally expect their level  
37 of support for social welfare to be similar to that found among blacks and women. Unfortunately,  
38 this proposition cannot be tested because our survey did not distinguish among different groups of  
39 Latino citizens. We know, for example, that Cubans tend to be more conservative than other  
40 Latinos (especially Puerto Ricans, but also Mexicans; see de la Garza *et al.* (1992), and there is a  
41 large Cuban population in Florida. As a result, it is not surprising to learn that the Latinos in the  
42 Florida Voter survey do not, on average, differ significantly from whites in terms of the variables  
43 that are most critical to our analysis.

1 <sup>12</sup> Those who are ambivalent concerning state government in Florida are slightly *more* likely to say  
2 that the people who run our government can be trusted ( $\tau\text{-}b = .08, p < .05$ ), while those who  
3 express ambivalence concerning their local government are slightly *less* inclined to believe that  
4 government often does a better job than it is given credit for ( $\tau\text{-}b = -.07, p < .05$ ). All other  
5 correlations involving the trust and ambivalence indices, as well as their individual components,  
6 are statistically equivalent to zero.

7 <sup>13</sup> Others have also found weak or negligible relationships between measures of political trust and  
8 support for social welfare policies. See, for examples, Edlund (1999, 2006).

9 <sup>14</sup> Multicollinearity does not appear to a significant problem in the model shown in Table 4. Only  
10 three of the 91 bivariate associations among independent variables exceed  $\tau\text{-}b = .30$ . One of these  
11 was between the Republican and Democratic partisanship dummies ( $\tau\text{-}b = -.64$ ); the others were  
12 between the traditional measure of political trust and active trust ( $\tau\text{-}b = .32$ ), and between trust  
13 and Republican partisanship ( $\tau\text{-}b = .32$ ). Detailed results are available by request to the first-  
14 named author. The usual concern about multicollinearity is that the inflated standard errors mask  
15 statistical significance of key independent variables. As noted in Table 3, the bivariate relationships  
16 between our measures of trust and social welfare liberalism are trivial in magnitude, which suggests  
17 that there is no substantive relationship to mask.

18 <sup>15</sup> We also estimated three other models, each of which contained one of the component terms from  
19 the ambivalence index. Across the board, ambivalence is associated with greater opposition to  
20 social welfare programs ( $p < .05$  for both state and local,  $p < .10$  for federal).

21 <sup>16</sup> Liberals are those who score 1, 2, or 3 on the seven-point scale, while conservatives are those who  
22 score 5, 6, or 7.

23 <sup>17</sup> At the risk of overinterpretation, our first reaction to this finding is that the active trust/mistrust  
24 question evokes a longer-term perspective than traditional trust measures; this may have led some  
25 conservative respondents to focus on government in general rather than on the short-term  
26 advantage enjoyed by their preferred party in 2004.

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SNP Best-set Typesetter Ltd.	
Journal Code: POLP	Proofreader: Elsie
Article No: 147	Delivery date: 23 September 2008
Page Extent: 33	Copyeditor: Joan

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