

**THE POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF VOTERS' REACTIONS
TO A CORRUPTION SCANDAL**

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines voters' reactions to a corruption scandal that erupted just before the 2004 Canadian election. We use the 2004 Canadian Election Study, which included a series of questions tapping voters' views about the scandal. We show that: the scandal had a major impact on the vote; that partisan loyalties remained quite important though reactions to the scandal were only slightly coloured by partisan predispositions; one's prior views about politicians strongly affected how one perceived the scandal; information had both direct and indirect effects on opinions but that the direct effects were particularly striking; and an emotional reaction (anger) was not a necessary or sufficient condition motivating voters to punish the government.

From time to time corruption scandals emerge, even in well established democracies. Some scandals have had spectacular political consequences. The sequence of scandals that occurred in Italy in the early 1990s, for example, led to a complete reshuffling of the party system (Waters 1994; Donovan 1995). Perhaps more often the impacts of corruption scandals are more modest. Peters and Welch (1980) report that most House of Representatives incumbents who were accused or convicted of corruption were re-elected but that they suffered a loss of 6-11 points from their expected vote, the magnitude of the loss being related to the severity of the alleged wrongdoing.

This raises questions about how voters assess a scandal and how much weight they give to the scandal when deciding how to vote. It is fair to assume that not all voters react to a scandal the same way, that reactions hinge on the information that voters do and do not possess about the scandal, and the considerations that people bring to the issue, most especially their views about politics in general and about the specific individuals involved in the scandal (Zaller 1992). It is also fair to assume that some will absolutely want to punish the wrongdoers while others will pay more attention to other factors (Rundquist, Strom and Peters 1976).

One crucial issue pertains to the identification of the culprits. Typically there are specific individuals who committed some wrongdoing. But others are also usually implicated. Others may have known about the wrongdoing, or suspected something, yet did nothing to prevent or report it. If others did not know, the question arises: was it their responsibility to know. In short who is to be blamed, and who is not to be blamed?

Survey evidence of the political psychology of voters' reactions to corruption scandals is limited. We know that scandals matter, that candidates who are accused or convicted of corruption get fewer votes (Peters and Welch 1980), that the Watergate scandal culminated in the resignation of President Nixon and drained the Republican vote in the subsequent presidential election (Norpoth 1984; Frey and Schneider 1978). We also have survey evidence about the kinds of behaviour that are judged acceptable and unacceptable by the elite and the mass public (Welch and Peters 1977; Rundquist et al.

1977; Mancuso et al. 1998). Far less is known, however, about the cognitive, emotional, and normative underpinnings of voters' attitudes about a "big" scandal.

This paper examines voters' reactions to one scandal, the Canadian "sponsorship scandal" that erupted in February 2004, a few months before a general federal election, held in June. We look at voters' judgements about the seriousness of the scandal (and the amount of corruption it signalled), their propensity to believe that the Prime Minister was personally aware of the wrongdoing, their assessment of how the scandal had been dealt with, their emotional feelings about the incident, and the relative weight attached to the scandal in their vote choice. We examine the relationships among these perceptions and attitudes and we try to sort out, whether and how, voters' values, predispositions and information drove these reactions.

The sponsorship scandal

On February 10 2004, Sheila Fraser, Auditor General of Canada, presented her report on the sponsorship program. Jean Chrétien, the former Prime Minister of Canada (from 1993 to 2003) and leader of the Liberal Party, created this program immediately after the 1995 Quebec referendum on sovereignty which resulted in a very tight No victory (50.6% No, against 49.4% Yes). The outcome created a feeling of crisis and panic in Ottawa. One line of thinking was that many Quebeckers were willing to leave Canada because they were insufficiently informed about the benefits of federal programs, and so it was decided to increase the visibility of Canada and the federal government in the province. The sponsorship program was created, with a total budget of \$250 million over six years, to be used for such purposes as putting up large banners at the (Montreal) Grand Prix of Canada and billboards in the Montreal Olympic Stadium to make CANADA visible to all Quebeckers.

After allegations of irregularities, Prime Minister Chrétien called for a report to the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. The report was very critical (Fraser 2003). First, "rules for selecting communications agencies, managing contracts, and measuring and reporting results were broken or ignored". Second, these agencies had received lavish payments for trivial services, like a 12% commission to hand over a cheque from the Department of Public Works to a Crown Corporation. The report estimated that \$100 million out of the total \$250 million budget had been devoted to fees and commissions to these agencies. Furthermore, the Auditor General suspected that "arrangements, involving multiple transactions with multiple companies, artificial invoices and contracts, or no written contracts at all, have been designed to pay commissions to communications agencies while hiding the source of funding and the true substance of the transactions". The sponsorship program became the "sponsorship scandal".

Two months before the report became public, Paul Martin replaced Jean Chrétien as Prime Minister of Canada. Martin had been Minister of Finance from 1993 to 2002, and he was thus the most powerful minister (and a minister from the province of Quebec) at the time of the sponsorship program. Martin was also a long time rival of Jean Chrétien. In 1990, the two men had run for the leadership of the Liberal Party of Canada. After Chrétien became Prime Minister, they maintained an uneasy working relationship, but by 2000 rumours circulated that Martin was plotting to replace Chrétien as the leader of the Liberal Party. The clash between the two ended with a cabinet reshuffle in 2002, in

which Martin was ousted from the cabinet. In December 2003, Chrétien stepped down as Prime Minister of Canada and was replaced by Martin, after Martin was elected as leader of the Liberal Party. The very first decision Martin made, announced the very day his new cabinet was sworn in, was to cancel the sponsorship program.

For Jean Chrétien, the sponsorship program was a crucial (and successful) component of the post-referendum federalist strategy. Later, testifying before the Gomery Commission, Chrétien claimed that this “national unity strategy was necessary and right”. He acknowledged that some wrongdoing might have taken place, in “bad faith for personal gain”, but he argued that if it were so there was a simple solution: those who were responsible “should be identified and punished, subject, of course, to due process of law” (Laporte 2005)

Martin’s reaction was quite different. From the start, he declared the scandal a terrible mess. “This is unacceptable. It is intolerable, and we are taking decisive action”, he said immediately after the report was released (Elliott 2004).

Martin moved on three fronts. First, he fired Alfonso Gagliano, who was then Canadian ambassador in Denmark and the Chrétien appointee who had been the (Public Works) Minister in charge of the program until 2002. Second, he asked the Public Accounts Committee to scrutinize the management of the sponsorship program. Third, he created the Commission of Inquiry into the Sponsorship Program and Advertising Activities, known by the name of the Commissioner, Mr. Justice John H. Gomery, as the Gomery Commission. Gomery’s mandate was “to investigate and report on questions raised, directly or indirectly, by Chapters 3 and 4 of the November 2003 Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons with regard to the sponsorship program and advertising activities of the Government of Canada” and “to make any recommendations that he considers advisable...to prevent mismanagement of sponsorship programs or advertising activities in the future”.

Paul Martin’s reaction was intriguing from a number of vantage points. First, he has consistently maintained that he knew nothing about any embezzlement. So he pleaded ignorance and thus innocence.¹ Second, he never downplayed the issue. He never questioned that this was indeed a “scandal,” and he expressed anger about it. Third, he made the point that he wanted the whole truth to come out and this is why he created the Gomery Commission, which had full powers to thoroughly investigate the affair. The Commission had access to every document it deemed relevant, which included tons of paper and email exchanges, as well as cabinet discussions. The Commission also had the latitude to call all the witnesses it wanted, including Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien.²

This strategy raises many questions. Like many politicians, Martin claimed not to have been aware of any questionable use of government monies. Was such a claim credible? After all, Martin was the Minister of Finance and from Quebec, where all the sponsorship money was being spent. How could he not have known? Martin claimed that he had no responsibility for this program and that it was Jean Chrétien who kept him out of the national unity issue. Would people believe him? And if he did not know, did he suspect, or hear rumours, of wrongdoing? Should he have known? Was he negligent? McGraw (1991), in particular, has shown that pleas of ignorance are judged to be poor excuses. If McGraw is right, Martin’s strategy was bound to fail.

Martin also claimed to have done everything that had to be done when he became aware of the scandal. He abolished the program, he fired Alfonso Gagliano, he invited the

Public Accounts Committee to look into the management of the program, and he created the Gomery Commission to fully investigate the affair. But were those actions genuine attempts to root out the problem or were they merely symbolic gestures? Was Martin truly committed to getting out the whole truth or was he simply buying time in the run-up to the 2004 election? When the 2004 election took place, the Gomery Commission had not started its public hearings, and so it was impossible to know what its findings would be. What was known was that the affair had tarnished the reputation of the Liberal party and government and that support for the Liberal party had dwindled. Perhaps the Prime minister was opportunistically hoping that voters would not punish the Liberals at the polls in 2004 because of the actions he had taken to deal with the scandal and that voters would forget about the affair by the next federal election.

When the 2004 election was called, Canadians (at least the great majority of them) knew that there was a scandal. The scandal was fresh in their minds since it had erupted a few months before the election and it had been widely covered by the media. Voters had to make up their minds about it. Was this a “small” or a “huge” scandal? Who was involved? Was it only a few individuals? Only the Chrétien camp? All the Quebec Liberals including Martin? Or was it the whole Liberal party? Who did and did not know about it? How well had Martin handled the scandal? How confident could voters be that Martin would clean up the mess and prevent such a scandal from happening again? And, finally, how much weight should the sponsorship scandal carry in the vote decision?

The Liberals obtained 37% of the vote, four points less than in the previous election. As a result, they lost their majority status and had to form a minority government. Given the impact of scandals on support for governing parties elsewhere, it is tempting to attribute this drop in popularity to the scandal. But of course many other factors were at play, perhaps the most obvious being that there were three new party leaders³ and that on the right the Progressive Conservatives and the Alliance had merged to form the new Conservative party.

The study and the analytical model

This analysis uses data from the 2004 Canadian Election Study (CES).⁴ The 2004 CES comprises a telephone campaign rolling cross-section survey of 4,323 respondents (response rate of 53%) interviewed between May 23 (the day the election was called) and June 26 (the day before the election), a telephone post-election re-interview of 3,138 respondents, and a mailback questionnaire (filled out by 1,674 people).

Survey questions about the scandal were included in the campaign survey. The first question tapped respondents’ perceptions of the degree of corruption under the Chrétien government. This is an indicator of the perceived magnitude of the sponsorship scandal. Respondents were asked whether they thought that there was a lot of corruption, some, a little, or none under Jean Chrétien (see the Appendix for question wordings).⁵ More than one third (35%) said “a lot”, an indication that the sponsorship scandal was “huge”, and another 44% chose “some”. Only a quarter of Canadians thought that there was little corruption.

Then there were questions that dealt specifically with the scandal and Paul Martin’s role in it. The first asked whether people believed that he knew about the scandal. An overwhelming majority (78%) believed so, which seems to confirm

McGraw's (1991) verdict that pleas of ignorance do not work very well. Only 10% said that they believed Martin was not aware, and another 12% had no opinion. Worse yet, the majority (69%) of those who thought Martin did not know about the scandal added that he *should* have known.

Other questions probed voters' evaluations of Martin's handling of the issue. Martin's gamble was to convince Canadians that he had done everything that ought to be done; he had abolished the program, he had fired Alfonso Gagliano, and he had created a commission that would fully investigate the affair. But could Martin convince people who were suspicious of politicians more generally and who believed that he was aware of the scandal before he became Prime Minister? As it turns out, Martin was not very successful. Only 28% said that he had done a good job. Martin did not completely fail, however; only 22% had reached the conclusion that he had done a very bad job (more precisely "not a good job at all"). Paul Martin's goal was to persuade voters not only that he had handled the scandal appropriately but also that they could trust him to prevent such a mess from occurring again. Consequently, respondents were asked how confident they were that "Paul Martin will prevent this type of scandal from happening again". Reactions were somewhat less negative in this case. As many as 41% said that they were confident, and only 21% indicated that they were not confident at all.

The questionnaire included an item designed to ascertain voters' overall gut reactions to the scandal. How angry did respondents feel about the affair?⁶ All in all, almost 40% of the respondents said that they were very angry, an indication that they were emotionally concerned with the scandal. At the other end, 23% were not really angry (not angry at all, not very angry, or did not know).⁷

We assume that reactions to the scandal followed the kind of causal sequence illustrated in Figure 1. First, people formed a view about how serious the scandal was, that is, how much corruption there had been under the Chrétien government which was responsible for the sponsorship program. Then they focused on Paul Martin's implication in the scandal. Next they considered how he had dealt with the issue when he became Prime Minister and what he would do in the future. These perceptions and evaluations, in turn, influenced people's emotional responses, that is, whether or not they were angry about the scandal. Finally, these reactions, we speculate, formed the basis of the decision to punish, or not to punish, the Liberals at the ballot box.

The model sketched in Figure 1 raises many questions. One concerns the role of blame-allocation. Paul Martin gambled that it was possible to avoid taking blame for the scandal while not downplaying what had happened.⁸ This assumes that judgments about the role of Paul Martin in the affair could be decoupled, at least partially, from evaluations of the magnitude of the scandal. In effect, people could believe that this was a huge scandal, but that Paul Martin should not be blamed. A second question concerns the credibility of Paul Martin's plea of ignorance. Martin's claim that he did not know about the scandal before he became Prime Minister was received with wide scepticism by voters. How damaging was the fact that most voters thought he was aware of the wrongdoing? A third question concerns the role of emotions in a scandal. We assume that voters' gut reactions, as measured here by our "angry" question, drove voters' response to the scandal, namely, the decision to punish or not to punish the Liberals. For the scandal to be a decisive factor in the vote decision, we presume, a voter needed to be emotionally engaged.⁹

Figure 1 relates various dimensions of voters' reactions to each other. But these reactions may well depend on people's prior dispositions. We examine the effects of two such predispositions. First, we look at party attachments. According to the Michigan school (Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes 1960; Miller and Shanks 1996) partisan loyalties should strongly colour how one viewed the scandal. The expectation is that Liberal partisans would be more prone to think that this is a minor scandal and that Paul Martin adequately handled the affair while Conservative, NDP, and Bloc identifiers would believe exactly the opposite. Still, what needs to be determined is the magnitude of these effects. We also need to see if partisans identifying with the opposition parties responded similarly. More specifically, the scandal occurred in Quebec and it was associated with a "national unity" program, and so we could predict that Bloc partisans would react particularly negatively.

A second predisposition is one's general level of political cynicism. We surmise that those who distrust politicians in general would be more prone to jump to the conclusion that this must be a huge scandal and that they should be less willing to give Paul Martin the benefit of the doubt. At the same time, however, we hypothesize that the most cynical tend to become *blasé* about politicians and that as a consequence they did not become particularly angry about the scandal.¹⁰

Reactions to the scandal will not depend solely on predispositions. As Zaller (1992) has persuasively demonstrated, the least politically aware often do not receive messages. The report of the Auditor General, and her strong indictment of the sponsorship program, made the headlines. The scandal was widely covered by the media. Yet this was a new issue, and it is fair to assume that those who do not follow politics on a regular basis may have only vaguely heard about the affair. It is reasonable to suppose that the least politically attentive would be less inclined to have formed strong views on the issue, and thus fewer of them would have come to the conclusion that this was a huge scandal.

According to Zaller, the impact of political awareness should be mostly interactive: opinions on the scandal should be more strongly correlated to predispositions (party identification and cynicism) among the most attentive segment of the electorate, who are more able to make the connection between the scandal and their basic values and predispositions.

Our analysis finally includes the most relevant socio-demographic characteristics; this allows us to determine whether subgroups of the electorate reacted to the scandal in different ways. We pay particular attention to the regional dimension. The scandal occurred in Quebec and we expect reactions to be stronger in that province. At first sight, it seems that the scandal did have a greater impact in Quebec: the Liberals lost 10 points in the province (from 44% to 34%), but only 2 points outside Quebec (from 40% to 38%). We check whether that intuition is valid. At the same time, the scandal might have confirmed Westerners' suspicions that the federal government was willing to buy votes in Quebec with federal government money.

Assessing the magnitude of corruption

The place to begin is with Canadians' judgments about the amount of corruption under the Chrétien government. As we have seen, only a quarter of our sample were

inclined to dismiss this as a minor problem, but only one third were willing to argue that there was a lot of corruption. At the time of the election (and before the public hearings of the Gomery Commission), the modal position was to think that there was something to be concerned with, though perhaps not a huge mess.¹¹

Table 1 relates views about the amount of corruption to the level of political awareness, party identification, cynicism, and socio-demographic characteristics. The data show that political information mattered a lot. Everything else being equal, the probability of believing that there was a lot of corruption under Jean Chrétien increased from 16% among the least aware to 61% among the most aware. The implication is that the government benefited immensely from citizens' lack of attention. According to our simulations, 61% would have thought that there was a lot of corruption, instead of 37%, if everyone had been very attentive to politics.¹²

Assessments of corruption were also filtered through partisan attachments: Liberal identifiers were prone to see less corruption, while Conservative and Bloc identifiers saw more. That said, the impact of party identification was less than expected. Interestingly, NDP identifiers were no more likely to infer corruption than non partisans. And the differences between partisans and non partisans were not overwhelming. The mean probability of believing that there was a lot of corruption was 29% among Liberal identifiers, 35% among those without party attachment, 46% among Bloc identifiers, and 55% among Conservative identifiers.

The degree of corruption imputed to the Chrétien government also depended on prior dispositions about politicians in general. The most cynical were more inclined to think that there was a great deal of corruption. The probability of inferring that there was a lot of corruption increased from 34% when one was at 0 (on the -1 to +1 scale) to 62% when was at +1.

According to Zaller (1992) the impact of such predispositions as party identification and cynicism should vary with the level of political awareness. We tested for potential interactions between party identification and information and cynicism and information, and the results (reported in the second column of Table 1) mostly support Zaller's hypothesis: the coefficients of the interaction variables all have the correct sign, and they are jointly statistically significant. The most sophisticated perceived the amount of corruption in a fashion that was broadly consistent with their partisan attachments and degree of cynicism. This was much less the case among the least attentive to politics.

Regional differences turned out to be relatively modest. Contrary to expectations, Quebeckers did not react differently from Ontarians (the reference category). Finally, Westerners perceived more corruption (even controlling for party attachments).¹³

Among socio-demographic characteristics, age emerges as the most important variable. Everything else being equal, the propensity to believe that there was a lot of corruption under Jean Chrétien was 29% among those under 35, compared to 40% among those over 35.¹⁴ Younger Canadians were more willing to give the Chrétien government the benefit of the doubt, perhaps because they have not been fully socialized to the dominant view that politics is corrupt.

Finally, Catholics and members of visible minorities, the two key groups that traditionally support the Liberal party (Blais 2005), were prone to infer slightly less corruption.

The most striking finding here is the strong effect of political awareness. Attentiveness to politics was the principal factor that drove impressions about the magnitude of corruption. Attentiveness also conditioned the influence of party identification and cynicism. It was only among the best informed that these predispositions had a substantial effect.

To implicate Paul Martin or not?

An overwhelming majority of Canadians believed that Paul Martin knew about the scandal before he became Prime Minister. Why?

We expect the same predispositions, party identification and cynicism, to affect opinions on this question but we also expect these predispositions to play partly indirectly, through perceptions of corruption. The higher the perceived amount of corruption, the more difficult it must be to think that Paul Martin was completely unaware of what was going on. Beliefs about Paul Martin's implication, we speculate, were driven first and foremost by views about the magnitude of the scandal and the amount of corruption it signalled.

Table 2 presents the findings. They confirm that opinions were strongly influenced by the perceived amount of corruption. All else equal, the propensity to implicate Paul Martin decreased from 84% when one thought that there was a lot of corruption under Jean Chrétien to 59% when one was of the opinion that there was no corruption.

Predispositions have a powerful direct effect on the propensity to implicate Paul Martin. Cynicism has a large impact, even after controlling for views about the amount of corruption. The probability of assuming that Martin was aware of the scandal increased by 16 points when one was very cynical (compared to someone who was at 0 on the -1 to +1 scale). Likewise partisan attachments made a big difference. All else equal, the probability of not believing that Martin was aware was 70% among Liberal partisans, 78% among those with no party identification, 87%, 89% and 91% among Conservative, Bloc and NDP identifiers. Direct partisan differences are as important here as they were for perceptions of corruption. Furthermore, NDP partisans, who were not particularly cynical when it came to ascertaining the magnitude of corruption, were the most likely to think that Martin must have known.

Cynicism and party identification thus had a major influence on people's willingness to believe that Martin knew about the scandal, even after taking into account one's assessment of the seriousness of the problem. It would seem that predispositions matter even more when it comes to making a judgment about the implication of a political actor.

As for awareness, its direct effect is quite small. But as with the case of perceptions of corruption, predispositions were more strongly related to opinions about whether Martin was aware of the scandal among the most attentive segment of the public. Column 2 of Table 2 shows that all the interactive variables (between cynicism or party identification and awareness) have the correct sign and they are jointly significant. Once again, Zaller's (1992) model, according to which opinion is formed through the combination of predispositions and awareness, is vindicated.

Some intriguing results emerge with respect to socio-demographic characteristics. Quebeckers were particularly suspicious about Martin's implication. And Catholics and visible minorities, two key groups that strongly support the Liberals, were more likely to believe that Martin knew about the scandal. These two groups were more willing to assume that there was not a lot of corruption, but they were less prone to accept the proposition that Martin was unaware of what was going on.¹⁵

Paul Martin convinced few Canadians that he did not know that there was some wrongdoing in the sponsorship scandal. He got the benefit of the doubt only among the few who thought that there was no scandal to start with, or who did not distrust politicians in general. The question that arises is whether it was possible to support a politician who, they thought, was implicated in the scandal.

To have confidence in Martin or not?

Few Canadians were willing to believe that Paul Martin knew nothing about the scandal. But Martin did abolish the program and he did set up a powerful and independent commission to fully investigate the affair. Could he persuade voters that he had adequately handled the "mess" and that he was genuinely intent on getting rid of corruption in government? Could he be credible when most people thought he was aware of the affair? How strongly were evaluations of Paul Martin's handling of the issue affected by perceptions that he was aware of the wrongdoing? And how strongly correlated were retrospective evaluations of his actions and confidence (or lack of) about his future performance?

This part of the analysis considers retrospective evaluations of Paul Martin's handling of the issue and prospective confidence in his capacity to end corruption. These two judgements are strongly correlated ($r=.55$). Still, 28% of those who said that Martin had done a poor job of dealing with the scandal were at least somewhat confident that he would prevent this type of mess from happening again.

The fact that judgments about the future were somewhat more positive than those about the past is surprising.¹⁶ We would have expected the reverse. After all, the report of the Auditor General forced Martin to deal with the scandal but a cynical observer might doubt that he would be as "aggressive" on similar matters in the future. Responses to the two questions suggest that a number of people were ambivalent in their evaluations of Paul Martin and that this ambivalence sometimes led to different views about what he had done in the past and what he would do in the future.

These two questions are considered separately in our analyses, although we are mindful that they are relatively strongly correlated. We expect evaluations of Martin to be affected first and foremost by perceptions of corruption under Chrétien and beliefs about Martin's own knowledge of the affair, and more by the latter than the former because Martin could shift the blame to Chrétien for any wrongdoing that took place when Chrétien was Prime Minister. As for predispositions, they should have a minor direct effect, their main influence being shaped by prior opinions about the amount of corruption and Martin's implication. Finally, we predict the level of awareness not to matter much except in one case. The most sophisticated were more likely to know that Paul Martin had said that he knew nothing. Those among them who thought that Paul Martin was aware had to face the fact that their opinion had been contradicted by Martin,

the implication being that Martin had lied. Consequently, evaluations of Paul Martin should be more strongly tied to views about Martin's implication among the most politically aware.

Table 3 presents the main findings. As expected, judgments of Paul Martin were strongly influenced by perceptions of the amount of corruption and opinions about Martin's implication. For instance, everything else being equal, the probability of saying that Martin had done a bad job in dealing with the scandal increased by 16 points when one thought that he was aware at the time. Furthermore, as expected, views about Martin's personal awareness mattered more (though not a lot more) than views about the global amount of corruption.¹⁷

We predicted that the impact of party identification and political cynicism would be mostly felt through prior opinions about the magnitude of the scandal and Martin's implication, and that the direct effect on overall evaluations (once these opinions were controlled for) would be minor. That prediction is disconfirmed. Retrospective and prospective judgments are strongly affected by partisan attachments and cynicism, even when prior opinions are taken into account. The propensity to conclude that Martin did a bad job is 12 points lower among Liberal identifiers and about 10 points higher among Conservative, NDP and Bloc identifiers (than among non-identifiers). The differences are larger in the case of judgments about Martin's capacity to get rid of corruption in the future.¹⁸ The effect of cynicism is even bigger. The probability of a "bad job" response rises by 29 points among the most cynical (compared to those at the neutral point on the -1 to +1 scale). Cynicism, it seems, played into judgments at every stage of the opinion formation process. Voters' deep cynicism constituted an insurmountable hurdle for Paul Martin.

Finally, and mostly in line with our expectations, there was little difference in the overall evaluations of the most and least politically aware segments of the electorate. This is, of course, once views about corruption and Martin's awareness are taken into account. The least informed were much less prone to perceive corruption, and this made them less harsh in their judgments. But the least and the most informed made similar judgments when and if they had similar perceptions. We predicted that views about Martin's implication would have a greater impact among the better informed (who were more likely to know that Martin denied being aware) but no such interaction effect emerges.¹⁹

Judgments about Paul Martin's handling of the scandal stemmed from a combination of considerations. Perceptions of the seriousness of the "mess" and of Martin's implication clearly mattered, as did partisan predispositions and one's prior disposition to distrust politicians. Among all these factors, the most powerful appears to have been the latter, the general level of political cynicism. Because cynicism is so strong, it becomes extremely difficult for a politician to convince voters that he has done everything that should be done to get all the facts out, to punish the culprits, and to eradicate corruption in government. Martin failed to convince Canadians on each of these fronts. He may have succeeded, however, in raising some doubts in their mind.

Enough to get angry or not?

A substantial body of research suggests that in situations like this one, emotions are crucial. Because evaluation is basically an affect, emotions are deeply implicated in

political judgments. Consequently, emotional reactions shape how people respond to political stimuli (Marcus, 2000). This line of reasoning leads us to hypothesize that voters will feel compelled to punish the culprits in a corruption scandal only if they are outraged by it.

Almost 40% of our respondents said that the scandal made them very angry. What produced this emotional response? One possibility is that perceptions of the amount of corruption might be the most powerful source of anger. After all, why be furious if one believes that there was little or no corruption? But opinions about Martin's implication should also play a role. At the time he was in cabinet Martin did nothing to stop the wrong-doing, and he should have if he knew about it. Evaluations of Martin's handling of the issue after he became Prime Minister and confidence about what he would do in the future should count little. Voters should be angry first and foremost about the scandal itself.

We expect predispositions to have little direct emotional impact. These predispositions, as we have seen, had a substantial effect on how people viewed the scandal and Martin's role in it, and these views should in turn shape emotional responses to the scandal. In our proposed model, the impact of predispositions should be almost entirely mediated by these views. For instance, a Conservative identifier should not be angrier than a non-partisan, if and when the two had similar perceptions of the issue.

We also predict awareness may not matter much. The better informed, as shown above, tended to perceive more corruption and this should make them more angry. But there is no reason to believe that the better informed would be more, or less, angry, once mediating views are taken into account.

Table 4 presents the findings.²⁰ As expected, the most powerful predictor of anger is perception of corruption. The probability of being very angry increased by 35 points when one thought that there was a lot of corruption (rather than none) under Jean Chrétien. Surprisingly, evaluations of Martin's actions since becoming Prime Minister had a greater emotional impact than did views about whether he was aware of the scandal when he was Minister of Finance. Most Canadians thought that Martin was probably aware of the scandal and the fact that he did nothing at the time made them more critical of his performance after he became Prime Minister. But his "sin", as such, was not sufficiently serious to provoke outrage. Finally, it is intriguing to find that it is the negative retrospective judgment about Martin's handling of the issue that triggers anger, not lack of confidence about what he would do in the future. Anger is driven by retrospection, not by anticipation.

Anger hinged on perceptions about what had, and had not, been done in this affair but predispositions mattered as well. Cynicism, as we have seen, had a huge impact on how people viewed the scandal but it also had a smaller direct effect on how they reacted to it emotionally. Even after controlling for their perceptions, the most cynical came out as more angry. This contradicts our expectation that the most cynical might have become *blasé*. Party identification had a smaller direct effect. For instance, the propensity to be very angry was only 10 points higher among Conservative identifiers than among non-partisans.

Our prediction was that awareness would not be directly linked to emotional responses. That prediction is not borne out by the data. Political sophistication had both a direct and an indirect impact on anger. The better informed were more prone to think that

there was a lot of corruption and this made them angry. But, even controlling for these perceptions, the most aware were more outraged. When views about the scandal were excluded from the model, the probability of being very angry increases by 34 percentage points when one is very informed (compared to the most uninformed); that gap is reduced, to only 15 points, when opinions on the scandal are considered, but the difference remains substantial. The better informed, perhaps, care more about politics and they get more frustrated (than the less informed, who care less) when they see corruption.

We also observe that younger voters were less outraged about the scandal. Everything else being equal, the probability of getting very angry was 10 points higher among those over 35. The initial difference is larger. The percentage who were very angry was almost twice as high among older voters than among the younger (41% versus 23%). Much of that difference is explained by the fact that young people are less informed but there is more. Younger voters are less engaged in the political process, they have lower expectations and concerns, and so they are less prone to react emotionally.

We note, finally, the absence of regional differences. Quebeckers, in particular, did not express greater anger over the scandal, contrary to what the outcome of the election seems to suggest. Canadians from all regions appear to have reacted in similar ways.

The scandal did provoke strong negative feelings. These feelings were produced first and foremost by perceptions of widespread corruption. Citizens can live with a little corruption, but they get furious when they see a lot of it. At the same time, to become incensed about a scandal requires engagement in politics, and this is why younger and less aware voters were much less enraged. Finally, whether one thought that Paul Martin was aware of the wrongdoing did not make much difference. Beliefs that Martin was aware did affect evaluations of his performance, but they failed to produce anger.

The impact on vote choice

Ultimately, voters had to decide whether the Liberals deserved to be thrown out of power or whether they should be supported despite the scandal. We assume that partisan attachments mattered a lot, that most Liberal identifiers would stick with their party while most Conservative, NDP and Bloc partisans would find it natural to vote against the Liberal party.

But the effects of various reactions to the scandal need to be unpacked. Was the vote very much an emotional response? Did voters need to be enraged by the scandal to punish the Liberals at the polls? How crucial were judgments about Paul Martin's handling of the issue? Did voters distinguish between what he did (or did not do) before and after he became Prime Minister? Or was the vote decision simply a summary evaluation of the magnitude of corruption under the previous government?

To address these questions, we relate the decision to vote Liberal or not sequentially to the perceptions and opinions that were tapped in the survey, starting with the most distant variable, perception of the amount of corruption, and ending with the most proximate, the feeling of anger. Information, party identification, cynicism, and socio-demographic characteristics are always controlled.

Table 5 presents the results. Perhaps the most striking result is that feeling of anger as such did not have any independent effect on vote choice.²¹ Perceptions of

corruption, opinions about Martin's awareness, evaluations of his handling of the affair and confidence that he would clean things up all seem to matter, but whether one was incensed or not by the scandal did not appear to make a real difference at the polls. This finding challenges conventional wisdom, namely, that the public reaction to a scandal is essentially emotional.²²

When it comes to the views that did influence the vote, opinions about what Paul Martin had done after becoming Prime Minister, and, what he would do in the future, counted slightly more than perceptions about what had taken place under Jean Chrétien.²³ These findings are consistent with the view that voters pay more attention to the most recent events and decisions. Moreover, the effects of BAD JOB and NO CONFIDENT are of similar magnitude, which suggests that prospective and retrospective judgments were equally important.²⁴

Table 5 also shows that partisan loyalties had a powerful impact on vote choice, an impact that is largely independent of the influence of reactions to the scandal. We have noted that party identification influenced perceptions of the scandal. The results in Table 5 indicate that the direct effect on the vote was much bigger than the indirect effect via opinions. Notice that the party identification coefficients are only slightly reduced when views about the scandal are taken into account.

The same pattern applies to regional variations. Voters from the West were much less prone to vote Liberal but this had little to do with the scandal; the "west" coefficient is basically the same before and after the inclusion of the scandal variables. The same pattern holds for Quebec, the site of the program and the ensuing scandal. There is no evidence that Quebecers were more upset by the affair.

Table 5 confirms that, as usual, Canadians of non-European origin were more supportive of the Liberals (see Blais 2005). But again, the evidence presented here indicates that they did not view the scandal more or less negatively, and so the Liberals maintained most of their vote in that key group.²⁵

One new aspect of the 2004 election was that younger voters were less inclined to vote Liberal. Our data show that this was *not* principally because of the scandal. In fact, younger citizens were somewhere less critical and less outraged by the scandal. The Liberals lost ground among the youth mostly because of the new appeal of the NDP, linked to attitudes on social issues (see Gidengil, Blais, Everitt, Fournier and Nevitte 2005).

How much impact did the scandal have on the outcome of the election? We estimated the mean predicted probability of voting Liberal according to our complete model (last column of Table 5), which incorporates reactions to the scandal, and under a scenario under which views about the scandal are assumed to have no effect. The coefficients of the "scandal" variables are all set to 0 (and everything else is held constant).²⁶ Our simulations suggest that the Liberals suffered a net loss of 7 points because of the scandal.

These same simulations (and the results presented above) suggest that the scandal had the same impact inside and outside Quebec. Outside Quebec, Liberal support declined by only two points between 2000 and 2004. The Liberals did relatively well, according to the data, not because they were not hurt by the scandal but because they gained on other issues, gains that almost offset the losses associated with the scandal.²⁷

There were no similar gains for the Liberals in Quebec, and so the net total decline in support was steeper in that province.

The impact of the scandal was not uniform across all groups. The effect was considerably larger among those who tend to be more cynical to start with. According to our simulations, the Liberals lost 12 points in the most cynical segment of the electorate, and only 5 points among the less cynical. The implication is that the most cynical are more sensitive to allegations of corruption, and so they are more willing to “throw the rascals out”.

We also checked whether the net effect was larger among the most politically aware but there is no overall difference. We do note, however, that vote choice was more strongly affected by perceptions of corruption among the most sophisticated and by retrospective evaluations of Martin’s handling of the issue among the less aware. Finally, younger voters paid less attention to the scandal and, as a consequence, the issue had a smaller effect on their vote decision. According to our estimates, the Liberals lost only 4 points among those under 35.

The sponsorship scandal had a major effect on Canadians’ vote in the 2004 federal election. Without it, the Liberals would have formed yet another majority government. The impact was no larger in Quebec but it was bigger among the most cynical and smaller among younger voters. The impact of the scandal on vote choice, it seems, was driven by a combination of perceptions; no one dominant factor shaped vote choice. There is no support for the view that reactions were mostly emotional, that only those who were very angry were motivated enough to punish the Liberals.

Conclusion

It seems that the sponsorship scandal cost the Liberals about 7 points in the 2004 election and it cost the government its majority in the House of Commons. The impact is of the same magnitude as the one that has been reported for scandals in the House of Representatives (Peters and Welch 1980). This is a very substantial effect. The scandal trumped all other short-term factors in 2004, as major scandals almost always do.

The scandal did not trump all other factors. Partisan loyalties remained quite important. Interestingly, the effect of party identification was mostly direct. As expected, Liberal partisans were more sanguine in their views about the scandal and those who identify with the Conservatives, the NDP or the Bloc were more negative. But the differences were muted. Liberal partisans did not deny the existence of a scandal, they did not like what they saw, but they mostly stayed with their party despite the “mess”. These results are inconsistent with the view that “the causal role of party identification as an antecedent to the vote is largely indirect through its influence on policy preferences and appraisals of presidential performance and candidate traits” (Miller and Shanks 1996, 147; see also Shanks and Miller 1990). It appears that views about scandals are not highly coloured by partisan predispositions, perhaps because they are “exceptional” events to which people react on the basis of other predispositions.

The most fundamental predisposition seems to be one’s general view about politics and politicians. On this point, we have some intriguing results. One the one hand, the overall level of political cynicism does not appear to have risen after the scandal.²⁸ On the other hand, one’s prior views about politicians strongly affected how one

perceived the scandal. The effect was pervasive, as the most cynical reacted more harshly in nearly every way. Evaluations of Paul Martin's handling of the affair, in particular, were much more negative among the most cynical, even after their perceptions of the amount of corruption and opinions about Martin's implication are taken into account. These results indicate that given the widespread level of cynicism it is very difficult for a politician who is at the apex of power to convince voters that he/she was in no way involved in a scandal.

Our findings also support the view that reactions to a scandal depend to a great extent on one's degree of attentiveness to politics. This point has been made forcefully by Zaller (1992) and his model is largely confirmed by our data; opinions are more strongly related to predispositions among the most sophisticated.

But it is perhaps the direct impact of information that is most striking in the sponsorship scandal. We tend to assume that information about major scandals, which are intensively covered by the media, reaches everyone. Our study invites us to reconsider that assumption. The least attentive were much more likely to believe that there was little corruption, most probably because they had hardly heard about the affair. This suggests that the politicians' most common strategy when directly or indirectly involved in a scandal, which is to duck the issue in the hope that it will disappear from the radar screen, is not a bad one, from their own perspective. The less people hear about a scandal, the smaller the damage.

Finally, the data do not support the view that reactions to the scandal are mostly affective, that a scandal has a notable impact on the vote only if people are enraged. Many Canadians did react emotionally; as many as 40% said they were angry. But the data seem to indicate anger was not a necessary or sufficient condition motivating voters to punish the Liberals. That decision was the product of a combination of perceptions and opinions.

Table 1: Perceptions of Corruption Under Chrétien

	Model 1	Model 2
Information	1.43 (.11)**	1.23 (.15)**
PID Liberal	-.21 (.07)**	-.05 (.15)
PID Conservative	.56 (.08)**	.04 (.22)
PID NDP	-.10 (.11)	-.24 (.33)
PID Bloc	.31 (.15)*	-.68 (.30)*
Cynicism	.86 (.08)**	.64 (.17)**
Info X PID Liberal	—	-.24 (.25)
Info X PID Conservative	—	.94 (.36)**
Info X PID NDP	—	.28 (.51)
Info X PID Bloc	—	2.31 (.62)**
Info X Cynicism	—	.42 (.30)
Under 35 years old	-.34 (.06)**	-.37 (.06)**
Atlantic	.16 (.10)	.16 (.10)
West	.23 (.06)**	.23 (.06)**
Québec	-.05 (.08)	-.06 (.08)
Catholic	-.14 (.06)*	-.15 (.06)**
Visible minority	-.29 (.09)**	-.30 (.09)**
Female	-.08 (.05)	-.07 (.05)
Dropout	-.00 (.08)	-.00 (.08)
University	.03 (.06)	.03 (.06)
_cut1	-1.68 (.12)	-1.80 (.13)
_cut2	-.41 (.10)	-.52 (.11)
_cut3	-.27 (.10)	-.37 (.11)
_cut4	1.12 (.10)	1.02 (.11)
N	2576	2576
Pseudo R ²	.11	.12

*: significant $\alpha \leq .05$; **: significant $\alpha \leq .01$

Note: Cell entries are ordered probit coefficients and standard errors are in parentheses.

Table 2: Perceptions of Paul Martin's Awareness

	Model 1	Model 2
Corruption	.84 (.13)**	.80 (.13)**
Information	.31 (.16)*	.13 (.19)
PID Liberal	-.25 (.09)**	-.17 (.21)
PID Conservative	.43 (.12)**	-.10 (.33)
PID NDP	.61 (.16)**	.16 (.36)
PID Bloc	.50 (.23)*	-.37 (.46)
Cynicism	.79 (.11)**	.45 (.20)*
Info X PID Liberal	—	-.10 (.35)
Info X PID Conservative	—	.92 (.53)
Info X PID NDP	—	.84 (.53)
Info X PID Bloc	—	2.61 (1.32)*
Info X Cynicism	—	.67 (.35)
Under 35 years old	.09 (.09)	.07 (.09)
Atlantic	-.14 (.12)	-.14 (.12)
West	.04 (.08)	.04 (.08)
Québec	.39 (.11)**	.38 (.10)**
Catholic	.21 (.08)**	.20 (.08)*
Visible minority	.23 (.11)*	.21 (.11)
Female	-.10 (.07)	-.10 (.07)
Dropout	-.21 (.09)*	-.20 (.09)*
University	-.17 (.08)*	-.16 (.08)*
_cut1	-.34 (.14)	-.48 (.15)
_cut2	.16 (.14)	.02 (.15)
N	2425	2425
Pseudo R ²	.10	.10

*: significant $\alpha \leq .05$; **: significant $\alpha \leq .01$

Note: Cell entries are ordered probit coefficients and standard errors are in parentheses.

Table 3: Perceptions of Paul Martin's Performance

	Bad Job	No Confident
Martin aware	.76 (.08)**	.83 (.09)**
Corruption	.45 (.10)**	.59 (.11)**
Information	.09 (.12)	-.24 (.13)
PID Liberal	-.39 (.07)**	-.60 (.07)**
PID Conservative	.47 (.08)**	.55 (.08)**
PID NDP	.26 (.11)*	.23 (.13)
PID Bloc	.28 (.12)*	.50 (.13)**
Cynicism	1.09 (.08)**	1.08 (.08)**
Under 35 years old	.08 (.06)	.09 (.06)
Atlantic	-.20 (.10)*	-.05 (.09)
West	-.12 (.06)*	-.08 (.06)
Québec	.05 (.08)	.06 (.08)
Catholic	-.02 (.06)	.00 (.06)
Visible minority	.06 (.10)	.02 (.10)
Female	.01 (.05)	.04 (.05)
Dropout	-.11 (.08)	-.07 (.08)
University	.02 (.06)	.08 (.06)
_cut1	-.91 (.13)	-.41 (.14)
_cut2	.56 (.12)	1.04 (.14)
_cut3	.71 (.12)	1.08 (.14)
_cut4	2.01 (.13)	2.16 (.14)
N	2423	2425
Pseudo R ²	.11	.14

*: significant $\alpha \leq .05$; **: significant $\alpha \leq .01$

Note: Cell entries are ordered probit coefficients and standard errors are in parentheses.

Table 4: Emotional Response (Anger)

	Anger
No confident	.12 (.10)
Bad job	.69 (.11)**
Martin aware	.24 (.09)**
Corruption	1.16 (.12)**
Information	.46 (.12)**
PID Liberal	.01 (.08)
PID Conservative	.25 (.09)**
PID NDP	-.10 (.12)
PID Bloc	.35 (.12)**
Cynicism	.39 (.10)**
Interview in French	-.26 (.15)
Under 35 years old	-.30 (.07)**
Atlantic	-.01 (.10)
West	.13 (.07)
Québec	-.12 (.15)
Catholic	.13 (.06)*
Visible minority	-.01 (.11)
Female	.11 (.06)*
Dropout	-.04 (.08)
University	-.11 (.06)
_cut1	.04 (.15)
_cut2	.73 (.15)
_cut3	2.17 (.16)
N	2423
Pseudo R ²	.12

*: significant $\alpha \leq .05$; **: significant $\alpha \leq .01$

Note: Cell entries are ordered probit coefficients and standard errors are in parentheses.

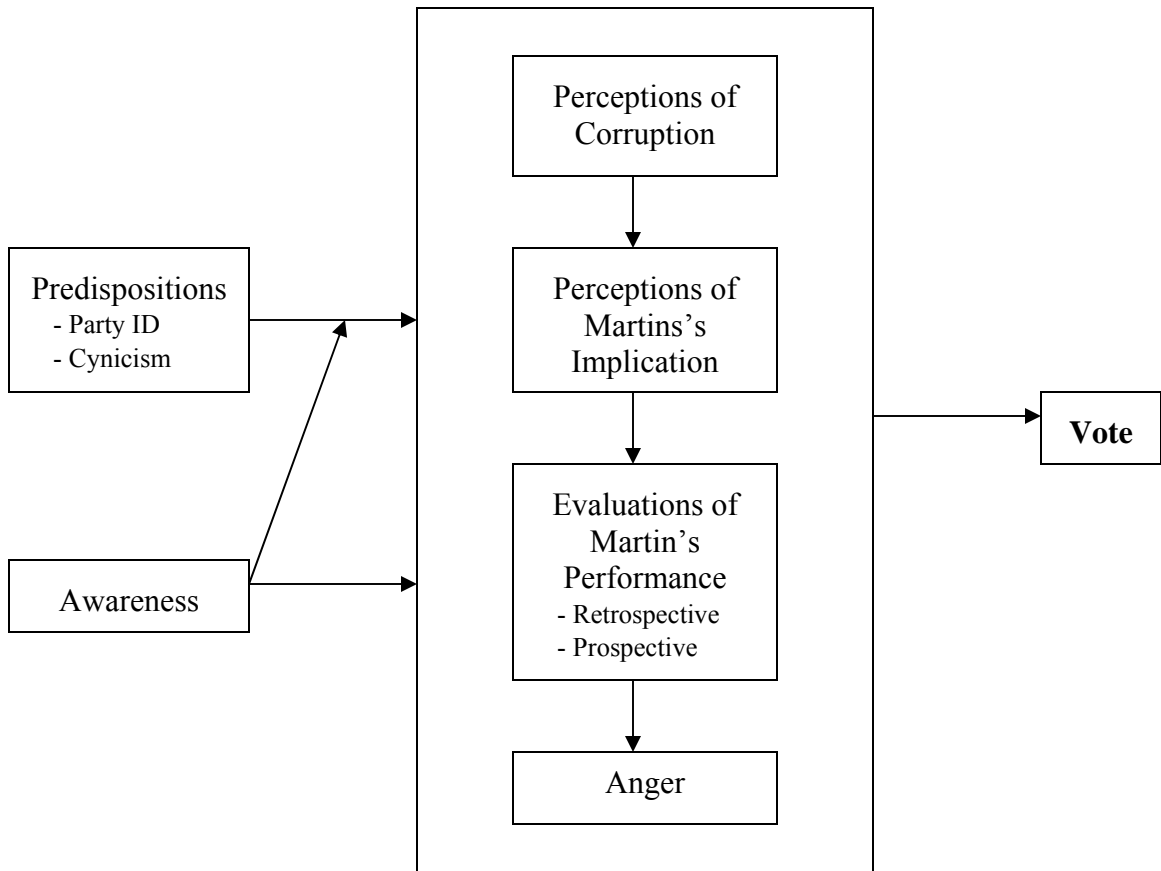
Table 5: Liberal Vote Choice

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Anger	-	-	-	-	-	-.41 (.27)
No confident	-	-	-	-	-1.26** (.27)	-1.26** (.27)
Bad job	-	-	-	-1.35** (.25)	-.79** (.29)	-.72* (.29)
Martin aware	-	-	-.99** (.19)	-.74** (.20)	-.57** (.21)	-.53* (.21)
Corruption	-	-.94** (.27)	-.90** (.28)	-.81** (.28)	-.69* (.30)	-.58 (.30)
Information	.05 (.31)	.34 (.32)	.23 (.33)	.23 (.33)	.10 (.34)	.12 (.34)
PID Liberal	2.38** (.19)	2.35** (.19)	2.35** (.19)	2.24** (.19)	2.12** (.20)	2.13** (.20)
PID Conservative	-2.53** (.33)	-2.44** (.33)	-2.29** (.33)	-2.19** (.33)	-2.10** (.33)	-2.09** (.33)
PID NDP	-1.75** (.35)	-1.80** (.36)	-1.68** (.36)	-1.70** (.38)	-1.71** (.39)	-1.75** (.39)
PID Bloc	-3.22** (.77)	-3.24** (.77)	-3.18** (.77)	-3.15** (.78)	-3.01** (.78)	-2.97** (.78)
Cynicism	-1.41** (.21)	-1.28** (.21)	-1.20** (.22)	-.88** (.24)	-.71** (.24)	-.67** (.24)
Interview in French	-.51 (.35)	-.47 (.35)	-.39 (.37)	-.52 (.38)	-.50 (.40)	-.54 (.39)
Under 35 years old	-.60** (.18)	-.69** (.18)	-.79** (.19)	-.78** (.19)	-.82** (.20)	-.84** (.20)
Atlantic	.26 (.23)	.31 (.23)	.26 (.24)	.22 (.25)	.21 (.25)	.21 (.25)
West	-.77** (.16)	-.73** (.16)	-.76** (.17)	-.80** (.17)	-.81** (.18)	-.80** (.18)
Québec	-.02 (.32)	-.09 (.32)	-.06 (.34)	.01 (.36)	-.02 (.37)	-.02 (.37)
Catholic	.12 (.16)	.11 (.16)	.07 (.17)	.11 (.17)	.13 (.17)	.13 (.17)
Visible minority	.65** (.24)	.60* (.24)	.62* (.25)	.63* (.25)	.63* (.26)	.62* (.26)
Female	.11 (.14)	.10 (.14)	.12 (.14)	.11 (.14)	.09 (.15)	.10 (.15)
Dropout	.54** (.20)	.56** (.20)	.56** (.21)	.54* (.21)	.54* (.21)	.54* (.21)
University	.05 (.16)	.06 (.16)	.03 (.16)	.08 (.16)	.11 (.17)	.11 (.17)
Constant	-.44 (.25)	.11 (.30)	.95** (.35)	1.49** (.37)	1.61** (.38)	1.75** (.38)
N	2037	2034	1953	1953	1953	1953
Pseudo R ²	.34	.35	.36	.38	.39	.39

*: significant $\alpha \leq .05$; **: significant $\alpha \leq .01$

Note: Cell entries are logit coefficients and standard errors are in parentheses.

Figure 1: A Model of Voters' Reactions to the Scandal



Appendix : Description of Variables

Variables were coded on a scale from 0 to 1, unless specified otherwise.

CORRUPTION:

When Jean Chrétien was Prime Minister, do you think there was a lot of corruption in government, some, a little, or none? (cps_11_3)

	(%)
None	2.2
A little	14.9
Don't know	4.0
Some	43.6
A lot	35.3

MARTIN AWARE:

Before becoming Prime Minister, do you think Paul Martin knew about the sponsorship scandal? (cps_13)

	(%)
No	10.0
Don't know	11.9
Yes	78.1

BADJOB:

Since becoming Prime Minister, how good a job has Paul Martin done in dealing with the sponsorship scandal? A very good job, quite a good job, not a very good job, or not a good job at all? (cps_15)

	(%)
Very good job	4.1
Quite a good job	23.7
Don't know	12.9
Not very good job	36.9
Not good job at all	22.4

NO CONFIDENT:

If re-elected, how confident are you that Paul Martin will prevent this type of scandal from happening again? Very confident, somewhat confident, not very confident, or not confident at all? (cps_16)

	(%)
Very confident	9.1
Somewhat confident	31.5
Don't know	9.2
Not very confident	28.9
Not confident at all	21.3

ANGER:

Does [the sponsorship scandal] make you very angry, somewhat angry, not very angry, or not angry at all? (cps_12)

	(%)
Not angry at all	6.5
Not very angry	9.3
Don't know	7.4
Somewhat angry	29.6
Very angry	47.3

VOTE:

Which party did you vote for, the Liberals, Conservatives, NDP, Bloc Quebecois or another party? (pes_a3_3)

	(%)
Liberals	35.0
Other	65.0

AWARENESS is an index made up of 18 questions:

- a) Four general information questions:
cps_know ; cps_kn_a ; cps_kn_b ; cps_kn_c

- b) Six factual questions on the leaders :
cps_e1 ; cps_e2 ; cps_e4 ; pes_e1 ; pes_e2 ; pes_e4
- c) Seven factual questions on party positions on the issues:
cps_n1_2 ; cps_n2_3 ; cps_n4_2 ; cps_n5_1 ; cps_n6_1 ; cps_n7_3 ; pes_d6
- d) Interviewer evaluation of the respondent's overall level of political information
(pes_r_po)

The index is the sum of the 18 scores divided by 18.

Mean: .51 *Cronbach's Alpha: .89*

CYNICISM is an index made up of seven questions coded from -1 to +1:

On the whole are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied, or not satisfied at all with the way democracy works in Canada? (pes_a11)

Do political parties keep their election promises: most of the time, some of the time, or hardly ever? (cps_p6)

How do you feel about politicians in general? Use any number from zero to one hundred. Zero means you really dislike them and one hundred means you really like them. (cps_g6)

How do you feel about political parties in general? Use any number from zero to one hundred. Zero means you really dislike the party and one hundred means you really like the party. (pes_c2d)

I don't think the government cares much what people like me think. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree? (pes_g3)

All federal parties are basically the same; there isn't really a choice. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree? (pes_g7)

Politicians are ready to lie to get elected. Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree? (pes_g8)

The index is the sum of the seven scores divided by 7.

Mean: .13 *Cronbach's Alpha: .72*

PARTY IDENTIFICATON

- 1a) In federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as a: Liberal, Conservative, N.D.P, Bloc Québécois, or none of these? (cps_q1a / pes_k1a)
- 1b) In federal politics, do you usually think of yourself as a: Liberal, Conservative, N.D.P, Bloc Québécois, another party, or no party? (cps_q1b / pes_k1b)
- 2) How strongly (name of the party) do you feel : very strongly, fairly strongly, or not very strongly? (cps_q2 / pes_k2)

Half of the respondents were asked question 1a, and the other half question 1b. Both had to answer question 2. Only those who identify very or fairly strongly with the same party in the campaign survey and the post-election survey are construed to be party identifiers. Each variable takes the value of 1 if the respondent has a strong or a fairly strong identification with the party, and 0 otherwise.

	(%)
None	61.3
Liberal	16.6
Conservative	12.3
NDP	5.0
Bloc québécois	4.8

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¹ Later on, in 2005, he did acknowledge that he should have been more vigilant about the program. That admission, however, came after the 2004 election.

² The commission had a total budget of \$32 millions. Public hearings lasted 9 months, there were 180 witnesses, the commission examined a total of 28 million documents, and hired 30 full-time lawyers (*La Presse*, June 18 2005, page A4).

³ The new leaders included Martin for the Liberals, Harper for the Conservatives on the right, and Layton for the NDP on the left; Duceppe, the leader of the separatist Bloc québécois, was the only "old" leader.

⁴ The CES was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, with support from Elections Canada. The fieldwork was conducted by the Institute for Social Research at York University. The data and questionnaires are available at : www.ces-ec.umontreal.ca

⁵ Ideally, the question should have been about the perceived magnitude (or seriousness) of the scandal. We assume that the scandal was used as a cue about the overall honesty or corruption of the government.

⁶ There was an error in the French version of the questionnaire. In the French version, the two most negative response categories were « extremely » and « very » angry, instead of « very » and « somewhat ». Throughout our analyses, we control for this inconsistency between the French and English instruments through a dummy “French questionnaire” variable.

⁷ The CES also had questions about the relative importance that voters attached to the issue. There was an open-ended question about what the respondent considered the most important issue to her personally. References to ethics, corruption, or the scandal combined for 11% of the responses. Only one other issue, health care, got more mentions (32%). The scandal also emerged as the second most important issue in response to close-ended questions inviting people to choose the top two most important issues among the following: health care, taxes, social welfare programs, the environment, or corruption. 22% identified corruption as their main concern and 18% as the second most important. Health was the first choice of 50% and the second choice of 25%.

⁸ Or very little blame. As we indicated, Martin acknowledged in 2005 that he may not have been vigilant enough.

⁹ In the same vein, Blais, Gidengil, Nevitte and Nadeau (2004) show that voters needed to be angry in order to be ready to punish a Prime Minister for calling a snap election.

¹⁰ It could be argued that the direction of causality between cynicism and views about the scandal go the opposite way. We reckon that this is a possibility but such an interpretation seems to be contradicted by the observation that the scandal did *not* produce an increase in the overall level of cynicism between 2000 and 2004 (Gidengil, Blais, Everitt, Fournier and Nevitte 2005).

¹¹ We do not examine here the evolution of voters’ views over the course of the campaign. These views hardly moved during the campaign.

¹² For these simulations, we estimated the mean predicted probability of providing a specific response if everyone were at 0 on the awareness scale and if everyone were at 1, keeping constant all the other variables. This allows us to ascertain the specific impact of a variable at the individual level. We also estimate the aggregate effect of a variable by comparing the mean predicted probability of a given response under our full model and under a scenario where the variable is assumed to have no impact (that is, the coefficient is set at 0). We proceed similarly with other variables.

¹³ It could be that Westerners perceived more corruption because the scandal confirmed their anti-Quebec sentiments. Views about how much should be done for Quebec are related to perceptions of the magnitude of corruption but the effect is weak and including that variable does not wash out the impact of the Western region dummy (results not shown).

¹⁴ This is the difference after awareness is controlled for. If awareness is dropped, the gap between the two groups increases to 17 points.

¹⁵ It would also appear that the better and the lesser educated were slightly more willing to give the Prime Minister the benefit of the doubt. We have no explanation for this pattern.

¹⁶ The retrospective question elicited 28% positive ratings and the prospective question 42%. It is possible that there was an order effect in the survey. The retrospective question immediately followed the “implication” question to which 80% of the respondents had answered that in their opinion Martin knew about the scandal. It may have been difficult to indicate right afterwards that Martin had done a good job.

¹⁷ We checked whether there was an interaction effect between overall perceptions of corruption under Chrétien and opinions about Martin’s awareness about the scandal. We found one in the case of retrospective evaluations. It appears that one must have thought that there was quite a bit of corruption and that Martin knew about it for one to say that Martin did a very bad job. No such interaction effect emerged with respect to confidence.

¹⁸ There is a 20 point gap between Liberal partisans and non partisans.

¹⁹ It could be that the most sophisticated both knew better Martin’s claim of ignorance and were slightly less certain about their own verdict (that Martin knew). The questionnaire did not tap respondents’ degree of certainty about their perceptions.

²⁰ Our model includes a control variable for language of interview, to take into account the slight discrepancy between the French and English questions, noted above.

²¹ We also tested for interaction effects with the four “opinion” variables, and we found none.

²² We also checked whether choosing corruption as the most important issue made one less inclined to vote Liberal or increased the effect of reactions to the scandal on vote choice. We found no additive nor interactive effect.

²³ The difference is small, however : the marginal effect of the two most distant variables is about 14 points, while that of the two most proximate variables is 18 points.

²⁴ We compare the total effect of each variable, which is estimated when that variable is first entered into our sequential model. The last model, which includes all factors, underestimates the total effect of distant variables.

²⁵ They did lose some support, but not because of the scandal. See Gidengil, Blais, Everitt, Fournier and Nevitte (2005).

²⁶ For these simulations, the « scandal » variables were scored on a -1 to +1 scale, so that positive evaluations could be construed as helping the Liberals.

²⁷ Gidengil et al. (2005) suggest that the Liberals made gains on two issues : the Iraq war and social spending.

²⁸ Cynicism rose in Canada in the 1970s and 1980s, and slightly declined in the 1990s (Blais and Gidengil 1991; Gidengil, Blais, Nevitte and Nadeau 2004, 107; Blais, Gidengil, Nadeau and Nevitte 2004, 54), and so it is difficult to argue that it was so high before the scandal that it could not get higher.