How Voters See Political Corruption:
Definitions and Beliefs, Causes and Consequences

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Prepared for delivery at the annual meeting of the Southwestern Political Science Association, New Orleans, LA, March 28-30, 2002.

Introduction*

Few subjects in American politics attract as much attention as *corruption*. As the historian Gordon S. Wood recounts in his study of the American constitutional founding, the principal driving force behind the revolutionary war was the desire to be free from English corruption. "'Alas! Great Britain,' said one Virginian in 1775, 'their vices have even extended to America! . . . The torrent as yet is but small; only a few are involved in it; it must be soon stopped, or it will bear all before it with an impetuous sway'" (Wood 1969, 110). Writing in the early days of the Progressive Era, Robert C. Brooks (1909) recognized a similar sentiment; "in the whole vocabulary of politics, it would be difficult to point out any single term that is more frequently employed than the word 'corruption.'" In our own time, stories of ethical lapses, abuse of authority, law breaking and scandals are commonplace. A recent search of the CNN on-line news archive turned up, for example, some 2,405 articles on corruption of one kind or another.

Against this backdrop, scholars striving for a rigorous assessment of corruption face the daunting challenge of coming up with clear terminology. Much like Justice Stewart Potter's famous statement on obscenity in Jacobellis *v.* Ohio (1964) – "I know it when I see it"– an objective, all-encompassing definition of political corruption seems hard to pin down. In this paper, we will not attempt to provide such a definition. Rather, we consider corruption from the point of view of citizens at the voting booth. When asked to comment on a wide variety of

* We would like to thank Doug Rose for his work in the initial development and coordination of this project and the New Orleans exit polling, Jenny Chanley (Miami), Fred Monardi (Kenosha), and Charles Tien (New York) for the exit polls in their respective cities, and Travis Lowe for research assistance in Iowa City. This has been truly a collaborative effort. Bill Shaffer supervised the collection of data in Lafayette, IN, and offered much valuable advice on the questionnaire.

political actions, how do individuals determine which are above board and which are corrupt? Do these judgments vary from place to place, so that acceptable behavior in one part of the

country is deemed corrupt in another? Aside from these regional differences, do other factors, such as partisanship, ideological leanings, or social and economic group connections, affect how political actions are interpreted? And are beliefs about corruption politically consequential? That is, do these attitudes help shape voting decisions?

Using a large exit poll conducted in six cities during the 2000 presidential election, we examine these questions. We find that judgments over what constitutes corrupt behavior in politics are structured largely along two dimensions – activities that are patently illegal and actions that, while legal, are still suspect because they are at odds with the "greater good" of society. These attitudes vary widely across the mass public, and they play a significant role in the voting calculus. In short, we argue that in the United States, the term *political corruption* is fundamentally ambiguous. It may mean different things to different citizens, and these different understandings may have markedly different political overtones.

Theoretical Background

That outrage over corruption can be enormously important in spurring political activity is beyond dispute. Investigations of "angry voting" in the 1980s and 90s, recruitment into third parties, and social movement protest activism all point to righteous indignation as an essential element in mobilization (see, e.g., Tolchin 1999, McCann et al. 1999, Gold 1995, Verba et al. 1995, Hetherington 1999). Such sentiments also figure prominently in accounts of critical elections, rebellions, and revolutions in developing countries.

When American citizens reflect on integrity, ethics, and corruption, how do they determine what is acceptable behavior in politics? One common approach in the scholarly literature is to equate political corruption with lawlessness. Fackler and Lin (995), for instance, define corruption as any of a "variety of unlawful . . . acts by political actors." In a similar vein,

Meier and Holbrook (1992) measure corruption within a particular historical period by counting the number of public officials convicted of some crime in state courts.

This understanding is tidy and might ring true for many citizens as they pass judgment on political actions. However, as Peters and Welch (1978) write, there is much more to "corruption" than breaking the law. Many behaviors that are technically legal might nonetheless violate longstanding community norms. Favoritism in politics, putting one's self-interest above the well being of all, unbridled partisanship, pettiness, or extravagance among governing officials – many voters would no doubt condemn all of these as corrupt. In doing so, they would be echoing the fiery social reformers of the 1700s who sought to root out all forms of self-aggrandizement and pandering to special interests. "'Nothing is more certain,' observed John Witherspoon in a common . . . fusion of piety and politics, 'than a general profligacy and corruption of manners make a people ripe for destruction'" (Wood 1969, 118).[1]

Assessing corruption in formal legal terms would also cause us to miss the shades of gray that are a part of all moral reasoning. Juries in court proceedings typically have no choice but to think in stark black and white terms, guilty or not guilty. Yet in politics, actions are embedded in specific social and institutional contexts, where any number of value premises, assumptions, and experiences may intersect to produce ambiguous verdicts. Peters and Welch (1978), Johnston (1986), Jackson and Smith (1996), and Heidenheimer (1970) offer many scenarios where observers could reasonably conclude that an action is only "somewhat" corrupt: a congressional member provides a special favor to a supporter, but the supporter is a constituent,

[1] Richard Reeve's (2001) work on the Nixon presidency touches on this notion of corruption when tracing the fallout from the Watergate affair. According to Reeves, most Americans did not follow the congressional inquiries with all their legal maneuverings very closely. In the end, what turned the "silent majority" against Nixon was what the White House tapes revealed about the president's vulgar language and venality.

a policeman accepts free meals from restaurant owners, the president nominates a wealthy donor for an ambassadorship, to name only a few.

Mapping the nuances of these judgments has been a key concern in the applied empirical literature. As one would expect, surveys find that a wide variety of political actions, not all of them strictly illegal, can fall under the heading of "corrupt" to one degree or another. One intriguing finding is that the citizen's socioeconomic status conditions beliefs about what is fair or foul (Johnston 1986, Table IV, Jackson and Smith 1996, Gardiner 1970). Individuals at the higher rungs of society, as indicated by their level of education, income, or employment, are more apt to think *legalistically* about corruption. To these people, self-interested actions and blatant favoritism tend to be viewed as "just politics" and not condemned, as long as no laws were violated. However, the more elite members of society come down harder on lawbreakers. Officials who accept bribes, embezzle, falsify documents, and commit other serious crimes are significantly more likely to be labeled corrupt. For citizens with lower social or economic status, these tendencies are reversed. In this case, individuals who act out of self-interest and disregard community values – but do not break the law – are apt to be seen as corrupt, while actions that violate the law are slightly less likely to be condemned as corrupt.

Johnston (1986) speculates that these class differences may come about for two general reasons. Citizens with more education or income may be better informed about politics, and thus might be more aware of and less offended by narrow minded, self-interested government officials. Those who are unfamiliar with the often petty give-and-take of politics could have higher expectations of altruistic behavior. Along different lines, Johnston also offers an interest-based argument: individuals with higher status might be accustomed to receiving particular benefits and services from government. "It may well be that what lower and middle status

people regard as illegitimate favors and advantages are seen by higher status groups as merely the fruits of merit and expertise . . . The legitimacy of special favors and privileges, it seems, has much to do with whether one views them from above or below" (p. 387). Jackson and Smith (1996) raise a similar point in their comparison of elite versus non-elite beliefs about corruption in New South Wales, Australia.

We concur with the approach taken by Jackson, Smith, and Johnston. To understand the impact of corruption on mass political behavior, it is important to map the attitudes and perceptions of citizens from across the many strata of American society. In our analysis, we extend this literature in several new directions. First, we provide a rigorous assessment of how socioeconomic status and demographic variables affect beliefs about what is or is not corrupt. We pay particularly close attention to the impact of local political contexts. We do this by comparing the results of surveys conducted in six cities across the United States during the last presidential election. Do people who live in small cities and rural areas have markedly different views on corruption than citizens in large urban areas? To date this question has not been explored. We think it entirely possible that local conditions and cultures shape moral judgments – what is acceptable in New York City, New Orleans, or Miami might be unthinkable in the small cities and towns of Iowa, Wisconsin, and Indiana.

In the final part of the paper, we further ask whether beliefs about corruption funnel citizens into one partisan camp or another. Candidates running for office often cloak their arguments in reformist or moralistic terms. Yet little research has been done so far on whether the citizen's personal understanding of what is fair game in politics affects how susceptible he or she is to such arguments.

Research Design and Findings

Data for this study were collected through exit polls carried out in six cities during the November 7, 2000 presidential election. Exit polls, while imposing some limits on the scope of questions that can be asked, have the advantage of capturing the attitudes of people directly engaged in the most basic of political processes, and thus also most likely to be considering political issues and their implications at the time they are interviewed. Our exit polls were conducted under faculty direction by students enrolled in political science courses at colleges and universities in seven cities. A standard form containing about 50 questions was used in each location, although each poll also had room for a short series of questions on local issues. The cities in the poll were New York City, Miami, New Orleans, Los Angeles, Kenosha, WI, Lafayette and West Lafayette, IN, and Iowa City, IA. Because of collection problems, data from Los Angeles are unavailable for analysis.[2] Thus the results reported here come from the remaining locations, three of which are major metropolitan areas with at least some history of political corruption. The other three cities are all small, Midwestern cities, where residents generally do not perceive a significant history of corruption.

At each location, voting precincts were chosen randomly with each precinct weighted according to its voter population so as to assure that every voter in the relevant jurisdiction had an equal chance of being selected. Within precincts, interviewers systematically selected voters leaving the polling place according to a preset plan and attempted to get them to complete the survey instrument.[3] Those who agreed were handed the questionnaire and asked to complete it

[2] The Los Angeles exit poll was beset by problems ranging from an unwillingness of voters to participate to threats of gang violence at two polling locations. Interviewers were only able to collect 155 completed surveys, not enough to ensure any statistical value to the data.

[3] As always, some voters refused to participate in the survey. Poll takers were instructed to record the gender, race, and apparent age of all refusals to allow weighting of the data. Refusal rates ranged from a low of 13% in Lafayette,

unaided by the interviewer. Upon completion, the exit poll was dropped in a box next to the interviewer. Interviewers braved a variety of weather conditions, voter attitudes, and problems at the polls in completing the project, for which they generally received partial course credit.[4]

Descriptive Statistics. Table 1 provides an overview of the data collected for each city and key demographics of respondents. As might be expected, the racial composition of the samples varies widely with no more than about 7% non-white respondents in the Midwestern cities, while more than half the New Orleans respondents were from minority groups. Miami had the largest Hispanic proportion, with more than on-third of respondents. Across the cities, about half of respondents were homeowners, though far fewer were in New York, and about four out of ten were married. Nearly 40% reported household incomes greater than $50,000 and slightly more than half of all respondents were female.

[Table 1 about here]

The questionnaire included a wide range of questions designed to collect attitudes towards candidates, the reported vote, the importance of certain issues and key demographic information. Of particular note for this paper is a group of questions specifically asking about corruption. Respondents were asked about corruption in their local government, about their own behavior if asked for a bribe, and about their perceptions of how citizens should deal with government. They were also asked whether they see more corruption in government now compared to twenty years ago and which level of government (local, state, national) was likely to be the most corrupt. In addition, an eight question battery asked respondents to rate the extent

IN to a high of 56% in New York City. The analyses in this paper were carried out on the unweighted data, since preliminary investigation showed no particular advantage to using the weighted data.

[4] See Cole (2002) for detailed discussion of the pedagogy involved in this project.

to which various hypothetical actions by government officials or citizens were corrupt, based on a five-point scale (1 = "not at all corrupt," 3 = 'somewhat corrupt," 5 = "extremely corrupt"): How corrupt would it be if . . .?

- A police officer accepted money not to write a traffic ticket on a speeding driver
- A citizen claimed government benefits to which he or she was not entitled
- A government official gave a contract to a contributor without considering other contractors
- An elected official raised campaign funds while inside his or her government office
- Someone on the government payroll did not work for the pay
- An official recommended an out-of-work friend for a government job
- Voters supported a candidate for office in return for a promise to fix potholes on their street
- An elected official with many wealthy backers supported a tax cut that largely benefited the rich

Table 2 gives a summary of responses to these eight items.

[Table 2 about here]

The eight question battery in Table 2 provides a beginning for examining the types of activities that voters find corrupt. Of the eight hypothetical situations, all but two have means above the midpoint of the scale indicating that voters tend to see all of them as at least somewhat corrupt. The situations with means below the midpoint (POTHOLES, JOB) both have relatively large variances, indicating less general agreement on how corrupt such actions really are. On the other hand, the four actions viewed as most corrupt (NOWORK, BRIBE, BENEFITS, CONTRACT) show much less variance and are widely perceived as significantly corrupt with more than half of all voters considering them to be "extremely corrupt."

To begin examining variations in attitudes, we considered the results for the three small Midwestern cities compared to the other three substantially larger places. In general, we find that for those actions deemed to be most corrupt (NOWORK, BRIBE, BENEFITS, and CONTRACT), voters in smaller cities were especially harsh in their evaluations. These

differences, however, while statistically significant, are not large. Citizens in both types of localities seem to share similar conceptions about which items are truly corrupt and which are not.

In addition to the corruption battery, respondents were asked their opinions on a number of related questions. In particular we wished to understand how voters perceived corruption in their own community. Was there a lot of wrongdoing? Are illegal activities a noticeable feature of public affairs? Table 3 provides the marginal responses to these items. When asked to choose from a list of possible "most important problems" in their community, just over 3% chose "corruption" in the Midwestern cities. Three times as many chose this option in the large cities. We also considered whether voters, if asked to pay a $50 bribe to a government official, would do it. More than twice as many people in the large citizens said they would pay the bribe, though the large majority of people in all cities claimed they would not. In follow-up questions, respondents noted whether there seems to be more corruption in Washington D.C. compared to twenty years ago and whether there is more corruption locally than in other places they had lived. Citizens in the smaller and larger cities were in agreement on the integrity of the federal government. In each case, approximately half of the respondents saw it as more corrupt. On the other hand, voters disagreed on the amount of corruption locally. Fifty-five percent of the voters in the three larger cities reported that there is more corruption locally, while only one in six of the people in the Iowa, Wisconsin, or Indiana samples thought likewise. A final item summarized these sentiments by asking respondents which level of government was most corrupt. It is clear in this case that the Midwesterners on the whole saw more corruption far away. In New Orleans, New York City, and Miami, corruption was much closer at hand.

Multivariate analysis. The patterns in Tables 2 and 3 show that citizens in large urban areas believed to a greater extent that corruption in local government was a fact of life, and that these beliefs may have affected their own normative standards of right and wrong in politics. We now return to the eight-item battery to put this latter inference to a fuller test. To simplify our analysis, we created two summary indices, one based on behaviors that are undeniably illegal throughout the country (being paid by the government for no work, accepting bribes, claiming benefits to which one is not entitled, and giving a no-bid contract), and another comprised of three political actions that smack of self-interest and favoritism but are legal (a legislator voting for a tax cut that favors rich supporters, voters backing candidates who promise to fix potholes on their street, and officials recommending unemployed friends for a job). These groupings are theoretically sensible, and they are confirmed by the factor analysis presented in Table 4. In this analysis, we see a clean two-dimensional solution. The only exceptions are the loadings for the last item on fundraising in a government office. In the eyes of our respondents, this kind of behavior hovers between law breaking and favoritism. To simplify matters, this item is dropped from further analysis.[5]

[Table 4 about here]

The correlation between the "law breaking" and "favoritism" indices is .30, which tells us that respondents saw these two kinds of actions as fairly distinctive. Do these different understandings of corruption vary from person to person, and place to place? Table 5 lists the results from a regression analysis for the "law breaking" index. In the first specification, we

[5] As noted in Table 1, the distributions for many of these items are highly skewed, which could make conventional factor analysis problematic. To verify the soundness of these results, we replicated the analysis using LISREL's weighted least squares estimator, which relaxes the assumption of multivariate normality. The same two-factor solution emerged in this analysis, with comparable loadings.

enter ten predictors, five of which tap into the respondent's socioeconomic status, four indicating political dispositions, and a dummy variable separating large from small cities.[6]

[Table 5 about here]

The first set of coefficients dramatically illustrates the point raised by Johnston (1986) and others regarding social class. Individuals with more education and higher income were significantly more inclined to equate illegal actions with corruption. Older respondents and women were similarly more likely to condemn this behavior. Political dispositions play a role too in these evaluations. Self-identified liberals took a softer stance on law breaking, while conservatives were firmer in their convictions that bribery, fraud, and the other kinds of legal violations counted as "corruption."

Turning to the geography of citizen evaluations, the differences between large and small cities are apparent in this model. Voters in New York, New Orleans, and Miami were on average less likely to see law breaking as corrupt. The magnitude of this effect, in absolute standardized terms, is about as large as that for education and income.

In an expanded model (second column), we entered the full set of city dummies, with the Iowa sample serving as the comparison group. Although Midwesterners voice generally more harsh condemnations of lawbreaking, it is evident in this specification that there is a great deal of variation from city to city. Voters in Iowa City and Lafayette / West Lafayette were on the whole in agreement over whether illegal behaviors constitute political corruption. People in Kenosha were significantly more inclined to equate the two. Index scores for Miami residents were on average markedly lower than for the Iowa and Indiana voters, as we would expect. Yet

[6] The coding for these variables is as follows: age (1=18-29, 2=30-44, 3=45-64, 4=65+); education (1=no high school diploma, 2=high school graduate, 3=some college, 4=college graduate); income (1=$50,000 or more, 0=less than $50,000); race, gender, partisanship, and ideological self-placements were all dummy coded.

this does not hold for respondents in New York and New Orleans. The coefficient for New Orleans is especially intriguing given that the city has long been famous for ethically questionable wheeling and dealing. Rather than taking a tolerant view of lawbreaking, residents of the Big Easy seem to be decidedly more damning. We have no ready explanation for why this is, and we leave this puzzle for further research.[7]

A comparable regression analysis is given in Table 6, with the dependent variable being the average score for the TAXCUT, POTHOLES, and JOB items. The effects of education and income operate here in the opposite direction, with higher status voters being particularly less inclined to consider "political favoritism" corrupt. Race also enters into the equation, with whites voicing less concern. Interestingly, older respondents and women continue to be significantly more extreme in their judgments. Such sentiments point to a kind of moral conservatism that apparently is not being picked up by ideological self-identifications.

[Table 6 about here]

Similarly complex regional patterns continue to emerge in the regression findings. Voters in Iowa and Lafayette / West Lafayette took comparable positions on the "favoritism" index, while Kenosha residents again appear significantly more concerned about these behaviors. For the large cities, we find that New Yorkers scored markedly lower on this measure. In contrast, voters in Miami appear more, rather than less, judgmental. We have no a priori reason to expect this distinction, and we leave it as well for future work.

[7] One possibility we considered is that older New Orleans residents are appreciably less bothered by law breaking in government, while younger voters, who would be products of a reform era in Louisiana politics, are more alarmed about such behavior. Unfortunately, the data do not support this hunch. Nor did we find any other noteworthy statistical interaction effects for New Orleans voters.

Political Consequences. On the day of the election, did these two attitude dimensions matter as citizens made choices at the voting stations? Moral judgments can, as noted earlier, be a powerful motivator in politics. Our analysis suggests that the different normative frames citizens employ when considering political actions may lead to different kinds of political mobilization. People who understand corruption in more expansive terms, so that all manner of self-interested, tacky, or partisan behaviors are denounced, are no doubt destined to be disappointed when hearing news reports. This disappointment could make these voters more open to the kinds of appeals raised by third party "protest" candidates, self-styled political outsiders such as George Wallace, John Anderson, H. Ross Perot, Ralph Nader, and Pat Buchanan who indicted not only incumbent office holders but the entire American governing regime. On the other side of the fence, citizens with an understanding of corruption that is limited largely to law breaking might shun these insurgent candidates. In that serious criminal activity in politics tends to be dealt with swiftly, voters from this camp may be satisfied with "politics as usual" – at least when it comes to passing moral judgments.

Research on voting for third party candidates finds that distrust of or hostility towards the federal government can pull voters towards third party and independent candidates (Rosenstone et al. 1996, Gold 1995, McCann et al. 1999, Hetherington 1999). Our surveys allow us to put a finer point on this finding by factoring in the two different orientations towards political corruption. We did this via multinomial logistic regression, where the dependent variable is the respondent's voting choice in the 2000 presidential election (coded 0 for George W. Bush, 1 for Al Gore, and 2 for a third party candidate). Of course, the last presidential contest did not feature the kind of fiery third party campaigning that characterized the 1968, 1980, 1992, or 1996 elections. Fortunately, however, our exit poll included far more respondents than in most

surveys, and we were able to net approximately 400 third party voters, a bloc sufficiently large to make multivariate regression analysis feasible.

[Table 7 about here]

In this model, we include as controls all the predictors from Tables 5 and 6 plus the standard measure of trust in government, coded so that high scores indicate distrust (1= "trust the government to do what is right just about always," 2= "trust the government most of the time," 3= "trust the government only some of the time"). As we would expect, not trusting the government led voters to reject Al Gore, the incumbent Vice-President, in favor of George Bush, or to side with one of the third party contenders. Also not surprisingly, the largest coefficients are for party identification and ideological positions. Yet even when controlling for these substantial effects, we find that the two corruption indices significantly affected voting decisions. Individuals adopting a strictly legalistic perspective on corruption were more likely to reject the minor candidates (b = -.328, $p < .05$), and were evenly split between the two major party nominees (b = .045, ns). On the other hand, voters who come down more strongly on favoritism in politics were more likely to support minor candidates (b=.143, $p<.05$.) Thus, a tendency to denigrate actions in politics that run contrary to the "greater good" of society is associated with increased support for a third party candidate. Seen in this light, backing a candidate such as Nader or Buchanan is not so much an outpouring of cynicism as much as a normative statement about proper versus improper motives in politics.

Conclusion

Defining political corruption is a substantial challenge to researchers. We chose, instead, to let voters define it for us. Given our battery of questions, voters clearly differentiated between corruption that is clearly illegal and that which many might simply call "politics." These

differing conceptions themselves differ in varying by local context, voter demographics and ideology. Our analysis also shows that conceptions of corruption have clear implications for voting behavior, in particular for the support of third party candidates. Our exit poll has resulted in a number of novel findings, but it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the study design. An exit poll by necessity must be brief; voters on their way home or to work will not fill out more than one or two pages. While the eight items we use to chart the voters' moral maps represent a wide range of questionable behavior in politics, we realize that additional work with more elaborate instrumentation is necessary to assess the nuances of judgment calls. Our investigation is further limited in geographic terms. The six cities covered here vary enormously in terms of ethnicity, culture, and political traditions. However, a thorough treatment of how local conditions affect beliefs about corruption and integrity would require still more city cases. This study is simply a first look at this question.

Bearing all this in mind, we should also note the new ground that has been broken in this exploration. Our analysis leads to the following hypotheses worthy of further study:

- Even in an age of mass communication and mobility, residents of small cities and towns think about corruption in somewhat different terms than citizens living in large metropolitan areas

- Older Americans and women are more inclined to apply the label "corrupt" to any number of behaviors in politics, even those that are not strictly illegal.

- Mobilization behind third party and independent candidates depends upon a particular configuration of moral judgments, in addition to a general distrust of the government.

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Table 1
Characteristics of Exit Poll Respondents by City

			Demographic Characteristics of respondents					Income
City	**Completed**	**Refused**	**Female**	**Non-White**	**Hispanic**	**Married**	**Homeowner**	**> $50,000**
Iowa City, IA	927	725	53.1%	5.7%	1.0%	35.8%	47.9%	35.7%
Kenosha, WI	1,545	1272	54.7	7.3	2.7	53.4	58.5	39.3
Lafayette, IN	804	117	50.9	5.8	0.9	49.5	57.7	47.9
Miami, FL	1,433	1313	48.9	14.2	39.6	50.5	50.9	42.3
New Orleans, LA	1,140	1242	55.8	54.7	2.6	40.4	57.2	33.4
New York, NY	980	1248	56.6	32.1	13.2	31.2	34.6	39.9
Summary	**6,829**	**5,917**	**53.2%**	**22.2%**	**11.5%**	**43.2%**	**51.7%**	**39.6%**

Table 2
Six City Corruption Battery

Question	Mean	S.D.	% Extremely Corrupt
Would it be corrupt if:			
Someone on the government payroll did no work for the pay? (NOWORK)	**4.38**	**1.03**	**66.4**
Small Cities	4.45	0.95	67.7
Large Cities	4.33	1.10	65.1
A police officer accepted money not to write a traffic ticket on a speeding driver? (BRIBE)	**4.35**	**1.02**	**63.6**
Small Cities	4.42	0.94	65.5
Large Cities	4.28	1.09	62.0
A citizen claimed government benefits to which he or she was not entitled? (BENEFITS)	**4.31**	**0.97**	**58.7**
Small Cities	4.40	0.90	62.1
Large Cities	4.23	1.02	55.7
A government official gave a contract to a campaign contributor without considering other contractors? (CONTRACT)	**4.19**	**1.06**	**54.4**
Small Cities	4.22	1.03	54.9
Large Cities	4.16	1.10	53.9

Table 2 Continued

An elected official with many wealthy backers supported a tax cut that largely benefited the rich? (TAXCUT)	**3.81**	**1.35**	**45.3**
Small Cities	3.80	1.34	44.9
Large Cities	3.81	1.36	45.7
An elected official raised campaign funds while inside his or her government office? (FUNDRAISING)	**3.66**	**1.32**	**33.3**
Small Cities	3.69	1.35	32.9
Large Cities	3.63	1.29	33.7
Voters supported a candidate for office in return for a promise to fix potholes on their street? (POTHOLES)	**2.88**	**1.52**	**22.6**
Small Cities	2.91	1.48	21.8
Large Cities	2.85	1.55	23.3
An official recommended an out-of-work friend for a government job? (JOB)	**2.79**	**1.44**	**17.6**
Small Cities	2.71	1.38	14.9
Large Cities	2.86	1.48	20.1

All mean differences are significant at $p<.05$ except for FUNDRAISING ($p<.1$), and TAXCUT and POTHOLES (n.s.)

Table 3
Voter Perceptions of Corruption

Question	Response	Small City Response	Large City Response
What is the most important problem the [city] area needs to address?	Corruption	3.4%	9.3%
If a local elected official were found buying votes, would he or she be removed from office?	Very Likely	65.2%	54.1%
If you needed a permit and an official demanded a $50 bribe would you:	Pay the $50	7.4%	15.5%
Does it seem that there is a lot more corruption in the federal government than there was 20 years ago?	Yes	55.3%	51.1%
Is there more corruption locally than other places you've lived?	Yes	16.7%	54.8%
Which level of government seems most corrupt?	Local	13.5%	45.5%
	State	9.9%	25.7%
	National	76.6%	28.8%

Table 4
Factor Analysis of the Corruption Battery

	Factor Loadings		*Communality*
	Law Breaking	Favoritism	
Paid government worker does no work	**.707**	.162	.526
A police officer accepts bribe	**.769**	.052	.595
Claiming government benefits to which one is not entitled	**.794**	.072	.636
Official gives contract to a campaign contributor without open bid	**.717**	.228	.567
Official with wealthy backers supports tax cut largely benefiting the rich	.194	**.636**	.441
Voters support candidate who promises to fix potholes on their street	.062	**.819**	.675
Official recommends out-of-work friend for a government job	.030	**.788**	.622
Official raises campaign funds inside government office	.398	.519	.428

Note: The factor loadings were derived via principal component analysis, with VARIMAX rotation. All items in the battery were scored on a five-point scale (1 = "not at all corrupt," 5 = "extremely corrupt"). The two factors explain 56% of the variance for the eight items; a third factor would have an eigenvalue far below 1.0.

Table 5
OLS Regression Analysis of the "Law Breaking" Index

	b (se)	beta weight	b (se)	beta weight
Predictors				
Socioeconomic Traits				
Education Level	.094 (.027)**	.10	.090 (.013)**	.10
Family Income (Over $50K)	.137 (.021)**	.09	.144 (.021)**	.09
Race (White)	.012 (.028)	.01	.113 (.029)**	.06
Gender (Female)	.132 (.020)**	.09	.126 (.020)**	.08
Age	.175 (.011)**	.22	.163 (.011)**	.20
Partisanship				
Democrat	.011 (.026)	.01	-.013 (.026)	-.01
Republican	-.029 (.030)	-.02	-.017 (.030)	-.01
Ideological Position				
Liberal	-.069 (.025)*	-.04	-.061 (.024)*	-.04
Conservative	.094 (.027)*	.05	.090 (.027)*	-.01
Place of Residence				
Large City	-.120 (.022)**	-.08		
Lafayette / West Lafayette, IN			-.069 (.039)	-.03
Kenosha, WI			.085 (.035)*	.05
New York City			-.018 (.040)	-.01
New Orleans			.131 (.039)*	.06
Miami			-.240 (.034)**	-.13
Constant Term	3.541 (.057)**		3.473 (.062)**	
Adjusted R^2	.089		.111	

'*' = $p < .05$; '**' = $p < .001$

Note: The variable "Large City" was coded 1 for respondents in New York, New Orleans, or Miami, and 0 for respondents from Lafayette, Kenosha, and Iowa. In the second specification, Iowa City residence serves as the baseline comparison for the city location dummies. $N = 5{,}408$. The dependent variable is the average score on NOWORK, BRIBE, BENEFITS, and CONTRACT; respondents with high scores on this index tended to see these illegal actions as highly "corrupt."

Table 6
OLS Regression Analysis of the "Political Favoritism" Index

	b (se)	beta weight	b (se)	beta weight
Predictors				
Socioeconomic Traits				
Age	.122 (.016)**	.10	.106 (.016)**	.09
Education Level	-.112 (.019)**	-.10	-.104 (.019)**	-.08
Family Income (Over $50K)	-.087 (.031)*	-.04	-.087 (.031)*	-.04
Race (White)	-.195 (.040)**	-.07	-.235 (.042)**	-.09
Gender (Female)	.387 (.030)**	.17	.385 (.029)**	.17
Partisanship				
Democrat	.009 (.038)	.01	.028 (.038)	.01
Republican	-.144 (.044)*	-.06	-.146 (.044)*	-.06
Ideological Position				
Liberal	-.064 (.036)	-.03	-.036 (.024)	-.02
Conservative	.058 (.040)	.02	.075 (.040)	.03
Place of Residence				
Large City	-.037 (.032)			
Lafayette / West Lafayette, IN			-.146 (.057)	-.04
Kenosha, WI			.224 (.051)**	.08
New York City			-.139 (.059)*	-.04
New Orleans			-.022 (.058)	-.01
Miami			.116 (.050)**	.04
Constant Term	3.358 (.084)**		3.249 (.091)**	
Adjusted R^2	.064		.076	

'*' = $p < .05$; '**' = $p < .001$

Note: The variable "Large City" was coded 1 for respondents in New York, New Orleans, or Miami, and 0 for respondents from Lafayette, Kenosha, and Iowa. In the second specification, Iowa City residence serves as the baseline comparison for the city location dummies. $N = 5{,}388$. The dependent variable is the average score on TAXCUT, POTHOLES, and JOB; respondents with high scores on this index tended to see these political actions as highly "corrupt."

Table 7
Explaining Vote Choice in the 2000 Presidential Election:
Were the "Law Breaking" and "Political Favoritism" Indices Consequential?

	Vote for Gore	Third Party Voter
Predictors		
Attitudes on Corruption		
"Illegal"	.045 (.069)	-.328 (.097)*
"Favoritism"	.013 (.047)	.143 (.070)*
Distrust the Federal Government	-.181 (.082)*	.287 (.125)*
Socioeconomic Traits		
Age	.022 (.052)	-.097 (.078)
Education Level	.124 (.060)*	.329 (.095)*
Family Income (Over $50K)	.011 (.100)	-.219 (.148)
Race (White)	-1.091 (.150)**	-.336 (.227)
Gender (Female)	.096 (.097)	-.490 (.145)*
Partisanship		
Democrat	1.991 (.111)**	-.318 (.177)
Republican	-2.602 (.132)**	-2.783 (.217)**
Ideological Position		
Liberal	.770 (.124)**	1.361 (.170)**
Conservative	-.992 (.122)**	-.231 (.193)**
Place of Residence		
Lafayette / West Lafayette, IN	-.499 (.184)*	-.718 (.282)*
Kenosha, WI	-.610 (.162)**	-.326 (.228)
New York City	.249 (.209)	.546 (.269)*
New Orleans	-.544 (.191)*	-1.023 (.302)*
Miami	-.436 (.160)*	-.270 (.222)
Constant Term	1.391 (.403)*	-.738 (.594)

'*' = $p < .05$; '**' = $p < .001$

Note: These effects were estimated via multinomial logistic regression; standard errors are in parentheses. The dependent variable was coded 1 for Gore voters and 2 for third party voters; voting for Bush serves as the baseline alternative. $N = 5{,}152$. $\chi^2_{32} = 3{,}999$ ($p < .001$); pseudo-$r^2 = .452$.