How accurate are voters' evaluations of pledge fulfillment? A comparative analysis of Quebec

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Introduction

Promissory representation (Mansbridge 2003) holds that parties make promises during election campaigns, which they try to fulfill if elected to power. In turn, voters make voting decisions based on the parties' record of keeping or breaking promises in the past. There is much accumulated evidence to support the first expectation that parties fulfill their election pledges once elected to power (see Naurin 2011 and Thomson et al. n.d. for comparative evidence; see Pétry and Duval 2015 and Duval and Pétry n.d. for Canadian evidence). But we know virtually nothing about the second expectation that voting decisions are based on the parties' record at fulfilling their promises. In fact, we do not even know whether voters are able to discriminate between fulfilled and unfulfilled party pledges.

This research answers the last question using data on voters' evaluation of the degree of fulfillment of party pledges. The data are drawn from a 2014 on line survey of close to 12,000 adult Quebecers who were asked to rate the fulfillment of pledges made by the Parti Québécois during the 2012 Quebec election. The question of citizens' evaluation of pledge fulfillment has already been studied in Ireland (Thomson 2011), Sweden (Naurin and Öhberg 2013) and Great Britain (Brandenburg and Thomson 2014). This is the first time that the question is examined at the sub-national or regional level.

Citizens' evaluation of pledge fufillment is relevant to the broader topic of evaluation of governments' policy performance. This study benefits greatly from the accumulated scientific work on voters' evaluation of governments' performance, particularly those models which incorporate personal subjective evaluation of government policy

performance (Duch, Palmer and Anderson's 2000). It departs from the literature on policy performance in at least two ways. First, our model focuses on voters' evaluation of whether politicians fulfill specific campaign promises. This is different from previous models which focus on voters' evaluation of the general performance of politicians in office. Second, by asking survey respondents to evaluate specific pledges, we are able to provide a fine-grained assessment of citizens' ability to differentiate between different levels of political performance.

Theory and Hypotheses

The dependent variable. Survey respondents are asked to evaluate pledges in the 2012 Party Québécois manifesto as either "kept", "kept in part" or "not kept" or "don't know." These evaluations are then compared with evaluations by experts in the Marois polimetre (Polimetre). The difference between citizens' and experts' evaluations is the dependent variable, which takes two forms: The <u>tone</u> of citizens' evaluation is measured by whether citizens overestimate or underestimate the extent of fulfilment of each pledge by comparison with the expert verdict found in the Marois polimeter. Respondents who rate as "not kept" a pledge that is rated as "kept" by the experts underestimate the rate of fulfillment. Respondents who rate as "kept" a pledge that is rated as "not kept" by the experts overestimate the rate of fulfillment. The <u>accuracy</u> of citizens' evaluation is a scale which measures the extent to which citizens get it right or wrong when they evaluate the fulfillment of pledges. The variable also takes the form of a binary coded one if citizens' rating is identical to expert rating, and zero otherwise.

Explanatory variables.

<u>Social background characteristics</u>. Previous research on voters' evaluation of pledge fulfillment in Ireland (Thomson 2011), Sweden (Naurin and Öhberg 2013) Great Britain (Brandenburg and Thomson 2014) and Canada (Pétry 2014) has uncovered a statistical link with socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, revenue, and education level. Based on these findings, it is expected that older, educated, affluent, male Quebecers evaluate the level of pledge fulfillment more positively and more accurately than younger, uneducated, poor, females.

The Parti Québécois is a strong defender of the French language (it also advocates Quebec's separation from Canada). The Party does not translate its campaign platform in English (Poltext) because it expects little support or interest from non-francophone Quebecers who habitually vote for the Liberal party. In view of this situation, we expect the presence of a language gap in the tone and accuracy of evaluation of pledge fulfillment by the PQ. It is hypothesized that Francophone respondents evaluate pledge fulfillment by the Parti Québécois more positively and more accurately than non-Francophone respondents.

Level of political information. One possible determinant of variation in people's evaluation of promise-keeping by politicians is the level of political information they possess. There is evidence that better informed citizens arrive at more accurate judgments of the performance of politicians (Althaus 2003, Gidengil et al. 2004). Better-informed citizens may be more aware of the promises made and kept, and will therefore arrive at a more accurate evaluation of promise-keeping by politicians than more poorly informed citizens. There is also the argument that better-informed citizens may be less inclined than poorly-informed citizens to resort to stereotypes when answering complex policy questions (Kuklinski and Quirk 2000). The stereotype that applies in our case is undeniably one that characterizes politicians as liars (Naurin 2011, Pétry 2014, Thompson 2011). Higher levels of political information are expected to limit this kind of stereotype. It is therefore hypothesized that better-informed Quebecers will evaluate pledge fulfillment more accurately and more positively than poorly informed Quebecers.

Media exposure. There is evidence in the literature that media exposure may reinforce people's dissatisfaction with politicians' performance in office (Patterson 1993, Soroka 2014). This literature suggests that the media's tendency to focus on the negative side of politics contributes to political cynicism and disaffection with politics. However, this may not be an entirely accurate charge: the media are not *always* or uniformly negative. In fact, there is evidence that exposure to news media has a positive impact on Canadians' perception of campaign promise keeping (Pétry 2014). This is in line with the "virtuous circle" hypothesis which holds that consumption of news media reinforces political interest and results in more political engagement (Norris 2003). Nevertheless, the issue of

whether politicians keep their campaign promises is a fertile ground for negativity bias in media coverage. It is not so much that the media "frame" their stories around the politicians-as-liars theme. Rather the media in general tend to pick and "prime" more sensational stories at the expense of less sensational ones (Patterson 1993). Stories about politicians reneging on their promises are more sensational than stories about politicians keeping their promises, especially if the promises are linked to issues that are salient to the public. It is probably safe to speculate that media reporting of promises broken is a more frequent occurrence than media reporting of promises kept. Since we have conflicting theories about the effect of media exposure on citizens' evaluation of pledge fulfillment, we do not make a prediction in one or the other direction.

Personal experience of issues. Many party pledges directly affect the welfare and income of precisely targeted groups of citizens--parents of school-age children for example. This provides the incentive for citizens to be well informed about the extent of fulfillment of those pledges by government. Therefore, it is hypothesized that the level of fulfillment of pledges is more accurately evaluated by members of groups directly targeted by those pledges than by citizens who are not directly targeted.

Issue importance in the eyes of respondents. Citizens do not necessarily need to be affected directly in their pocket book by a party pledge to accurately evaluate its fulfillment. Respondents who believe that a given policy issue is particularly important in the program of the governing party are probably more likely to pay attention to party pledges about that issue than are citizens who have no strong opinions about it. Because they pay more attention, they are better informed, and their evaluation of pledge fulfillment is likely to be more accurate. It is therefore hypothesized that Quebecers who believe that a specific issue is an important priority in the eyes of Prime Minister Marois are more likely to accurately evaluate the level of fulfilment of a government pledge on that issue than other citizens.

Keeping informed politically and having direct personal experience of policy issues helps in the accurate evaluation of pledge fulfillment, but it is probably not enough to know everything that parties promise. Even if they are unaware of what parties promise, citizens may make up for their lack of political information by drawing on a variety of

easily obtained information shortcuts, or heuristics, "that serve as second-best substitutes for harder to obtain kinds of data" (Popkin 1991).

One shortcut is trust in political parties. Having a high level of trust in your representative implies that you believe that she has your interest at heart (Hardin 2002) and that she will probably keep her campaign promises. At the opposite, having no trust in your representative means that you do not believe that she will fulfill her commitments. There is evidence to show that citizens who have more trust in political parties rate the fulfillment of election promises differently from those who don't. Trust correlates positively with accuracy of pledge fulfillment evaluation in Ireland (Thomson 2011) and in Great-Britain (Brandenburg and Thomson 2014). Trust also correlated positively with citizens' evaluation of whether politicians keep their promises (Pétry 2014). It is therefore hypothesized that respondents who trust political parties will evaluate pledge fulfillment more accurately and more positively.

Another shortcut is party ID. There is evidence that partisanship is a central factor in explaining political attitudes (Campbell et al. 1960). According to a widely shared conception, citizens who identify with the governing party evaluate government performance more positively than those who identify with the opposition party. There is evidence that party identification explains citizens' evaluation of pledge fulfillment to some degree. More specifically, Brandenburg and Thomson (2014), Pétry (2014) and Thomson (2011) find that citizens who identify with the parties in government rate pledge fulfilment significantly more positively than those who identify with opposition parties or with no party at all. In line with these findings, we expect that citizens who identify with the Parti Québécois have a more positive evaluation of the promise-keeping performance of the Marois government than those who identify with opposition parties or with no party at all.

Note that an alternative conception is also possible: Parti ID is a consequence rather than a cause of citizens' retrospective evaluation of government performance (Fiorina 1981). In the alternative conception, citizens' choose to support the Parti Québécois based on their favourable evaluation of the promise-keeping performance of past PQ governments. Trust in political parties may also be the consequence rather than the cause of positive

citizens' evaluation of pledge fulfilment. For example, citizens who feel that the party in government does not fulfill its election promises may withdraw their trust in political parties.

Previous research indicates that citizens underestimate the degree of fulfillment of campaign pledges (Brandenburg and Thomson 2014, Pétry 2014, Thomson 2011). This negativity bias leads us to expect that the <u>tone</u> of pledge fulfillment evaluation will affect its accuracy: More positive evaluations are more accurate; more negative evaluations are less accurate. To test this expectation, the tone of pledge fulfillment evaluation is included as an explanatory variable in the models for pledge rating accuracy by pledge (see Table 3).

Here is a summary of the hypotheses that will be tested:

Socio-demographic factors. Older, educated, affluent, male, Francophone Quebecers evaluate pledge fulfillment more accurately and more positively than younger, uneducated, poor, females.

Political information. Citizens evaluate the fulfillment of pledges more accurately and more positively the more informed they are politically.

Media exposure. The hypothesis does not specify the direction of the prediction.

Personal experience. Citizens with personal experience with the issues on which pledges are made evaluate the fulfillment of those pledges more accurately than citizens without experience.

Issue importance. Citizens who believe that a specific issue is important in the eyes of the governing party evaluate the fulfilment of a government pledge on that issue more accurately than other citizens.

Political trust. Citizens evaluate the fulfillment of pledges more accurately and more positively, the more trust they have in politicians.

Party ID. Citizens who identify with the governing party evaluate the fulfillment of pledges more accurately and more positively than citizens who identify with opposition parties or with no party identification.

Tone of evaluation. More positive citizens' evaluations are also more accurate.

Method

These hypotheses are tested with data on Quebecers' evaluations of the fulfillment of six specific election pledges written in the platform of the Parti Québécois during the 2012 election campaign (Parti Québécois 2012). The PQ formed a minority government after that election which was defeated 18 months later in a non-confidence vote. Survey respondents were asked to evaluate the extent of pledge fulfillment in the weeks after the 2104 election campaign in which the PQ was defeated by the Liberal Party. Surveys of citizens' evaluation of party pledge fulfillment ask respondents to think about pledges that were made by the parties in the election before the last election campaign. Survey respondents may not recall that far in the past, or may be confused as to which election is under investigation, and this raises a problem. In our case, the problem is limited since the previous election took place only 18 month before the 2014 survey. The survey was administered online by the Quebec Vote Compass. The survey panel consisted of 11 647 individual respondents. The respondents were not randomly selected, and the data were weighted in order to achieve results that are representative of the Quebec population.

As part of the 2014 Quebec Vote Compass survey, respondents were asked the following questions to which they could answer "fully kept", "kept in part", "not kept" or "don't know".[1]

Q1. A promise to introduce a tax credit for children arts activities.

Q2. A promise to limit annual political donations to $100 per political party.

Q3. A promise to forbid enrollment of French-speaking children in subsidized English-language public schools.

Q4. A promise to introduce autonomy insurance aimed at improving services to older people who have lost their autonomy.

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[1] The survey questionnaire is displayed in Appendix B.

Q5. A promise to forbid all state personnel to wear conspicuous religious symbols.

Q6. A promise to abolish tuition fee increase.

As far as socio-demographic characteristics are concerned, age is a continuous variable, gender is a binary variable. The language binary opposes French speakers from non-French speakers. Education and income are scales. The variable for children is a dichotomous variable coded 1 when a respondents declares having at least one child, and zero otherwise.

Political information is an index constructed by asking respondents whether they know the name of the father of responsible government in Canada, the name of the Québec Premier who called the 1976 election, which party proposed the Saint Lawrence Project in the 2014 Quebec election, and how many MPs currently represent Quebec in the federal Parliament. Media exposure is an index constructed by asking respondents at what frequency they consume new media per week.

Personal experience is operationalized as a dichotomous variable using survey questions that reveal whether each respondent had personal experience with the issue on which the pledge was made. For the pledge to introduce a tax credit on children art activities, respondents who declared that they had children under 15 were coded as having personal experience. For the pledge to limit annual political donations to $100, respondents were coded as having personal experience if they declared having donated money to a political party and/or having been a candidate in a Quebec election in the last 5 years. For the pledge to forbid enrollment in English language public schools, non-French speaking respondents were coded as having more personal experience. For the promise to introduce autonomy insurance for older people, female respondents were coded as having personal experience. There is evidence that female are more directly involved in care for the elderly, in particular care for elderly relatives (citations still to come). For the pledge to forbid state personnel to wear conspicuous religious symbols, respondents were coded as having personal experience if they reported being muslims. And finally, for the pledge to abolish tuition fee increase, respondents were coded as having personal experience if they reported being students.

Respondents were asked to rank order the issues on which pledges were taken based on the level of importance that they thought Prime Minister Pauline Marois attributed them. Respondents were asked to mark a 1 beside the most important issue, and a 6 beside the least important issue (see Appendix B for more details).

Party identification is measured by asking respondents which party they voted for in the last election. Trust is measured by an index based on two dimensions of politicians' democratic performance in the survey, whether politicians "are held accountable for their actions" and whether they "are honest." These two dimensions reflect two conceptions of trust (Maloy 2009): trust as discretion (blind faith) and trust as accountability (conditional or fiduciary trust).

Analysis

Figure 1 shows the distribution of respondents' evaluations of the six pledges under analysis. Citizens' evaluations of pledge fulfillment are more often inaccurate than accurate. Only two pledges have more accurate than inaccurate evaluations, setting aside respondents who declare they don't know: The pledge to limit donations is correctly evaluated as fully kept by 81% of the respondents who provide a verdict, and the pledge to forbid religious symbols which was broken according to the experts, is evaluated as broken by 60% of the respondents who provide a verdict. In the four remaining pledges, there are more inaccurate than accurate evaluations, again ignoring respondents who do not provide a verdict: More respondents evaluate the pledges to establish a tax credit and to freeze tuitions as broken or partially kept than those who evaluate them as fully kept (both these pledges were fully kept). More respondents evaluate the pledges to forbid enrollment in English public schools and to introduce autonomy insurance as fully or partially kept than as broken (both pledges were actually broken).

Two inaccurate verdicts tend to underestimate the degree of pledge fulfillment compared with actual pledge fulfillment. In the two inaccurate evaluations of the pledges that were fully kept (tax credit and tuition freeze), there are more respondents describing them as broken or partially kept than as fully kept. At the opposite, the verdicts on the pledge to introduce autonomy insurance and on the pledge to freeze tuitions overestimate the degree of pledge fulfillment. Both are actually broken, but more respondents declare that they are

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fully kept or partially kept than broken. On the other hand, respondents select the "broken" verdict more often overall than they select the "fully kept" verdict, even though the number of pledges kept is the same as the number of pledges not kept.

Overall, respondents choose the "don't know" answer more often than any other category of answer. More specifically, the pledges to limit donations, to forbid religious symbols, and to freeze tuition fees have comparatively low proportions of respondents who declare that they don't know. These are pledges for which respondents do not appear to hesitate to give a verdict. By contrast, in the pledges to establish a tax credit, to forbid enrollment, ant to introduce autonomy insurance the "don't know" category of answer is the modal category. Respondents hesitate to give a verdict for these pledges. Note that all the pledges in which many respondents hesitate also receive incorrect verdicts.

Crossing the percentage of "don't know" and the accuracy of the verdicts for each pledge yields the following ranking of pledges by diminishing degree of difficulty. Easiest are the pledges to limit donations and to forbid symbols (they have high percentages of accurate evaluations and low percentages of "don't know"). The pledges to introduce a tax credit and to forbid enrollment are harder (they both have high percentages of "don't know"). Next is the pledge to freeze tuitions (low percentage of "don't know" and high percentage of inaccurate evaluations). The pledge to introduce autonomy insurance is the hardest (high percentages of inaccurate evaluations and of "don't know").

Figure 1 about here

The bar chart of Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of the measure that is used to test the accuracy of individual verdicts, the dependent variable in the models of Table 1. The measure was computed by fitting a two-parameter Item Response Theory model where one parameter is easiness and the other is the discrimination parameter. We then computed each respondent's factors scores based on the item's parameters and their answers. This is often referred to as "ability estimates" in the IRT literature. In short, this allows us to build a scale accounting for items difficulty and discrimination. Our scale is more valid than an additive scale. The values on the scale range from -0.86 (lowest individual accuracy) to 1.21 (highest individual accuracy). Appendix C provides further

insight into how "easy" or "hard" it is for individual respondents to accurately evaluate the fulfillment of pledges.

Figure 2 about here

The bar chart of Figure 3 illustrates the measure of the tone of citizens' evaluations of pledge fulfillment that we use in the multivariate analysis of Table 1. The scale on the horizontal axis of the chart is constructed by adding to the score of each respondent one or two points if she evaluates the level of fulfillment of a pledge more positively than the actual level of fulfillment (i.e. plus one point to a respondent who declares a pledge kept in part when the actual verdict is broken, plus two points if the respondents declares that the pledge is fully kept), and by subtracting one or two points if she evaluates fulfillment more negatively than the actual pledge fulfillment. The maximum theoretical value on the scale is +5, and the minimum value is -5. The actual distribution is skewed toward negative values, which means that respondents' evaluations tend to be more negative than actual pledge fulfillment. The scale offers a glimpse of the negativity bias (Soroka 2014) in Quebecers' evaluation of pledge fulfillment. The values on Figure 3's scale are used as measure of the dependent variable in the multivariate models of the positive or negative tone of respondents' evaluation of pledge fulfillment (see Table 2).

Figure 3 about here

Table 1 displays the results of the multivariate analysis of the accuracy of evaluation of pledge fulfillment.[2] The variables in the regression analyses are presented according to the logic of block recursive estimation. Model 1 estimates the effect of socio-demographic variables. Model 2 measures the effect of political information and of media exposure, and Model 3 measures the added impact of party identification and political trust. The dependent variable being a scale, OLS is the appropriate estimation method.

Looking at model 1, we see that older, more educated francophone men are significantly more likely to have a positive evaluation of pledge fulfillment by the PQ in power than younger, less educated non-francophone women. Income and parenthood have no statistical effect on the accuracy of pledge fulfillment. From Model 2, we see that media

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[2] Effect plots for some of the explanatory variables are reported in Appendix A.

exposure has a significantly positive impact on accuracy, and political information has a negative impact, which suggests, against expectation, that higher levels of political information lead to less accurate evaluations of pledge fulfillment in general. Party ID in model 3 has the expected statistical impact: Respondents who identify with the incumbent Parti Québécois make significantly more accurate evaluations of pledge fulfillment than respondents who identify with opposition parties or have no party identification. Political trust has a significantly positive impact on accuracy as expected. Judging by the changes in R-square values from Model 2 (.055) to Model 3 (.122) party ID and political trust have a very large statistical impact on the accuracy of citizens' evaluation, as large as the impact of all the other variables put together.

Table 1 about here

The multivariate analyses reported in Table 2 explain variation in respondents' tone of evaluation of pledge fulfillment. The dependent variable being a scale, OLS is the appropriate estimation method. Looking at socio-demographic effects (Model 1) we see that older, female, non-francophone less educated respondents are significantly less likely to give positive verdicts on pledge fulfillment in general than younger, male, francophone, educated respondents. Not having children has a negative impact on the tone of evaluation, although the coefficient is statistically significant only in Models 2 and 3. Education loses its statistical power in Model 3.

From Model 2, we see that higher levels of media exposure and political information have negative effect on tone of evaluation, but the coefficient for the latter factor is not statistically significant. Model 3 indicates that respondents who identify with the incumbent Parti Québécois are significantly more likely to deliver positive verdicts than other respondents. This is in line with expectation. The variable for political trust adds nothing to the statistical model. Adding the effects of party ID almost triples the R-square value of the model from .036 to .121.

Table 2 about here

What are some salient features of the data in Table 1 and Table 2? Among the socio-demographic variables, gender and language have statistical effects on both the tone and

the accuracy of evaluations, but the effects go in opposite directions: Negative on accuracy and positive on tone. As expected, women' evaluations of pledge fulfillment are significantly less accurate than men'. But women' evaluation are significantly more positive in tone than men'. This might have to do with the fact that women generally express less negative bias than men (Soroka 2014). It might perhaps also have to do with the fact that PQ Prime Minister Pauline Marois was a woman. As expected, Francophone respondents give more positive verdicts of pledge fulfillment but those verdicts are less accurate than those of non-Francophone respondents.

The level of political information has no statistical effect on tone or accuracy of evaluation. This contradicts our expectation that respondents with higher levels of information give more accurate verdicts. Another difference has to do with the opposite signs for the effect of media exposure: Media exposure has a significantly negative effect on the tone of evaluations, and a significantly positive one on accuracy.

Another difference is the significantly positive effect of party ID on accuracy and its significantly negative effect on tone. Note also the much higher weight of party ID as a determinant of the mode of evaluation of pledge fulfillment (Table 2) than as determinant of accuracy of evaluation (Table 1). Political trust has a statistically positive effect on accuracy as expected, but no statistical effect on tone contrary to expectation.

Next we run a series of binary logit models on each of the six pledges separately. The dependent variable is coded zero for respondent who provided the wrong answer (including don't know answers) and 1 for those who gave the correct answer. One object of this analysis is to measure the impact of the variables for personal experience and for issue importance while controlling for other factors. Table 3 displays the results.

We start with the model for the promise to limit donations (limitd). In line with expectations, respondents with personal experience with campaign donations have a significantly higher likelihood of accurately evaluating the fulfillment of the pledge to limit campaign donations. However, respondents who think that Pauline Marois gives a high priority to the issue of the integrity of the political system are significantly less likely to accurately evaluate the pledge accurately, contrary to expectation.

The second model (taxcred) reveals that parent with children of 15 or less (who have more personal experience of children arts activities) are significantly more likely to accurately evaluate the fulfillment of the pledge to introduce a tax credit for children arts activities. Respondents who believe that arts and culture are important in the policy agenda of Pauline Marois are also statistically more likely to give accurate verdicts on the same promise.

According to the third model (enroll) Parti Québécois identifiers (who are more closely associated with the defense of the French language in school) are significantly more likely to correctly evaluate the fulfillment of the pledge to forbid enrollment of French speaking students in English speaking schools. However, contrary to expectation, respondents who believe that the defense of French is a priority for Pauline Marois have a significantly less accurate evaluation of the pledge to forbid enrollment. This counter-intuitive finding provides part of the explanation for the unexpectedly high number of respondents who incorrectly declare that Pauline Marois broke her promise to forbid enrollment (see Figure 1).

Moving on to the fourth model (auton), as expected, female respondents provide significantly more accurate verdicts on the level of fulfillment of the pledge to introduce autonomy insurance. On the other hand, the accuracy of the verdict is not influenced by respondents' belief that healthcare services to older Quebecers is a high priority in the agenda of Pauline Marois.

The coefficients for personal experience and for issue importance fail the test of statistical significance in the fifth model (relig), indicating that being a muslim or believing that religious accommodation is a policy priority of Pauline Marois makes no statistical difference in the accuracy of evaluation of the pledge to forbid religious symbols. According to the last model (tuition) students are significantly less likely to evaluate the pledge to freeze tuitions. This counter-intuitive finding is in line with the unexpectedly high number of respondents who incorrectly declare that Pauline Marois broke her promise to freeze tuitions (see Figure 1).

Table 3 about here

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Conclusion

The study of the fulfillment of election pledges raises a puzzle. On the one hand, researchers have uncovered high levels of pledge fulfillment in several countries, including Canada (Monière 1988, Pétry 2014) and Québec (Pétry 2012, but see Duval and Pétry n.d.). On the other hand, citizens in advanced democracies generally do not believe that politicians keep their promises (International Social Survey Program 2006, Naurin 2011, see Pétry 2014 for Canadian evidence). One reason for this discrepancy is that the definition by political scientists of campaign promises differs from citizens' understanding of pledges.

Unlike researchers who have a detailed knowledge of the link between well-defined promises and specific government actions within a precise time frame, citizens rarely possess the political sophistication necessary to make detailed distinctions about exactly what promise is made, when it is fulfilled, and by whom. The theoretical argument of this paper is not that citizens are unable to accurately evaluate the level of fulfillment of some party pledges. It is instead that, aside of socio-demographic factors, the simplest heuristic shortcut of all (Cutler 2002), citizens think primarily of party promises based on personal experience with issues, on party ID, and occasionally on political trust. High levels of education and political information do not have much effect on evaluation of pledge fulfillment. The paper tests this theoretical argument by asking respondents about specific and testable campaign promises. The findings by and large support the theory.

Citizens' evaluations of pledge fulfillment haves never been analyzed at at the regional level. This study bridges that research gap. This furthers our understanding of promissory representation in a regional setting.

In the introduction, we asked whether the accuracy and the tone of citizens' evaluations of pledge fulfillment have an influence on the vote. Answering this question is left for another paper. However, to the extent that partisan ID is positively correlated with the vote, we can already speculate about the likelihood that Quebecers' evaluations of pledges fulfilled by the incumbent government will influence the vote.

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Figures and Tables

Figure 1 – Respondents' Evaluations of the Fulfillment of Six Pledges

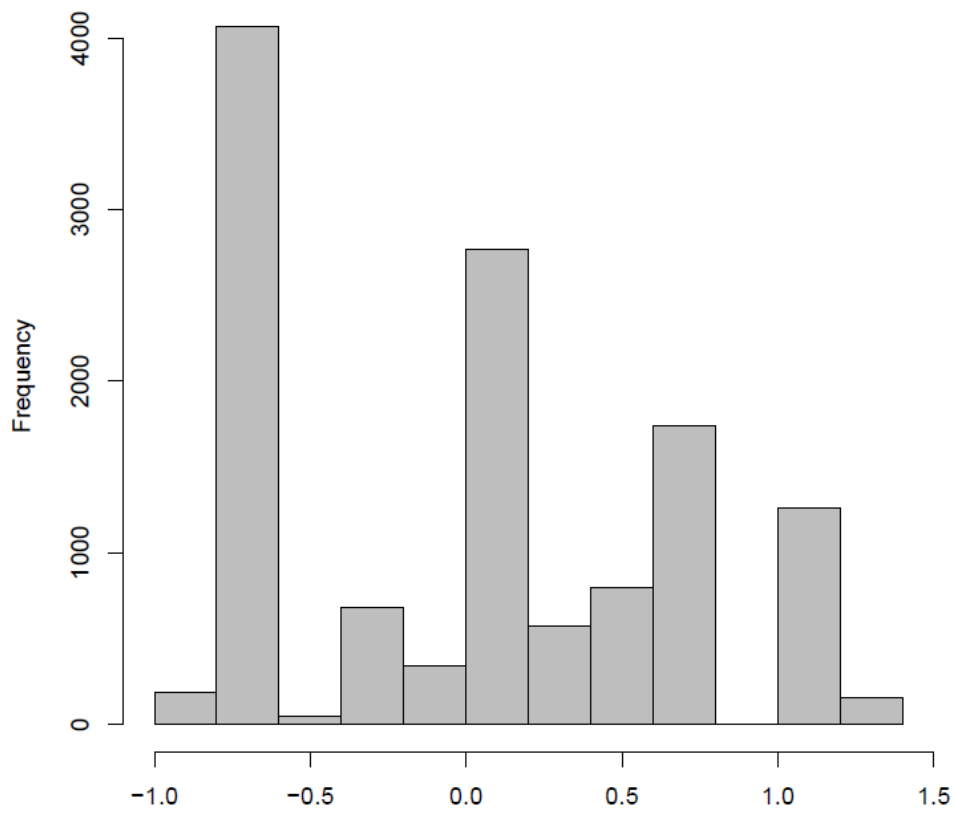Figure 2 – Distribution of Pledge Rating Accuracy
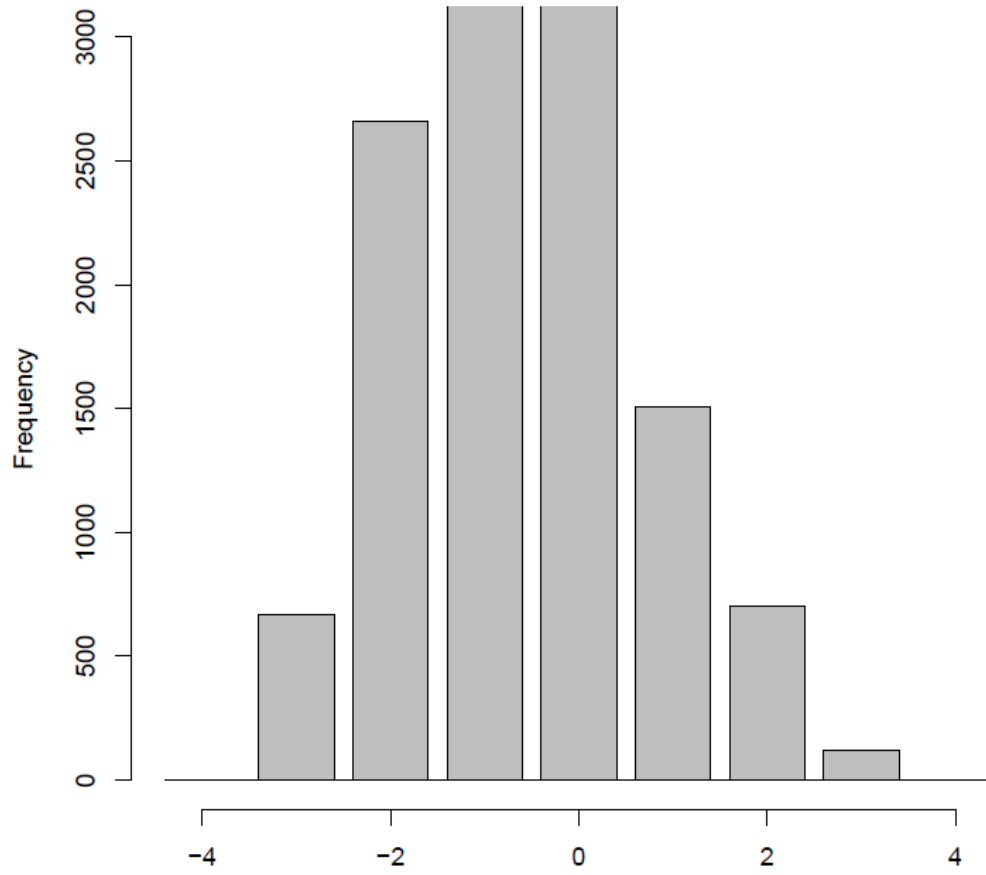
Figure 3 – Distribution of Pledge Rating Tone

Table 1 – OLS Models of Pledge Rating Accuracy (All Pledges)

	accuracy 1	accuracy 2	accuracy 3
(Intercept)	0.000	−0.604***	−1.022***
	(0.030)	(0.048)	(0.050)
age	0.006***	0.004***	0.006***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)
gender: Women/Men	−0.098***	−0.088***	−0.093***
	(0.012)	(0.012)	(0.012)
language: French/Other	−0.140***	−0.122***	−0.038*
	(0.017)	(0.017)	(0.017)
income2	−0.000	−0.000	0.000
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.004)
children: No children/Children	−0.001	0.000	0.001
	(0.015)	(0.015)	(0.015)
education2	−0.022**	−0.024***	−0.015*
	(0.007)	(0.007)	(0.007)
knowledge		−0.005	−0.004
		(0.009)	(0.008)
polFollowNews		0.139***	0.125***
		(0.009)	(0.009)
votePQ: 0/1			0.380***
			(0.015)
trustindex			0.010***
			(0.003)
R-squared	0.032	0.055	0.112
adj. R-squared	0.031	0.054	0.111
sigma	14.170	13.919	13.424
F	65.242	80.511	136.460
p	0.000	0.000	0.000
Log-likelihood	−30956.243	−28954.112	−27822.556
Deviance	2384828.878	2160922.390	1955091.283
AIC	61928.486	57928.224	55669.111
BIC	61987.550	58001.428	55756.627
N	11884	11163	10861

Table 2 – OLS Models of Pledge Rating Tone

	tone 1	tone 2	tone 3
(Intercept)	−1.446***	−0.915***	0.333**
	(0.074)	(0.120)	(0.125)
age	−0.008***	−0.006***	−0.009***
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
gender: Women/Men	0.205***	0.204***	0.166***
	(0.030)	(0.031)	(0.030)
language: French/Other	0.730***	0.712***	0.425***
	(0.042)	(0.043)	(0.042)
income2	0.001	0.005	−0.000
	(0.009)	(0.010)	(0.009)
children: No children/Children	−0.052	−0.087*	−0.195***
	(0.038)	(0.039)	(0.038)
education2	0.044*	0.049**	0.026
	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.018)
knowledge		−0.038	−0.014
		(0.021)	(0.021)
polFollowNews		−0.123***	−0.081***
		(0.022)	(0.022)
votePQ: 0/1			−1.190***
			(0.036)
trustindex			0.002
			(0.006)
R-squared	0.033	0.036	0.121
adj. R-squared	0.032	0.035	0.121
sigma	35.047	35.002	33.231
F	67.495	52.323	150.025
p	0.000	0.000	0.000
Log-likelihood	−41729.806	−39254.957	−37674.460
Deviance	14592042.351	13667411.823	11983759.873
AIC	83475.612	78529.915	75372.921
BIC	83534.677	78603.120	75460.438
N	11887	11165	10863

Table 3 – Logit Models of Pledge Rating Accuracy by Pledge

|	limitd	taxcred	enroll	auton	relig	tuition
(Intercept)	−2.155**	−2.633*	1.948**	−1.572*	2.664***	−2.030*
	(0.737)	(1.130)	(0.715)	(0.798)	(0.653)	(0.803)
z1.k	0.066	−0.025	−0.241	−0.095	0.085	−0.098
	(0.118)	(0.124)	(0.138)	(0.128)	(0.106)	(0.141)
polFollowNews	0.773***	−0.048	−0.325*	0.216	−0.475***	0.097
	(0.151)	(0.209)	(0.142)	(0.150)	(0.131)	(0.150)
votePQ: 0/1	−1.085***	−0.843***		−1.310***	−0.889***	−1.071***
	(0.211)	(0.230)		(0.193)	(0.179)	(0.223)
trustindex	0.091**	0.027	−0.012	0.008	0.010	0.103*
	(0.034)	(0.044)	(0.044)	(0.038)	(0.031)	(0.047)
maroisImportanceSystemIntegrity	−0.215***					
	(0.052)					
fiveYearsDonatedParty	0.720**					
	(0.245)					
maroisImportanceArtsCulture		0.249**				
		(0.090)				
children: Children/No Children		0.989***				
		(0.235)				
votePQ			0.780**			
			(0.243)			
maroisImportanceDefendFrench			−0.028			
			(0.068)			
french: other/French			−0.417			
			(0.329)			
maroisImportanceServicesOlder				−0.069		
				(0.058)		
gender: Women/Men				0.527**		
				(0.188)		
maroisImportanceReligiousAcc					−0.022	
					(0.038)	
muslim					−0.569	
					(0.545)	
maroisImportanceEducation						−0.063
						(0.068)
students						−2.590*
						(1.077)
Nagelkerke R-sq.	0.197	0.088	0.063	0.109	0.077	0.066
Likelihood-ratio	1620.791	494.827	281.342	716.931	609.175	349.605
Log-likelihood	12159.810	7432.460	7704.085	9310.281	13536.210	6929.879
Deviance	12159.810	7432.460	7704.085	9310.281	13536.210	6929.879
N	10350	10129	5938	10115	10316	10233

Appendix A – Effect Plots

Vote Effect Plots
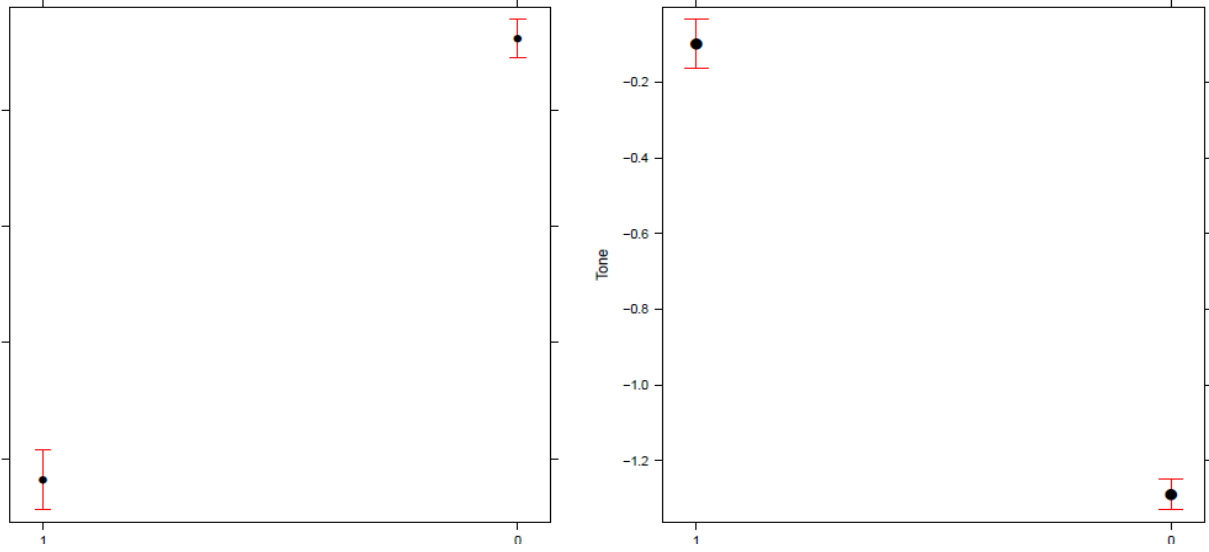
Education Effect Plots
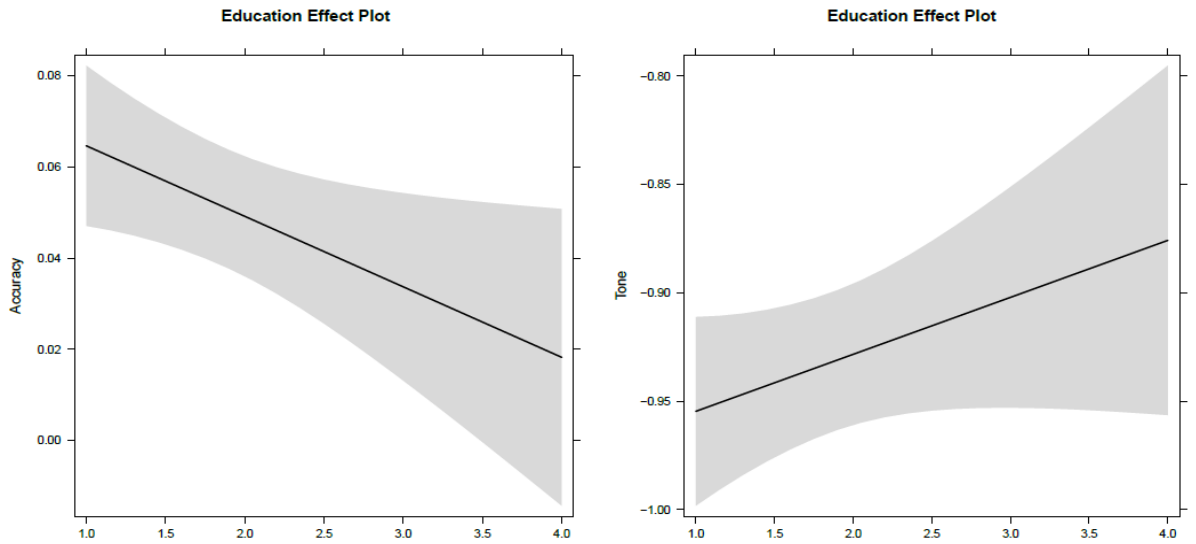
Income Effect Plots
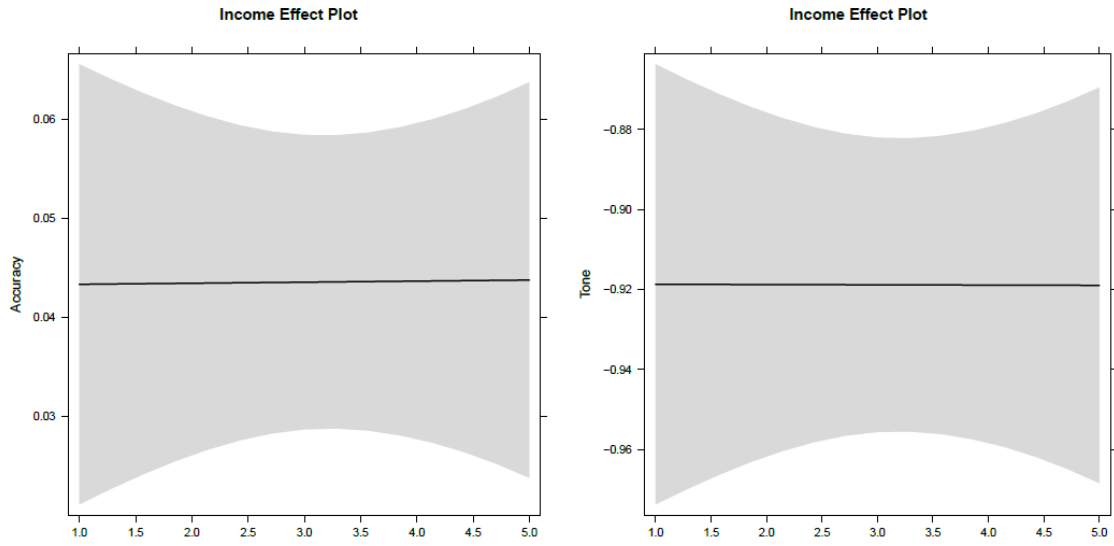
Language Effect Plots

Trust Effect Plots

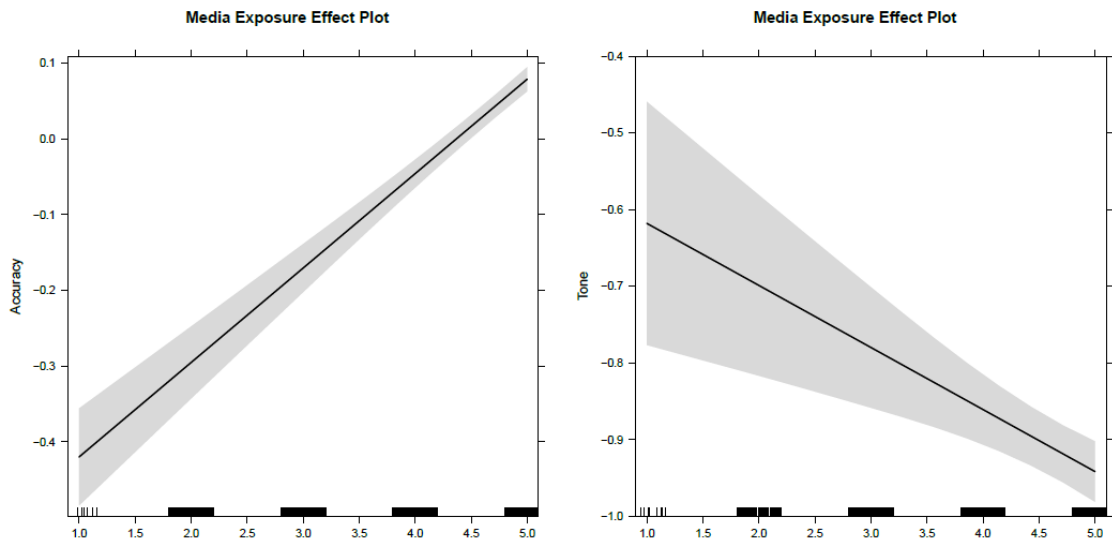### Trust Effect Plot

Trust Effect Plot
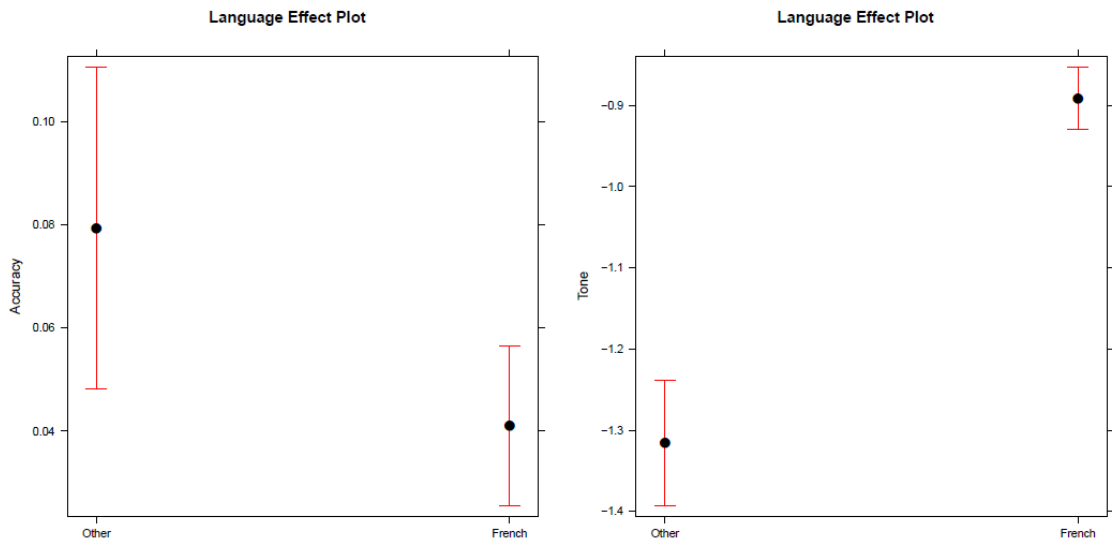
Media Exposure Effect Plots

Media Exposure Effect Plot
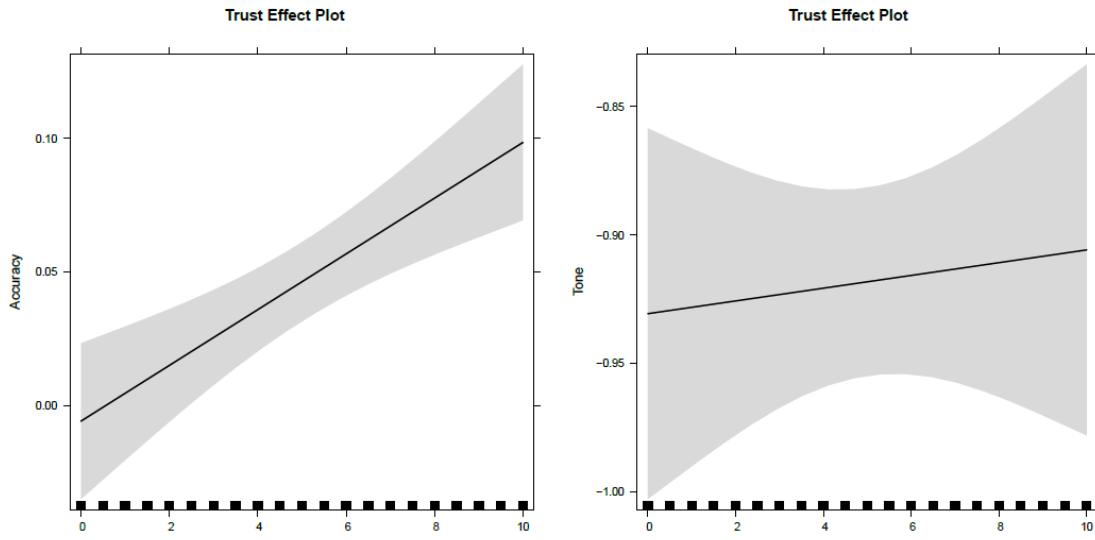
Media Exposure Effect Plot

Appendix B: Survey questions

During the 2012 provincial election, the following promises were made by Pauline Marois' Parti Québécois who afterwards formed the government. For each promise, do you think it was fully kept, partially kept, broken, or you don't know? /Lors de l'élection provinciale de 2012, les promesses suivantes ont été faites par le parti québécois de Pauline Marois qui a ensuite formé le gouvernement. Pour chaque promesse, pensez-vous qu'elle a été tenue, tenue en partie, rompue, ou êtes-vous incertain de la réponse?

Q1. A promise to introduce a tax credit for children arts activities/la promesse d'offrir un crédit d'impôt aux familles qui inscrivent leurs enfants à l'apprentissage des arts.

Fully kept/ tenue	Partially kept/ tenue en partie	Not kept/rompue	Don't know/incertain

Q2. A promise to limit annual political donations to $100 per political party/la promesse de limiter le don annuel d'un électeur à un parti politique à 100 dollars.

Fully kept/ tenue	Partially kept/ tenue en partie	Not kept/rompue	Don't know/incertain

Q3. A promise to forbid enrollment of French-speaking children in subsidized English-language public schools/la promesse d'interdire aux enfants de langue française l'accès à l'école publique de langue anglaise.

Fully kept/ tenue	Partially kept/ tenue en partie	Not kept/rompue	Don't know/incertain

Q4. A promise to introduce autonomy insurance aimed at improving services to older people who have lost their autonomy/ La promesse de mettre en place une assurance autonomie afin d'augmenter les services aux aînés en perte d'autonomie.

Fully kept/ tenue	Partially kept/ tenue en partie	Not kept/rompue	Don't know/incertain

Q5. A promise to forbid all state personnel to wear conspicuous religious symbols/La promesse d'interdire à tous les fonctionnaires de porter des signes religieux ostentatoires.

Fully kept/ tenue	Partially kept/ tenue en partie	Not kept/rompue	Don't know/incertain

Q6. A promise to abolish tuition fee increase/la promesse d'abolir la hausse des droits de scolarité.

Fully kept/ tenue	Partially kept/ tenue en partie	Not kept/rompue	Don't know/incertain

Q7. In a typical week, how many hours do you spend reading and watching news and current affairs in newpapers, on television and other media/Dans une semaine habituelle, environ combien d'heures passez-vous à lire et à regarder les nouvelles dans les journaux, à la télévision et les autres medias? *(Note. Part of this question is in the existing survey questionnaire).*

Q8. Where do you get most of your information about Quebec politics? (Please circle one answer only)/Quelle est votre principale source d'information sur la politique québécoise? (Veuillez sélectionner une seule réponse).

Television/télévision

Radio/radio

Newspapers and online newspapers/journaux et journaux en ligne

Social media like facebook/media sociaux comme facebook

Friends and family/amis et famille

Did not get information/pas de source d'information

Q9. What was the name of the father of responsible government in Canada?/Comment s'appelait le père du gouvernement responsable au Canada?

Louis-Hippolyte Lafontaine

Louis-Joseph Papineau

René Levesque

John A. Macdonald

Wilfrid Laurier

Not sure/incertain

Q10. What was the name of the Québec Premier who called the 1976 election?/ Comment s'appelait le premier ministre du Québec qui a déclenché les élections de 1976?

Pierre Laporte

René Levesque

Robert Bourassa

Lucien Bouchard

Pierre-Marc Johnson

Not sure/incertain

Q11. Which of the following parties proposed the Saint Lawrence Project in the 2014 Quebec election? Quel parti a proposé le projet Saint Laurent pendant la campagne électorale de 2014?

Liberal Party

Parti québécois

Québec solidaire

Coalition avenir Québec

Option nationale

Not sure/incertain

Q12. How many MPs currently represent Quebec in the federal Parliament?/ Combien de députés fédéraux représentent le Québec au Parlement d'Ottawa à l'heure actuelle?

52

75

99

159

Not sure/incertain

Using a sliding scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) please indicate whether you agree or disagree with each statement below/Sur une échelle de zero (fortement en désaccord) à 10 (fortement d'accord), veuillez indiquer si vous êtes d'accord ou en désaccord avec chacune des affirmations suivantes.

Q13. Elected politicians keep most of their promises/les dirigeants élus tiennent la plupart de leurs promesses.

Q14. Politicians are held accountable for their actions/les dirigeants politiques sont tenus responsables de leurs actions.

Q15. Government officials are honest/les dirigeants politiques sont honnêtes.

Q16. In the last 5 years, have you belonged or done any of the following/Au cours des cinq dernières années, avez-vous été membre ou avez-vous pris part à une ou plusieurs des activités suivantes?

Voted in an election/voté à une élection

Belonged to a political party/joint un parti politique

Donated money to a political party or candidate/fait un don à un parti politique ou à un candidat

Volunteered in an election campaign/été volontaire dans une campagne électorale

Been a candidate for a party in a Québec election/été candidat pour un parti dans une élection au Québec

Q17. Individual donations to political parties should be/les dons individuels aux partis politiques devraient être …

> Limited to a few dollars/plafonnés à quelques dollars
>
> Limited to a few hundred dollars/plafonnés à quelques centaines de dollars
>
> Limited to several thousand dollars$/plafonnés à quelques milliers de dollars
>
> Unlimited/sans aucun plafond
>
> Not sure/incertain

Q18. Do you have children under 15 currently under your care? /Avez-vous des enfants de moins de 15 ans à votre charge?

Q19. Please rank the issues listed below according to what you believe their importance was in the eyes of Pauline Marois' government. Mark a 1 beside the most important issue for Pauline Marois, a 2 beside the second most important, a 3 beside the third most important, a 4 beside the fourth most important, a 5 beside the fifth most important, and a 6 beside the least important/ Veuillez ranger les enjeux ci-dessous en fonction de l'importance que leur a accordé le gouvernement de Pauline Marois selon vous. Placez un 1 à côté de l'enjeu le plus important, un 2 à côté du deuxième plus importante, un 3 à côté du troisième plus importante, un 4 à côté du quatrième plus importante, un 5 à côté du cinquième plus importante et un 6 à côté de l'enjeu le moins important.

> Les services aux aînés/ Services to older people
>
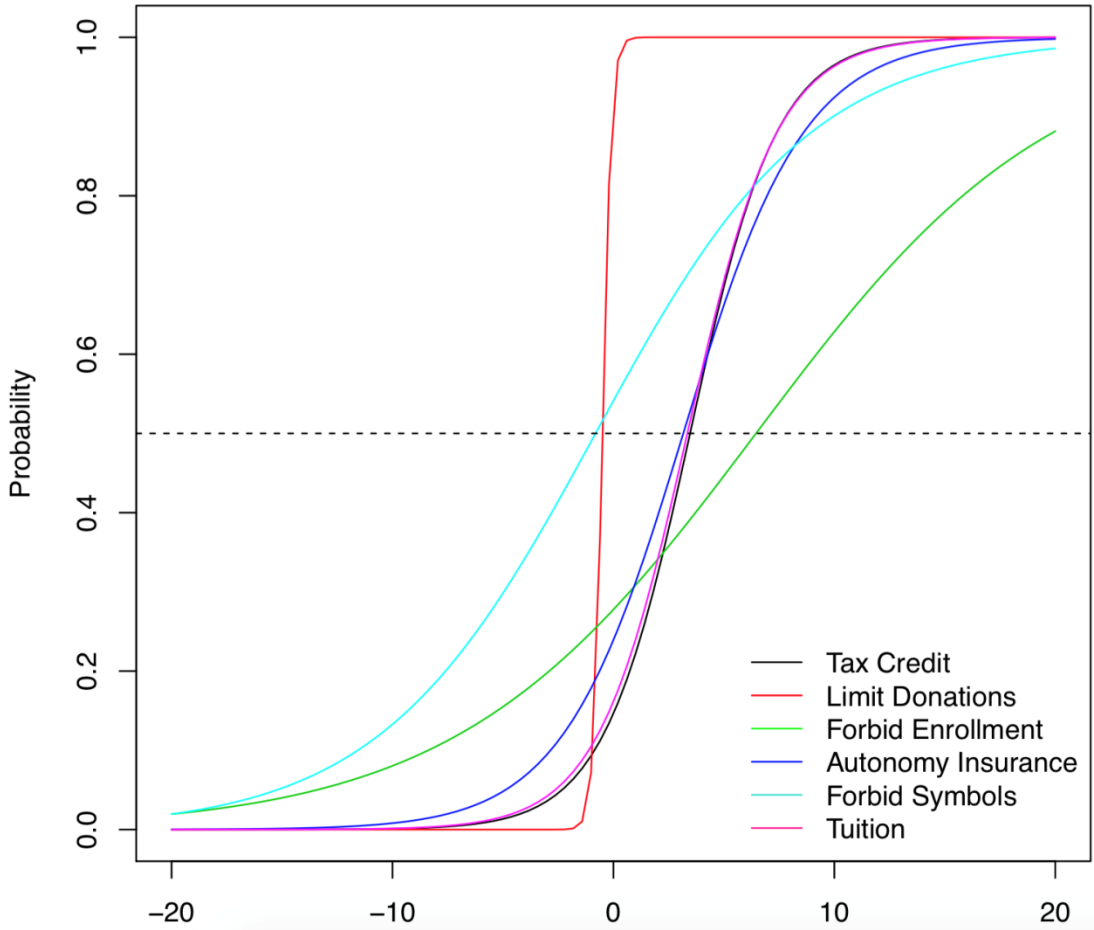> La défense de la langue française/ Defense of the French language
>
> L'éducation supérieure/ higher education
>
> L'intégrité du système politique/ Integrity of the political system
>
> Les arts et la culture/ Arts and culture
>
> Les accommodements religieux/ religious accommodations

Appendix C: Item Characteristic Curve (IRT) of six pledges

When building an additive scale of accuracy in citizens' evaluation of pledge fulfillment, we must acknowledge that some pledges are harder to evaluate and therefore less discriminating between respondents. There is a risk that the use of traditional scaling methods, which assume that all scale items are equally hard to evaluate, will lead to biased estimates. This paper addresses the problem by using Item Response Theory (IRT) to generate a latent variable representing the ability to answer pledges fulfillment

questions accurately. The model used to generate the ability scores is formally expressed as follow:

$$\log\left(\frac{\pi_i}{1-\pi_i}\right) = \beta_{1i}(z - \beta_{0i}^*)$$

Where π is the probability of an answer being accurate, β_{0i} is the difficulty parameter of a given pledge fulfillment question, β_{1i} is the discrimination parameter of a given question and z is the latent variable representing the ability to accurately answer pledge fulfillment questions accurately. Figure 2 illustrates how the model works. This is commonly called an Item Characteristic Curves (ICC) graph. Each curve represents one of six fulfillment pledges question. The graph puts in relation the ability of survey respondents and the probability of a question being answered accurately. The displacement of the curves on the x axis shows their difficulty, curves to the right being harder to answer. The slope of the curves shows how well questions discriminate among respondents. The steeper the slope of the curve, the better they discriminate.

The diagram above displays the six item characteristic curves (ICC) for the pledge questions analyzed in this paper. The horizontal axis θ represents the ability of individual respondents to accurately evaluate the degree of pledge fulfillment which varies from -20 (minimum ability) to +20 (maximum ability). The vertical axis displays the probability of a question being answered accurately (from 0 to 1).

The individual curves capture two distinct properties: difficulty and discrimination. The displacement of the curves on the horizontal axis shows the level of difficulty to accurately evaluate the level of pledge fulfillment: The more a pledge curves to the right, the more difficult it is to evaluate accurately. The steepness of the slope of the curves shows how well pledges discriminate among respondents: The steeper the slope, the higher the discrimination.

The very steep curve for the pledge to limit donations means that the probability of an accurate verdict changes abruptly from zero to one as respondents' ability reaches and passes the 0 value on the horizontal axis. At the opposite end of the distribution, the curve for the pledge to forbid enrollment is not very steep: The probability of an accurate

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verdict on this pledge increases gradually as respondents' ability improves. Note also that the curve for the pledge to forbid enrollment does not begin at 0 or end at 1 on the vertical axis. The probability of an accurate evaluation of this pledge never reaches 1 no matter how able or sophisticated the respondent. The curves for the pledge to forbid religious symbols and for the pledge to limit donations cross the horizontal midpoint at exactly the same (both pledges have the same degree of difficulty) except that it is steeper (the pledge to forbid religious symbols is less discriminatory).

The curves for the pledges on tax credit, autonomy insurance and tuitions follow very similar intermediate trajectories, illustrating a pattern of medium difficulty. IRT analysis yields the following ranking of pledges by diminishing magnitude of difficulty. Easiest is the pledges to forbid donations. The pledge to forbid symbols is as easy, although it discriminates less than the pledge to forbid donation. The pledges to introduce a tax credit, to freeze tuitions and to introduce autonomy insurance occupy an intermediary position on the difficulty scale. The pledge to forbid enrollment is the hardest to evaluate. The IRT values in Figure 2 are the dependent variables in multivariate models of accuracy of respondents' evaluation of pledge fulfillment (see Table 1).