Corruption in the “First Order”: Predicting the influence of
scandal on voting behaviour and media perceptions during a
General Election.

by

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SCANDALS IN GENERAL ELECTIONS

Abstract

This thesis investigates responses in voting behaviour and media perceptions to the presence of media scandals about politicians and associated political parties during the 2017 New Zealand general election. A repeated measures design was used wherein 351 participants were recruited before the start of the election campaign, primarily from an Introductory Psychology course at Victoria University of Wellington. Follow-up surveys were conducted at three time points throughout the two month campaign. Participants were randomly allocated into one of two conditions for each follow-up survey. Half the participants were given a real news article to read about a media scandal, the other half read an article about a policy platform by the same political party. At the end of the election campaign, participants were asked about their voting behaviours. A second study was conducted after Labour Party leader, Jacinda Ardern, was announced Prime Minister with participants recruited via social media sites 'Twitter' and 'Facebook'. In this study, 153 participants recalled information about scandals that were present in the media during the election campaign.

Results showed that political scandals in news media do have an influence on voter perceptions, but not in an easily predictable way. Prior perceptions of political parties were the best predictors of who participants intended to vote for. Participants responded most strongly to public policy articles rather than scandal information, particularly those more knowledgeable of New Zealand's political system, and therefore likely more engaged with politics in general. Further, there was evidence that information presented in the media influenced how participants viewed political parties that were not involved in the scandal, which is an important under a proportional voting system like MMP which requires understanding of the relationships between parties.

Evidence was also found for a backlash effect towards the media wherein participants who were exposed to scandal information would displayed a decrease in trust towards the general media, consistent with the idea that one reason why voters may not respond negatively to scandal information reflects the decision that the source of the information is not credible. Future research should consider more targeted analysis on the different sources of news media, especially new media like blogs, social media, and entertainment news.

Corruption in the “First Order”: Predicting the influence of scandals on voting behaviour and media perceptions.

During general elections, political news media is important for shaping political discourse and informing the voter of the policies and vision that political parties have for the future. The media has an important role in helping voters make an informed decision regarding who they believe would best run the country over the next electoral term (Argyle, 2015; Forgette & Morris, 2006). However, increasingly research is moving towards the investigation of partisan bias within media (Gross, Shalizi, Gelman, & Groseclose, 2012; Levendusky, 2013). Especially with people turning to more modern forms of news media for political information, including social media (Wang, 2007; Wei & Hindman, 2011; Woolley, Limperos, & Oliver, 2010). Further, some researchers are concerned that a perception of media reporting on stories that question the integrity of politicians can lead to an erosion of trust in politics and institutions (Finkel & Geer, 1998; Freedman & Goldstein, 1999; Tsftati & Cappella, 2003).

Scandals are one type of potentially important negative news information, as they tend to focus on the integrity of politicians and their questionable ability to lead a country when that integrity is in doubt (Argyle, 2015; Lull & Hinerman, 1997; Neckel, 2005). When people think about political scandals, easy ones that might come to mind include Bill Clinton’s affair with Monica Lewinsky, or Richard Nixon and Watergate. Scandals that dominate General Elections can have disastrous consequences for politicians and countries. More recently, Hillary Clinton’s 2016 run for President was coloured by rumours of an FBI investigation of compromised emails. The result of which, among other things, earned her the title “Crooked Hillary” which trended on social media site “Twitter”. In 2016, the world was witness to perhaps America’s greatest political scandal yet: Donald Trump becoming President.

While the United States can often be an easy target, New Zealand is not exempt from political intrigue. *Dirty Politics* (2014), a book published by investigative journalist Nicky Hagar which exposed corruption within the National Party and its association with right-wing bloggers, set the tone of the 2014 General Election. In spite of the publication of the book *Dirty Politics*, the National Party saw no decrease in their share of the vote compared to the 2011 election. Furthermore, there was no decrease in voter turnout. Total turnout for the 2014 General Election was 77.9%. Up from 74.21% from the 2011 General Election suggesting that while we cannot know how the election would have turned out for the National Party had *Dirty Politics* never been published, there was no evidence to claim that the scandal had any measurable impact on voting behaviour.

New Zealand's 2017 General Election was a little more egalitarian in its reporting of political scandals. National Party's Todd Barclay was found to be secretly recording employee disputes, which led to a police investigation. It was later revealed that the Prime Minister, Bill English, was aware of the activity, but did nothing about it. Interestingly, the story was in the media months earlier when Mr Barclay refused to cooperate with a police investigation. However, the story was recycled some 100 days out from the General Election, and ultimately saw Barclay's resignation just days after the story was re-released. Just when it looked like things might be over for the National Party, it was revealed that New Zealand was playing host to a programme in which unpaid interns were brought in from overseas to learn about political campaigns. This included cold-calling, leaflet dropping, and wondering when the promised lectures with major political figure heads like Andrew Little, Rt Hon Helen Clark and the now Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern would occur.

Meanwhile, New Zealand's third major political party and natural coalition partner of Labour, the Green Party, were having their own problems. Just under 60 days out from the General Election, Green Party co-leader Metiria Turei admitted to benefit fraud in early 90s, during the Green Party campaign launch. Despite initially stating that she would not be resigning from her role as Green Party co-leader, after persistent questioning by the media about the circumstances and extent of the fraud, Turei was forced to resign. The Green Party, who obtained 10.7% vote share in the 2014 election fell to under the 5% electoral threshold in the polls, potentially ruling them out of making it into Parliament.

While valid and reliable information about the integrity of political leaders is important, a significant media focus on scandals can potentially hold negative long-term consequences for how people regard political actors and institutions (Ansolabehere, Iyengar, Crigler, Holbrook, Huckfeldt, & Sprague, 1999a; Bowler & Karp, 2004; Lau, Sigelman, & Rovner, 2007; Lemert, Wanta, & Lee, 1999). If this is indeed the case, an increasing focus on scandal might lead to a loss of faith in the political system, which subsequently harms the likelihood that citizens will be motivated to participate in the democratic process at all. It is important to know what impact the reporting of scandal has on public perception of politicians and political figures.

Of course, negative news media is not the only factor linked to non-voting behaviour (see (Stockemer, 2016) for a meta-analytic review of predictors of non-voting behaviour). Previous research does consistently find that young people and minority groups are less likely to vote (Stockemer, 2016; Vowles, 2014). However, in spite of concern about declining turnout, it is important to remember that many people continue to do so. Identifying a potential at-risk group does not provide us with clear information about why people within these groups are less likely to vote. Further, there does appear to be an overall global trend towards increasing

disenchantment with politics that is not isolated simply to identified risk groups (Dermody & Hanmer-Lloyd, 2004; Dermody, Hanmer-Lloyd, & Scullion, 2010; Lijphart, 2001; Pattyn, Van Hiel, Dhont, & Onraet, 2012; Vowles, 2014). Previous research conducted by the New Zealand Electoral Commission regarding the 2014 General Election found that statements like ‘it makes no difference who the government is’ and ‘can’t be bothered with politics or politicians’ were among the most cited reasons by eligible voters who chose not to vote (TNS New Zealand, 2014).

Negative advertising in general, which can take the form of criticising competency from politicians from opposing political parties, does appear to be associated with decreased turnout and an increase in cynicism towards politics (Ansolabehere, Iyengar, & Simon, 1999b; Bowler & Karp, 2004; Lemert et al., 1999). For example, Ansolabehere et al. (1999b) found that negative advertising appeared to reduce political participation. Further, when an election had a more positive campaign, the turnout for that election tended to be higher. At the same time, Ansolabehere et al. (1999b) also noted that there could be a bi-directional relationship wherein those with a lower intention to vote may simply not pay attention to ambient political information. In the United States there is evidence of an increase in negative news media concomitant with a slow decline in voter turnout, albeit with wide variation between Presidential elections (Finkel & Geer, 1998). However, while aggregate data, which looks at the overall type of political advertisements during an election campaign and compares it to voter turnout, might show a potential connection between rates of negative information and low turnout, it does not show how individuals respond to news media. Or under what circumstances negative effects are seen.

Assessing the influence of negative news media is complex as it can take many forms. In some studies, researchers focus solely on negative advertisements which generally take the form of one political party directly criticising their rival party (Finkel & Geer, 1998; Garramone, Atkin, Pinkleton, & Cole, 1990). Scandals as reported by journalists and mainstream media are one type of negative news. Exactly what constitutes as a scandal is complicated as scandals all include different people, content, and contexts. These variables may influence the severity of response. For example, a scandal during an election can be more salient than one that occurs outside of one (Ansolabehere et al., 1999b). However, although the content and context of scandals is highly varied, this does not mean comparisons cannot be drawn between them. For something to be classed as a political scandal it should involve a threat to the legitimacy of government, as political leaders set the standard for behaviour (Argyle, 2015; Lull & Hinerman, 1997; Neckel, 2005). Scandals do this through violation of a social norm or moral expectation (Funk, 1996; McDermott, Schwartz, & Vallejo, 2015; Thompson, 2000). They do not necessarily have to involve political corruption, which is a legal violation for the purpose of personal gain, although some scandals do. The other important aspect is that they must have received public attention (Funk, 1996; Thompson, 2000). It is not a scandal if no one is interested in the story.

What is the threshold for scandal to affect perceptions of institutional legitimacy? Bowler and Karp (2004) investigated whether being aware of a political scandal involving a single politician was enough to decrease overall trust in the American congress and in political institutions. Using data from the 1992 American National Election Study, they found that 87% of the population surveyed had heard of the target scandal, 73% believed that representatives involved had broken the law, and 47% believed that they should be voted out of office. The salience of the scandal was found to be greater for voters in districts where the representative

was engaged in a higher degree of morally questionable behaviour than representatives from other districts. This allowed Bowler and Karp to directly attribute a loss of trust in Congress and political institutions to the legislative scandal. Their findings were further validated by a follow-up study using data from the 2001 British Election Study. Attitudes towards politics was measured using a single item asking whether politicians in general can be respected. Knowledge of scandals was associated with lower regard for government and lower political efficacy, the belief that voters have no real say, and politicians are not influenced by elections. Voters who were represented by an MP that was involved in a scandal were more likely to report lower levels of political efficacy.

One issue with using real-world examples to assess the influence of a scandal on voting behaviour and political perceptions is that scandals do not occur within a vacuum, and it can be difficult to predict what the outcome of one will be. One example is the differential response to sex scandals and likeliness to survive them politically. President Clinton, for example, while receiving significant media attention for his affair did not end up resigning as a result, which Grover and Hasel (2015) attributes at least partly to the lack of a viable replacement from either the Democrats or the Republicans. Comparatively, leader of New Zealand's Conservative Party, Colin Craig, had to resign from his position as leader after allegations of improper conduct towards a staff member. In this case, the difference in importance between the two leaders clearly had an impact on public response and political consequences for both leaders.

Experimental studies using hypothetical scandals are useful for isolating the features of a scandal to see how they may influence political behaviour and opinions. Hypothetical scandal studies have shown that scandals do decrease overall trust towards politicians. For example, Schwarz and Bless (1992) reported that when participants were primed to think about a scandal

their subsequent trust towards the politicians involved decreased, as did their trust in politicians in general. Participants were primed to think of scandal by asking them to recall the names of the politicians involved in the scandal. Notably, trust towards specific politicians that were *not* involved in the scandal increased among participants primed to think about the scandal, showing that voters, or at least the participants in this study, did take into account the behaviour of other politicians when determining levels of trustworthiness.

Experimental studies have also shown that scandals which contain ideological hypocrisy, wherein a politician behaves in a way that is inconsistent with their presumed ideology or party platform, can determine the impact and perceived severity of a scandal. Bhatti, Hansen, and Olsen (2013), for example, presented participants with different fictional scandals to see how they would respond to them. As expected, behaviour that involved illegal activity or failing to fulfil political obligations, such as attending meetings, resulted in participants expecting the scandal to result in a greater loss of trust in public opinion compared to a scandal that involved poor conduct in a politician's private life, such as adultery. However, how participants responded depended on partisanship. A politician said to belong to the Danish Social Democrat party (which in New Zealand would be ideologically similar to perhaps the Green or Labour Party) was punished more severely for the use of a private hospital, in comparison to a politician belonging the Liberal Party (which would be closer in ideology to New Zealand's National Party). Conversely, bankruptcy was judged more harshly when the politician was from the Liberal Party compared to the Danish Social Democrat Party.

Partisanship and perceived hypocrisy of politicians involved in a scandal may only have an influence if the participant has a high enough degree of political sophistication in order to have already formed an opinion regarding the perceived values of political parties and

politicians. For example, Régner and Le Floch (2005) found that participants who were more politically sophisticated, defined as higher knowledge of a scandal involving political corruption involving a former French minister, tended to rate their trust in politicians in general higher than those with lower levels of knowledge. However, when high-knowledge participants were primed first to think of the scandal, their reported trust was lower compared to participants in a non-priming condition. The opposite effect was found for those with lower levels of knowledge. When it came to specific politicians, no difference was found in participants with low levels of knowledge. However, as expected, trust levels towards specific politicians were higher for participants after being prompted to think of the scandal for those with more knowledge. Régner and Le Floch argued that this was likely due to low-knowledge participants being unable to draw a clear distinction between politicians involved in the scandal and those not, suggesting that those with higher levels of political sophistication in general are more influenced by scandal.

As the previously discussed research has suggested, scandals can be linked to lower political participation. However, this does not necessarily mean that voter turnout is always adversely affected. In spite of the scandals during the 2014 and 2017 New Zealand General Elections, both saw an increase in turnout, particularly among young voters. While New Zealand has worked towards increasing voter turnout, for example, through encouraging advanced voting and setting up polling booths on University campuses, both the 2017 United Kingdom General Election and the 2016 U.S Presidential Election saw a slight increase in voter turnout in comparison to their previous elections. Elections provide a way for voters to hold public leaders to account. One reason for a slight increase in voter turnout could be that the reporting of negative news media, such as scandals, can show voters that there is a reason for them to get out

and vote (Craig, Rippere, & Grayson, 2014; Finkel & Geer, 1998; Freedman & Goldstein, 1999; Lau et al., 2007; Westen, 2007).

Finkel and Geer (1998) argue that the benefit of negative news media is that voters are more likely to attend to it because negative news media is more interesting than articles about public policy. This also increases the amount of discussion of politics not just in the media, but between voters as well (Djupe & Peterson, 2002). Freedman and Goldstein (1999) report support for this notion in analysis of a telephone survey just prior to the 1997 Virginia gubernatorial election¹. Participants were asked about their engagement with different forms of media to get an indication of how much political news, and what type of political news, they may have been exposed to during the election campaign. Respondents were surveyed again just after the election, and including a measure of what information participants could recall about the candidates from the election campaign. Freedman and Goldstein found that participants who were exposed to more negative political advertisements showed an increased likeliness to vote. No effect was found for exposure to positive advertisements.

Another potential benefit to negative news media in general is that it provides more information about politics, particularly if the source is from an opposing political party, because it shows the values and competency of both parties (Garrazone et al., 1990; Geer & Vavreck, 2014; Lau et al., 2007). After asking participants to listen to negative advertisements against two hypothetical candidates, Geer and Vavreck (2014) reported that participants shifted their ideological perceptions of both candidates, making them more confident in assessing how the fictional candidate would vote on policy positions such as raising or lowering taxes. Similarly, Garrazone et al. (1990) designed an experimental study wherein participants were exposed to

¹ A gubernatorial election is for electing Governors.

either positive or negative advertisements for fictional political candidates, finding that participants who were exposed to negative advertisements could discriminate better between the two candidates. At the same time, there were no effects on political interest and engagement - which is unsurprising as participants would be unlikely to have a strong emotional response to a hypothetical scandal. This highlights the importance of conducting research on the effects of political information where the participants have a stake in the outcome.

While negative news media may encourage people to get out and vote, it may be too simplistic to expect voters to punish the politician involved in a scandal by not voting for them. In Lau et al.'s (2007) meta-analytic study on the effects of negative political campaigning, it was reported that while negative news media appeared to lower political efficacy, trust in Government, and increase overall disaffection with politics, there was no reliable evidence for negative news media being responsible for low turnout. Instead negative news can have a motivating effect on people who are already supporters of a political party, but may not otherwise have turned out to vote (Craig et al., 2014). Austin and Pinkleton (1999) argue that voters are conscious of how other people may respond to information presented in the media. In their study, political cynicism was associated with an increased belief that other voters are more gullible, and would therefore be easily influenced by what is presented in the media. Austin and Pinkleton argue that this means that the more sceptical someone is of other people's ability to critically evaluate information presented in the media, the more motivated they may be to participate themselves.

One problem with predicting how people are going to respond to political news is that people are not passive receivers of information. Anduiza, Gallego, and Muñoz (2013) argue for two reasons why someone may continue to vote for a corrupt politician, despite having

knowledge of their corruption: They may decide that either the information is not relevant, or that the source of the information is not credible. A meta-analytic study conducted by Lau et al. (2007) proposed a potential backlash towards the media wherein voters displayed a negative response to the source of political information that criticised a party they preferred. Lau et al. stated that whether the backlash effect is stronger compared to an increase in negative perceptions of the candidate or party being attacked is not known.

This phenomenon is largely driven by partisanship, given that highly partisan voters are less likely to punish their own political party for corruption or being involved in a scandal (Anduiza et al., 2013; Muñoz, Anduiza, & Gallego, 2016). Lemert et al. (1999) concluded that political identification and partisanship was one influence on how voters responded to advertisements that were negative towards both the Republican and the Democratic Parties during a 1996 Senate election in the United States. These advertisements came from opposing political parties so the partisan bias was clear. Recall of the advertisements about the candidates appeared to reinforce partisan loyalties. However, participants who identified themselves as Republicans were more likely to withhold their vote if they recalled the negative advertisement about the Republican candidate. For independent voters, recall of the negative advertisements appeared to discourage them from voting. The winner of this particular election happened to be the candidate from the Democratic Party, which Lemert et al. speculated may have had something to do with the Democratic candidate withdrawing his negative advertisements towards the Republic candidate.

Further complicating matters is that the relationship between partisanship and response to negative advertisements, including media scandals, may be influenced by political sophistication. Anduiza et al. (2013) found that highly knowledgeable people are less influenced by partisan

biases. Partly, perhaps, because knowledgeable voters are more aware of the tangible benefits to continuing to support that particular party, and be in a better position to identify the candidate's policies which are consistent with their own ideological preferences. Both may offset corrupt or scandalous behaviour in the eyes of a voter (Manzetti & Wilson, 2007; Muñoz et al., 2016; Rundquist, Strom, & Peters, 1977).

Political sophistication also seems to affect whether a scandal will be considered relevant or not. Funk (1996) found that within the context of either marital infidelity or tax evasion for a fictional congressman, more politically sophisticated participants used competence-based traits rather than warmth-based when deciding who to vote for. Consistent with past research (Carlson, Ganiel, & Hyde, 2000; Doherty, Dowling, & Miller, 2011; McDermott et al., 2015), Funk (1996) found that the fictional congressman was punished more for a financial scandal, but that political sophistication appeared to influence how the marital infidelity scandal was viewed. Those scoring higher on political sophistication were also less influenced by infidelity when the congressman was described as highly competent compared to when the congressman described as warm, but less competent. Those lower in political knowledge rated both the highly warm, and highly competent, politicians involved in the marital scandal more negatively.

Despite financial scandals generally being more politically damaging, compared to moral scandals like infidelity, it is important to remember that there are times when people will be more concerned with scandals that violate moral standards, infidelity for example. Moral scandals have a bigger impact on people who score high on measures of social conservatism (Doherty et al., 2011). However, McDermott et al. (2015) argue that the reason why scandals, particularly scandals that involve hypocrisy, can be so damaging is because it is comparable to applying for a job with the wrong skill-set. A moral scandal violates the 'employment contract'

which a socially conservative politician may have agreed to run on, which makes it harder for them to survive the repercussions of their actions (Grover & Hasel, 2015; McDermott et al., 2015). Similar effects might be found for a politician who runs on a law and order platform, but is later found guilty of a speeding offence or tax evasion. This shows that one aspect of determining whether a scandal is ignorable depends on whether the politician is considered to have behaved outside the implied contract with voters.

Present study

The present research will investigate how political scandals during a general election influence voter response and views on the political system, and particularly in relation to how the media is viewed. Much of the research in this area has been conducted using hypothetical politicians and scandals (e.g. Bhatti et al., 2013; Funk, 1996; Garramone et al., 1990; Régner & Le Floch, 2005). While vital in order to study and isolate the effects of core features of scandals, there is an ecologically valid element of importance and emotionality that may be absent in this paradigm. Garramone et al. (1990), for example, found that participants who were given negative information about a fictional candidate were no more interested or willing to engage in the fictional election campaign than someone who received positive information about a candidate. Conclusions can be drawn about how voters are affected by a scandal in general, and a participant may claim that said scandal has led to a loss of trust in that politician, leading them to say they would be less likely to vote for them. However, when it comes to the polling booth, the ideological positions and benefits associated with a political party may outweigh any negative opinions that a voter has formed in response to a scandal (Muñoz et al., 2016; Rundquist et al., 1977). Further, an intention to vote does not necessarily equate to an actual vote cast which highlights the importance of conducting research using behavioural measures of voting. Indeed,

Freedman and Goldstein (1999) argued that the likely reason why they found that exposure to negative news media was associated with increased voter turnout when other researchers had not found the same result, was because they measured how participants voted as opposed to whether they intended to vote.

Scandal on voting behaviour. Perhaps one of the most challenging aspects of determining the effects of a political scandal on the outcome of an election is that there is no control group. In the case of Hillary Clinton and the 2016 Presidential Election, the FBI investigation into Clinton's use of a private email server was a commonly cited reason for her loss as reported in the media (see Murray, 23 August 2017; Siddiqui, 3 May 2017; Zurcher, 13 September 2017 for examples of online news articles). However, that claim is still somewhat speculative wherein people search for explanations as to why she lost. It is also important to remember that she did win the popular vote. As previously mentioned, while the National Party did not see a decrease in their share of the vote in New Zealand's 2014 General Election in spite of *Dirty Politics* featuring prominently in the media, it is difficult to say what the outcome of the election would have been had the book never been published.

New Zealand provides a unique opportunity to attempt to isolate the effects of information present during an election due to having a campaign period that only lasts for two months. This makes it easier to see how a scandal present in the media may have an impact on how people choose to vote as the time between the scandal being prominent in the media and Election Day are much closer together. A difficulty with research on the effects of real-world scandals is that they tend to be conducted sometime after an election. This is problematic as voters' perceptions of the scandal and those involved may change over time.

Low level of knowledge about scandals has also been a consistent problem in the literature, with researchers finding that it cannot be assumed that a participant has even heard of the scandal, resulting removal of participants prior to analysis (Bowler & Karp, 2004; Régner & Le Floch, 2005; Schwarz & Bless, 1992). Régner and Le Floch (2005), in particular, found that even in those participants categorised as having high levels of scandal knowledge still had a score well below the maximum score achievable. Studies that rely on participants being able to accurately recall information about a scandal are problematic. A voter may have heard of the scandal but be unable to recall details, especially if the scandal occurred long before the time the study was conducted. This does not mean, however, that people were not influenced by the scandal at the time it occurred.

In this study, an experimental design will be used to see how political news media may influence participants at the time the scandal is most prominent in the media. Participants will be given a news article to read of either a scandal involving a political party, or a policy of that same political party. This ensures that participants in the scandal condition will all have some information about the scandal before responding to questions about political trust (although it is expected that some participants will know more than others). A comparison can then be made with participants who are in the non-scandal condition to see if being primed to think about a scandal leads to a loss of trust in the party at that moment.

Participants for this study will be recruited at the beginning of the election campaign to obtain baseline measures of attitudes towards political parties, and will be asked at different time points of the campaign period to participate in follow-up surveys where they will be asked to read newspaper articles. The repeated-measures design allows for testing to see if any initial

changes in trust in response a scandal holds over time to subsequently effect how participants voted.

Another unique factor in New Zealand is the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) voting system which makes it difficult for political parties to form a majority on their own. MMP voting systems encourage the formation of coalitions between political parties. The reason why this is important in the context of this study is due to vote switching. Lau et al. (2007) stated that negative information about political parties did not shift votes, even if participants had a negative response to the information. However, Lau et al primarily looked at studies conducted in North America, neglecting to investigate the impacts of different electoral systems. If partisanship is a strong predictor for who someone votes for, then a voter is unlikely to shift their vote to an ideologically incompatible party in response to negative information about their preferred party. In New Zealand, voters can switch their party vote, while still voting for a party consistent with their ideology. Participants with a good understanding of New Zealand's electoral system are more likely to understand that a strong coalition partner is useful for their preferred political party. There are many ways to measure political sophistication, for example, knowledge of scandals, knowledge of policy, and knowledge of political leaders. In this study, electoral knowledge will be used as a measure of political sophistication, because it is the participants who best understand how the electoral system in New Zealand works that may be in a better position to understand the relationships between political parties in New Zealand Electoral knowledge has also been commonly used in New Zealand election studies as a measure of political sophistication (Banducci & Karp, 2003; Karp, 2006).

Scandal on media perceptions. This research will also investigate the influence of scandal on perceived credibility of news media. Source credibility has been identified as a reason

why a voter may choose to disregard information about a favour politician being involved in a scandal (Anduiza et al., 2013; Muñoz et al., 2016). Researchers have tended to focus on the opposing political party as being the source of negative information such as through advertisements that attack the opposing political party (Garrazone et al., 1990; Geer & Vavreck, 2014; Lau et al., 2007). However, participants also get negative information about political parties from mainstream media who, in theory, are unbiased watchdogs of politicians' behaviour. While backlash to the source of negative information has been found (Lau et al., 2007), it is not isolated to mainstream media within the context of scandal information.

Study One

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from an Introductory Psychology course and through flyers placed around Victoria University of Wellington. Participants recruited through flyers were placed into a draw to receive a movie voucher. For each survey they filled out, participants received an additional entry into the movie voucher draw. Psychology student participants were given the option to count participation towards a mandatory research experience component (of which this study was one option) or receive an entry into the movie voucher draw. There were two recruitment periods for the Introductory Psychology students. One at the end of the first semester (May), and one at the beginning of the second semester (July). At both intakes participants were invited to take part in a study about political attitudes and scandal, however only those who elected to participate in the follow-up studies are included in this thesis. The first intake had 202 participants. Participants that did not supply an email address and therefore could

not be included in follow-up surveys were removed from the sample leaving 62 participants. There was one participant that filled out the survey twice and was removed from the sample leaving a total of 60. The second intake from Introductory Psychology had 605 participants. After participants who did not supply an email address, were not eligible to vote in New Zealand, had filled out the survey more than once, and had participated in the first intake were removed leaving 231 participants. Eighty-eight participants were recruited via the flyer. Participants that were not New Zealand citizens, did not correctly fill out their email address, or failed to complete an entire scale were removed leaving 52 participants. The final survey included 351 participants. The age, gender, and ethnicity of the participants is presented in Table 1. Two-thirds identified as female, and the average participant was around twenty years of age. The ethnicity question was free choice format so there were participants that chose to identify as more than one ethnicity. For example, as both Māori and New Zealand European. These participants were placed in the category ‘Other NZ’. As the sample was predominately New Zealand European it was not practical to look at differences between ethnicity.

Table 1
Age, gender and ethnicity of final sample

M (SD)	
Age	19.94 (5.71)
Percentage	
Gender	
Male	30
Female	68.8
Non-binary	0.6
Ethnicity	
NZ Euro/Pakeha	71.7
NZ Māori	3.8
Pasifika	2.6
Asian	7.0
Other NZ	8.7
Other	5.5

Measures

As well as demographic questions, the baseline online survey included the following measures:

Political knowledge. Questions from the New Zealand Election Study were used to assess participants' general knowledge of New Zealand's electoral system (Karp, 2006). This includes seven forced-choice true/false questions. Example items include "*The party with the most votes is more likely to get the most seats under Mixed Member Proportional than under First Past the Post*" and "*The party votes usually decide the total number of seats each party gets in parliament*".

Ideology and views on the effectiveness of government. Perceived trustworthiness of specific political parties was measured by asking participants to indicate how trusting they felt towards specific New Zealand political parties (National, Labour, Green, New Zealand First, Māori, ACT, and United Future), and their leaders, on a 1 (very untrustworthy) to 7 (very trustworthy) Likert scale. While this is not an exhaustive list of all the New Zealand political parties, they were the parties that had a seat in Parliament. There was also an option to indicate that the participant had not heard of the political party or the political leader.

As a measure of political ideology, participants were also asked to indicate how liberal or conservative they identified their political views on a 1 (Liberal) to 7 (Conservative) scale, and how left-wing or right-wing they identified with 1 indicating right-wing and 7 indicating left-wing. These questions are commonly asked in research on political behaviour, including the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study (Sibley, 2017). It is also consistently included in American National Election Studies.

Voting behaviour. Participants were asked “*if the General Election was held today, which political party would you give your party vote to?*” This was a free-response question to give the participants the opportunity to show their support for minor parties unlikely to get into parliament at the next general election.

Participants were also asked to indicate how likely they would be to vote for National, Labour, Green, New Zealand First, Māori, ACT, and United Future parties using a 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely) scale.

Media trustworthiness. Four items assessed feelings towards mainstream media. The items were adapted from a scale initially developed by Gaziano and McGrath (1986) and later built on by Meyer (1988) and West (1994). Items from the scale have been used in some form in studies on perceptions of source credibility in a political context (see Carr, Barnidge, Lee, & Tsang, 2014; Kioussis, 2001; Tsfati & Cappella, 2003 for examples). The items used encompassed credibility and fairness, “*Journalists report the news fairly*”, “*Most journalists are unbiased*”, and societal concern, “*The media is concerned with community’s well-being*”, and a reverse-scored item “*Mainstream media are only concerned about making profits*”. Participants were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with each item from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

In the follow-up surveys, participants were asked to indicate their perception of the level of bias in the article they had just read from 1 (biased against the party involved) to 7 (biased towards the party involved). A score of 4 indicated no media bias.

Procedure

Ethical approval for this research was provided by the School of Psychology Human Ethics Committee under delegated authority of the National Health and Disability Ethics Committee (RM# 0000024969).

Stage One: Baseline survey. Participants were recruited via Introductory Psychology two months before the General Election. Flyers were also placed across two (of four) campuses at Victoria University of Wellington inviting them to participate in an online survey in exchange for an entry into the draw to win a movie voucher. The flyers were put up three months before the election and left for one month. The first 'base-line' survey included all measures. Following the completion of the online survey all participants, regardless of whether they had been recruited via flyer or Introductory Psychology course, were asked if they would like to participate in further research about opinions on news media. They were told that they would be contacted no more than three times during the election campaign, and again for a final survey after the General Election. Participants who agreed to participate provided their email addresses and were informed that this would be used to link their responses to the surveys, and that they did not have to fill out all five surveys in order to participate in the study.

Stage Two: Follow-up survey. The second stage of the study looked at the influence of news media. Participants who agreed to take part in the second stage of the study were emailed with a link to a follow-up online survey. The first follow-up survey was sent to participants one month after the survey for Stage One closed. Follow-up surveys were administered two weeks apart and left open for seven days. A reminder email was sent four days after the survey was opened. The final follow-up survey closed two weeks before the election and before the polls opened for advanced voting.

The participants first read a real news article that had been published online describing events of the election campaign and that had been recently published online, before moving on to answer questions about their views of the article they had just read and political parties in general. Six articles were used in this study which are included in Appendix A – F.

A scandal was selected from each of the three largest political parties, according to a set of criteria. The scandal had to involve a clear violation of a societal norm, but did not necessarily have to be illegal. Preference was given to a scandal which directly involved the leader of the political party. All media articles used were ones that had been published in the media within the two weeks preceding each follow-up survey. This influenced the ordering of the follow-ups as the intention was to collect the data when the scandal was most prominent in the media. The policy articles that were selected were ones that had been published at the same time as the scandal article, with an attempt to make sure that the scandal and policy article had a similar theme. Articles were all press releases written by political parties rather than journalists so that the bias in them would be clear, however, participants were not told who the author of the article was. All articles aimed to be less than 300 words in length. The web link to the article was included, information on the author of the articles was not provided.

The National Party scandal article was a press release written by the New Zealand First Party and mentioned National Party leader Bill English being aware that National Party MP Todd Barclay had secretly recorded an employment dispute. The policy article was a press release written by the National Party and talked about wanting to improve law and order.

The Green Party scandal article was a press release written by the ACT Party and discussed co-leader Metiria Turei's involvement in benefit fraud. The policy article used was one that discussed housing problems for low income families in New Zealand.

Both the Green and National Party scandals received significant coverage over the course of the election campaign. Labour did not receive a significant amount of coverage for scandalous or corrupt behaviour. However, as Labour is the second largest political party in New Zealand, it was important for them to be included. There was one news article, written by a journalist, about the Labour Party hiding large donations in the form of art auctions without the knowledge of the artists. The policy article was about developing a scheme to reduce unemployment in young New Zealanders.

In the first follow-up survey, participants were asked to read an article about the Green Party. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions, wherein they read either a scandal about the Green Party co-leader's involvement in benefit fraud, or an article about a recently announced Green Party policy. The second follow-up survey asked participants to read about either a National Party policy, or the National Party scandal. In the third follow-up survey, participants were asked to read a Labour Party scandal, or policy, article.

At the end of the survey, participants were then asked to provide their email address if they would like another entry into the movie voucher draw, or, if they were enrolled in Introductory Psychology, they could choose to instead receive course credit.

Stage Three: Post-election survey. The week after the General Election, participants were invited to complete a final survey. This survey was identical to the one participants filled out in the first study with an extra measure asking if they had advanced voted, and if they stated they did not vote, they were asked who they would have voted for if they chose to vote. It also asked participants if they remembered hearing about each of the three scandals that were used in the three follow-ups surveys from Stage 2. If participants indicated that they had heard of the

survey, they were asked to recall five facts from that event, to provide a measure of how much participants remembered from scandal events that occurred during the election.

Results

Study One

The number of participants that filled out each survey is shown in Table 2, alongside the number of follow-ups completed by each participant. Of concern is that the final sample of 88 participants differs from the original sample. Table 3 shows that the sample of participants that filled out the final survey was slightly older, and there was a more even gender balance.

Importantly, electoral knowledge, socio-political control, and partisanship were similar suggesting that participants who filled out the final survey and participants who did not were not noticeably dissimilar in terms of political attitudes.

Table 2

Number of participants in each survey and number of surveys completed

Surveys completed	N (%)	Follow-ups completed	N (%)
1	343	0	133 (38.8)
2	165 (48.1)	1	72 (21.0)
3	120 (35.0)	2	47 (13.7)
4	109 (31.8)	3	48 (14.0)
5	88 (25.7)	4	43 (12.5)

Table 3

Demographic, baseline electoral knowledge, and baseline political attitude data across participants who completed the final survey and participants who did not.

		Baseline	Final
		M (SD)	M (SD)
Age		19.38 (4.13)	21.55 (8.66)
Electoral knowledge		4.48 (1.35)	4.71 (1.30)
Liberal – Conservative		2.92 (1.37)	2.76 (1.50)
Right-wing – Left-wing		3.73 (1.65)	3.71 (1.90)
		Percentage	Percentage
Gender			
	Male	28.3	35.6
	Female	71.3	63.2
	Non-binary	0.4	1.1
Ethnicity			
	NZ Euro/Pakeha	71.7	73.6
	NZ Māori	4.3	2.3
	Pasifika	2.0	4.6
	Asian	6.3	9.2
	Other NZ	9.8	5.7
	Other	5.9	4.6

Table 4.

Means, standard deviations for perceptions of party leaders and associated party in response to scandal information.

Political Party	Variable	Condition	N	Mean (SD)	df	t	p
Green	Best interests	Scandal	55	3.60 (1.61)	104	5.63	$p < .01$
		Policy	51	5.24 (1.37)			
	Party leader trust	Scandal	55	3.53 (1.63)	104	1.18	$p = .24$
		Policy	50	3.84 (1.62)			
	Likeliness to vote	Scandal	55	4.40 (2.10)	103	0.19	$p = .85$
		Policy	51	4.48 (2.15)			
	Party Trust	Scandal	55	4.36 (1.63)	104	1.00	$p = .32$
		Policy	51	4.73 (1.54)			
	Best interests	Scandal	63	3.03 (1.51)	117	3.62	$p < .01$
		Policy	56	4.05 (1.57)			
National	Party leader trust	Scandal	63	3.44 (1.79)	117	2.04	$p = .04$
		Policy	56	4.07 (1.55)			
	Likeliness to vote	Scandal	63	3.29 (2.28)	116	1.53	$p = .13$
		Policy	55	3.91 (1.78)			
	Party trust	Scandal	63	3.62 (1.76)	117	1.92	$p = .06$
		Policy	56	4.21 (1.62)			
Labour ²	Leader trust	Scandal	56	4.82 (1.50)	105	1.18	$p = .24$
		Policy	51	5.16 (1.43)			
	Likeliness to vote	Scandal	56	4.95 (1.87)	105	0.86	$p = .39$
		Policy	51	5.25 (1.83)			
	Party Trust	Scandal	56	4.55 (1.62)	105	1.20	$p = .24$
		Policy	51	4.90 (1.38)			

² Due to a technical glitch with the survey software, responses to the question about how much participants thought the Labour Party leader acted in the best interests of New Zealanders was incomplete so the data could not be used.

Exposure to scandal

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to see how exposure to a scandal article might influence how participants viewed the political leader of a party and their likeliness to vote for that party. Table 4 shows that simply being exposed to a scandal news article has no influence on how participants feel about political parties or political leaders, with one notable exception. When participants were asked if they thought the leader of the involved political party acted in the best interests of New Zealanders they rated the leader significantly lower compared to participants that read policy. A loss of trust towards the leader was only seen in response to the National Party scandal. There was no indication that scandal influenced how the participants would vote.

Partisanship. Partisanship may influence how a participant responds to scandal information. Participants may not be influenced by the scandal if they already have a low opinion of the party and leader involved. Table 5 shows that there are generally strong correlations between political perceptions at the time of the scandal, and their baseline measures of partisanship. The right-left dimension of political ideology did not correlate with the outcome variables, with one exception. Participants who identified as more left-wing were more likely to think that the Green Party co-leader acted in the best interests of New Zealanders. As the left-right dimension did not appear to be a consistent measure of partisanship, it was not included in the moderation analyses.

Table 5.

Correlations between baseline partisanship scores and opinions about political leaders and likelihood to vote for their party at the time of the scandal.

	Likelihood to vote	Leader trust	Right – Left	Liberal – Conservative
Green Time 2				
Likelihood to vote	.78**	.62**	-.01	-.48**
Leader trust	.63**	.55**	.00	-.26**
Best interests	.30**	.41**	.27**	-.15
National Time 3				
Likelihood to vote	.84**	.70**	.01	.53**
Leader trust	.73**	.76**	.03	.43**
Best interests	.44**	.45**	.12	.32**
Labour Time 4				
Likelihood to vote	.56**	.44**	-.16	-.28**
Leader trust	.39**	.49**	-.09	-.22*

Note: * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$

Moderated regressions have been employed extensively in the analyses that follow.

Moderated regression allows investigation of whether two variables (such as exposure to scandal and partisanship) interact to predict the outcome (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Where a significant moderation is found it indicates that the outcome variable depends not solely on one or both predictors, but the interaction between the two as well (or instead). A significant interaction or moderation is identified when the inclusion of the multiplicative interaction term explains significant unique variance beyond that accounted for by the two individual predictor variables on their own.

Green Party. Table 6 shows the interaction between partisanship and exposure to the Green Party scandal on opinions about the Green Party. It was found that condition and

conservatism accounted for a significant amount of variance on how much participants thought the Green Party co-leader acted in the best interests of New Zealanders ($R^2 = .29$, $F(1, 103) = 38.66$, $p < .01$). The interaction explained an additional 3% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .03$, $\Delta F(1, 102) = 4.06$, $p = .05$). McClelland and Judd (1993) note that moderated regression is an under-powered analysis, meaning that interactions may not be found where they exist because of lack of power. As a rule-of-thumb, an ΔR^2 of .02 is the cut off for a small but meaningful effect (Cohen, 1988). Small effect sizes are generally considered acceptable in the social sciences (Aiken, West, & Reno, 1991; Stone-Romero & Liakhovitski, 2002), and even 1% additional variance explained is meaningful (Abelson, 1985; Evans, 1985; McClelland & Judd, 1993). Figure 1 shows that participants in the scandal condition tended to rate the Green Party co-leader as not acting in the best interests in New Zealanders. However, participants who were more liberal did show a negative perception of the co-leader when exposed to the scandal compared to participants who were more liberal but read about a policy.

Baseline trust towards the Green Party co-leader explained a significant amount of the variance in trust towards the co-leader at the time of the scandal ($R^2 = .30$, $F(1, 82) = 35.64$, $p < .01$). An interaction between baseline trust and condition explained an additional 6% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .06$, $\Delta F(1, 80) = 7.00$, $p = .01$). Figure 2 shows that regardless of whether a participant was in the scandal or policy condition, those who showed higher baseline trust towards the Green Party co-leader also showed greater trust towards her at the time of the scandal. Participants who favoured the co-leader at baseline levels rated her less favourably if they were exposed to the scandal. The opposite was found for those who had lower levels of baseline trust, suggesting that participants who trusted the Green Party co-leader less responded negatively to Green policy.

Table 6.

Unstandardized coefficients and confidence intervals for interaction between exposure to scandal and partisanship on party perceptions for the Green Party.

	B [CI]	SE B	t	p
Green Party: Best interests				
Constant	3.81 [3.01, 4.60]	0.40	9.50	$p < .01$
Conservative	-0.08 [-0.35, 0.19]	0.14	0.59	$p = .56$
Condition	2.87 [1.66, 4.09]	0.61	4.69	$p < .01$
Conservative X Condition	-0.38 [-0.76, -.01]	0.19	2.01	$p = .05$
Green Party: Best interests				
Constant	2.58 [1.77, 3.39]	0.41	6.30	$p < .01$
Left-wing	0.30 [0.09, 0.50]	0.10	2.89	$p < .01$
Condition	2.61 [1.30, 3.92]	0.66	3.95	$p < .01$
Left-wing X Condition	-0.29 [-0.60, 0.03]	0.16	1.82	$p = .07$
Green Party: Best interests				
Constant	2.60 [1.39, 3.80]	0.61	4.28	$p < .01$
Leader trust	0.25 [-0.00, 0.50]	0.12	1.98	$p = .05$
Condition	0.50 [-1.51, 2.51]	1.01	0.50	$p = .62$
Leader trust X Condition	0.20 [-0.22, 0.62]	0.21	0.96	$p = .34$
Green Party: Leader Trust Time 2				
Constant	4.05 [3.18, 4.92]	0.44	9.22	$p < .01$
Conservative	-0.20 [-0.50, 0.09]	0.15	1.36	$p = .12$
Condition	1.12 [-0.22, 2.45]	0.67	1.66	$p = .10$
Conservative X Condition	-0.22 [-0.64, 0.19]	0.21	1.07	$p = .29$
Green Party: Leader Trust Time 2				
Constant	2.28 [1.34, 3.42]	0.57	3.98	$p < .01$
Leader trust Time 1	0.33 [0.09, 0.57]	0.12	2.74	$p = .01$
Condition	-2.43 [-4.33, -0.53]	0.95	2.55	$p = .01$
Leader trust X Condition	0.53 [0.13, 0.93]	0.20	2.65	$p = .01$

Table 6 cont.

Unstandardized coefficients and confidence intervals for interaction between exposure to scandal and partisanship on party perceptions for the Green Party

	B [CI]	SE B	t	p
Green Party: Vote likeliness				
Constant	5.87 [4.83, 6.90]	0.52	11.23	$p < .01$
Conservative	-0.56 [-0.91, -0.21]	0.18	3.20	$p < .01$
Condition	1.29 [-0.29, 2.88]	0.80	1.62	$p = .11$
Conservative X Condition	-0.30 [-0.79, 0.20]	0.25	1.19	$p = .24$
Green Party: Vote likeliness				
Constant	1.56 [0.57, 2.56]	0.50	3.10	$p < .01$
Leader trust Time 1	0.81 [0.55, 1.06]	0.13	6.20	$p < .01$
Condition	-0.54 [-1.81, 0.74]	0.65	0.83	$p = .41$
Leader trust X Condition	0.05 [-0.27, 0.36]	0.16	0.29	$p = .77$
Green Party: Vote likeliness				
Constant	0.78 [-0.13, 1.69]	0.46	1.70	$p = .09$
Vote likeliness Time 1	0.76 [0.59, 0.94]	0.09	8.74	$p < .01$
Condition	0.01 [-1.32, 1.33]	0.68	0.01	$p = .99$
Vote likeliness X Condition	0.01 [-0.25, 0.26]	0.13	0.04	$p = .97$

Figure 1. Interaction between condition and conservatism on belief that the Green Party co-leader acted in the best interests of New Zealanders.

Figure 2. Interaction between condition and baseline trust towards the Green Party co-leader on trust towards the co-leader at the time of the scandal.

National Party scandal. Table 7 shows the interaction between partisanship and exposure to the National Party scandal on opinions about the National Party. Condition and conservatism accounted for a significant amount of variance on how much participants thought the National Party leader was trustworthy ($R^2 = .23$, $F(1, 115) = 6.20$, $p = .01$). The interaction between the two explained an additional 3% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .03$, $\Delta F(1, 114) = 4.02$, $p = .05$). The interaction is shown in Figure 3. More liberal participants appeared to be more affected by the presentation of scandal compared to more conservative participants. The more liberal participants showed lower trust towards the National Party leader when they were exposed to the scandal compared to those presented with policy, while more conservative participants showed no difference. Interestingly, this does mirror the results seen for the Green Party scandal where more liberal participants were more affected by scandal than the more conservative participants. The difference was that in this case the conservative participants showed stronger approval overall towards the party leader which is to be expected given higher levels of conservatism were correlated with greater support for the National Party.

Table 7.

Unstandardized coefficients and confidence intervals for interaction between exposure to scandal and partisanship on party perceptions for the National Party.

	B [CI]	SE B	t	p
National Party: Best interests				
Constant	1.90 [1.17, 2.63]	0.37	5.15	$p < .01$
Conservative	0.38 [0.17, 0.59]	0.11	3.56	$p < .01$
Condition	1.44 [0.35, 2.53]	0.55	2.62	$p = .01$
Conservative X Condition	-0.13 [-0.45, 0.20]	0.16	0.78	$p = .44$
National Party: Best interests				
Constant	0.10 [-0.59, 0.79]	0.35	0.28	$p = .78$
Leader trust	0.82 [0.66, 0.97]	0.08	10.53	$p < .01$
Condition	1.44 [0.41, 2.46]	0.52	2.79	$p = .01$
Leader trust X Condition	-0.22 [-0.44, 0.01]	0.11	1.89	$p = .06$
National Party: Leader Trust Time 2				
Constant	1.66 [0.91, 2.40]	0.38	4.38	$p < .01$
Conservative	0.59 [0.38, 0.81]	0.11	5.48	$p < .01$
Condition	1.68 [0.56, 2.80]	0.57	2.98	$p < .01$
Conservative X Condition	-0.34 [-0.67, -0.01]	0.17	2.01	$p = .05$
National Party: Leader Trust Time 2				
Constant	0.10 [-0.59, 0.79]	0.35	0.28	$p = .78$
Leader trust Time 1	0.82 [0.66, 0.97]	0.08	10.53	$p < .01$
Condition	1.44 [0.41, 2.46]	0.52	2.79	$p = .01$
Leader trust X Condition	-0.22 [-0.44, 0.10]	0.11	1.89	$p = .06$
National Party: Vote likeliness				
Constant	0.85 [0.09, 1.79]	0.47	1.79	$p = .08$
Conservative	0.81 [0.54, 1.08]	0.14	5.95	$p < .01$
Condition	1.33 [-0.08, 2.73]	0.71	1.87	$p = .06$
Conservative X Condition	-0.21 [-0.62, 0.21]	0.21	0.97	$p = .34$

Table 7 cont.

Unstandardized coefficients and confidence intervals for interaction between exposure to scandal and partisanship on party perceptions for the National Party.

	B [CI]	SE B	t	p
National Party: Vote likelihood				
Constant	-0.26 [-1.02, 0.50]	0.38	0.68	$p = .50$
Leader trust Time 3	1.03 [0.83, 1.23]	0.10	10.40	$p < .01$
Condition	-0.01 [-1.30, 1.23]	0.65	0.02	$p = .98$
Leader trust X Condition	-0.01 [-0.31, 0.31]	0.16	0.01	$p = .99$
National Party: Vote likelihood				
Constant	0.20 [-0.37, 0.77]	0.29	0.70	$p = .49$
Vote likelihood Time 1	0.86 [0.73, 0.99]	0.07	12.87	$p < .01$
Condition	0.74 [-0.14, 1.63]	0.45	1.67	$p = .10$
Vote likelihood X Condition	-0.92 [-0.30, 0.11]	0.10	0.89	$p = .38$

Figure 3. Interaction between condition and conservatism on trust towards the National Party leader.

Labour Party scandal. Table 8 shows the interaction of partisanship and exposure to the Labour Party scandal on opinions about the Labour Party. First, baseline trust towards the Labour Party leader accounted for a significant amount of variance in how trustworthy participants rated the Labour Party leader ($R^2 = .24$, $F(1, 85) = 26.86$, $p < .01$). The interaction between baseline trust and condition explained an additional 8% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .08$, $\Delta F(1, 83) = 10.16$, $p < .01$). The interaction is shown in Figure 4, and indicates that participants who showed greater trust towards the Labour Party leader at baseline displayed a decrease in trust when exposed to the scandal. Further, there was a tendency for those who showed low levels of trust at baseline to trust the Labour Party leader less after being exposed to the policy, rather than scandal, information.

Conservatism also explained a small but significant amount of variance in how likely participants indicated they would be to vote for the Labour Party ($R^2 = .08$, $F(1, 104) = 8.49$, $p < .01$). The interaction between conservatism and condition explained an additional 6% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .06$, $\Delta F(1, 102) = 7.39$, $p = .01$). Figure 5 shows that participants tended to display a greater likeliness to vote for Labour when given Labour Party policy, regardless of whether they were more liberal or conservative. More liberal participants stayed high even when exposed to the scandal. As with the previous scandals, it was the more conservative participants that appeared to be more affected by the scandal with higher levels of conservatism being associated with a decrease in likeliness to vote for the Labour Party when exposed to the scandal.

Table 8.

Unstandardized coefficients and confidence intervals for interaction between exposure to scandal and partisanship on party perceptions for the Labour Party.

	B [CI]	SE B	t	p
Labour Party: Leader Trust Time 4				
Constant	5.69 [4.92, 6.47]	0.39	14.66	$p < .01$
Conservative	-0.31 [-0.55, -0.07]	0.12	2.58	$p = .01$
Condition	-0.26 [-1.38, 0.86]	0.56	0.46	$p = .65$
Conservative X Condition	0.22 [-0.12, 0.56]	0.17	1.30	$p = .20$
Labour Party: Leader Trust Time 4				
Constant	3.69 [2.50, 4.89]	0.60	6.16	$p < .01$
Leader trust Time 1	0.27 [0.05, 0.49]	0.11	2.47	$p = .02$
Condition	-2.92 [-0.95, -0.88]	1.03	2.85	$p = .01$
Leader trust X Condition	0.64 [0.24, 1.04]	0.20	3.19	$p < .01$
Labour Party: Vote likeliness				
Constant	6.61 [5.68, 7.54]	0.47	14.09	$p < .01$
Conservative	-0.60 [-0.89, -0.31]	0.15	4.09	$p < .01$
Condition	-1.23 [-2.59, 0.12]	0.68	1.81	$p = .07$
Conservative X Condition	0.56 [0.15, 0.97]	0.21	2.72	$p = .01$
Labour Party: Vote likeliness				
Constant	0.54 [-0.71, 1.80]	0.63	0.89	$p = .39$
Leader trust Time 4	0.91 [0.67, 1.16]	0.13	7.29	$p < .01$
Condition	0.90 [-1.03, 2.83]	0.97	0.93	$p = .36$
Leader trust X Condition	-0.17 [-0.54, 0.20]	0.19	0.94	$p = .35$
Labour Party: Vote likeliness				
Constant	2.22 [1.05, 3.40]	0.59	3.75	$p < .01$
Vote likeliness Time 1	0.57 [0.34, 0.80]	0.12	4.92	$p < .01$
Condition	0.33 [-1.18, 1.85]	0.76	0.43	$p = .67$
Vote likeliness X Condition	0.02 [-0.28, 0.32]	0.15	0.11	$p = .91$

Figure 4. Interaction between condition and baseline trust towards the Labour Party leader on trust towards the leader at the time of the scandal.

Figure 5. Interaction between condition and conservatism on likelihood to vote for the Labour Party.

Knowledge. Participants were split into two groups to test if level of electoral knowledge had an influence on how participants responded to scandal information. Electoral knowledge was measured out of 7 with a mean slightly above the scale midpoint ($M = 4.53$, $SD = 1.39$). Thus, participants who scored a four or below were placed in the low knowledge group. Participants who scored a five or above were placed in the high knowledge group. A similar procedure was adopted by (Régner & Le Floch, 2005). There were 166 participants in the low knowledge group, and 171 in the high knowledge group.

Moderated regressions were conducted using likeliness to vote for a political party involved in a scandal, trust in the political party, and trust in the party leader as outcome variables. Baseline levels of trust and likeliness to vote were used as predictor variables. Only unstandardized coefficients and confidence intervals for significant interactions are included in Table 9.

Baseline trust towards the Green Party leader and condition predicted trust towards the leader at the time of the scandal condition in participants with high knowledge ($R^2 = .44$, $F(2, 45) = 17.51$, $p < .01$), but not low knowledge ($R^2 = .15$, $F(2, 32) = 2.92$, $p = .06$). The interaction between baseline leader trust and condition for those with high knowledge explained an additional 11% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .11$, $\Delta F(1, 44) = 17.51$, $p < .01$). Figure 6 shows that when participants with high levels of electoral knowledge were reminded of the scandal involving the Green Party co-leader, if they trusted her more at the beginning of the study, then they trusted her less after being exposed to the scandal. Participants with lower baseline trust trusted her less when exposed to Green Party policy.

Baseline trust towards the Labour Party leader and condition predicted trust towards the leader at the time of the scandal condition among participants with high knowledge ($R^2 = .30$, $F(2, 46) = 9.94$, $p < .01$), and low knowledge ($R^2 = .21$, $F(2, 35) = 4.52$, $p = .02$). Only the interaction between baseline leader trust and condition for those with high knowledge explained additional variance ($\Delta R^2 = .27$, $\Delta F(1, 45) = 28.93$, $p < .01$). Figure 7 shows that when participants with high levels of electoral knowledge were reminded of the scandal involving the Labour Party leader, if they trusted her more at the beginning of the study, then they trusted her less after being exposed to the scandal. Participants with lower baseline trust trusted her less when exposed to Labour Party policy.

Table 9.

Unstandardized coefficients and confidence intervals for interaction between exposure to scandal and baseline leader trust on leader trust at time of scandal split by knowledge.

	B [CI]	SE B	t	p
Green scandal				
High knowledge: Leader trust				
Constant	2.28 [0.94, 3.63]	0.67	3.42	$p < .01$
Leader trust baseline	0.30 [0.01, 0.59]	0.15	2.08	$p < .01$
Condition	-3.39 [-5.65, -1.13]	1.12	3.02	$p = .04$
Leader trust X Condition	0.79 [0.31, 1.26]	0.24	3.35	$p < .01$
Low knowledge: Leader trust				
Constant	2.30 [0.25, 4.35]	1.01	2.29	$p = .03$
Leader trust baseline	0.33 [-0.10, 0.75]	0.21	1.58	$p = .13$
Condition	-0.91 [-4.30, 2.48]	1.66	0.55	$p = .59$
Leader trust X Condition	0.11 [-0.62, 0.83]	0.36	0.29	$p = .77$
Labour scandal				
High knowledge: Leader trust				
Constant	4.39 [3.05, 5.74]	0.67	6.59	$p < .01$
Leader trust	0.20 [-0.06, 0.45]	0.13	1.56	$p < .01$
Condition	-6.08 [-8.40, -3.76]	1.15	5.27	$p = .13$
Leader trust X Condition	1.16 [0.72, 1.59]	0.22	5.38	$p < .01$
Low knowledge: Leader trust				
Constant	2.86 [0.64, 5.07]	1.09	2.62	$p = .01$
Conservative	0.39 [-0.01, 0.80]	0.20	0.43	$p = .06$
Condition	-0.76 [-4.34, 2.82]	1.76	1.96	$p = .67$
Conservative X Condition	0.27 [-0.47, 1.01]	0.37	0.74	$p = .46$

Figure 6. Interaction between condition and baseline trust towards the Green Party leader on trust towards the leader at the time of the scandal in participants with high levels of electoral knowledge.

Figure 7. Interaction between condition and baseline trust towards the Labour Party leader on trust towards the leader at the time of the scandal in participants with high levels of electoral knowledge.

Vote switching

While scandal information may not necessarily decrease a participant's likeliness to vote for the involved political party, they may still *consider* voting for a different party. The previous findings have suggested that even in cases where scandal has resulted in a loss of trust, this does not override partisanship preferences. One way in which participants may respond to a scandal is to consider switching their vote to an alternative party.

The correlations between partisanship and trust towards the political parties is shown in Table 10. Looking at the correlations between political parties is problematic as participants vary on how trusting they are in general. Participants who indicate higher trust towards one party are also likely to feel a little more trusting towards others. Using partisanship allows for investigating what participants understand the political ideology of a party to be. Trust towards a political party was used rather than likeliness to vote for that party because while a participant may support more than one party, their preference for that party could influence how they rate other parties. For example, while a participant may support both the Labour and Green parties equally, if they feel they are more likely to vote for Labour, they might give a low score for the Green Party simply because they have already decided to vote for Labour. Table 9 shows that support for National, Māori, ACT and United Future were all correlated with higher levels of self-reported conservatism. In comparison, support for Green was correlated with a more liberal ideology. More left-wing participants had higher trust towards New Zealand First and Māori, whereas more right-wing participants supported ACT.

Table 10.
Correlations between partisanship and trust towards political parties at baseline levels.

	Liberal Conservative	Right-wing Left-wing
National	.30**	.05
Labour	-.03	-.06
Green	-.22**	-.04
New Zealand First	.32**	.13*
Māori	.15*	.29*
ACT	.17*	-.27**
United Future	.27**	.03
TOP	.11	-.01

A Principal Components Analysis with Promax rotation was also conducted to further investigate whether participants' baseline levels of trust towards the different political parties might reveal a basic pattern.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .74 suggesting that a factor analysis may reveal an underlying structure. As a rule of thumb, .50 is considered the minimum for the appropriateness of conducting a factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(28) = 514.70, p < .01$) suggesting there were statistically consistent relationships between constellations of variables. The analysis revealed that the relationships between parties could be broken down into three components. The eigenvalue for component one was 3.34 and explained 41.77% of the variance. The second component had an eigenvalue of 1.23 with 15.36% additional variance explained. The final component with an eigenvalue of 1.03 with 12.88% additional variance explained parties. The rotated factor loadings are shown in Table 11.

Table 11.

Factor solution for trust towards the different political parties at baseline.

	Component 1	Component 2	Component 3
TOP	.88	-.37	.03
United Future	.74	.25	.01
ACT	.65	.07	.15
Māori	.61	.23	-.03
New Zealand First	.57	.46	-.14
National	.01	.88	.03
Green	.15	-.25	.88
Labour	-.11	.38	.81

Note: bolding indicates highest loading for each party.

Table 11 suggest that participants who supported the Green Party also tended to support Labour.

TOP, United Future, the Māori Party, and New Zealand First appeared to occupy a similar perceptual space in this sample which may be indicative of the fact that these are all smaller parties with many participants indicating they had not heard of them. National loaded onto its own component suggesting that it seemed to occupy an ideological space separate from Labour and Green. The PCA suggest that a potential Green voter disillusioned by a Green-involved scandal may be more likely to consider vote switching to the Labour party, rather than National, given trust perceptions of Labour and the Green Party are more strongly aligned. Disillusioned National voters to appear to have no obvious alternative. The correlations presented in Table 10 suggest New Zealand First, Māori, ACT, or United Future. However, a shared political ideology does not necessarily mean that voters will see that party as a viable alternative to their preferred party.³

³ The same conclusion could be drawn when looking at likeliness to vote for each political party instead of trust. The PCA for likeliness to vote revealed two components rather than three with likeliness to vote for TOP, Māori, New Zealand First, ACT and United Future loading onto component 1, and likeliness to vote for Labour and Green loading on component two with likeliness to vote National acting as a suppressor.

Labour and Green scandals. While there was no relationship between trust towards the Labour Party and liberalism, as trust towards Green and Labour both loaded onto the same component it is likely that participants who supported Labour would also support Green. Participants therefore exposed to the Green Party scandal may see Labour as a viable alternative and show an increase in their likeliness to vote for Labour. Trust towards the Green Party was positively correlated with likeliness to vote for Labour for the Green Party scandal ($r(164) = .34$, $p < .01$), and trust towards Labour at the time of the Labour Party scandal was positively correlated with likeliness to vote for the Green Party ($r(118) = .30$, $p < .01$).

Table 12 shows the interactions between party trust and condition on the likeliness that a participant would vote for a different (but ideologically similar) party. There were no significant interactions for the Labour Party scandal. For the Green Party scandal, trust towards the co-leader accounted for a significant amount of variance in how likely participants were to vote for Labour ($R^2 = .07$, $F(1, 162) = 12.66$, $p < .01$). The interaction between trust and condition explained an additional 3% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .03$, $\Delta F(1, 160) = 4.65$, $p = .03$). Figure 8 shows that participants who trusted the Green Party co-leader were just as likely to vote for Labour regardless of whether they were given a scandal or policy article. In comparison, participants who read the policy article and trusted the co-leader less showed a lower likeliness to vote for the Labour Party compared to those who read the scandal article. As there was no difference in responses in the scandal condition, this suggests a negative reaction to Green Party policy when participants did not trust the Green party co-leader. In this case, it appeared that the Labour Party's association with the Green Party resulted in participants who may not have liked the Green Party policy be less likely to support their potential coalition partner.

Table 12.

Unstandardized coefficients and confidence intervals for interaction between exposure to scandal and trust towards the involved party on likelihood to vote for an ideologically similar party.

	B [CI]	SE B	t	p
Green Party scandal				
Likelihood to vote Labour				
Constant	4.66 [1.17, 2.63]	0.54	8.62	$p < .01$
Green Party leader trust	0.06 [0.17, 0.59]	0.14	0.43	$p = .67$
Condition	-1.65 [0.35, 2.53]	0.69	2.39	$p = .02$
Leader trust X Condition	0.37 [-0.45, 0.20]	0.17	2.16	$p = .03$
Likelihood to vote Labour				
Constant	3.82 [2.55, 5.08]	0.64	5.97	$p < .01$
Green Party trust	0.24 [-0.03, 0.51]	0.14	1.76	$p = .08$
Condition	-1.42 [-3.05, 0.21]	0.83	1.72	$p = .09$
Party trust X Condition	0.26 [-0.09, 0.60]	0.17	1.47	$p = .14$
Labour Party scandal				
Likelihood to vote Green				
Constant	1.44 [-0.28, 3.16]	0.87	1.66	$p = .10$
Labour Party leader trust	0.56 [0.22, 0.90]	0.17	3.25	$p < .01$
Condition	0.54 [-2.10, 3.18]	1.33	0.41	$p = .69$
Leader trust X Condition	-0.11 [-0.62, 0.39]	0.26	0.44	$p = .66$
Likelihood to vote Green				
Constant	2.57 [0.98, 4.16]	0.80	3.21	$p < .01$
Labour Party trust	0.34 [0.01, 0.67]	0.17	2.06	$p = .04$
Condition	-0.03 [-2.63, 2.58]	1.31	0.02	$p = .98$
Party trust X Condition	0.01 [-0.51, 0.53]	0.26	0.04	$p = .97$

Figure 8. Interaction between condition and trust towards the Green Party co-leader on likelihood to vote Labour.

National party scandal. Despite there being no clear alternative to a disillusioned National voter, trust towards National did share significant ideological correlations with ACT, United Future, New Zealand First, and Māori parties. ACT, United Future, New Zealand First, TOP, and the Māori parties all had high incidences of participants giving an 'unsure' response when asked how trustworthy the parties were, suggesting a lack of familiarity with these parties which is a potential reason why they did not load strongly onto another component on the PCA. As levels of conservatism could predict how participants might feel towards ACT, United Future, New Zealand First, and Māori, they were all considered potential alternatives to voting National. For the National Party scandal survey, likelihood to vote for the National Party was correlated positively with trust towards New Zealand First ($r(117) = .33, p < .01$), United Future ($r(117) = .28, p < .01$), and ACT ($r(118) = .41, p < .01$). Their scores were combined rather than looking at each party separately as it would be difficult to determine why one participant would

choose one potential coalition partner over another. The interaction between scandal exposure and perceptions of the National Party on likeliness to vote for New Zealand First, United Future, or ACT as viable alternatives is shown in Table 13. Trust towards the National Party leader at the time of the scandal accounted for a significant amount of variance on how likely participants were to vote for an alternative party ($R^2 = .22$, $F(1, 115) = 32.05$, $p < .01$). The interaction between party trust and condition explained an additional 3% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .03$, $\Delta F(1, 113) = 4.09$, $p = .05$). As shown in Figure 9, participants who showed less trust to the National Party leader after being exposed to the scandal were less likely to vote for a party considered a potential coalition partner compared to participants whose trust towards National remained high. Unlike the Green Party scandal which found the policy was considered more negative, Figure 9 shows that it was the scandal information that was perceived as being more negative. However, as with the Green Party scandal, it was the participants who already showed less trust towards National that were more affected by the negative information.⁴

⁴ Likeliness to vote for New Zealand First, United Future, and ACT as outcome variables were looked at individually. However, no significant interactions were found. The interaction was only seen when the parties were combined into a single variable.

Table 13.

Unstandardized coefficients and confidence intervals for interaction between exposure to National Party scandal and trust towards the National Party on likelihood to vote for an ideologically similar party.

	B [CI]	SE B	t	p
Likelihood to vote				
Constant	1.98 [1.44, 2.52]	0.27	7.25	$p < .01$
National Party trust	0.35 [0.22, 0.49]	0.07	5.19	$p < .01$
Condition	0.55 [-0.34, 1.43]	0.45	1.22	$p = .22$
Party trust X Condition	-0.13 [-0.33, 0.08]	0.10	1.21	$p = .23$
Likelihood to vote				
Constant	1.97 [2.55, 5.08]	0.26	7.60	$p < .01$
National Party leader trust	0.37 [-0.03, 0.51]	0.07	5.59	$p < .01$
Condition	0.86 [-3.05, 0.21]	0.44	1.96	$p = .05$
Party trust X Condition	-0.21 [-0.09, 0.60]	0.11	2.02	$p = .05$

Figure 9. Interaction between condition and trust towards the Green Party co-leader on likelihood to vote Labour.

Post-election

Table 14 shows the relationship between the number of details that participants could recall in the final survey for each of the scandals. The majority of participants indicated that they were familiar with the scandal and it was the scandal which on average participants could recall the most details about. About half of the participants recalled the National Party scandal but could only recall one to two facts about it. Only a third of participants were aware of the Labour Party scandal and the number of details participants could recall was very low with many not being able to correctly recall anything about the scandal. Overall, the number of details that could be recalled was low.

The number of details that could be recalled for each scandal was not correlated with trust towards any of the political parties or leaders. It was also not correlated with participants' likeliness to vote. There was one notable exception with participants who could recall more details about the Green and National Party scandal showed lower levels of trust towards New Zealand First leader Winston Peters. A significant negative correlation was not seen between trust towards Peters and recall of the Labour Party scandal. However, this could be due to the number of details participants could recall about the Labour Party scandal being low.

When the data for the final survey was collected, New Zealand First held the balance of power in deciding who would form the new Government. It is possible that the outcome of the election may have caused some voters to reconsider who they voted for. Consistent with the findings from the baseline data, participants who indicated they were more likely to vote for New Zealand First were also more likely to vote for the National Party ($r(86) = .36, p < .01$), ACT ($r(86) = .30, p < .01$), and United Future ($r(86) = .23, p = .04$). They were also less likely to vote

for the Green Party ($r(86) = -.27, p = .01$). No correlation with the Labour Party was found ($r(86) = -.06, p = .61$).

Table 14.

Correlations between the number of details recalled for each scandal with perceptions of political parties and leaders.

		Scandal recall			
Trust		Lab	Nat	Green	Total
	Labour	-.10	-.12	-.20	-.18
	National	-.09	-.20	-.18	-.22*
	NZF	-.04	-.11	-.10	-.11
	Green	-.03	.01	.01	-.01
Likeliness					
	Labour	-.19	-.20	-.36**	-.32**
	National	-.20	-.11	-.13	-.12
	NZF	-.14	-.13	-.10	-.14
	Green	.07	.09	.16	.15
Leader trust					
	Ardern	-.16	-.16	-.17	-.20
	English	-.06	-.15	-.19	-.18
	Turei	.02	-.07	-.06	-.06
	Shaw	.11	.10	.13	.14
	Peters	-.05	-.22*	-.24*	-.23*
	Mean	0.45	1.22	2.13	3.78
	SD	1.05	1.74	1.95	1.96
	Recall – yes	30	46	77	
	Recall – no	58	42	11	

*Note: NZF = New Zealand First. * $<.05$, ** $<.01$*

Scandal on media trust

The moderated regressions did not show that participants were likely to change their vote depending on the kind of news information that they received. Participants who were committed to supporting a political party remained committed despite negative information. If exposure to scandal does not influence how people feel about political parties, then participants must either be disregarding the information or discrediting the source. Table 15 shows how participants felt about the media after being exposed to a news article, consistently showing that those in the scandal condition considered the scandal article to be more biased than the policy article. While bias should be seen for the Green Party and National Party scandals, due to both articles being press releases written by an opposing political party, the Labour Party scandal article was written by a journalist and in theory should have been less biased against the Labour Party. Only in the case of the Green Party scandal was a loss of trust towards the media in general seen. Bias was slightly above the mean for all policy articles suggesting a slight perception of bias in favour of the party.

Table 15 shows the correlations between trust towards the media, article bias, trust towards the party and its leader at the time of the scandal, and partisanship. As with the relationship between partisanship and trust measures, the right-left dimension of political ideology was not a good predictor. The extent to which the participant identified as liberal or conservative, however, was. Table 16 shows that participants who were more conservative saw the media article as more biased in favour of the Green and Labour parties at the time of the scandal. In comparison, more liberal participants saw the media as being more biased towards the National Party at the time of the scandal. For the Labour Party scandal, greater media trust was correlated with greater trust towards the Labour Party and its leader. Greater media trust was

also associated with greater trust towards the Green Party leader. No relationships were seen between perceptions of the media and trust towards the National Party.

Table 15.

Means, standard deviations for media perceptions in response to scandal information.

Scandal	Variable	Condition	N	Mean (SD)	df	t	p
Green	Media trust	Scandal	52	3.16 (0.95)	101	4.50	< .01
		Policy	51	3.90 (0.71)			
	Article bias	Scandal	48	2.50 (1.19)	94	10.58	<.01
		Policy	48	4.96 (1.09)			
National	Media trust	Scandal	63	3.56 (0.89)	117	0.94	.93
		Policy	56	3.55 (0.89)			
	Article bias	Scandal	59	2.80 (1.37)	110	8.87	< .01
		Policy	53	4.87 (1.06)			
Labour	Media trust	Scandal	55	3.53 (0.84)	104	0.96	.34
		Policy	51	3.69 (0.87)			
	Article bias	Scandal	50	3.20 (1.36)	95	7.58	< .01
		Policy	47	4.98 (0.90)			

Table 16.

Correlations between partisanship and trust towards the media and political parties at the time of the scandal.

	Party trust		Leader trust		Right Left	Liberal Conservative
	Baseline	Scandal	Baseline	Scandal		
Green Time 2						
Media trust	.08	.13	.13	.17*	.01	.10
Article bias	.13	.09	.15	.09	.16	.18*
National Time 3						
Media trust	.12	.03	.12	.03	.10	-.04
Article bias	.01	.09	-.06	.16	-.07	-.20*
Labour Time 4						
Media trust	.28**	.27**	.23*	.29**	.11	.10
Article bias	-.01	.04	-.04	.08	-.07	.21*

Note: * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$

Table 17.

Unstandardized coefficients and confidence intervals for interaction between exposure to scandal and partisanship on perception of media bias.

	B [CI]	SE B	t	p
Green Party scandal: Article bias				
Constant	2.12 [1.45, 2.80]	0.34	6.25	$p < .01$
Conservative	0.17 [-0.07, 0.40]	0.12	1.42	$p = .16$
Condition	2.54 [1.73, 3.35]	0.41	6.22	$p < .01$
Conservative X Condition	-0.11 [-0.37, 0.15]	0.13	0.87	$p = .39$
Green Party scandal: Article bias				
Constant	0.94 [-0.30, 1.91]	0.49	1.92	$p = .06$
Baseline trust in Media	0.52 [0.22, 0.81]	0.15	3.46	$p < .01$
Condition	3.95 [2.69, 5.22]	0.64	6.17	$p < .01$
Media trust X Condition	-0.53 [-0.90, -0.16]	0.19	2.80	$p = .01$

Table 17 cont.

Unstandardized coefficients and confidence intervals for interaction between exposure to scandal and partisanship on perception of media bias.

	B [CI]	SE B	t	p
National Party scandal: Article bias				
Constant	3.37 [2.68, 4.07]	0.35	9.52	$p < .01$
Conservative	-0.19 [-0.41, 0.02]	0.11	1.80	$p = .08$
Condition	2.08 [1.13, 3.02]	0.48	4.37	$p < .01$
Conservative X Condition	-0.01 [-0.29, 0.27]	0.14	0.07	$p = .95$
Labour Party scandal: Article bias				
Constant	2.33 [1.61, 3.06]	0.36	6.40	$p < .01$
Conservative	0.32 [0.08, 0.55]	0.12	2.69	$p = .01$
Condition	2.44 [1.51, 3.36]	0.47	5.24	$p < .01$
Conservative X Condition	-0.24 [-0.52, 0.04]	0.14	1.70	$p = .09$
Labour Party scandal: Media trust				
Constant	3.30 [2.46, 4.15]	0.42	7.81	$p < .01$
Baseline trust in Labour leader	0.06 [-0.95, 0.22]	0.08	0.79	$p = .43$
Condition	-0.97 [-2.35, 0.41]	0.70	1.40	$p = .17$
Baseline trust X Condition	0.22 [-0.05, 0.49]	0.14	1.64	$p = .10$
Labour Party scandal: Media trust				
Constant	3.37 [2.68, 4.06]	0.35	9.69	$p < .01$
Baseline Labour Party trust	0.04 [-.10, 0.18]	0.07	0.52	$p = .60$
Condition	-0.85 [-1.73, 0.04]	0.44	1.90	$p = .06$
Baseline trust X Condition	0.24 [0.05, 0.42]	0.10	2.46	$p = .02$

Baseline levels of trust towards the Labour Party accounted for a significant amount of variance on how much participants trusted the media at the time of the scandal ($R^2 = .08$, $F(1, 103) = 8.44$, $p = .01$). The interaction between party trust and condition explained an additional 5% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .05$, $\Delta F(1, 101) = 6.05$, $p = .02$). Figure 10 shows that when

participants with high baseline trust towards the Labour Party were asked to read about Labour Party policy, they showed higher levels of media trust compared to those who read the scandal article. It also appeared that those who started off trusting Labour less may have displayed some loss of trust towards the media when asked to read about policy. Table 17 showed that there was no significant difference in media trust between the scandal and policy conditions for the Labour Party scandal. The interaction seen in Figure 10 suggests that a loss of trust depended on prior perceptions of the Labour Party.

Figure 10. Interaction between exposure to a Labour Party scandal or policy with trust towards the Labour Party leader at baseline on level of trust towards the media at the time of the scandal.

Media trust and article bias. A significant difference in trust towards the media was seen for the Green Party scandal with participants given the scandal article rating the media as being less trustworthy compared to participants given the policy article. Table 15 shows no significant

relationships between media trust and political partisanship prior to the scandal becoming prominent in the media.

While there was a significant difference in trust towards the media between conditions for the Green Party scandal (see Table 15), there was no indication that this was related to partisanship. However, there was a positive correlation between perceived bias of the article and trust in the media. Overall, participants who trusted the media more were more likely to see the article as biased towards the Green Party. Baseline levels of trust towards the media and condition accounted for a significant amount of variance on how much participants saw media bias when reporting on the Green Party scandal ($R^2 = .50$, $F(1, 146) = 139.77$, $p < .01$). The interaction between media trust and condition explained an additional 3% of the variance ($\Delta R^2 = .03$, $\Delta F(1, 145) = 7.81$, $p = .01$). Figure 11 shows participants who displayed lower trust towards the media when in the scandal condition saw the article as being more biased against the Green Party. Comparatively, those with more trust in the media saw the scandal article as being more biased towards the Green Party, despite being written by a rival political party.

Figure 11. Interaction between exposure to a Green Party scandal or policy with perception of article bias on level of trust in the media at the time of the scandal.

Scandal exposure and intention to vote.

Table 18 shows the means and standard deviations for voting intention (for the Green Party, National Party, and Labour Party) at each time point based on condition. Intention to vote was consistently high with participants indicating that they were likely to vote in the upcoming election regardless of whether they had been exposed to a political scandal or not. There were no significant differences in vote intention between conditions. Intention to vote did appear to increase over time. While this could be due to the retention of participants who were more politically engaged, the same trend was found when looking only at participants who stayed with the study until the final survey.

Table 18.

Means and standard deviations for vote intention at each time point based on condition

Scandal	Condition	N	Mean (SD)	df	t	p
Green	Scandal	55	6.95 (1.85)	104	0.10	$p = .92$
	Policy	51	6.98 (1.63)			
National	Scandal	63	7.22 (1.78)	117	1.43	$p = .16$
	Policy	56	6.73 (1.07)			
Labour	Scandal	56	7.29 (1.67)	104	0.66	$p = .51$
	Policy	50	7.06 (1.85)			

Summary of results

Voting behaviour in response to scandal. Exposure to scandal information in a news article on its own overall did not influence how participants viewed the involved political party or leader. Further, it did not affect their vote. It was found that participants responded differently to news information depending on partisanship and prior perceptions of political parties. More Liberal participants tended to show lower levels of trust towards the Green Party co-leader and

the Labour Party when exposed to scandal information involving that political party. More Liberal participants also responded more negatively to National Party policy. In comparison, more Conservative participants showed lower trust to the National Party co-leader when exposed to the National Party scandal, but lower levels of trust towards the Green Party co-leader when exposed to Green Party policy information, and lower trust towards the Labour Party when exposed to Labour Party policy.

These relationships did seem in part dependent on electoral knowledge (political sophistication), however. Participants who initially had high trust towards the Green Party co-leader only showed lower trust towards her when exposed to the Green Party scandal if they had greater levels of political sophistication. Further, only those with greater sophistication trusted her less after exposure to Green Party policy if they initially had lower baseline trust. This effect was also found for the Labour Party scandal, but not for the National Party.

Overall, it did not appear that exposure to scandal resulted in participants deciding to change their vote. Participants that were given Green Party policy were less likely to vote for the Labour Party (a potential coalition partner) if they did not trust the Green Party co-leader. However, these were participants that were already unlikely to vote for the Labour Party. Participants given National Party policy were less likely to vote for one of the minor parties (who were potential National coalition partners) if they did not trust the National Party. However, again, these were participants that were already unlikely to vote for a minor party.

Media perceptions in response to scandal. As expected, participants tended to view scandal articles as more bias against the involved political party in comparison to policy articles. However, there were partisan effects with more liberal participants viewing news articles as being more biased against the Labour and Green Parties, and more conservative participants

viewing news articles as being more biased against the National Party. Only in the case of the Green Party scandal was a loss of trust towards the media seen. Further, those in the scandal condition who trusted the media less also viewed the article as being more biased *against* the Green Party, and those in the policy condition who trusted the media less viewed the news article as being more biased *towards* the Green Party. While no overall loss of trust towards the media was seen in participants who were exposed to the Labour Party scandal, it was found that participants who trusted Labour more also trusted the media more when given Labour Policy to read.

Study Two

Study Two was conducted to investigate the influence the change in Government could have on voters' perceptions of political parties and the political system as influenced by information present in the media that participants may have been exposed to. One problem that emerged with Study One was that the high rate of attrition meant the sample size for the final survey was too small to realistically look at differences between how people voted in the General Election. A second problem with Study One was that the number of details that could be recalled for the scandals at the final survey was low. This was partly due to the scandal chosen for the Labour Party. The scandal chosen for the Labour Party in Study One involved hiding campaign donations in art auctions. This story did not receive as much media attention as the National and Green Party scandals but was chosen because it was a story current in the media at the time the data was collected. The story about Labour using unpaid overseas interns received higher media attention, but occurred before the campaign period for the General Election. As Study Two looked at voting behaviour after the election rather than how people responded to a scandal at the

time it occurred in news media, the story about the use of unpaid overseas interns could be used. Study Two also included measures of internal and external efficacy.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited via social media websites Facebook and Twitter. One-hundred and fifty-three people responded to the survey. After removing participants that stopped before completion, the final sample included one-hundred and seventeen people who were eligible to vote in the general election. The age, gender, and ethnicity for participants is presented in Table 19. The average age for participants was older than that of the Study One with wider variation. About 50% of the sample was female, and the sample was predominantly New Zealand European.

Table 19
Demographics for Study Two.

	M (SD)
Age	36.58 (14.48)
	Percentage
Gender	
Male	45.7
Female	52.6
Non-binary	0.9
Ethnicity	
NZ Euro/Pakeha	81.9
NZ Māori	0.9
Pasifika	0.9
Asian	1.7
Other	12.1

Measures

As well as demographic questions, the survey included the following measures:

Political knowledge. Questions from the New Zealand Election Study were used to assess participants' general knowledge of New Zealand's electoral system (Karp, 2006). This includes seven forced-choice true/false questions. Example items include "*The party with the most votes is more likely to get the most seats under Mixed Member Proportional than under First Past the Post*" and "*The party votes usually decide the total number of seats each party gets in parliament*".

Partisanship. Perceived trustworthiness of specific political parties was measured by asking participants to indicate how trusting they felt towards specific New Zealand political parties (National, Labour, Green, New Zealand First, Māori, ACT, and United Future), and their leaders, on a 1 (very untrustworthy) to 7 (very trustworthy) Likert scale. There was also an option to indicate that the participant had not heard of the political party or the political leader.

As a measure of political ideology, participants were also asked to indicate how liberal or conservative they identified their political views on a 1 (Liberal) to 7 (Conservative) scale, and how left-wing or right-wing they identified with 1 indicating right-wing and 7 indicating left-wing. These questions are commonly asked in research on political behaviour, including in New Zealand (citations).

Voting behaviour. Participants were asked if they voted in the General Election. If they selected yes, they were then asked "*what party did you give your party vote to?*" Participants were reminded that it was a confidential survey and that their response would not be recorded with any identifying information.

Participants were also asked to indicate how likely they would be to vote for National, Labour, Green, New Zealand First, Māori, ACT, and United Future parties using a 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely) scale.

Media trustworthiness. Trust in the media was measured using the same four-item scale used in Study One. Reliability analyses were conducted at each time point in Study One showing that on average, the scale had acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .75$). The four items included: *“Journalists report the news fairly”*, *“Most journalists are unbiased”*, *“The media is concerned with community’s well-being”*, and the reverse-scored *“Mainstream media are only concerned about making profits”*. Participants were asked to indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with each item from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Efficacy. Efficacy was measured on a six-item Likert scale developed by Craig, Niemi, and Silver (1990). Items are rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Craig et al. state that efficacy should be treated as two components as internal efficacy encapsulates how confident a person feels about the ability to engage in politics, whereas external efficacy is understood to be how much a person thinks the average voter can influence politicians and policy. There were three items on the internal efficacy subscale, an example being *“I think I am as well-informed about politics and government as most people”*. An example item from the three-item subscale of external efficacy was *“Under our form of government, the people have the final say about how our country is run”*.

Scandals. Scandals asked about included two of the same scandals used in Study 1: The National Party scandal involving Todd Barclay and the illegal recording of a staff member, and the Green Party scandal involving Metiria Turei disclosing benefit fraud. The third scandal included the Labour Party’s use of overseas students for campaigning purposes earlier in the

year. This study was included in place of the one regarding potential campaign funding fraud. This was because the use of the overseas students would likely be more well-known. There were initial concerns about using this scandal in Study One as it had occurred earlier in the year before there had been a change in leadership of the Labour Party. When the data was collected for the National and Green Party scandals, the scandals were both heavily present in the media. It was therefore decided to use a scandal that was also present in the media for the Labour Party at the time of data collection. This was less of a concern for Study 2 as data was collected well after the election.

Procedure

Ethical approval for this research was provided by the School of Psychology Human Ethics Committee under delegated authority of the National Health and Disability Ethics Committee (RM# 0000024372).

The data was collected the week after New Zealand First Party leader, Winston Peters, stated that he would be going into coalition with the Labour Party resulting in the formation of a minority Labour Party led Government with New Zealand First and the Green Party. The survey was open for two weeks. As compensation, participants went into the draw to win one of five double movie vouchers. Participants did not have to complete the survey in order to go into the draw. Participants were asked to provide their email address if they wished to enter the draw.

Participants were recruited via posts made on Facebook and Twitter. This can be problematic due to potential for homogenous samples. However, this is a risk that also exists for participants recruited from primarily undergraduate psychology classes at a single University, or participants recruited from a single media source. People were encouraged to share the survey via their own Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Results

Trust in different political parties

One problem in looking at the effects of scandal information on perceptions of political parties is that voters who indicate high trust in one political party are likely to also indicate high trust towards political parties they see as being related. This means that a participant may respond to a scandal of a particular party due to its association with another one. To investigate this, a Principal Components Analysis with Promax rotation was conducted. There was no missing data. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .65 suggesting that a factor analysis may reveal an underlying structure. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(28) = 335.75, p < .01$) suggesting there were relationships between variables. The analysis showed that the relationships between parties could be broken down into two factors. The eigenvalue for component one was 2.59 and explained 32.19% of the variance, and 2.40 for component two with 30.05% variance explained. The eigenvalue for a third component was 0.82 with only 10.24% additional variance explained. Two components also made theoretical sense. As Table 20 shows, the first component includes Green, Labour, New Zealand First, and The Opportunities Party. Green, Labour, and New Zealand First make up the current Government. The second component includes ACT, United Future, and National. These parties formed the previous Government. Based on the results of the factor analysis, two new variables were made to represent trust towards the Government (Labour, Greens, and New Zealand First), and trust towards the Opposition (National, and ACT). The Māori Party loaded on both components. They had been in coalition with the previous Government which is likely why a strong relationship would be seen between the Māori Party and component two. However, it is a party that grew

from the Labour Party so potentially could be viewed as ideologically closer to those in component one. It was therefore not included in either of the new variables.

Table 21 shows the average levels of trust towards each of the political parties, as well as trust towards the Government and Opposition. Table 21 also includes the correlations between scandal recall and the trust measures.

Table 20.

Factor solution for trust towards political parties.

	Component 1	Component 2
Green	.87	-.06
Labour	.86	-.07
New Zealand First	.68	-.08
The Opportunities Party	.57	.30
ACT	-.14	.84
United Future	.16	.82
National	-.28	.76
The Māori Party	.41	.59

Note: Bolded text indicates highest loading for each party.

Table 21.

Correlations between trust towards political parties in Parliament and number of details recalled for each scandal.

	Trust							Scandal recall			
	Lab	Nat	NZF	Greens	ACT	Gov	Opp	Lab	Nat	Green	Total
Labour	-	-.14	.51**	.76**	-.20*	.91**	-.19*	-.28*	-.08	-.03	-.15
National	-	-	-.14	-.29**	.63**	-.23*	.91**	.01	-.12	-.11	-.09
NZF	-	-	-	.43**	-.06	.73**	-.12	-.17	.03	-.09	-.09
Greens	-	-	-	-	-.12	.89**	-.22*	-.13	.08	.14	.04
ACT	-	-	-	-	-	-.15	.90**	.08	.03	-.03	-.09
Government	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.21*	-.23*	.01	.02	-.08
Opposition	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.05	-.05	-.08	-.04
Mean	4.10	3.66	2.83	4.19	3.52	3.71	3.60	1.60	2.28	2.72	6.60
SD	1.95	1.98	1.62	2.04	1.90	1.59	1.75	1.79	1.95	1.69	4.57

*Note: N = 116, * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .01$*

Effects of scandal recall on trust

Recall was measured by asking participants if they recalled hearing about the scandal in the media. If participants indicated that they had heard about the scandal, they were asked to recall details about the scandal. There was space for participants to provide up to five details. Only correctly recalled details were included. The Green Party was the most commonly recalled scandal with 113 out of 116 participants indicating that they had heard about it. The National Party scandal was the next most commonly recalled with 102 out of 116. Finally, the Labour Party scandal was the scandal that participants were least likely to have heard about with 78 out of 116 indicating that they had heard about the scandal. Table 21 shows that more details could be recalled about the Green Party scandal, followed by National, and finally Labour. Overall, the number of details that participants could recall was low. As there were few participants who had

not heard about the National and Green Party scandals, influence of scandal recall on party trust and general political opinion was measured using number of details correctly recalled rather than whether the participant recalled the scandal or not.

Table 21 shows that the number of details that could be recalled for each scandal was not correlated with trust towards political parties, with one exception. Participants who recalled more details about the Labour Party scandal were also less likely to trust the Labour Party. While it could be that participants who were aware of the Labour Party scandal trusted the Labour Party less, and by extension the current Government, a likely possibility is that participants in this study who distrusted the Labour Party were more likely to attend to and therefore recall negative information about them.

Partisanship should be less influenced by negative news media. If the participants who recall more details about the scandal are also more likely to be right-wing or conservative, this would suggest that the relationship between recall and trust is due to attending to negative information about a party that a person does not like.

A moderated regression was used to investigate the relationship between partisanship, Labour Party scandal recall, and trust towards the Labour Party. The unstandardized coefficients are shown in Table 22. Conservatism and number of details recalled for the Labour Party scandal did account for a significant amount of variance on how much participants trusted the Labour Party ($R^2 = .37$, $F(1, 113) = 33.11$, $p < .01$). However, there was no interaction between the two ($\Delta R^2 = .01$, $\Delta F(1, 112) = 0.29$, $p = .59$). This suggests that participants who could recall more details about the Labour Party scandal and trusted Labour less did not do so simply because they were more conservative.

Right-wing ideology and number of details recalled for the Labour Party scandal accounted for a significant amount of variance on how much participants trusted the Labour Party ($R^2 = .34$, $F(1, 112) = 28.37$, $p < .01$). Additional variance of 3% could be explained by the interaction term ($\Delta R^2 = .03$, $\Delta F(1, 111) = 6.02$, $p = .02$). Figure 12 shows that for more right-wing participants, it did not matter how many details they recalled about the Labour Party scandal, their trust towards them remained low. For participants who identified as more left-wing, their trust towards the Labour Party decreased as the number of details recalled increased. As partisanship should be reasonably stable over time, this suggests that participants who originally may have supported the Labour Party were negatively affected by the presence of the Labour Party scandal. This means that the negative relationship between the number of details recalled and trust towards the Labour Party was unlikely to be due solely to more right-wing participants attending to scandal information whereas the more left-wing participants do not.

Table 22.

Unstandardized coefficients and confidence intervals for interaction between exposure to scandal and partisanship on trust towards the Labour Party.

	B [CI]	SE B	t	p
Liberal – Conservative				
Constant	6.75 [5.89, 7.60]	0.43	15.65	$p < .01$
Scandal recall	-0.42 [-0.74, -0.11]	0.16	2.65	$p = .01$
Partisanship	-0.64 [-0.87, -0.41]	0.12	5.44	$p < .01$
Partisanship X Recall	0.03 [-0.07, 0.12]	0.05	0.54	$p = .60$
Right-wing – Left-wing				
Constant	1.28 [0.21, 2.35]	0.54	2.37	$p = .02$
Scandal recall	0.18 [-0.25, 0.61]	0.22	0.82	$p = .41$
Partisanship	0.76 [0.53, 0.99]	0.12	6.58	$p < .01$
Partisanship X Recall	-0.11 [-0.20, -0.02]	0.05	2.45	$p = .02$

Figure 11. Interaction between the numbers of details recalled about the Labour Party scandal and how left-wing participants identified on trust towards the Labour Party. Low = right-wing, Med = neutral, High = left-wing.

Scandal recall on party vote

The number of participants that voted, and how they voted, is shown in Table 23. Almost everyone in the sample voted. The Green Party received the largest share of the vote, followed by National, then Labour. As the numbers were low, the number of party votes received by minor parties were merged into a single variable.

A one-way ANOVA was run to investigate if scandal recall had an influence on who the participants voted for. Due to the small sample sizes, participants who voted for a political party other than Labour, National, or Green were merged together. Table 24 shows the average number of correctly recalled details out of five for each of the political parties organised by who participants gave their party vote to.

Homogeneity tests using Levene's F test were acceptable for both recall of the Green Party scandal ($F(3,112) = 1.65, p = .18$) and the Labour Party scandal ($F(3,112) = 1.66, p = .18$), but not for the National Party scandal ($F(3,112) = 5.02, p < .01$). No significant differences were found for the number of details recalled for the Labour ($F(3,112) = .61, p = .61$) or National ($F(3,112) = 1.83, p = .15$) Party scandals. However, there were differences for the Green Party scandal ($F(3,112) = 5.78, p < .01$). Comparisons were made based on 1000 bootstrap samples, due to a small sample size, showing that participants who voted for the Green Party recalled more details about the Green Party scandal compared to participants that voted for any other party.

Table 23.
Voting behaviour in percentages.

	Voted		Advanced voted		Political party			
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Labour	National	Greens	Other
Percentage	94.8	5.2	62.9	31.9	18.1	27.6	30.2	24.1

Table 24.
Means and standard deviations of details recalled for each scandal organised by party vote.

	Green scandal	Labour scandal	National scandal
Labour	2.24 (1.48)	1.24 (1.70)	2.43 (2.06)
National	2.34 (1.62)	1.63 (1.66)	1.72 (1.59)
Green	3.66 (1.41)	1.89 (2.04)	2.80 (1.86)
Other	2.36 (1.83)	1.50 (1.71)	2.14 (2.26)
Total	2.72 (1.69)	1.60 (1.79)	2.28 (1.95)

Scandal recall and media trust

In Study One, participants who initially supported the Green Party showed a loss of trust towards the media when presented with the Green Party scandal which may explain why they

continued to support the Green Party. Given that Green Party voters in this sample were aware of the scandal, this means they would have had to discount the information when deciding who to vote for. While Table 4 shows that trust towards the media was generally low, a one-way ANOVA showed there were significant differences in media trust depending on who participants voted for ($F(3, 111) = 3.47, p = .02$). The only significant difference was between National and Green with the Green Party showing higher levels of trust towards the media ($M = 3.51, SD = 1.28$) than National ($M = 2.63, SD = 1.02$). This means that, at least after the election, people who voted Green felt more trusting towards the media, however this is likely linked to a generally more positive outlook due to the election outcome. This would also explain why those who voted National showed a loss of trust towards the media indicating a more despondent view.

Scandal and attitudes towards government

The means, standard deviations, and relationships between scandal recall and attitudes towards the government are presented in Table 25. Overall, participants in this study indicated slightly above average levels of efficacy indicating that there was a tendency to think that voting was effective. As with Study 1, participants also showed higher than average levels of electoral knowledge, and trust towards the media in general tended to be low. Significant positive correlations were found between scandal recall and efficacy, however, only for internal efficacy. Only recall of the Green Party scandal was positively correlated with external efficacy. This indicates that those who had more knowledge of political scandals in New Zealand also felt that they were more qualified to participate in New Zealand politics. In the case of the Green Party scandal, those who recalled more details were also more likely to think that it was easier to have influence in politics.

Table 25.

Means, standard deviations, and correlations between party vote and political attitudes.

Party Vote	N	Efficacy			Media Trust
		Internal	External	Total	
Labour	21	4.65 (1.14)	4.62 (1.12)	4.63 (0.80)	3.32 (0.75)
National	32	5.45 (1.10)	3.99 (1.24)	4.72 (1.03)	2.63 (1.02)
Greens	35	5.76 (0.88)	4.95 (0.90)	5.36 (0.73)	3.51 (1.28)
Other	28	5.57 (0.88)	4.30 (1.42)	4.93 (0.98)	3.08 (1.37)
Total	116	5.43 (1.07)	4.47 (1.22)	4.95 (0.93)	3.13 (1.19)

One of the reasons why participants would show higher internal efficacy is because they score more highly on political sophistication and therefore are more are potentially more qualified to participate in politics. As Table 26 shows, this was not the case. However, political sophistication was positively correlated with external efficacy. Those higher in electoral knowledge thought it was easier to make a difference in politics. Due to their being a change in government after the general election, as expected, participants who had more positive feelings towards political parties that formed the current government also had higher external efficacy. No relationship was found between those who had more positive feelings towards the opposition parties and efficacy.

This would suggest that in order for people to feel qualified about participating in politics, they need to have more information about political parties. This is consistent with research that has shown that scandal information does provide information about political parties and make voters feel informed. Articles on the moral behaviour of politicians tell people about the party, and the moral values of the opposition.

Table 26.

Means, standard deviations, and correlations between scandal recall and attitudes towards government

	Efficacy					Trust		
	Int	Ext	Total	Con	Know	Media	Gov	Opp
Efficacy								
Internal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
External	.32**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	.79**	.84**	-	-	-	-	-	-
Knowledge	.13	.27**	.25**	-.25**	-	-	-	-
Trust								
Media	.02	.27**	.19*	-.31**	.21*	-	-	-
Government	-.09	.29**	.14	.07	-.07	.41**	-	-
Opposition	.10	.13	.14	-.45**	.05	.02	-.21*	-
Scandal recall								
Labour	.21*	.14	.21*	-.11	.46**	-.03	-.23*	.05
National	.23*	.07	.18	-.07	.40**	.16	.01	-.05
Green	.28*	.25**	.32**	-.23*	.37**	.16	.02	-.08
Total	.29**	.18	.28**	-.16	.49**	.12	-.08	-.04
Mean	5.43	4.47	4.95	3.39	5.37	3.13	3.71	3.60
SD	1.07	1.22	0.93	1.24	1.44	1.19	1.59	1.75

Discussion

Between the two studies, results show that the presence of scandals in the media has a limited influence on the final decisions made by voters on who to vote for in general elections. Partisanship and perceptions of political parties that participants formed prior to the election remained the best predictor of who participants would give their vote to. The kind of information that participants were given about the political parties did influence how participants saw

political leaders. While there were similarities in responses scandals and news information, it was clear that each scandal needed to be treated differently because participants did not consistently respond in a predictable way.

Green Party scandal

The biggest effects were seen for the Green Party scandal, which involved the Green Party co-leader, Metiria Turei admitting to benefit fraud in the 1990s. In the first study, which involved participants who had been recruited through the University, it was found that participants who identified as more ideologically liberal and more trusting towards the Green Party at baseline levels felt more positive towards Turei regardless of whether they read about the scandal or a Green Party policy. Notably, reading about the Green Party scandal did not seem to have a large effect on how participants viewed Turei or the Green Party regardless of whether or not they had felt more positive towards her at the beginning of the study. Participants appeared to have a stronger response to the policy article, which was about the cost of housing in New Zealand, than the scandal article. Participants who viewed Turei as more trustworthy and identified as more liberal showed an increase in trust towards Turei when given the policy article to read. In comparison, participants who trusted Turei less viewed her as even more untrustworthy after reading the policy article in comparison to the scandal article.

The second study, which was conducted after the General Election, did not find that number of details recalled for the Turei scandal was related to trust towards any of the political parties or leaders. It was found that participants who voted Green correctly recalled more details about the Turei scandal than participants who voted for any other political party. Green Party supporters were clearly aware of the scandal; it just did not affect their vote.

National Party scandal

As with the Green Party scandal, when participants were asked to read a scandal news story that implicated the National Party leader, Bill English, they saw him as not acting in the best interests of New Zealanders. Participants also showed a loss of trust towards English as a result of the scandal. However, as with the Green Party scandal, trust towards the National Party in general was not affected, and importantly neither was the intention to vote for them. One reason why a loss of trust towards English might be seen in response to the scandal when the same loss of trust was not seen in the Green Party scandal is to do with the timing of the scandal. While both scandals involved leaders of political parties, the Green Party scandal occurred in the early 90s when Turei was not a member of the Green Party. In contrast, the National Party scandal was more recent. Further, while Turei's actions were clearly illegal, she was the one that confessed to it. In comparison, Bill English had stated that he was not aware of illegal recordings made by one of his MPs regarding an employment dispute, but was then later discovered to be lying about his lack of knowledge. Another possibility is the slight skew towards supporting the Green Party which may have made it difficult to detect differences due to a ceiling effect.

Similar to what was seen for the Green Party scandal, partisanship affected the way participants responded to the news articles. More conservative participants showed a loss of trust towards the National Party leader when exposed to the National Party scandal. The more liberal participants showed lower levels of trust when given policy compared to the scandal information.

Labour Party scandal

A scandal involving the Labour Party potentially breaking campaign rules by not declaring money raised through art auctions as donations had the least impact on voter opinion and behaviour. Those who supported the Labour Party leader, Jacinda Ardern, at baseline

showed a loss of trust towards her when exposed to the scandal, however trust levels remained high. Those with lower levels of trust towards Labour and Ardern appeared to see Labour policy as more negative, similar to the National and Green Party scandals. However, as with the Green Party scandal, this interaction only occurred in participants that were categorised as high in electoral knowledge. No adverse response to policy was seen in participants who saw Ardern as untrustworthy if the participant had low knowledge of the electoral system. Unexpectedly, more conservative participants who were exposed to the Labour Party scandal stated that they were less likely to vote for the Labour Party than the more conservative participants in the policy condition suggesting that even participants who tended to be more conservative showed positive feelings towards the Labour Party. Yet it would be inaccurate to describe these participants as holding a conservative political ideology. The sample from the first study suggested a liberal bias.

Part of the reason why participants tended not to respond negatively to the Labour Party scandal in Study One could be due to the nature of the scandal. The scandal used in Study One did not directly implicate the party leader as the National and Green Party scandals did. It also did not receive as much media attention as evidenced by participants being able to recall fewer details about the scandal at the end of the study. The second study, which collected data from a different population after the election was over, asked participants about a Labour scandal that had been more prominent in the media, but earlier in the year before Ardern became the Labour Party leader. In the second study, participants were asked to recall details about Labour's use of overseas unpaid interns in the lead-up to the election. As with the art auction donations, this scandal also did not directly implicate the Labour leader. Regardless, participants who could recall more details about the Labour scandal involving unpaid overseas interns showed

significantly lower levels of trust towards the Labour Party. Further analyses revealed that participants who were more left-wing, and therefore would have been more likely to support the Labour Party, did show a loss of trust as the number of correctly recalled details increased.

Scandal and trust in the media

The second part of this study aimed to investigate how the reporting of scandals in the general news media may influence public perception of the media. Further, beliefs about the trustworthiness of news media can also influence the way voters interpret information presented to them (Anduiza et al., 2013; Muñoz et al., 2016). In the present study, participants consistently viewed the general media as being untrustworthy and not necessarily working in the best interests of New Zealanders. Overall, the presentation of scandal on its own did not appear to decrease trust in the media. The one exception was seen with the Turei scandal. Participants in the first study that were given scandal information to read showed a decrease in their trust towards the media immediately after reading the article rather than a decrease in their likeliness to vote for the Green Party suggesting participants did not see the source as credible as research from Anduiza et al. (2013) would be the case. Indeed, when looking at perceptions of media bias, for the Turei scandal, participants who saw the scandal article as being biased against the Green Party showed significantly lower levels of trust towards the media. Whereas participants who saw the scandal article as being biased towards the Green Party rated the media as less trustworthy in comparison to participants who read the policy article. Remembering of course that the Turei scandal news article was a press release written by rival political party ACT. However, despite an immediate loss of trust in the media, the effect did not appear to hold over time. This is important because it means the timing of a scandal may be more relevant than the content.

The findings from the second study also support the idea that participants considered the Turei scandal to be irrelevant when it came to deciding who to vote for. Participants who voted for the Green Party recalled more details about the Turei scandal than participants who voted for any other party. This means that Green voters, or at least the ones participating in this study, at some point decided that the information was not relevant, or not credible, when casting their vote for the Green Party. While the results from this study cannot speak to whether the participants in the second study had an adverse response to media articles about the Turei scandal at the time, it was found that Green voters in the second study had significantly higher levels of trust to the media compared to the National Party. This means that at the conclusion of the election, after it was announced that the Green Party would be in Government with Labour and New Zealand First, Green Party voters felt more positive towards the media.

Although only the Turei scandal was associated with a loss of trust, all participants tended to see news articles containing negative information about a party as being more biased, compared to articles about policy. As expected, participants tended to see the scandal articles as being more biased against the political party involved. The articles for the Green and National Party scandals should have been seen as more biased against the party as the article was written by a rival political party, albeit unknown to the participant. However, the Labour Party scandal article, which was written by a journalist, was also perceived as being biased against the Labour Party. Seemingly, any article that outlines negative information about a political party is going to be considered more biased against that party.

While scandal articles were viewed as more biased against the party than policy articles, there was a tendency for participants to see any news article as being biased against a political party that they shared a political ideology with. The more conservative participants saw articles

about the National Party as being more biased against national, whereas more liberal participants saw articles about the Labour and Green Parties as being more biased against those parties. Any news about a preferred political party was viewed more negatively.

However, the way participants viewed political parties seemed to influence how much they trusted the media. Participants indicating greater trust towards the Labour Party at the beginning of the survey for Study One displayed higher trust towards the media when they reported on a Labour Party policy. In comparison, those who indicated more negative feelings towards the Labour Party perceived the media to be less trustworthy when provided with policy.

Electoral knowledge

Previous research has found that political knowledge is important when determining how a voter will respond to negative information, like scandals, in news media (Anduiza et al., 2013; Bhatti et al., 2013; Régner & Le Floch, 2005). Anduiza et al. (2013), for example, found that more knowledgeable participants were less influenced by partisanship because they saw it as in their best interests to continue to support a political party that may have been involved in a scandal but was otherwise ideologically consistent with the participants' beliefs. When a voter is aware that a political party can provide for them in terms of good public policy, they are less concerned about scandals (Manzetti & Wilson, 2007; Muñoz et al., 2016; Rundquist et al., 1977).

This appears to be consistent with the findings from Study One. Policy was more of a concern to participants with high knowledge. In regards to the survey which investigated responses to Green Party scandal and policy, overall it was found that participants who viewed Turei as more trustworthy displayed an increase in trust towards Turei when they read the policy article as opposed to the scandal article. Participants who trusted Turei less viewed her as even more untrustworthy after reading the policy article. However, when levels of electoral

knowledge was included in the analysis, it was discovered that it was only participants who were categorised as having high knowledge that were influenced by the policy article. The same effect was found for the Labour Party survey. While overall participants with lower levels of trust towards Ardern at the beginning of the study displayed a loss of trust towards Ardern when they read about Labour Party policy. However, the interaction only occurred in participants that were categorised as high in electoral knowledge. No adverse response to policy was seen in participants who saw Ardern as untrustworthy if the participant had low knowledge of the electoral system. One thing to note with moderated regression for the Labour Party scandal was that the interaction term explained an extra 27% of the variance which is unusually large. In the Green Party scandal, only an additional 11% was explained with the interaction term.

The finding that more knowledgeable participants responded adversely to policy suggests differential understanding of what counts as negative news media. This is something researchers should keep in mind for future research. Having a political article that is not associated with a particular political party could help to isolate responses to policy information. This was difficult for the present study because sample sizes in the follow-up survey were already low, so having three conditions was not feasible. Further, it is difficult to find a political article that is ideology free.

Efficacy and intention to vote

The results from Study One indicated no evidence that reading about a scandal influenced a participant's intent to vote. Potentially because participants' intention to vote was high even at the beginning of the study suggesting a ceiling effect. This was surprising given the trend towards greater disenchantment with politics (Dermody & Hanmer-Lloyd, 2004; Dermody et al., 2010; Lijphart, 2001; Pattyn et al., 2012; Vowles, 2004). One of the reasons for this could have

been due to it being an election year resulting in an increase in election propaganda. Participants may have felt more engaged with politics. Even so, being able to recall details about scandals was not related to vote intention. This is inconsistent with prior research that found scandal recall to be associated with lower voting efficacy (Ansolabehere et al., 1999a; Ansolabehere et al., 1999b; Bowler & Karp, 2004). It does however support the idea that negative news media has more of a motivating effect, encouraging people to vote (Craig et al., 1990; Finkel & Geer, 1998; Freedman & Goldstein, 1999; Lau et al., 2007). While it also was not seen that the scandal information increased the likeliness that participants would vote, as previously mentioned intent to vote was consistently high. Potentially due to it being an election year and the Electoral Commission having a strong presence on the University campus.

Study Two focused specifically on the relationship between efficacy and scandal recall, drawing a distinction between internal efficacy which refers to feeling competent in ability to participate in politics, and external efficacy which refers to feeling like political change can be made (Craig et al., 1990). A notable finding is that participants higher on political sophistication also scored higher on external efficacy, but not internal efficacy. People should feel more capable to participate in politics if they know more about the political system. The questions in the political sophistication scale trend towards asking participants how the MMP system works. Given MMP generally requires political parties to form coalitions in order to form a Government, voting efficacy should be higher because it is easier to hold politicians to account (Karp, 2006; Karp & Banducci, 2008). Proportional representation generally makes it easier to change the composition of Government in comparison to other electoral systems like the Presidential system in the United States wherein a Presidential candidate might win the majority vote, and yet still lose the election. The relationship in the present study between external

efficacy and electoral knowledge suggests that participants who know how MMP works do feel like voting is more effective.

Vote switching

One of the reasons why conducting research on voting behaviour in New Zealand can contribute a great deal to the understanding of how voters respond to political news media is due to having a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) voting system which requires parties to work together in order to form a Government. This means that voters should develop a sense of how political parties fit together. This does make it harder to determine how a voter is going to respond to information because it means they have multiple options when it comes to who they can vote for. Lau et al. (2007) have argued that changing a vote in response to a scandal is relatively unlikely, although Lau et al. did focus primarily on studies conducted in North America and did not look at variations in electoral systems. This Lau et al.'s finding that scandal and negative news media does not necessarily lead to a change in votes makes sense in a Presidential or two-party electoral system considering voters are unlikely to change their vote to a political party with a different political ideology. A person who identifies as Liberal is not going to vote for a Conservative party because the Liberal party is caught in a scandal. Indeed, Lemert et al. (1999) found that participants who could recall information about a Republican candidate were simply less likely to turn up to vote. The present study found no relationship between vote intention and scandal. However, it did find that in some cases news information about one political party influenced views on another.

For example, in Study One, news articles about the Green Party influenced the way participants viewed the Labour Party. Participants who trusted Turei less, and were given an article about Green Party policy to read, showed a decrease in their likeliness to vote for the

Labour Party. The likely interpretation of this is that the involvement of Green Party members in a scandal is not relevant information to a voter who does not trust the Green Party as they are already less likely to vote for them. Of greater concern is the possible implementation of policies that non-Green supporters may disagree with or see as threatening. The concern about disagreeable Green Party policy reduced the likeliness that a participant would vote for an ideologically similar party.

In the case of the National Party survey it was the scandal article that was associated with a decrease in the likeliness to vote for a perceived ideologically similar party. Both the Green and Labour parties are large parties that participants were more familiar with. The potential alternatives to the National Party, which were ACT, New Zealand First, and United Future, were considered potential alternatives due to participants that self-identified as more conservative consistently supporting those parties. However, they were minor parties and the number of people who had reported no strong opinion about them was high in comparison to National, Green, and Labour. While the differing electoral system in New Zealand makes it difficult to apply the findings overseas, it does mean that we should be cautious about relying on overseas research when considering the effect news media has on voting behaviour because it is influenced by how New Zealand voters understand the relationships between political parties.

Limitations

Article relevance. One possibility for why participants may not have been influenced by the National or Labour Party scandals is that these participants determined that the information was not relevant. The Labour Party scandal did not criticise any specific politicians and although not declaring electoral donations could be considered hypocritical due to the Labour Party's stance as a workers' party, it was not clear that they had broken any laws around electoral

spending. The National Party scandal involving MP Todd Barclay secretly recording a staff member regarding an employment dispute was subject to police investigation, although no charges were ultimately made, Todd Barclay had since resigned from his position as MP at the time the data was collected. He was also a back-bench MP and therefore less prominent than Metiria Turei as co-leader of the Green Party. Although, the scandal article that was selected for the National Party directly referenced National Party leader Bill English as someone who was aware that one of his MPs had potentially broken the law but did nothing about it.

The Green Party scandal, involving benefit fraud, was less ignorable. While Turei's actions were not technically hypocritical as the purpose of revealing the information was to highlight the difficulties facing single mothers, it was clear that fraud had occurred. Also, Grover and Hasel (2015) found that when political leaders admit to and apologise for past mistakes they are more likely to survive political scandal. However, further investigation from the media revealed inaccuracies in the original reports and allegations of electoral fraud eventually came to light. As the scandal became harder to ignore, voters who continued to support the Green Party would have had to discredit the source of the information, leading to a loss of trust in the media.

Attrition. As with most repeated-measure design studies, attrition was a problem. Only about a quarter of participants responded to the final survey in the first study. Participants who did not fill out the final survey may not have responded in the same way as the participants who did stay with the study. The sample at the final time point was slightly older on average with a more even gender balance, and it did appear that the participants who stayed with the survey were more politically sophisticated or interested than those that did not fill out all the surveys. The most likely reason why participants did not fill out the final survey is timing. The majority of participants were recruited via an Introductory Psychology paper in which they received

additional course credit for each survey they filled out. Students must obtain a certain amount of course credit in order to pass the course. As the final survey was conducted near the end of the semester, it is likely that many of the participants had obtained the maximum amount of course credit they needed and therefore even with the option to instead receive a movie voucher for participation, there was little incentive for them to fill out the final survey. The type of incentive to participate is not the only difference between participants who filled out the final survey and those who did not. Participants recruited via flyer would have had a higher investment in the study as they actively opted into it. Due to the rates of attrition, even if the samples do appear to be similar, it cannot be assumed that participants who did not fill out the final survey would have voted for the political party they indicated they would vote for in earlier surveys, if they voted at all.

Non-voting rates. An issue with past research has been the reliance of voting intent to draw conclusions about what influences voting behaviour. It has been noted that this is problematic. An intent to vote does not equate to a vote cast and different measures voting behaviour have been cited previously as a reason for differing results in political research (Freedman & Goldstein, 1999). This study aimed to address that by asking participants who they would intend to vote for in the lead up to the election – and then ask them who they actually cast their vote for, if they cast one. This proved problematic for both studies because the rates of non-voting were not high. This is a potential flaw in the design as asking people about their political views and exposing them to political media increases their political engagement. It is expected that this would increase the likeliness of the participant to vote. This also makes it difficult to look at the effects of advance voting. The number of participants who voted before Election Day was higher than those who waited. However, the numbers were not high enough to reliably look

at differences between the two. For Study One, because the data was collected in a University setting it would be expected that participants would be more likely to advance vote due to there being voting booths set up at the University.

Strengths

One of the most important features of this study was that it was conducted in an election year. Any kind of news information about political parties, be it negative or positive, can lose its relevance very quickly. Studies that ask participants to think back to how they might have responded to a scandal are problematic as the salience of scandals and our perceptions of them change over time. The challenge in retrospectively looking back at political events that happened during an election year is that we do not know what the election outcome would have been had the scandal not occurred. Further, there are several major political events that occur during an election campaign. For example, in this election leaders of both the Green and Labour parties resigned which would have had some influence on how voters viewed those political parties. It is difficult to pin point exactly which events have an effect. The benefit of Study One was that it collected data during the time a scandal was prominent in the media making it possible to see how that scandal might have influenced voters at that specific time. The repeated measures design also means the present research could see whether news media information resulted in a change from how participants viewed the political parties before the scandal occurred.

New Zealand uniquely is a place which makes repeated measures designs possible due to its short election campaign of two months. Long election campaigns would struggle with maintaining a sizeable sample which is difficult even with a study that is conducted over a three month period. The short election campaign and differing electoral system do make it difficult to apply these findings overseas where countries may have much longer political campaigns. The

amount of information provided to potential voters in countries with long campaigns does accumulate over time. This highlights the importance of conducting this kind of research in New Zealand which does have a very different political system.

A positive seen in this study is that participants did appear to care about policy more so than scandal information. Most of the effects occurred in response to policy information, particularly in more knowledgeable participants. The sample for this study was primarily made up of young voters, a group that have consistently been found to be less likely to participate in the elections (Dermody et al., 2010; Vowles, 2014). The strong effects in response to policy rather than scandal suggest that young people do care about important political issues. The policy article used in Study One was intended to be the control condition as it contained information that solely reported on the policy of a party with no interpretation. It would have been beneficial to have a third condition wherein participants were given an article that had no political bias, perhaps an article that talked about a political issue but did not mention any specific political parties. For example, an article on local government. However, the attrition rate for Study One meant that having three conditions was not feasible.

Future research

Third-person perceptions. While the findings from the present study do not indicate that the Turei scandal directly resulted in a loss of trust towards the Green Party, the Green Party still lost a significant amount of their vote share for the 2017 General Election. Further, the results from Study One suggest that the drop occurred around the time of the Turei scandal, but increased back to baseline levels after the election was over. Further, participants' opinions about the Green Party did not appear to change throughout the study. This suggests that while

participants may not have responded negatively to the scandal, their vote was still potentially affected by it.

This could be due to something referred to as third-person perceptions, or beliefs about how other people will respond to information presented in the media (Austin & Pinkleton, 1995). This is why polling data can be problematic in an election as it gives voters an indication of how parties are performing. If a party consistently polls low, voters may be less likely to vote for them because they believe others will do the same. This does, however, presuppose that voters are aware of the polling data which should not be assumed. One of the reasons why participants were given real news articles to read in Study One was to account for previous studies finding that knowledge of scandals tended to consistently low (Bowler & Karp, 2004; Régner & Le Floch, 2005; Schwarz & Bless, 1992). Even if a voter does not have knowledge of current polling data, this does not mean their vote will not be influenced by how they think others may respond to a scandal. Austin and Pinkleton (1995) found that political cynicism appears to be associated with an increased belief that other voters are more gullible, and will therefore be easily influenced by what is presented in the media. This could have a motivating effect, encouraging voters to act so that they keep their preferred political party in power (Craig et al., 2014). However, if people who supported the Green Party were more motivated to participate in response to the scandal, the decrease in vote share in both the present study and in the final election outcome suggests they were not motivated to vote for the Green Party, but instead a potential coalition partner like Labour.

What this does mean is that, at least under New Zealand's MMP electoral system, views on political leaders and their parties is influenced by the relationships they form with others, suggesting that voters form expectations about political parties and how they work together.

When simply looking at how participants viewed the relationships between parties without considering political news media, one interesting finding was the change in how New Zealand First and its leader, Winston Peters, was viewed. In the first study, participants who supported National tended to feel the same towards New Zealand First. More conservative participants were more likely to support both New Zealand First and National. In contrast, there were no strong relationships between supporting the Labour Party and New Zealand First. Further, in the Principal Components Analysis (PCA) that was run in the first study, New Zealand First loaded better onto the component with the National Party than with Labour and Green. In the second study, this was reversed. The PCA showed a two-factor solution that fit with the current make-up of Parliament. Green, Labour, and New Zealand First, who are in Government, in component one. Opposition parties National and ACT in component two.

Thus, participants in Study One may have felt that New Zealand First was more aligned with the National Party, whereas those in the second study did not. The data for both studies was collected from different sources. Participants from the first study were recruited from the University, the second via social media. Despite wider variation in demographic data in terms of age, it is possible that a large proportion of the sample were also University students given they were largely recruited via the researchers own social networks. However, the better explanation for the change in perception of New Zealand First between the two samples is that the data for the first study was collected after the election, but before Winston Peters announced that he would be forming a Government with the Labour and Green Parties. The data for the second study was collected after Winston Peters's decision. This kind of research does have implications under an MMP system regarding choices that political parties make when it comes to forming coalitions. Potentially, those who voted for New Zealand First did so with an expectation that the

party would go into coalition with National. Further research should be conducted to examine how disparities between expectations of a political party and their final decisions effects views towards the electoral system, and feelings of effectiveness of voting.

Minority groups. One of the challenges facing democracy is in how to encourage political engagement in groups that are systemically less likely to turn up to vote on Election Day. Young people, ethnic minority groups, and those of low socio-economic status tend to have low turnout, potentially associated with greater cynicism in politics (Dermody, Hanmer-Lloyd, Koenig-Lewis, & Zhao, 2014; Dermody et al., 2010; Stockemer, 2016; Vowles, 2014). Due to the data collection method, the sample for both studies did gravitate towards being young and New Zealand European. There could also be differences between eligible voters that attend University and those that do not. A positive to take from this study is that it suggests that young people, or at least those who attend University, do seem to care about public policy. Indeed, they seemed to be more influenced by policy than they were about scandal. Further efforts need to be made to investigate the influence of news media in general on ethnic minority groups. With that said, it is not obvious why being in an ethnic minority would lead to someone being differentially affected by news media.

Competitiveness. Over the last three General Elections in New Zealand, there has been an increase in voter turn-out. This is consistent globally with increases in turnout also seen in the 2016 U.S Presidential Election, and the 2017 United Kingdom General Election. Predictions of turnout must consider the impact of political context. While initiatives to encourage voting such as setting up advanced polling booths in populated areas likely increase voter turnout, perceived competitiveness in elections, generally defined as close races between candidates, is also

associated with increased turnout (Evans, Ensley, & Carmines, 2014; Hall, 2007; Lipsitz, 2011). The jump in the polls in response to the change in leader of the Labour Party from Andrew Little to Jacinda Ardern would have made the election appear more competitive. Lipsitz (2011) argues that competitiveness, while increasing turnout, also tends to decrease the quality of the information that is presented to voters. The benefit of perceived competitiveness when it comes to elections is the level of media content is higher (Evans et al., 2014), suggesting more room for engagement. An election may not be objectively more competitive than any other, but constant exposure to potentially negative news media may amplify a perception of competitiveness and bring politics more into the public. With greater exposure, there will be greater engagement and more voters aware of the upcoming election. This could be one of the reasons why scandals and other forms of negative news media have a motivating effect. A further area of investigation is the level at which people see an election as being highly competitive and therefore feel more motivated to vote.

Entertainment and partisan news media. The present study focused on trust in traditional news media. Another important factor in the study of media bias that is missing from this study is the inclusion of new forms of news media which young people are increasingly receiving political news from and has been found to be an effective way of engaging youth (Delli Carpini, 2000; Kenski & Stroud, 2006; Wang, 2007). Globally, there is also an increase in entertainment style media as a form of educating young people about political issues. Examples are shows such as America's *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, *The Colbert Report*, and *Last Week Tonight with John Oliver* (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006). New Zealand has its share of entertainment style political news media. The recently cancelled television show *Back Benches* was a live public debate between three or four Members of Parliament (MPs) set in a pub which

was open to the public. The Friday night comedy satire television show, *7 Days*, presents political information in a way intended to be made accessible to the public. Online media website *The Spinoff* states its intention to present news media, including political news, in a way that is provocative and funny. Newer forms of news media also appear to be more comfortable with owning their political bias. The Spinoff describes itself as “left-leaning” on their homepage, for example. Right-leaning political news blogs such as *Whale Oil* and *Kiwi Blog* are also open about their political leanings and were notably involved in the *Dirty Politics* scandal of New Zealand’s 2014 General Election. While the increase in political engagement with young people is a positive, Baumgartner and Morris (2006) in their analysis of engagement with *The Daily Show* showed that while there was an increase in internal efficacy, people who watched *The Daily Show* also exhibited higher cynicism towards the electoral system and to public institutions. New Zealand’s electoral system is very different from that of the United States. The results from the present showing that news media about one political party can influence how likely participants were to vote for ideologically similar political parties mean that it is important to consider the differing electoral system before drawing conclusions on the effect of news media on political perceptions. The investigation of how voters respond to different sources in New Zealand should be an important area for future research.

Final conclusion

The goal of this study was to investigate the way political scandals in news media may influence the way voters behave, and their political perceptions. How the reporting of scandals influenced media perceptions was also investigated.

The first study was a repeated measures design wherein participants, mainly Introductory Psychology students were recruited before the start of an election campaign and then invited to

take part in follow-up surveys throughout the campaign. The follow-up surveys involved responding to news articles about either a scandal that a political party had been involved in, or a press release about a policy platform. At the end of the election campaign, participants were asked about their voting behaviours. The second study recruited participants via social media after Labour Party leader, Jacinda Ardern, was announced Prime Minister. In this study, participants were asked to recall information about scandals that were present in the media during the election campaign.

Results showed that political scandals in news media do have an influence on voter perceptions, but not in a consistent or easily predictable way. Partisanship and prior perceptions of political parties remained the best predictor of who participants intended to vote for. Overall, scandal information did not appear to negatively affect participants. It was public policy that had the biggest effects. Participants who already disliked a political party trusted them less when they were exposed to their policies, and participants who felt more positive towards a political party trusted them more. Further, this finding appeared to be specific to participants who were classed as being more knowledgeable of New Zealand's electoral system. This is an important as under a proportional voting system like MMP, participants' understanding of the relationships between parties can influence voting behaviour. Indeed, it was found that exposure to public policy or scandal could influence the way a participant viewed other political parties.

Evidence was also found for a backlash effect wherein participants who were exposed to scandal information would display a decrease in trust towards the general media. Overall, participants tended to see any scandal article as being biased against the political party. However, it also appeared that participants saw bias in the articles against their preferred party, including

when it was a policy article which was written by the political party, albeit unbeknownst to the participant.

Overall, the number of factors involved with the interpretation and response to political scandal in the media make it difficult to predict exactly how a voter is going to respond. Scandals are not just different in terms of their content, but they are highly contextualised and heavily influenced by other factors. Relationships between political parties, for example, appears to be important and should be investigated further. Future research should investigate newer forms of news media like social media sites, entertainment style news, and partisan blogs to investigate how their perceived credibility differs from that of more traditional forms of news media.

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Appendix A – Green Party scandal

Metiria Turei must resign

Thursday, 3 August 2017, 9:48 pm

Press Release: ACT New Zealand

Metiria Turei must resign

Metiria Turei must resign as an MP immediately because of her admitted abuse of the welfare system in the 1990s and her abuse of voters' trust during the past weeks.

"New revelations this evening prove Metiria Turei has abused the trust of not just the welfare system, but also the voters from whom she asked for sympathy," Mr Seymour said.

"Voters can't be represented by someone they can not trust, and the Greens can't campaign while being led by an admitted, repeated liar who may be facing a number of charges by election day."

"She must resign. She has let down all the genuinely struggling New Zealanders she claimed to represent with her self-centred ego trip. Even when she claimed to be 'coming clean' to promote the Greens policy, she was actually taking sole parents and hardworking Kiwi families for a ride."

Ms Turei told voters two and a half ago that as a sole parent on a benefit, she lied about having flatmates so she could claim a higher accommodation supplement.

It has now been revealed that during part of her period on the DPB, Ms Turei was registered on the electoral roll as living with the father of her child, in a house he owned, therefore, she was not eligible for the benefit at all.

"Remarkably, her defence is to claim she was merely committing electoral fraud by admitting she lied about her residence, not a further welfare fraud, in order to vote for a friend," Mr Seymour said. "She has also admitted that one of her 'flatmates' was her own mother while she over-claimed the accommodation allowance."

"We are only on day one of the Ministry of Social Development's investigation. She has to resign now and apologise to the honest working Kiwis and sole parents she has let down time after time."

ENDS

Appendix B – Green Party policy

Poorest New Zealanders struggling to pay for housing

Tuesday, 25 July 2017, 12:12 pm

Press Release: Green Party

Poorest New Zealanders struggling to pay for housing

Many New Zealanders are increasingly struggling to pay for the roof over their heads, according to the latest overview of poverty trends, the Green Party said today.

New Zealanders on the lowest incomes are now spending 51 percent of their income on housing, up from 29 percent in 1990, according to the latest Bryan Perry Household Incomes Report out today.

“Housing costs are eating into families’ budgets at a rate we’ve never seen before,” Green Party Co-leader Metiria Turei said today.

“These figures today show that the housing crisis is hurting our poorest people the most. That, combined with low incomes, is a recipe for growing poverty.

“It’s clear that to solve the housing crisis we need a new government that will build thousands of affordable homes, crack down on speculators, and tax property fairly.

“The Green Party will do all of that in government, as well as lift the incomes of people who are earning the least by 20 percent.

“New Zealanders living in cold damp housing know that they are paying too much to live where they are, yet they are powerless to change it.

“Only Government can fundamentally improve how our housing market operates. But this National Government has shown no commitment to doing that, even after nine years of failed policy.

“The report also notes that ‘the 2016 sample is ‘light’ on sole-parent households and on beneficiary households with children (both around 20-25% lower than expected).”

“This is the Government’s main report into household incomes. We would expect a thorough and complete picture. For the Government to not include a proportionate number of sole-parent and beneficiary households is simply not good enough. Despite the omission, these results are damning,” Mrs Turei said.

ends

Appendix C – National Party scandal

PM’S Stuck Record on Barclay Wearing Thin

Tuesday, 1 August 2017, 3:57 pm

Press Release: New Zealand First Party

PM’S Stuck Record on Barclay Wearing Thin

The Prime Minister’s cloak of “no responsibility” over the Todd Barclay affair is threadbare.

“Mr English might as well tell all – his phone records show he was in constant contact with electorate agent Glenys Dickson, who was secretly recorded by National MP Todd Barclay.

“Clearly Mr English knew all about the staffing problems and was involved in matters that led to her payoff and resignation.

“Mr English has dug his heels in just as he did when he was double dipping by claiming \$1000 a week expenses to live in his own house, which had been leased to the government for his official residence. He was eventually forced to pay back some money.

“Mr English sent Glenys Dickson over 450 text messages in the year before she resigned on 7 February, 2016.

“In the days leading to the resignation he sent her 31 text messages, with 22 the day before.

“He also claimed he had “nothing further to add” when questioned on the issues, yet he knew of the recording and was texting Glenys Dickson all the time. He sent her 90 text messages from late November 2015 to the day she resigned.”

“The New Zealand public should not have to put up with a Prime Minister who hides behind rules of Parliament. As Deputy Prime Minister at the time and now Prime Minister he has a duty to be honest.”

ENDS

Appendix D – National Party policy

National's plan for young serious offenders

Sunday, 13 August 2017, 11:40 am

Press Release: New Zealand National Party

A re-elected National Government will continue its focus on keeping New Zealanders safe by cracking down on the most serious young offenders and holding negligent parents to account.

“Our youth justice system works well for the vast majority of young offenders and our relentless focus on reducing crime has seen the youth crime rate drop 31 per cent. However there remains a small group of around 150 young people who continue to commit large numbers of serious offences,” National’s Justice Spokesperson Amy Adams says.

“These are young people who have been in and out of Youth Court but have shown no willingness or ability to change their behaviour. We are not prepared to just sit back and allow their victims to keep racking up until they reach adulthood.

“We want New Zealanders to be safe in their homes, at work, and on the streets, so we will introduce a \$60 million package over four years that will deal with the most violent and recidivist young offenders more seriously, to reduce reoffending.

“We will introduce a Young Serious Offender (YSO) classification which will see this very small group of the most hardened young offenders dealt with in ways that better reflect the seriousness of their crimes and help ensure fewer people are victimised.

“As a part of this, we will establish a defence-led Junior Training Academy based at the Waiouru Training Camp. Judges will be able to order YSOs who commit serious subsequent offences to attend the Academy for one year. The Academy will support YSOs to address problems like addiction or a lack of literacy and numeracy skills, helping them lead better lives while keeping the public safe.

“Those who fail to complete their time at the Academy will serve a commensurate adult sentence of imprisonment instead.”

Other changes under the YSO classification will include tightening bail requirements, increasing the use of electronic monitoring, and removing the ability for these most serious young offenders to be released early from any youth justice custodial sentences.

“We will also introduce a contestable fund of \$30 million over four years for community groups to support programmes to reduce offending, because we know local solutions are often the best, and we want to give smaller or rural communities the opportunity to take further action.

“National is proud to be the law and order party, that is committed to keeping New Zealanders safe, supporting victims, and addressing the drivers of crime.”

Appendix E – Labour Party scandal

Artworks used to funnel secret donors' contributions to the Labour Party

Sunday, 20 August, 2017

Stuff.co.nz

The Labour Party is hiding tens of thousands of dollars in donations behind over-inflated art auctions – and naming the artists as donors instead of the secret individuals handing over the big bucks.

The artists had no idea the party was naming them as the donors – they never saw a cent of the money. They say their works are auctioned off at well above market value to wealthy benefactors who want to keep their support for the party secret.

Labour says the practice complies with electoral rules. But one party operative described the practice as "whitewashing" – a way to keep big donations private at a time when corporate contributions to political parties were falling because of public scrutiny.

"What's the value of a painting?" the operative asked. "It's hard to put a price on it, not like a car or an airfare or something that can easily be valued. But a painting can't be valued, and that's exactly how auctions are used to launder the money."

Stuff is calling for transparency in political funding so the identity of all donors be promptly disclosed to the Electoral Commission. Stuff asks that loopholes allowing donors to be masked by trusts and other aggregators, like fundraising dinners and art auctions, be closed.

At present, anything less than \$15,000 can be donated anonymously, and other loopholes exist to keep donors' names out of the public domain.

Labour has hosted at least three art auctions in the past year – two in Auckland and one in Wellington – selling pieces from esteemed artists such as Dick Frizzell, Bill Hammond and Judy Millar.

The works were assigned valuations before going under the hammer, where they sometimes sold for thousands of dollars more.

After sale, the values were recorded as party donations from the artist – even though the artist never saw the money and often had no idea what was going on.

The difference from any auction price remained secret unless it surpassed the \$15,000 disclosure threshold. So, the party could sell a painting valued at \$20,000 for up to \$34,999 before anyone other than the artist was disclosed as a donor.

Appendix F – Labour Party policy

We can – and must – do better for Kiwi jobs

Wednesday, 2 August 2017, 1:57 pm

Press Release: New Zealand Labour Party

We can – and must – do better for Kiwi jobs

Labour has the plan to get more young New Zealanders into jobs and tackle concerns raised in the latest statistics which show an extra 3000 young Kiwis are neither earning or learning compared to the same time last year, says Labour's Employment spokesperson Grant Robertson.

"New Zealanders agree that we must provide better employment and training opportunities for young Kiwis, and the latest Household Labour Force Survey shows we have a challenge ahead of us.

"We cannot be happy with 128,000 unemployed and the growing rate of young Kiwis not in employment, education or training (NEETs), of which there are 3,000 more NEETs than this time last year.

"The survey also shows 65 per cent of workers got a pay rise of less than 2 per cent, and 43 per cent of workers got no pay rise at all. This means a sizable cohort of the working public actually went backwards in pay after inflation over the past year.

"New Zealand can – and must – do better, especially for our young people. Labour's Ready for Work scheme will do better for young Kiwis, providing youth with six months on-the- job training and the skills they need to be work-ready.

"Our Dole for Apprenticeship scheme offers employers who are willing to train an apprentice the equivalent of the unemployment benefit.

"Labour has set a goal to reduce unemployment to four per cent in our first term. Our Three-Years Free policy will provide up to three years of free post-school training or education to all New Zealanders to ensure they're equipped to tackle the ever-changing job market.

"A Labour Government will be an active partner in the economy to ensure we share prosperity with all New Zealanders. Our Regional Development plan will invest in regional strengths, and Government procurement will favour Kiwi-made products and services.

"Labour's got the policies to ensure all New Zealanders can enjoy meaningful work, be ready for the challenges of a rapidly-evolving economy, and share in the prosperity that we all deserve," says Grant Robertson.