

**STYLE OVER SUBSTANCE? THE EFFECT OF PERCEPTIONS OF THE ECONOMY
AND AFFECT TOWARD THE PRESIDENT ON TRUST IN GOVERNMENT**

by

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ABSTRACT

This study examines persons' trust in the federal government using data from the National Election Study for the presidential election years 1980 through 2000. I hypothesize that person's perceptions of the national economy's health and their affect toward the incumbent president are both positively correlated with their trust in the federal government. I also hypothesize that a persons' level of affect toward the president is a stronger predictor of their trust in the federal government than persons' perceptions of the national economy's health. All of these hypotheses are supported in my findings. I also present a serendipitous finding that relates to political party culture. This study finds significant differences between Democrats and Republicans in the trust they afford the government via affect toward the president, suggesting a difference in how self-identified Democrats and Republicans view the president's role in government.

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