ABSTRACT

Title of Document:	VOTING FOR CORRUPTION: WHEN DO VOTERS SUPPORT CORRUPT POLITICIANS?
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This dissertation explores the determinants of when voters are willing to support corrupt politicians. The first paper presents a unique survey experiment that asks respondents to choose between pairs of politicians who have different ideological positions, and are accused of corruption. The survey goes some way toward recreating the tradeoffs one makes when voting in the real world. Results show that voters are more likely to choose corrupt politicians who agree with their position on an issue when issue salience is high. Results also show that institutional trust decreases the likelihood of choosing a corrupt politician, while perceptions of corruption increase the likelihood. Institutional trust and perceptions of corruption also have a modifying effect on issue salience.

The second paper uses several datasets to test the effects of several mechanisms on the likelihood of a person voting for Silvio Berlusconi. Taking Berlusconi as the archetypal corrupt yet electorally successful politician I show that social norms that

justify corruption in one's peer group extend to voting and increase the likelihood of supporting Berlusconi. I find that perceptions of political corruption have an effect on the likelihood of supporting Berlusconi, and that this effect is not constant over time. I also find that trust in the judiciary has no effect on the likelihood of supporting Berlusconi – contrary to Berlusconi's claims of persecution by the judiciary – and that trusting the institution of television has a strong effect on the likelihood of voting for Berlusconi.

The third paper uses a unique survey experiment to measure changes in the support of voters for corrupt politicians. Results show that context matters, with voters' sensitivity to corruption being shaped by the type of political post held by politicians and the overall corruption in the political system. Experimental results show that voters are more forgiving of acts of corruption among higher ranked politicians in executive politicians, when corruption is common.

Overall, I provide evidence showing that voters are often willing to support corrupt politicians, and that transparency alone will have a limited effect in increasing the likelihood that corrupt politicians will be punished electorally.

VOTING FOR CORRUPTION: WHEN DO VOTERS SUPPORT CORRUPT
POLITICIANS?

By

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Introduction

In ways large and small, corruption hurts us all. It impedes social and economic development. It erodes the public's trust, hurts investment and undermines democracy and the rule of law. It facilitates terrorism, conflict and organized crime.

Kofi Annan, First Conference of the States Parties to the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)[1]

This dissertation is motivated by one main question: Why do people vote for corrupt politicians? The assumption of this question is that people do support corrupt politicians, and indeed, several studies have shown that the electoral consequences of corruption are often mild. In the United States, most members of the House of Representatives charged with corruption between 1968 and 1990 were reelected (Peters and Welch 1980, Welch and Hibbing 1997). A study of the Italian parliament from 1948 to 1994 found minor consequences for corruption (Chang et al 2010). In his study of Japan, Reed (1999) finds that legislators who are indicted of corruption only lose a few percentage points in vote share in subsequent elections, and can often gain in percentage of vote share.[2]

Much political science research focuses on institutional causes of corruption. For example, Persson et al (2003) find that larger voting districts are associated with lower levels of corruption whereas party lists are associated with higher levels of corruption. The authors attribute this to the effects of electoral competition: when there are low barriers to entry, voters have a wider range of candidate choice and so can choose clean

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[1] As quoted in Bracking (2000, p ix).
[2] Political corruption is generally defined as the misuse of public power for private gain.

candidates. Chang and Golden (2001) find that much political corruption in Italy can be attributed to the intraparty competition for electoral funds (at least prior to 1994). Kunicova and Rose-Ackerman (2005) find that proportional representation systems increase corruption – the authors argue that this is because PR systems reduce the ability of voters and opposition parties to monitor incumbents.

In the policy world, the focus has been on transparency. The assumption in much of this writing is that the voters are homogenous and universally dislike corruption. If only they had more information, they could punish corrupt politicians and levels of corruption would be reduced globally. This position often invokes the idea of a virtuous circle that begins with transparency and ends with a global Denmark or Sweden where corruption is low, transparency is high and institutions seem to work seamlessly. These assumptions can be seen in the positions of development agencies such as World Bank and USAID among others. Indeed, the importance of the concept of transparency can be seen in the name of the primary anti-corruption NGO, *Transparency International* (founded by a former World Bank official, Peter Eigan).

Bracking (2007) claims that corruption has worsened globally since corruption became a priority of the international community after the Cold War. This is despite the millions of dollars spent by international organizations, donor governments, and NGOs on programs to increase transparency, strengthen civil society and the media, and create anti-corruption watchdogs (Stapenhurst et al 2006).

Recent work in political science has turned its focus to the individual to test whether increased information (the presumed consequence of transparency) has an effect on voter

support for corrupt politicians. Winters and Weitz-Shapiro (2013) field a survey experiment in Brazil and find that voters are willing to punish politicians for corrupt behavior – and that they are not willing to trade off between corruption and competence. Riera et al (2013) find that the effect of corruption on voter support for the incumbent is heterogenous across the population. Klasnja (2015) finds a similar result in the United States, when he focuses on voter knowledge and the likelihood of voting for a member of Congress that has been accused of corruption.

Researchers have also carried out field studies in order to determine whether increased information has an effect on whether voters support the incumbent. Chong et al (2013) expose voters in Mexico to information about corrupt mayors and find that information does have some effect on incumbent vote share, but also erodes voter identification with the incumbent party and causes many to withdraw from the political process. Ferraz and Finan (2008) take advantage of the random release of municipal audits in Brazil to determine the effect of information on corruption. They find that voters punish incumbents when the level of corruption is much higher than voters expected, and that this effect is most pronounced in areas with local radio stations to spread the information. In effect, they find that voters whose mayors are corrupt may go unpunished. Mayors who are not much more corrupt than voters assumed they were get a pass on their corruption.

This brings us to work that has been done on the effect of the political environment on the likelihood of voters supporting corrupt politicians. Klašnja and Tucker (2013) carry out the same experiment in Moldova and in Sweden to see if there is a cultural difference in people's tolerance for corruption. As one might expect, Swedes were much more likely

to punish hypothetical corrupt politicians than were Moldovans. While this may be a cultural effect, the result squares well with two formal papers on the topic. The first is by Klašnja, Little and Tucker (2014) and focuses on political corruption traps. These traps are the result of voter choice in corrupt political environments, and candidates' decision to contest elections. Klašnja et al show formally how equilibria of high and low corruption can emerge in the same institutions because of voter expectations and so voter choice. The second paper is by Ashworth, Bueno de Mesquita and Friedenberg (2014) who show formally that accountability traps can come about because of 'bad expectations' about government. The authors describe an accountability trap as a situation in which "the voter expects the politician to shirk and the politician expects the voter to apply low standards for reelection" (p2). In all three of these papers, as well as in the work by Ferraz and Finan, the level of corruption in the political environment is important as it is factored into the calculus of the voters. If all actors in the political environment are corrupt then punishing a corrupt actor will have little consequence: punishing an otherwise competent politician could be harmful as the replacement will likely be equally corrupt, but could be far less competent.

The link between political or institutional trust and corruption has received some attention in the political science literature also. Cho and Kirwin (2007) write, "lack of confidence in government actually favors corruption insofar as it transforms citizens into clients and bribers who look for private protection to gain access to decision-makers" (iii). Similarly, Cleary and Stokes (2006) find that low institutional trust increases clientelism. However, the link between institutional trust and voting for a corrupt politician has not been explored.

Morris and Klesner (2010) argue for mutual causality between institutional trust and perceptions of corruption. This raises the prospect of a vicious circle where increased perceptions of corruption create lower levels of institutional trust, which becomes the lens through which individuals perceive higher levels of corruption. Mishler and Rose (2001) present evidence that institutional trust is the result of institutional performance. They find no evidence for cultural theories of institutional trust. [3] However, Heatherington (1998) finds that low levels of institutional trust make it difficult for institutions to perform well (which is required in order to increase institutional trust): "low trust helps create a political environment in which it is more difficult for leaders to succeed" (p791). Hakhverdian and Mayne (2012) find that in countries with low levels of corruption, education increases institutional trust, whereas in countries with high levels of corruption it has the opposite effect.

Overall, these studies give us some insight into the importance and origins of political trust. I extend this literature by examining the effect of institutional trust on the likelihood of supporting a corrupt politician.

Several other issues related to individual level tolerance of corruption have been explored in the literature. The noise surrounding issues of corruption may make assessing culpability difficult (Anduiza et al 2014), partisan bias has an effect (Muñoz et al 2013), as well as voters' perceptions of whether they may receive some benefit from the corruption (Fernandez-Vasquez et al 2014).

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[3] The authors also find that with country variation of institutional trust is higher than between country variation. This is encouraging as it means that individual level research such as presented in this dissertation is valuable as increasing institutional trust at the individual level can have a virtuous effect on the level of corruption at the national level.

Separate from voter choice, the tolerance of corruption and likelihood of engaging in corruption has been explored by Tavits (2010) in Estonia, and Dong et al (2012) cross-nationally. Both find that perceptions of corruption in one's peer group have a strong effect on the likelihood of one finding corruption to be justifiable or acceptable. This, in turn, increases the likelihood that one engages in some sort of corrupt activity one's self.

This dissertation aims to bring together and test several strands of this literature, and test hypotheses that have been difficult to test. The first paper sets up an original interactive survey that is inspired by research on risk aversion. In this way, I replicate some of the real world considerations voters must make: respondents choose between two politicians, one of whom is clean but ideologically distant, one of whom is corrupt but ideologically close. I show that issue distance and issue salience are important predictors of candidate choice. I also show that institutional trust has a conditional effect: high levels of institutional trust lessen the effect of issue salience on the likelihood of choosing the corrupt politician. And, that perceptions of political corruption have a conditional effect: perceiving high levels of corruption strengthens the effect of issue salience on the likelihood of choosing a corrupt politician.

The second paper uses real world data to test whether social norms play a role in an individual's decision to support a corrupt politician. In this case, the politician is Silvio Berlusconi. Berlusconi provides a good real world example of the determinants of supporting a corrupt politician as he has been charged and convicted several times throughout his career and yet has continued to enjoy electoral success. I use the case of Berlusconi to test several hypotheses. The first is whether social norms that justify

corruption extend to vote choice: is a person who claims that corruption is justifiable more likely to vote for a politician who is corrupt?

Whether corruption can be justified is itself a result of perceptions of corruption as commonplace: those who perceive corruption in their peer groups are more likely to claim that corruption can be justified. Thus, if claiming corruption can be justified increases the likelihood of voting for a corrupt politician, then we can trace this tolerance of political corruption back to the level of corruption in one's peer group. Indeed, this is what I find: respondents who perceive high levels of corruption are more likely to say that corruption can be justified, and are in turn more likely to support Silvio Berlusconi.

I use this opportunity to test two other hypotheses related to Berlusconi specifically. Berlusconi has long claimed that he is the victim of persecution by a left wing judiciary run amok. I test whether those who believe that the judiciary can be trusted are less likely to support Berlusconi (they are not). Because of Berlusconi's control over the Italian media market many commentators attribute his electoral success to his control of the Italian media. I test whether those who trust the institution of television are more likely to support Berlusconi (they are).

The third paper takes a slightly different approach. This paper is a survey experiment designed to test the effect of political position and political environment on voter tolerance of corruption. The survey was carried out at the University of Maryland's Experimental Psychology Laboratory, using a convenience sample consisting of undergraduates, graduate students, and university staff. The survey experiment asked respondents to read a short newspaper article, ostensibly from the *Baltimore Sun* that

detailed leaked e-mails showing the corrupt acts of a College Park politician. There were two manipulations in the article. Some respondents were told the politician was the mayor of College Park, while others were told he was a member of the City Council. In addition, some respondents were told that corruption is common in College Park City government, while others were told it is not.

I show that voters will punish corrupt politicians when the environment is clean, but are less likely to do so when the political environment is corrupt and the replacement is likely to be chosen from that environment. This means that higher level corrupt politicians are more shielded from punishment when the environment is corrupt as they are likely to be replaced by someone else from this corrupt environment. On the other hand, lower level politicians, whose replacements are more likely to be drawn from the public generally, are not protected from replacement when the environment is corrupt.

As this dissertation is formatted as three papers, rather than as a book length manuscript, each paper has its own conclusion and discussion section, references section and appendix. I have tried to avoid repetition in the literature review sections, and theory sections, although a certain amount of repetition is unavoidable, given the closely connected nature of the three papers. I include a brief conclusion at the end of the dissertation.

This dissertation therefore makes several contributions to our understanding of when voters tolerate corrupt politicians. The first paper ("Dance with the Devil") finds that issue salience causes voters to discount corruption charges against politicians with whom they agree on important issues. Results presented here also show that institutional trust

has a modifying effect on issue salience: voters with high levels of institutional trust do not choose the corrupt politician even when they care deeply about the political issue at hand. Furthermore, perceptions of corruption have the opposite effect: issue salience is an even stronger predictor when people perceive corruption to be common.

The second paper ("Norms, Trust and Voting for Berlusconi") finds that social norms that are accepting of corruption extend to voting. Those who perceive corruption as common are more likely to find corruption justifiable. These people are in turn far more likely to vote for Silvio Berlusconi. At the same time, I find no evidence for a lack of trust in the judiciary as being associated with support for Berlusconi. I do find evidence that trust in the institution of television increases the likelihood of supporting Berlusconi, as is to be expected, given Berlusconi's control over the Italian media market.

The third paper ("Political Position and Environment") finds that voters take into consideration the political environment in which a corrupt politician operates. When the political environment from which a corrupt politician's replacement would likely be drawn is corrupt, voters are less likely to punish that corrupt politician. In effect, this means that politicians at higher level positions will be somewhat insulated from electoral punishment when it seems that the replacement would be from the same corrupt environment. However, politicians at lower level positions may be easier to punish electorally as the replacement may come from outside the corrupt political environment.

Overall, the dissertation improves our answer to the question 'why do voters support corrupt politicians?'

Dance with the Devil:

Voter Position, Issue Salience and Corruption

Abstract: This paper presents a unique survey experiment that asks respondents to choose between pairs of politicians who have different ideological positions, and are accused of corruption. The survey goes some way toward recreating the tradeoffs one makes when voting in the real world. Results show that voters are more likely to choose corrupt politicians who agree with their position on an issue when issue salience is high. Results also show that institutional trust decreases the likelihood of choosing a corrupt politician, while perceptions of corruption increase the likelihood. Institutional trust and perceptions of corruption also have a modifying effect on issue salience.

Introduction

This paper explores the effect of issue salience on when a survey respondent will choose a corrupt politician over a clean one. I show that issue salience increases the extent to which respondents discount corruption allegations when choosing between political actors: respondents are more likely to choose a politician who agrees with them regardless of whether the politician is corrupt, when issue salience is high. Furthermore, I show that institutional trust at the individual level decreases the likelihood of choosing a corrupt politician, all else equal, while perceiving corruption as common increases the likelihood of choosing a corrupt politician. These factors both have a moderating effect on issue salience also: voters with high levels of institutional trust, who perceive low levels of corruption will punish corrupt politicians even if they agree with them on the salient issues.

I also show that respondents distinguish between different types of corruption, with clientelism – or the exchange of material goods for political support (Stokes 2007) – being the least frequently punished form of corruption.

This paper introduces a new approach to measuring when voters discount corruption in elected officials. I present a survey instrument in which respondents are presented with a series of pairs of politicians. The positions of the politicians on two political issues are varied; one of the politicians is corrupt while the other is not. This creates a tension where respondents must choose between a corrupt politician who shares their political position, and a clean politician who does not. The degree to which the clean politician's position differs from the respondent increases as the series of pairs continues.

This project therefore aims to do several things. Firstly, and most broadly, it aims to help us better understand when people are willing to support a corrupt politician. Much literature on corruption implies that once voters know that a politician is corrupt they will not support him. However, voters who care deeply about one or two issues may continue to support a politician who shares their position on these issues regardless of whether he is corrupt. Approaching the decision to support a corrupt politician as a tradeoff that takes into account the politician's position on important issues means moving toward a more holistic real world understanding of the calculus that voters are faced with when voting. Secondly, this project explores whether voters treat different types of corruption differently. It stands to reason that voters do: it would be strange if voters treated clientelism the same as stealing from the public coffers. Recent research has made some strides in understanding how voters distinguish between different types of corruption. I build on this work using this new dataset.

Thirdly, this project explores the effect of the salience of relevant political issues when deciding whether to support a corrupt politician. If a politician can cause voters to discount his corruption by focusing on an issue about which voters care deeply, he can potentially avoid electoral defeat and the consequences of exposure for misdeeds. Fourthly, this project tests whether institutional trust at the individual level matters for when voters support a corrupt politician. I add to the literature on trust and corruption and explore the effect of institutional trust on the likelihood of voting for a politician, as those with low levels of institutional trust may feel that supporting a corrupt politician has no effect on an already flawed institutional system. I also explore how institutional trust at the individual level modifies the effects of issue salience.

Fifthly, this project tests whether individual perceptions of corruption have an effect on voter tolerance of corruption. Work in the sociology literature indicates that higher perceptions of corruption lead to an acceptance of corruption as normal. I test whether perceiving corruption as common has an effect on the likelihood of supporting a corrupt politician, and explore how these perceptions modify the effects of issue salience.

Literature

It is well documented that corruption has negative effects on economic growth, support for democratic institutions, the allocation of scarce resources, and social trust (Rose-Ackerman 1999, Cho and Kirwin 2007, Lambsdorf 2005, Uslaner 2008, Clausen et al 2011). The puzzle of why voters support corrupt politicians is important both for theoretical and practical reasons.

Recent literature on individual level reaction to corruption can be divided into three groups. Firstly, field experiments attempt to measure the effects of exposure to information about corruption in the real world (Ferraz and Finan 2008, Chong et al 2011). These results have shown that exposing voters to information on corrupt politicians has some effect, but the results have been somewhat mixed. As is necessarily the case with field experiments, controlling for every confounding effect is difficult. In addition, the nature of corruption means that there is a lot of noise, misinformation, and bias involved in the processing of the information by the voters.

Other studies have attempted to use survey experiments in the field to ask voters about hypothetical politicians in order to determine how averse voters are to corruption (Gamboa et al 2014, Winters and Weitz-Shapiro 2013). These studies have explored the

different effects of corruption on voter perceptions, and have focused on asking respondents to choose between hypothetical political candidates.

A third set of studies emerges from the sociology literature and examines individual tendencies to engage in corruption based on the effects of perceptions of corruption and the influence of peer groups (Dong et al 2012, Tavits 2010). These highlight the role of social groups and social norms in making corruption acceptable, and hence something that is heavily discounted when an individual decides whether or not to engage in such behavior. Those who perceive corruption in their peer groups are more likely to find such behavior acceptable and engage in it themselves.

In introducing the issue of salience I bring together the corruption literature and the issue salience literature for the first time. Many studies argue that salience is an important yet under theorized concept in political science (Wlezien 2005, Belanger and Meguid 2008). While salience is usually measured by asking respondents what the most important problem facing the nation is, I take a different approach. Instead all respondents are faced with the same two issues, and I ask respondents to decide on a five point scale how important the issue is to them. I also have respondents place themselves on a Guttman scale for this issue. In this way I have clear information on both the respondent's position on the issue and how salient the issue is. This is an advantage over the traditional 'most important problem' approach. For example, a traditional survey that asks about the 'most important problem' could have two respondents give the same answer, but have vastly different positions on this issue. For example, an answer of 'abortion' could be because the respondent feels that abortions laws are too liberal, or because abortion laws are too restrictive. Furthermore, the 'most important problem' approach solicits answers on what

the respondent believes to be problems in some sense, potentially overlooking issues that the respondent may care more about (Wlezien 2005).

The salience literature is clearly connected to the classic spatial models of voter utility that can be traced back to Downs (1957), and has been shown to have an important effect on voting behavior (Edwards et al 1995, Fournier et al 2003, Rabinowitz et al 1982). In these models a voter maximizes her utility by choosing the candidate that is closest to her on a two dimensional issue space (eg, Enelow and Hinnich 1984). I complicate this simple model by adding the issue of corruption to the mix. A respondent must choose between two political actors while taking into account ideological distance, and that one of the actors has been charged with corruption.

This project therefore relates to several literatures. In creating a survey where respondents are forced to decide between a corrupt politician and a clean politician while also taking into account the politicians' position on an issue the respondent cares about I aim to create a tension that discourages respondents from defaulting to the socially desirable response (that is, the claim that they would never vote for a corrupt politician). The socially desirable response becomes less desirable as the pairs of politicians continue because the clean politician moves farther away from the respondent, ideologically. Therefore, the survey allows us to determine how much distance respondents will tolerate between their own position and the clean politician's position before defecting to the corrupt but ideologically close politician. In this survey, a quarter of respondents choose a corrupt politician over a clean one at some point.[4]

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[4] More specifically, 256/1068 respondents switch to the corrupt politician as soon as the clean one differs from them on the salient political issue, in at least one of the series of pairs. The survey design is explained in detail below.

This project engages with the substance of the literature on corruption as it allows us to test hypotheses that have been suggested elsewhere, and tested elsewhere, as well as bringing hypotheses from the corruption literature generally to bear on corruption and voter choice specifically. Results show that voters consider salient political issues when deciding whether to support a corrupt politician, and also distinguish between different types of corruption. Results also show that an increased perception of corruption increases the likelihood of supporting a corrupt politician. Low levels of institutional trust also increase this likelihood.

Research Design

This project uses a unique online forced choice survey design based on forums such as the short-lived social media websites 'facemash' and 'ULiken.net'[5] – respondents are faced with two fictional politicians and must choose one. The other inspiration for the survey is work done on risk aversion and incentive effects by Holt and Laury (2002), whereby a person's risk aversion is measured by moving through pairs of lottery choices using the cross-over point to determine risk aversion. In this project, the crossover point is used to determine the aversion the respondent has to knowingly choosing a corrupt politician: I measure how long a respondent will choose a politician who is ideologically dissimilar but uncorrupt before choosing to cross over and 'dance with the devil.'

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[5] Facemash was a predecessor of Facebook. It was set up by Mark Zuckerberg so that students at Harvard could compare pictures of Harvard students side by side and choose the more attractive of the two. ULiken was based on facemash, but allowed users to compare everything from cars to people. Neither is currently operational. (http://techcrunch.com/2008/05/13/facemash-returns-as-what-else-a-facebook-app-uliken/)

Prior to Holt and Laury (2002) there had been little experimental work done on risk aversion, despite the concept's importance in many branches of economics. However, "the multiple price-list method of Holt and Laury (2002) has become *the* standard" in experimental research on risk aversion (Maier and Ruger 2010). This method lends itself nicely to our purposes also. While initially developed to measure aversion to risk it can also be used to measure aversion to supporting a corrupt politician.

This survey asks respondents to place themselves on a Guttman scale related to two political issues. Importantly, the Guttman scale is designed so that a person's views on an issue can be scored. For example, instead of asking a respondent if she believes that abortion should be legal, a Guttman scale would ask whether a respondent agrees with a series of statements. Each statement is designed so that it encompasses the statements lower on the scale. For example, on the abortion Guttman scale, a respondent who agrees that a woman should legally be allowed to have an abortion if the woman decides she cannot afford to support a child would almost certainly also agree that a woman should legally be allowed to have an abortion if the pregnancy is the result of rape. The goal of the Guttman scale is "to derive a single dimension that can be used to position the subjects" on an issue (Abdi 2010).

Respondents are asked to position themselves on Guttman scales designed to measure positions on two political issues: when abortion should legally be available, and when the death penalty should be used. This position is then used to determine how long a respondent is willing to stick with a clean politician who is increasingly ideologically dissimilar before defecting to a corrupt but ideologically similar politician. This survey instrument was designed to be taken by anyone with access to the Mechanical Turk

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platform.[6] Partly for that reason the two issues used are two that cut across national politics.

Most respondents on Mechanical Turk are from the USA or India. Abortion is a constantly recurring and contentious political issue in the United States and is often central to individual politicians' platforms. The death penalty is a contentious political issue in state politics and its legality and the possibility of being able to execute criminals humanely using lethal injection has recently come into question and been dealt with in federal courts.

In India abortion is legal, but is taboo and abortion services are underprovided.[7] The death penalty is also legal, but the death penalty has only been carried out 54 times since Indian independence. There is currently debate as to whether India should ban the death penalty altogether, with the country's highest court indicating that it may be willing to do so.[8]

Respondents are asked standard demographic information as well as their position on Guttman scales for abortion and the death penalty.[9] They are also asked how important these issues are to them. Respondents are then presented with a pair of politicians. The respondent only has one or two pieces of information on the politician: where he stands on the salient issue and whether he has been charged with corruption. The respondent chooses which she prefers. The initial pair is one where both politicians share the same

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[6] *Mechanical Turk* is a service set up by Amazon.com with the purpose of using crowdsourcing for Human Intelligence Tasks. It has recently been increasingly used to carry out surveys and survey experiments.
[7] http://www.npr.org/blogs/goatsandsoda/2014/10/02/352465015/abortion-in-india-is-legal-yet-women-are-still-dying
[8] http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Should-death-penalty-go-Law-panel-begins-review/articleshow/40862013.cms
[9] The Guttman scale questions were taken from Aiken (1996).

position on the salient issue. However, the respondent is told that one of these politicians has been charged with some sort of corruption. Presumably, the respondent chooses the politician who has not been charged.[10] In the next pair, the corrupt politician remains the same, but the clean politician moves one step away from the respondent in the ideological space. The respondent now has to decide whether she will choose a corrupt politician who shares her ideological position, or a clean politician who differs slightly. The next pair again contains the same corrupt politician, but the clean politician is yet another step farther in the ideological space. In this way the design mimics the risk aversion lottery pairs used by Holt and Laury (2002) in that it allows us to see when a respondent 'crosses over' from the clean option to the corrupt option.

The survey instrument is interactive. For example, the abortion Guttman scale is as follows:

> When should a woman legally be allowed to have an abortion? Choose all that apply.
>
> if the woman's health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy
>
> if she became pregnant as a result of rape
>
> if there is a strong chance of a serious defect in the baby
>
> if the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children
>
> if she is not married and does not want to marry the man
>
> if she is married and does not want any more children

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[10] Responses where the respondents chose the corrupt politician when both politicians had the same position on the salient issue were not counted. While it is possible that one might prefer a corrupt candidate over a clean on when both are identical in every other way, I took this to be a check on whether the respondent was paying attention to the prompt.

A respondent that chooses the first option only - if the woman's health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy – scores 1 on the Guttman abortion scale. When it comes to choosing between pairs of politicians, the respondent is asked to choose between two politicians who believe that a woman should never legally be allowed to have an abortion. One of these politicians has been charged with corruption. Presumably the respondent chooses the politician who has not been charged.

The next pair the respondent is shown is one in which the clean politician now believes that a woman should legally be allowed to have an abortion if her health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy, but not in any other case. For this respondent, the clean politician now corresponds exactly to what the respondent believes. Presumably the respondent once again chooses the clean politician.

For the next pair of politicians the clean politician once again moves one space on the Guttman scale.[11] The respondent is now faced with the prospect of choosing a clean politician who believes that abortion should legally be allowed under circumstances that the respondent disagrees with, and a corrupt politician who does not. This continues until the respondent is faced with a clean politician who is at the other end of the Guttman scale to the respondent, and a corrupt politician who is much closer.

For a respondent who answered from 0 to 3 on the Guttman scale, the politicians presented are the same as in the example above. For a respondent who answered from 4 to 6 on the Guttman scale, the opposite is the case: the two politicians initially both believe that abortion should legally be allowed under all circumstances.

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[11] I include both Guttman scales in the Appendix.

11b) Which person would you vote for?

Has been charged with accepting bribes to provide legislation favorable to certain business people.

Believes a woman should *not* be able to legally have an abortion:
* if the woman's health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy;
* if she became pregnant as a result of rape;
* if there is a strong chance of a serious defect in the baby;
* if the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children;
* if she is not married and does not want to marry the man;
* if she is married and does not want any more children.

Believes a woman should *not* be able to legally have an abortion:
* if the woman's health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy;
* if she became pregnant as a result of rape;
* if there is a strong chance of a serious defect in the baby;
* if the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children;
* if she is not married and does not want to marry the man.
* if she is married and does not want any more children.

Snapshot of a typical pair presented to the respondent.

As mentioned above, recent work has shown that people may not respond similarly to all types of corruption. Bribery is different from clientelism. For this reason the lists are repeated using several different types of corruption. This will allow us to determine whether there is variation in how different types of people react to different types of corruption, as well as increase the data available for analysis.

There are three types of corruption used. All respondents are exposed to all three types, using both the Guttman abortion scale, and the Guttman death penalty scale. The three types of corruption used are clientelism, accepting a bribe from a private business man (which I term private corruption), and using public funds for personal use (which I term public corruption). This means that each respondent is presented with six sets of pairs.

The survey was fielded on the Mechanical Turk platform in December 2014. This is an online platform designed originally to recruit people to perform human intelligence tasks. As such, the survey was accessible to anyone in the world with internet access and a Mechanical Turk account. This allowed me to collect a large number of respondents from several countries. Previous work has shown that Mechanical Turk users are mostly from the United States (about 57%) but are also largely from India (32%) and a variety of other

countries (Ross et al 2010). My sample was comparable with 64% of respondents being from the USA and 30% from India. This essentially provides me with variation on the 'culture of corruption' that would otherwise be impossible without expensive and lengthy field work. There have been several recent studies that advocate the use of Mechanical Turk for social science research (Horton et al 2010, Berinsky et al 2012).

Theory and Hypotheses

Recent research has examined the effects of different types of corruption on when voters will punish corrupt politicians. This has generally been framed as a dichotomy between clientelism and private enrichment. Clientelism is the exchange of material goods for political support (Stokes 2007), while private enrichment is the abuse of public office to increase one's personal wealth (Johnston 2009). Gamboa et al (2014) point out that clientelism, while a misuse of state resources, does not enrich the politician indirectly. The resources are generally used to build support rather than line the pockets of the politician, per se. However, private enrichment means that the politician is benefitting only himself – the party is not built up, nor are jobs being handed out (although presumably these jobs will still be offered to people, but the offers will be based on merit rather than party allegiance).

Indeed, Peters and Welch (1980) and Welch and Hibbing (1997) show that not all corruption charges have the same effect. They argue that voters react more negatively to 'moral charges' than other charges such as bribery and conflict of interest.

I further this strand of research by choosing three different types of corruption, with which the fictional politicians are charged. In keeping with previous research, the first is

clientelism. Respondents are told that the politician is charged with "misuse of power for giving government jobs to his supporters."

For the other two types of corruption I distinguish between private enrichment where the money is being given to the politician by a private person (which I term private corruption), and enrichment where the money in question is public money (which I term public corruption). For the former, respondents are told that the politician "has been charged with accepting bribes to provide legislation favorable to certain business people." For the latter, the respondent is told the politician "has been charged with stealing public money for private use."

Following the logic laid out in Gamboa et al (2014) I expect respondents to be least concerned with clientelism. In the case of clientelism the politician is not enriching himself directly, and while clientelism likely means that the state is employing people that are underqualified, the effects of this are not obvious to most people. Indeed some may be part of the group that benefits from such jobs. Recent studies have argued that voters' reactions to corruption are contingent on the benefits received from the corrupt government (Manzetti and Wilson 2007, Fernandez-Vasquez et al 2015). As clientelism is a form of corruption from which a large number of people potentially benefit, voters may be more willing to overlook it. Indeed, many voters do not perceive clientelism as a form of corruption at all (Weitz-Shapiro 2012).

I expect respondents to be more concerned with private corruption than with clientelism, but less concerned with private corruption than with public corruption. In the case of private corruption, while the politician is directly profiting, the public is not directly losing. The money that enriches the politician is coming from a private person and the

exchange is such that it is difficult to pinpoint a loser. While the particular businessman

who paid the bribe will gain an advantage, it is not clear that any other businessman

loses. And, it may be that the businessman would have gained this advantage anyway,

albeit more slowly. Thus, in this second type of corruption, although the politician

benefits directly in a clear financial way, there is not a clear loser as a result of the

politician's actions.

The third type of corruption, public corruption, should be the one which concerns

respondents the most. In this case the politician is benefiting financially in a direct way

and there is a clear loser – the public purse. As this can be seen as 'our money',

belonging to the public as a whole, I expect respondents to be most hesitant to switch to a

politician accused of this type of corruption.

Thus, I propose the first set of hypotheses:

H1a: Voters are less concerned with clientelism than with other types of corruption.

H1b: Voters are less concerned with bribe-taking from the private sector than with

corrupt use of state funds.

Policy makers often focus on increasing transparency as a way to decrease corruption (eg,

Stapenhurst et al 2006). The story goes that this increase in transparency leads to an

increase in information available to the voters, who are then better able to choose the best

candidates in elections. However, this literature often neglects the fact that voters do not

vote on the basis of corruption alone. Indeed, voters may well discount corruption

charges and allegations as irrelevant when choosing which politician to support. At the

very least, the salient political issues in an electoral competition will be taken into

account when the voter makes her choice (Peters and Welch 1980). As such, I hold that

corruption researchers must take a holistic approach to the effect of information on corruption on voter behavior and that the effect will vary depending on the issue salience. Therefore I test whether higher issue salience affects the point at which respondents choose a corrupt politician over a clean politician. That is, I test whether a respondent who feels strongly on the death penalty issue is more likely to choose a corrupt politician over a clean one compared to a respondent who has the same position on the issue, but who does not feel as strongly.

I propose that respondents' tolerance for corruption will vary with the salience of the relevant political issue. This means that respondents for whom the political issue at hand is highly salient will discount the corruption allegations against the politician who agrees with their position. In effect, high salience means that respondents will be more likely to choose the corrupt politician over the clean one.

This is in keeping with recent research that shows that issue ownership by parties is only influential on voter behavior when that issue is salient (Belanger and Meguid 2008). The distance between the voter and the candidate or party does not matter if the issue is not important to the voter. Equally, here, the distance between the clean candidate and the respondent should not matter unless the issue at hand is highly salient. If it is not, the respondent will simply choose the clean but ideologically distant candidate over the corrupt but ideologically close candidate.

H2: High issue salience will increase the likelihood of a voter choosing the corrupt but ideologically close politician over the clean but ideologically distant politician.

There is a large literature on institutional trust and corruption. Research shows that voters have lower levels of trust in civil servants and lower evaluations of the political system in

countries with higher levels of corruption (Anderson and Tverdova 2003), and that lower levels of institutional trust at the individual level encourage people to engage in corruption (Cho and Kirwin 2007).

In this paper I take a different approach, and test the effect of institutional trust on the likelihood of a respondent voting for a corrupt politician. High levels of institutional trust at the individual level should mean that the person is less accepting of corruption. If institutions work well then there is no excuse for corruption. On the other hand, if one has little faith in institutions then empowering a corrupt political actor is not something to be avoided: there is no need to be concerned for the integrity of these institutions if one believes them to already be untrustworthy.[12]

In keeping with Torgler (2007), "trust in the state might tend to increase citizens' positive attitudes and commitment to the rules of a society, which ultimately has a negative effect on illegal activities." The idea of greasing the wheels or of having to engage in shady dealings to get things done is not plausible for those who have high levels of institutional trust. On the other hand, if one does not have trust in institutions then breaking the rules of these institutions is not seen as being as blameworthy – low levels of institutional trust at the individual level should make a person more tolerant of corruption and more likely to choose the corrupt politician over the clean one, all else equal.

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[12] By institutions here I mean the institutions that the political actor will be part of and have some control over. For example, the fact that many electoral institutions can censure and expel members for conduct unbecoming of the body highlights the idea that institutional integrity is maintained by controlling membership in these bodies. A recent example in the US Senate was Bob Packwood: the Oregan Senator was recommended for expulsion by the Senate Ethics Committee after allegations of sexual harassment. The Senator resigned instead. (http://www.nytimes.com/1995/09/07/us/packwood-case-overview-ethics-committee-6-0-asks-senate-oust-packwood-he-vows.html Accessed online, 2/21/2015)

H3: Voters with high levels of institutional trust are less likely to support a corrupt

politician.

Theories of pro-social behavior and how the actions of others affect one's attitudes and

actions have shown that the behavior of others has an effect on whether one complies

with the tax code (Frey and Torgler 2007), norms against littering (Frey, Torgler and

Wilson 2009), or whether one engages in criminal behavior generally (Kahan 1998).

Tavits (2010) shows that people are more likely to *engage in* corruption when they

perceive corruption as widespread. A recent paper by Dong, Dulleck and Torgler (2012)

shows that people are more likely to consider corruption to be justifiable when they

perceive corruption as being common.[13] However, we do not know how the perceived

level of corruption affects voter behavior.

I hypothesize that perceiving corruption as common will make voters more tolerant of

corrupt politicians. This is contrary to the claims of policy experts and researchers who

argue for increased voter information as a panacea for corruption (Stapenhurst et al 2006,

Persson and Tabellini 2000). In a world in which corruption is seen as common, choosing

a clean politician who is ideologically distant over a corrupt politician who is

ideologically close makes little sense. Corruption is so common in this world that having

one clean political actor will likely make little difference. And, choosing a clean actor

that does not share your position on an important issue may do you more harm than good.

The social norms theory posits that when corruption is common, the more information we

have about corruption the more corruption becomes normalized and acceptable. The

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[13] These papers look at people's perceptions of corruption amongst the population
generally, not specifically at political corruption. For example, bribing a police officer is
an act of corruption, but it is not political corruption.

information theory posits that when corruption is common, the more information we have about corruption the more we can and so will act against corruption.

In keeping with the Dong et al (2012) paper, I measure the respondents' perceptions of corruption in general.[14] I expect each of these to have a positive effect on respondents' acceptance of corruption. That is, respondents who perceive more corruption will be more likely to defect to the corrupt politician than those who perceive less corruption.

H4: People who perceive corruption as common are more likely to support a corrupt politician.

I also propose that institutional trust and perceptions of corruption should have a modifying effect on the effect of issue salience on the likelihood of voting for a corrupt politician. When institutional trust is high, the effect of salience should be lessened: institutional trust ought to have a negative effect on issue salience. Equally, when perceptions of corruption are high, the effect of salience should be increased: high perceptions of corruption ought to have a positive effect on issue salience.

H5: Institutional trust has a negative effect on the effect of issue salience.

H6: Perceptions of corruption have a positive effect on the effect of issue salience.

Results

Types of Corruption: Clientelism

The first hypothesis relates to the type of corruption of which the politician is accused. I propose that people distinguish between different types of corruption. I also propose,

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[14] The question is taken from the European Values Survey. "According to you, how many of your compatriots accept bribes in the course of their duties?" (4=almost all, 1=almost none)

based on the literature, that people are less concerned with clientelism than with other types of corruption.

For this analysis I created a series of binary variables, scored as 0 if the respondent switched to the corrupt politician as soon as the clean politician deviates from the respondent's position on the Guttman scale, and scored as 1 if the respondent stayed with the clean politician for at least one round beyond this point. Using these variables allows us to compare when respondents switched in the clientelism treatment versus the other treatments. [15]

I begin by examining the results from the series of pairs where respondents had information about the politicians' positions on abortion. Respondents in the clientelism treatment switched once they did not agree with the clean politician 29% of the time. This is compared to 26% of the time for the private corruption section, and 25% for the public corruption section. The difference in means between the clientelism and private corruption groups is three percentage points, but the difference is outside of statistical significance (p= .15 for a one-tailed test). However, the difference in means between the clientelism and public corruption groups is four percentage points, and is significant at 95% confidence (p = .05, one-tailed test).

Looking to the death penalty groups, we can once again compare when respondents switched in the clientelism treatment versus the private corruption treatment. Respondents in the clientelism treatment switched once they did not agree with the clean politician 10% of the time. This is compared to 8% of the time for the private corruption

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[15] These are binary variables, coded as 0 if the respondent switched to the corrupt politician in the first pair in which the clean politician disagreed with the respondent's position. The variable is coded as 1 if the respondent stayed with the clean politician for at least one pair when the clean politician and the respondent did not agree.

section, and 6% for the public corruption section. The difference in means between the clientelism and private corruption groups is two percentage points, but the difference is outside of statistical significance (p= .13 for a one-tailed test). However, the difference in means between the clientelism and public corruption groups is 4%, and is significant at 99% confidence (p = .005, one-tailed test).

Therefore in both the abortion group and the death penalty group, clientelism is the form of corruption with which respondents are least concerned. Although the difference between the clientelism treatment and the private corruption treatment is not statistically significant, the difference between the clientelism treatment and the public corruption treatment is four percentage points, and statistically significant, in both cases. Thus I find evidence in support of H1a: People are less concerned with clientelism than with other types of corruption.

Types of Corruption: Bribery and the Private Sector

To further understand whether and how people distinguish between different types of corruption, I propose that respondents will be less concerned with bribe-taking from the private sector than with corrupt use of state funds.

Looking again at the difference in means of binary variables that are coded as 0 if the respondent switched to the corrupt politician as soon as she did not agree fully with the clean politician, I compare when respondents switched in the private corruption treatment versus the public corruption treatment.

Once again, I begin by examining the results from the abortion series of politicians. Respondents in the private treatment switched once they did not agree with the clean

politician 26% of the time. This is compared to 25% of the time for the abortion/public

corruption treatment. The difference in means between the clientelism and private

corruption groups is therefore one percentage point, but the difference is outside of

statistical significance (p= .27 for a one-tailed test).

Looking to the death penalty series, respondents in the private corruption treatment

switched once they did not agree with the clean politician 8% of the time. This is

compared to 6% of the time for the public corruption treatment. The difference in means

between the clientelism and private corruption groups is two and a half percentage points,

and statistically significant at 95% confidence (p= .04 for a one-tailed test).

Therefore in both the abortion group and the death penalty group, respondents punish

bribe taking from a private person less than taking public money for private means.

However, this is only statistically significant for the death penalty group, and is of small

substantive significance.

Nonetheless this is evidence in support of H2b: People are less concerned with bribe-

taking from the private sector than with corrupt use of state funds.

Overall, these two results indicate that a voter is less likely to punish a politician charged

with clientelism than a politician charged with accepting bribes or stealing from the

public coffers. And, a voter is less likely to punish a politician charged with accepting

bribes from private individuals than a politician charged with stealing from the public

coffers.

Salience of Political Issues

Do people consider salient political issues when deciding whether or not to support a

corrupt politician? In order to determine the effect of issue salience I create a measure of

how often a respondent chose the clean politician over the corrupt politician.[16] As there are two political issues (abortion and the death penalty), I estimate the two OLS models separately. I include a measure for issue salience and standard demographic variables.[17] As respondents are from several countries, but mainly from the United States, I also control for being from the US.[18]

Results show that issue salience has a strong negative effect on how often respondents chose the clean politician (Table 1).[19]

Looking at the marginal effects of issue salience in this model, a respondent for whom abortion is not a salient issue (someone with 0 on the abortion salience scale) would choose the clean politician 8.2 times on average (score 8.2 on the dependent variable), holding all other variables at their means. On the other hand, a respondent for whom abortion is a very salient issue (someone with 4 on the abortion salience scale) would choose the clean politician 4.5 times on average, holding all other variables at their means.[20] When respondents care more about abortion they are much more likely to choose the corrupt politician who agrees with them on the issue, over a clean politician who does not.

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[16] That is, how many times the respondent chose the clean politician over the corrupt politician once the clean politician differed from their position on the political issue at hand. This means that respondents do not get credit for choosing a clean politician who agrees with them fully on the political issue – only for choosing a clean politician who disagrees with them to some extent. Scoring this way also means that the respondent's position on the political issue is held constant.

[17] As demographic controls I use measures for age, gender, education and income in all models.

[18] I also estimate the model using a dummy variable for India. See Appendix Table 1.

[19] Being from the US also has a negative effect on the score in the abortion model. This could reflect the high salience of this issue in US politics.

[20] The dependent variable in the abortion model goes from 0 for respondents who never chose the clean politician, to 9 for respondents who chose the clean politician the maximum number of times.

Table 1: Issue Salience

	Abortion Model	Death Penalty Model
Issue Salience	-0.9295***	-.3188***
	(.1527)	(.0021)
Age	.0189	.0021
	(.0120)	(.0050)
Gender (female)	-0.4246	.0334
	(.3314)	(.1338)
Education	-.1208	-.0033
	(.0900)	(.0363)
Income	-.0058	.0182
	(.0890)	(.0376)
USA	-1.921***	-.1652
	(.3982)	(0.1780)
Constant	10.2221***	5.8866***
	(1.0355)	(.4428)
Observations	550	519
R-squared	0.128	0.0314

Standard errors in parentheses.

***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.1 (tests are one-tailed for salience variables only)

Looking at the marginal effects of issue salience in this model, a respondent for whom

the death penalty is not a salient issue would choose the clean politician an average of 6

times, holding all other variables at their means. On the other hand, a respondent for

whom the death penalty is a very salient issue would only choose the clean politician 4.6

times on average, holding all other variables at their means. [21] When respondents care

more about the death penalty they are much more likely to choose the corrupt politician

who agrees with them on the issue, over a clean politician who does not.

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[21] The dependent variable for the death penalty model goes from 0 for respondents who
never chose the clean politician to 6 for respondents who chose the clean politician the
maximum number of times. The maximum score possible for the death penalty DV is
lower because the Guttman scale for the death penalty has fewer options. This translates
to fewer opportunities to choose a clean politician using this scale.

Adjusted Predictions with 95% CIs. All other variables held at means.
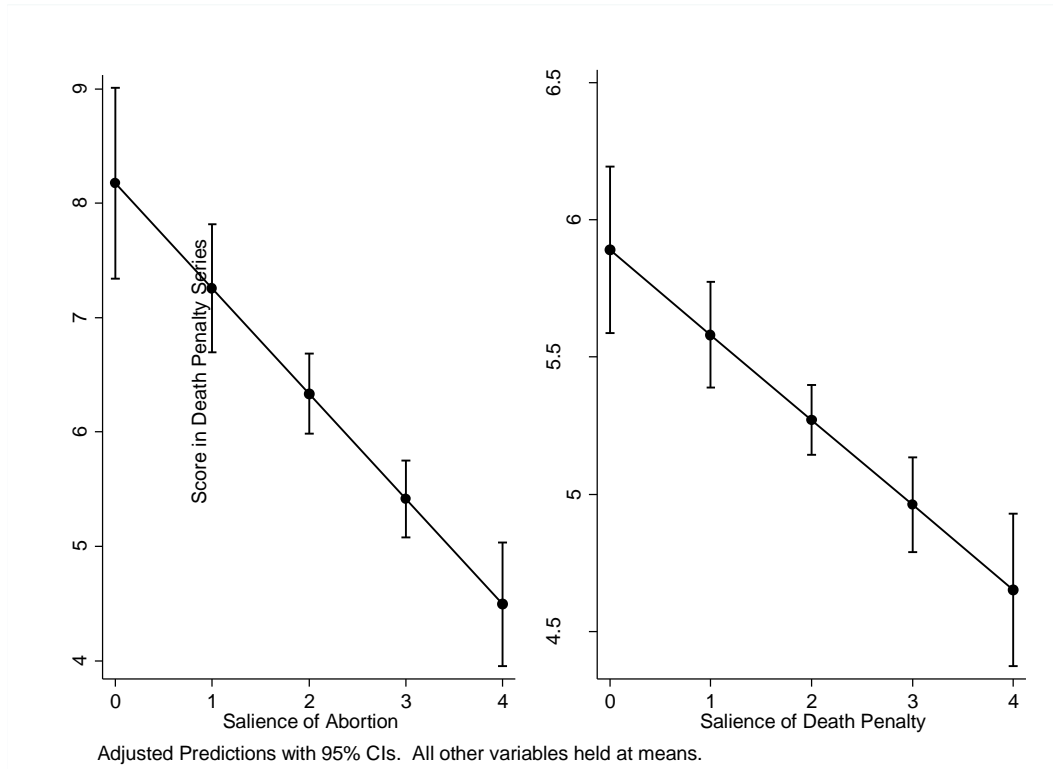
Figure 1. Graphs showing the marginal effects of issue salience on a measure of how often the respondent chose the clean but ideologically distant politician over a corrupt but ideologically close politician. Respondents who chose the corrupt politician every time are scored as 0.

This provides strong evidence in support of H2: High issue salience increases the likelihood of a voter choosing a corrupt but ideologically close politician over a clean but ideologically distant politician. In both the abortion and the death penalty series issue salience has a substantively strong and statistically significant effect on how respondents discount corruption.

Trust and Voting

In order to determine the effect of institutional trust on whether a respondent chooses a corrupt politician, I create a new dependent variable which is the sum of the scores from

the two models above. Therefore the new dependent variable scores as 0 respondents who never chose the clean politician once the clean politician disagreed with them, and scores as 15 respondents who chose the clean politician every time.[22]

I retest the effect of salience on this new measure. I estimate a model that includes the same demographic controls as the models above, and includes a measure of salience.[23] Results show that salience has the same effect in this model as in the previous section (p= .00, one-tailed): voters who care about the issues choose the clean politician less often. The marginal effect of salience – moving from the lowest level of salience to the highest – is 2.5 points on the 16 point measure of how often respondents chose the clean politician.

In order to determine whether people with high levels of trust are less likely to support a corrupt politician, I estimate the same OLS model as above and add a variable for institutional trust.

The institutional trust variable is a score for each respondent based on how trustworthy the respondent believes several institutions in her country to be. These institutions were the national government, state government, local government, political parties, police and

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[22] The dependent variable for this model consists of the scores for each of the six treatments that each respondent was exposed to. Because of listwise deletion the number of respondents in the sample is reduced to 412. This new variable allows me to test the effect of institutional trust (and perceptions of corruption) in one model instead of testing everything in two models. Combining the data should also give a better estimate of the effect of these variables of interest.

[23] The salience variable used here is the sum of the abortion and death penalty variables. This is for the sake of simplicity in that it allows me to have one salience variable instead of two.

the courts. This score therefore goes from 0 for absolutely no trust in any of these

institutions to 60 for maximum trust in these institutions.[24]

Table 2: Institutional Trust and Perceptions of Corruption

	Base Model	Trust Model	Perceptions Model
Issue Salience	-.5953***	-.6010***	-.5701***
	(.1313)	(.1319)	(.1322)
Institutional Trust		.034**	
		(.0195)	
Perceptions of Corruption			-.4977*
			(.3328)
Age	.0385**	.0319*	.0345
	(.0166)	(.0171)	(.0168)
Gender (female)	-.5875	-.6023	-.5412
	(.4635)	(.4661)	(.4638)
Education	-.0758	-.0815	-.0851
	(.1258)	(.1262)	(.1256)
Income	.1009	.0411	.1008
	(.1262)	(.1314_	(.1260)
USA	-2.096	-1.998	-2.433
	(.6162)	(.6325)	(.6553)
Constant	14.3821***	13.9997***	15.9081***
	(1.5205)	(1.5495)	(1.8292)
Observations	418	413	418
R-squared	0.0897	0.088	0.107

Standard errors in parentheses.
***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.1
(tests are one-tailed for salience, trust and perception variables only)

Results show (Table 2), institutional trust has a significant and positive effect on how

often the respondent chooses the clean politician (p= .03, one-tailed): respondents with

higher institutional trust chose the clean politician more often. Looking at the marginal

effect of institutional trust in this model, a respondent who has the lowest level of

institutional trust chooses the clean politician 10 times on average, while a respondent

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[24] The scale performs well in a test of reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.89.

who has the highest level of institutional trust chooses the clean politician 12 times on average, holding all other variables at their means.

Overall, this is strong evidence in favor of H3: Voters with high levels of institutional trust are less likely to support a corrupt politician.

Perceptions of Corruption

Work in sociology and economics has shown that perceiving corruption to be common increases an individual's tolerance of corruption. I extend this literature by proposing that the same mechanism makes one more tolerant of corrupt politicians. Thus I propose that perceiving corruption as common amongst the population in general strengthens the norm of corruption as acceptable. Following Dong et al (2012), in this model I operationalize perceptions of corruption with a measure of how common the respondent perceives bribe taking to be amongst the population in general.[25]

Results show (Table 2) that the variable is significant and in the expected direction (p= .06, one-tailed). [26] Looking at the marginal effect of the perception of corruption variable, a respondent who perceives the lowest amount of corruption chooses the clean politician 12 times on average, holding all other variables at their means. On the other hand, a respondent who perceives the highest amount of corruption only chooses the clean politician 10 times on average, holding all other variables at their means. This means that

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[25] According to you, how many of your compatriots accept bribes in the course of their duties? Almost all; A lot; Very few; Almost none. The variable is reordered to that 4 is the highest perception of corruption, and 1 is the lowest.

[26] I also estimate models using a dummy variable for India. See Appendix Table 2. I also estimate models for the institutional trust and perceptions of corruption variable without the salience variable. In addition, I estimate a model that includes both institutional trust and perceptions of corruption. The results are robust to these different specifications. See Appendix Table 3.

perceiving corruption as common resulted in respondents choosing the clean politician

less often than they otherwise would (or choosing the corrupt politician more often than

they otherwise would).

Therefore I find strong evidence in support of H4: People who perceive corruption as

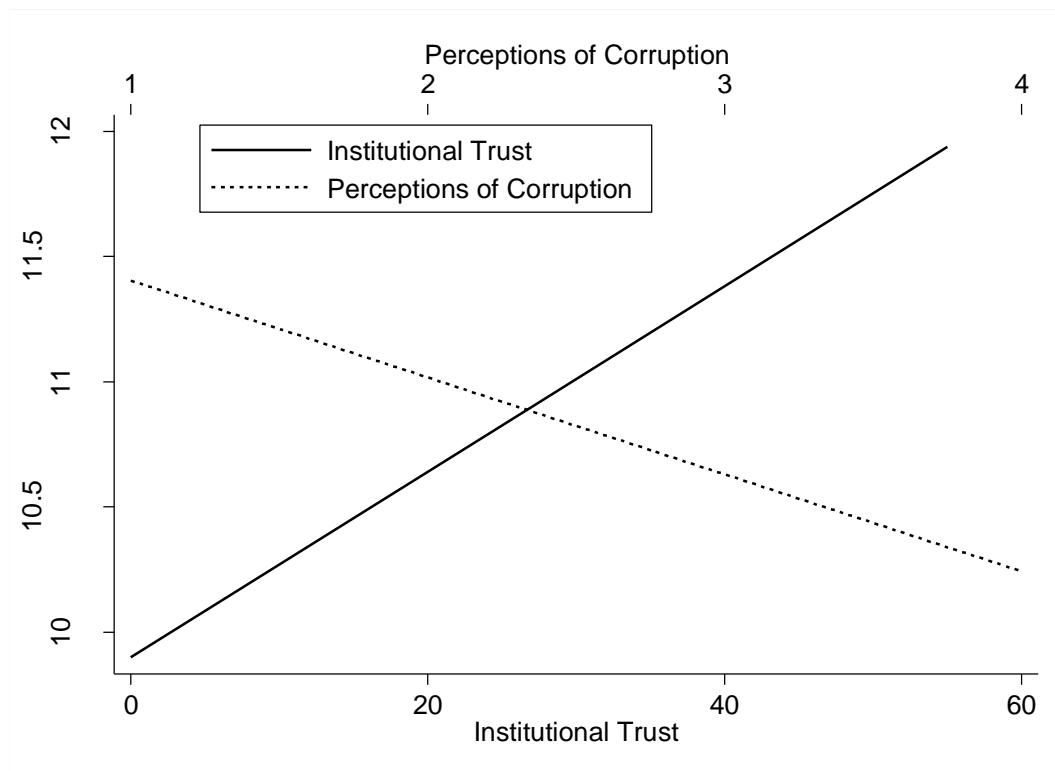common are more likely to support a corrupt politician.

Figure 2. Two way graph showing the effects of institutional trust and perceptions of
corruption on respondents scores on the dependent variable used in Table 2. The
dependent variable scores respondents on how many times they chose the clean politician
over the corrupt politician, with higher scores indicating fewer instances of choosing the
corrupt politician.

Finally I test the conditional effect of institutional trust and perceptions of corruption on issue salience.[27] Figure 3 shows that the marginal effect of issue salience is negative when institutional trust is low, but moves closer to zero as trust increase. For a respondent with 0 out of 60 on the measure of institutional trust, the marginal effect of issue salience is -.87. For a respondent with 45 out of 60 on the measure of institutional trust, the marginal effect of issue salience is-.40. Beyond this point, the effect of issue salience is statistically indistinguishable from 0. That is, the effect of issue salience is statistically insignificant when institutional trust is high.

What this means it that, for people who have low levels of institutional trust, caring about the issue is a good predictor of how often they will choose the corrupt politician. But, for people with high levels of institutional trust, this is not the case. The effect of high institutional trust cancels out the effect of issue salience.

By contrast, the graph on the right in Figure 3 shows that perceptions of corruption have the opposite effect on issue salience. The effect of issue salience is insignificant when perceptions of corruption are at their lowest, but the effect of issue salience is statistically significant once the respondent scores 2 out of 4 or above on the measure of perceptions of corruption. Higher perceptions of corruption also substantively increase the effect of issue salience on how often the respondent chooses a clean politician. For a respondent who scores 2 out of 4 on the perceptions of corruption measure issue salience has a marginal effect of -.51. For a respondent who scores 4 out of 4 on the perceptions of corruption measure salience has a marginal effect of -.91.

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[27] I focus here on the graphical representation of these results. For the regression output, see Appendix Table 4.

This means that, for people who perceive very little corruption, how much a respondent cares about the issues is not a good predictor of how often a respondent chooses the clean politician. But, when a respondent perceives a lot of corruption, how much a respondent cares about the issues is an important predictor of how often she chooses the clean politician. The more corruption a respondent perceives, the stronger the effect of issue salience.
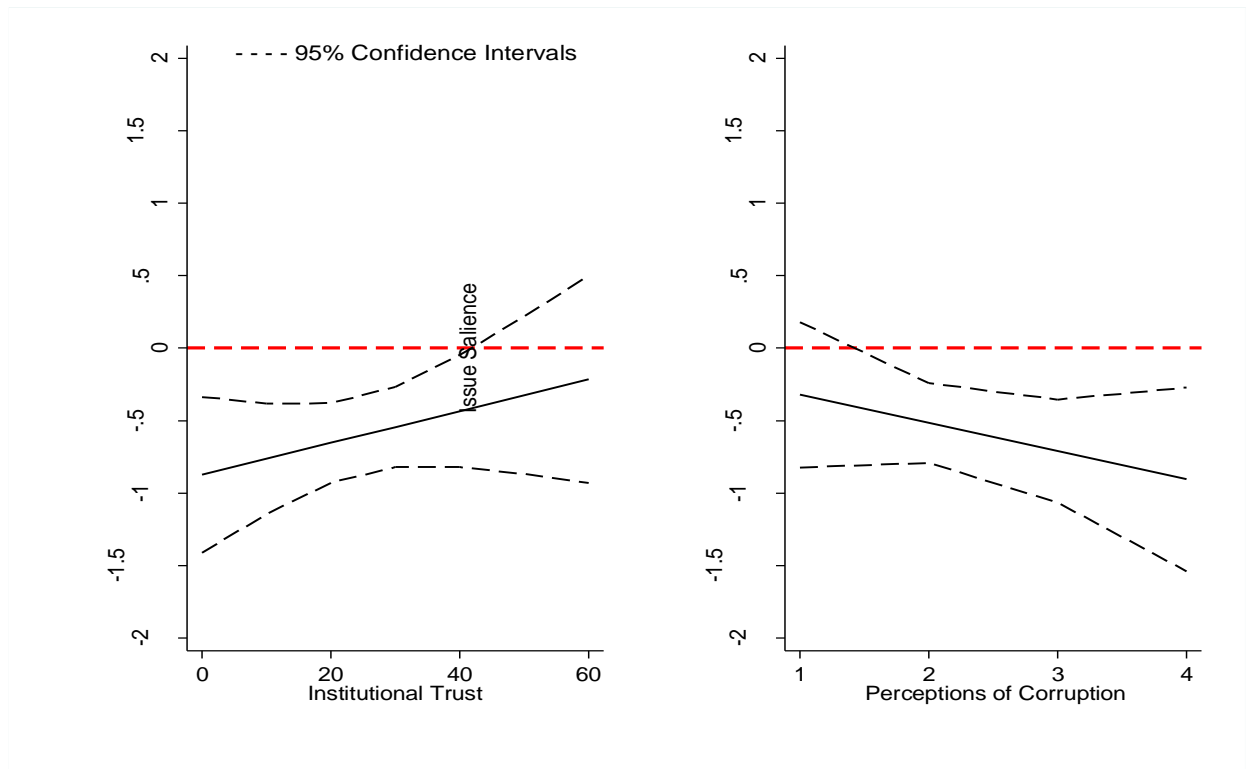
Figure 3. The marginal effect of issue salience on how often a respondent chose a clean politician. The left graph illustrates how the effect of issue salience changes with institutional trust. The right graph illustrates how the effect of issue salience changes with perceptions of corruption.

These results show that although issue salience is a powerful predictor of when a respondent will choose a corrupt but ideologically close politician over a clean but ideologically distant politician, the effect of issue salience is conditional on other factors. Therefore, the position of a corrupt politician on an issue and the salience of that issue to

voters need not rule the day. Indeed, issue salience becomes statistically insignificant in this model once institutional trust is high, or perceptions of corruption are low. What this means is that voters with high levels of institutional trust, and who perceive low levels of corruption will punish corrupt politicians even if they agree with them on the salient issues. The marginal effect of issue salience is -1 and statistically significant at 99% confidence when both institutional trust is at its highest and perceptions of corruption are at their lowest. This is reduced to a statistically insignificant -.08 when institutional trust is at its lowest, and perceptions of corruption at their highest. Therefore, I find strong evidence in favor of H5: Institutional trust has a negative effect on the effect of issue salience. I also find strong evidence in favor of H6: Perceptions of corruption have a positive effect on the effect of issue salience.

Discussion

This paper presents an innovative survey design that asks respondents to choose between an ideologically close but corrupt political actor and an ideologically distant but clean political actor. Doing so builds on work on spatial models of voter choice, and research on issue salience, and goes some way toward recreating the calculus that voters make when choosing between less than ideal candidates in the real world. Thus, the survey allows us to get some insight into how heavily voters weigh corruption relative to other salient issues.

Results presented here also show that voters distinguish between different types of corruption in a predictable way. Clientelism is seen as the least egregious of the offences, followed by taking bribes from a private person, and using public money for personal reasons.

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More importantly, results presented here indicate that respondents do take the salient

political issues into account when deciding whether to support a corrupt politician. This

goes beyond hopeful stylized facts regarding increasing information available to voters.

Since many voters are not willing to trade off on ideological issues because of corruption,

politicians may often be able to shield themselves from electoral defeat by moving into

an ideological space that is important to voters, or by highlighting issues that voters

believe to be more important than corruption. Indeed, research on issue trespassing has

shown that candidates are more likely to do so when they are trailing in a campaign, and

when an issue is particularly important to the electorate (Damore 2004).

Respondents who had high levels of institutional trust chose the clean politician over the

corrupt politician more often, all else equal. This is important as strengthening the rule of

law – and so, trust in institutions – may be key to reducing voter tolerance of corruption.

However, this is complicated by the fact that research has shown a possible negative

effect of corruption on trust in public institutions (Clausen et al 2011) and regime

legitimacy (Seligson 2002) at the national level. This result is also in keeping with other

research on political trust and corruption.

Perceiving corruption as common was a significant predictor of whether the respondent

chose the corrupt politician. This result extends the literature on social norms and

corruption and highlights the importance of work in sociology and criminology that link

the social norms of one's peer group to larger social issues (eg, Fisman and Miguel

2008). This also highlights the potential importance of sociological theories such as the

'broken window' theory of law enforcement (Kelling 1996) to dealing with apparently

unrelated issues such as political corruption: reducing perceptions of corruption in one's

peer group could have a positive effect if it 'filters up' to a reduced tolerance for corruption amongst elected politicians.

Institutional trust and perceptions of corruption had moderating effects on issue salience as a predictor of choice of politician. The effect of issue salience was weakened to the point of insignificance when institutional trust was high. Issue salience was made insignificant by low perceptions of corruption. These results are important as they offer some hope for the prospect of voters punishing corrupt political actors, even if the political actors correctly choose issue positions that are salient for the electorate. Voters with high levels of institutional trust, and who perceive low levels of corruption will punish corrupt politicians even if they agree with them on the salient issues.

Therefore, policy makers should move beyond transparency in order to increase the likelihood of corrupt politicians being punished at the polls. Anti-corruption NGOs and advocates may need to move their focus to improving people's trust in their institutions as a means to increasing the likelihood that corrupt politicians will be punished. Transparency in itself may be useless if corrupt politicians cleverly choose their positions on salient issues, or if voters mistrust a state's institutions, or perceive corruption as common.

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Appendix 1: Guttman Scales

When should a woman be legally allowed to have an abortion? Choose all that apply. If you do not agree with any of the statements, you need not choose any.

- ☐ if the woman's health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy
- ☐ if she became pregnant as a result of rape
- ☐ if there is a strong chance of a serious defect in the baby
- ☐ if the family has a very low income and cannot afford any more children
- ☐ if she is not married and does not want to marry the man
- ☐ if she is married and does not want any more children

When, if ever, should capital punishment (the death penalty) be used? Choose all that apply. If you do not agree with any of the statements, you need not choose any.

- ☐ Capital punishment is justified for the most extreme crimes (e.g., multiple murders)
- ☐ Capital punishment is justified for the crime of premeditated murderer
- ☐ Capital punishment is just and necessary
- ☐ Capital punishment should be available for crimes such as rape, assault and theft

Appendix 2: Alternate Specifications of Models

Appendix Table 1: Issue Salience (with India control variable)

	Abortion Model	Death Penalty Model
Issue Salience	-0.9898***	-.3268***
	(.1528)	(.0020)
Age	.0174	.0021
	(.0120)	(.0050)
Gender (female)	-0.3938	.0457
	(.3308)	(.1337)
Education	-.1272	-.0056
	(.0897)	(.0361)
Income	-.0131	.0144
	(.0888)	(.0376)
India	2.337***	-.2978
	(.4515)	(0.2029)
Constant	8.6282***	5.7645***
	(.9357)	(.3849)
Observations	550	519
R-squared	0.1340	0.0450

Standard errors in parentheses.

***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.1

(tests are one-tailed for issue salience variables only)

Appendix Table 2: Institutional Trust and Perceptions of Corruption
(with India control variable)

	Base Model	Trust Model	Perceptions Model
Issue Salience	-.6337***	-.6379***	-.6118***
	(.1314)	(.1318)	(.3272)
Institutional Trust		.0299**	
		(.0195)	
Perceptions of Corruption			-.5084*
			(.3372)
Age	.0385**	.0307*	.0320
	(.0166)	(.0171)	(.0168)
Gender (female)	-.4993	-.4952	-.4509
	(.4632)	(.4654)	(.4635)
Education	-.0788	-.0897	-.0863
	(.1249)	(.1252)	(.1248)
Income	.0841	.0259	.0841
	(.1259)	(.1307)	(.1257)
India	2.912	2.906	3.28
	(.7335)	(.7421)	(.7708)
Constant	12.6268***	12.4177***	13.8672***
	(1.3259)	(1.353)	(1.5458)
Observations	418	413	418
R-squared	0.1116	0.116	0.1168

Standard errors in parentheses.
***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.1
(tests are one-tailed for salience, trust and perception variables only)

Appendix Table 3: Trust and Perceptions Models without Issue Salience Variable

	Trust Model	Perceptions Model	Trust and Perceptions
Institutional Trust	.0310*		.0229
	(.0199)		-0.0204
Perceptions of Corruption		-.6784*	-.6027**
		(.3366)	(.3493)
Age	.0364*	.0363	.0330*
	(.0174)	(.0171)	(.0176)
Gender (female)	-1.251***	-1.1383	-1.1490***
	(.4529)	(.4506)	(.4557)
Education	-.0849	-.0924	-.0949
	(.1291)	(.1283)	(.1289)
Income	-.0023	.0520	.0135
	(.1341)	(.1280)	(.1341)
USA	-1.8261***	-2.4024***	-2.235***
	(.6452)	(.6681)	(.6859)
Constant	11.5477***	14.1839***	12.5794***
	(1.485)	(1.821)	(1.8932)
Observations	414	419	414
R-squared	0.0584	0.0536	0.0652

Standard errors in parentheses.
***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.1 (tests are one-tailed for salience, trust and perception variables only)

Appendix Table 4: Modifying effect of Institutional Trust and Perceptions of Corruption on Issue Salience (see Figure 3 in the main body of the paper)

	Interaction Model
Issue Salience	-.4659
	(.5136)
Institutional Trust	-.0127
	(.0497)
Perceptions of Corruption	.3022
	(.8555)
Trust*Issue Salience	.0087
	(.0098)
Perceptions*Issue Salience	1.1456
	(.1749)
Age	.0301*
	(.0173)
Gender (female)	-.5727*
	(.4682)
Education	-.0937
	(.1264)
Income	.0496
	(.1318)
USA	-2.1658***
	(.6772)
Constant	14.6858***
	(2.776)
Observations	413
R-squared	0.1109

Standard errors in parentheses.
***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.1
(tests are one-tailed for salience, trust and perception variables and their interactions)

Norms, Trust, and Voting for Berlusconi

Abstract: This paper uses several datasets to test the effects of several mechanisms on the likelihood of a person voting for Silvio Berlusconi. Taking Berlusconi as the archetypal corrupt yet electorally successful politician I show that social norms that justify corruption in one's peer group extend to voting and increase the likelihood of supporting Berlusconi. I find that perceptions of political corruption have an effect on the likelihood of supporting Berlusconi, and that this effect is not constant over time. I also find that trust in the judiciary has no effect on the likelihood of supporting Berlusconi – contrary to Berlusconi's claims of persecution by the judiciary – and that trusting the institution of television has a strong effect on the likelihood of voting for Berlusconi.

Introduction

This paper is a case study of the Italian politician Silvio Berlusconi. It is difficult to find an example of a politician who has been repeatedly accused of and even charged with corruption, who has both been repeatedly elected *and* on whom there exists a reasonable amount of data (or rather on whose supporters there exists a reasonable amount of data). Berlusconi fits the bill for this type of case study for several reasons. The first is that his corruption is undeniable. Although he may be better known for philandering, and making gaffes on the international stage, he has clearly also been active in using political power for personal gain – a standard definition of political corruption. The second is that his political party is essentially a personal vehicle for his political ambition. It is hard to imagine someone who supports Berlusconi's party, but not him – indeed in the 1996 elections, Berlusconi's was the only face allowed on any *Forza Italia* campaign material. What this means is that national Italian data can be used when exploring support for Berlusconi. In other countries, and other electoral systems, one might be limited to merely using data on one constituency – not so in this case.

The question that this case allows us to answer is *why do people vote for a politician who is corrupt?* The literature on corruption gives us some suggestions.

Recent cross national survey work has shown that those who perceive high levels of corruption are more likely to claim that corruption can be justified, and so engage in corrupt acts themselves (Tavits 2010, Dong et al 2012). I propose that this will affect voting: those who perceive corruption as common will be more likely to vote for Berlusconi, as will those who claim that corruption can be justified. Using the same logic,

I claim that perceiving high levels of political corruption will cause voters to discount political corruption and so be more likely to support Berlusconi.

A separate strand of research on corruption posits that when voters have information about corruption, they will punish corrupt politicians: in this model, it is only the lack of information that prevents voters from pushing for good clean governance (eg, Persson and Tabellini 2000). The observable implications of this model are clear, and appear to be in conflict with the positions outlined above: once a voter knows that Berlusconi is corrupt, she will not vote for him. While the surveys available do not ask whether a respondent believes Berlusconi to be corrupt, [28] one survey does ask about the extent to which the respondent trusts the institution of television. As Berlusconi controls most of the television market in Italy, we can take this question to be a measure of the extent to which the respondent is getting good, objective information about Berlusconi and politics generally.

Berlusconi has long claimed that he is the victim of persecution by left wing judges with an axe to grind. This is often reported in the international media as the myth that allows Berlusconi to dupe Italians into voting for him. The veracity of this claim can be tested here. This is really an extension of the standard 'information model', that voters will punish politicians whom they believe to be corrupt: the idea that Berlusconi has done nothing wrong and yet is being pursued by prosecutors is clearly false – an example of disinformation. This claim by Berlusconi gained traction in the media, and possibly among the general public. If Berlusconi's voters believe that he is indeed unfairly

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[28] If such a survey did exist, it would likely be unusable due to social desirability bias. A respondent would be unlikely to admit both that she believes Berlusconi to be corrupt, and that she has voted or will vote for him.

victimized by the judiciary then they will obviously not be very trusting of the judiciary. I test whether trusting the judiciary has an effect on support for Berlusconi.

From impressions of the south of Italy (or the *mezzogiorno)* that are common (Lumley and Morris 1997), one might expect that those who continue to support an ostensibly corrupt politician are from the south of Italy, which is reputedly low on social capital due to its history of hierarchical organizations (Putnam 1994). However, a cursory look at Italy's electoral map since 1994 reveals that Berlusconi's base of support has largely been in the north of the country, plus Sicily (Shin and Agnew 2008). The *mezzogiorno* has not been an area that Berlusconi has depended on for his power.

Therefore, this paper does two things. The first is that it tests whether social norms that are accepting of corruption (and are created by perceptions of corruption as common) increase the likelihood of a respondent voting for Berlusconi. I also test the effect of perceiving high levels of political corruption on the likelihood of a respondent voting for Berlusconi. This extends the literature on when people will engage in corruption and illegal activity, bringing it to the realm of voting and governance.

The second is that it tests whether there is any evidence for the information theory – the claim that the reason that voters do not punish corrupt politicians is because they do not have sufficient information.

The format of the paper is as follows: In the next section I outline the literature and explain the theory behind the hypotheses. This is followed by a brief explanation of the data used. I then provide a brief biography of Silvio Berlusconi – I believe that this helps

to understand both the man and political situation in Italy since the 1990s. I then test the hypotheses using the available data, and conclude.

Literature and Hypotheses

Despite allegations of bribery, false accounting, false testimony, tax evasion, embezzlement, mafia connections and money laundering, Silvio Berlusconi has lead a long and successful career as an Italian politician, serving three terms as prime minister of Italy. The party which he created – or rather, the coalition headed by this party – won a parliamentary majority in 1994, 2001 and 2008, and was the second largest coalition in 1996, 2006 and 2013. Altogether, he is Italy's longest serving post-war prime minister.

Berlusconi is perhaps one of the clearest and most cited examples of a corrupt politician winning reelection. From outside Italian politics, looking in, it appears one can safely assume that every Italian knows that Berlusconi is corrupt or that it is quite likely that he is involved in some corruption. Although Berlusconi had not been definitively convicted of anything until 2013, he was able to avoid conviction largely through legal technicalities such as the statute of limitations, the parliamentary immunities granted Italian legislators, and changes to what constitutes certain crimes, which his own parliamentary majority passed.[29]

Berlusconi poses an interesting case for social scientists as he is repeatedly elected despite continual allegations and charges of corruption. This is important because it is

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[29] To say that Berlusconi had not been convicted until 2013 is somewhat misleading. In fact, he had been found guilty in court before this. However, the Italian legal system allows for two appeals: one on the merits of the case, and one on legal procedure. Defendants do not serve time while waiting for these appeals. So, if one is found guilty in a lower court, of say tax fraud, one does not go to jail until found guilty in both appeals. Since many appeals are not completed before the statute of limitations runs out, many people who are found guilty of crimes in the lower courts never pay the penalties imposed.

well documented that corruption has negative effects on economic growth, support for democratic institutions, the allocation of scarce resources, and social trust (Rose-Ackerman 1999, Cho and Kirwin 2007, Lambsdorf 2005, Uslaner 2008, Clausen et al 2011).

Why voters do not punish corrupt politicians is a fundamental puzzle in the study of corruption (Kurer 2001, Golden 2006). While this paper is a case study of Italy – specifically Silvio Berlusconi's time as a politician in Italy – instances of voters refusing to punish corrupt politicians can be found in both rich countries, such as in the 'machine politics' of the United States, as well as in developing countries. For example, political scientists working in settings as different as Japan, Italy and Mexico have struggled with why this is the case (Reed 1999, Golden and Chang 2001, Chong et al 2011). Perhaps best known is Golden and Chang's (2001) work on Italy from the first post-World War II parliament to the 1990s, which showed a lack of punishment of corrupt politicians in all but one parliament studied.

Punishing or rewarding incumbents at the ballot box is a cornerstone of liberal democratic politics, the main power given to the citizenry to effect political change. If citizens choose to return corrupt politicians to office, the chances of cycles of corruption being ended are slim, as politicians in states with weak institutions may hold a great deal of informal power outside their de jure power (Bratton and Van de Walle 1994). A culture of corruption is difficult to change once it has taken hold (Dong et al 2012).

Drawing on theories of social norms, I argue that once corruption is seen as common, or seen as being the status quo, voters will become more tolerant of corrupt politicians: that

is, when a voter believes corruption to be common, he is more likely to consider corrupt actions acceptable, and to be tolerant of a corrupt politician. The foil to this position is the information theory. What I term the information theory is the position that holds that the only thing stopping voters from punishing corrupt politicians is a lack of information. I also test whether there is any evidence for the information theory – that voters would have punished Berlusconi electorally if only they had had better information and known he was corrupt.

Theories of pro-social behavior and how the actions of others affect one's attitudes and actions have shown that the behavior of others has an effect on whether one complies with the tax code (Frey and Torgler 2007), norms against littering (Frey, Torgler and Wilson 2009), or whether one engages in criminal behavior generally (Kahan 1998). Tavits (2010) shows that people are more likely to *engage in* corruption when they perceive corruption as widespread using a survey of the general public and of public officials in Estonia. A recent paper by Dong, Dulleck and Torgler (2012) also shows that people are more likely to consider corruption to be justifiable when they perceive corruption as being common and so are more willing to engage in such behavior.[30] However, we do not know how perceiving corruption affects voter behavior, or whether this acceptance of corrupt behavior extends to the realm of voting.

I hypothesize that perceiving corruption as common in one's peer group will make voters more tolerant of corrupt politicians. This is contrary to the claims of policy experts who argue for increased voter information as a panacea for corruption (Stapenhurst et al

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[30] These papers look at people's perceptions of corruption amongst the population generally, not specifically at political corruption. For example, bribing a police officer is an act of corruption, but it is not political corruption.

2006). This position assumes that increased information – allowing voters to perceive more corruption – will mean that voters will be less tolerant of corrupt behavior and punish politicians accordingly. If the social norms research already carried out extends to the realm of voting, then voters who perceive higher levels of corruption generally, will actually be less likely to punish corrupt politicians. As such, this would make an important contribution to our understanding of how voters determine whether to punish corrupt politicians.

Perceiving corruption as common likely causes a voter to discount allegations of corruption against a politician. If corruption is perceived as being pervasive, one will likely assume that the replacement politician would also be corrupt. As Golden (2006, p9) writes "forcing a corrupt individual legislator out of national office […] has no immediate impact on national policy or on the overall degree of corruption tolerated by the governing parties" and so it is not clear to what extent a voter benefits by being represented by the only (or one of the few) clean players in a dirty game.

That is, once corruption is seen as normal, it can seem sensible for voters to choose a corrupt politician who may be more likely to 'get things done': voters in Brazil have the saying 'he steals, but he gets things done'.

I also hypothesize that perceiving higher levels of political corruption will have the same effect: perceiving political corruption as common should increase the likelihood of supporting a corrupt politician.

Fearon (1999) argues that elections should be seen not as a chance to punish incumbents, but to choose a 'good type'. However, in certain cases – mainly when corruption is seen

as endemic – voters are more likely to choose what might ordinarily be considered a 'bad type'. A politician who is corrupt but who appears to be effective may well be preferred to a politician who is less corrupt, but also less effective. This is because the corruption part of the equation is severely discounted, to the point of not being considered at all: if everyone is corrupt then corruption does not figure into voter calculus.

The policy implications of this are important. If the electorate comes to embrace corruption then we cannot assume that the electorate can be counted on as part of the solution to the problem of corruption, contrary to the hopes of the transparency movement.

The push for greater transparency as a cure to political corruption came to the forefront of policy discussions in the nineties, when 'good governance' (often defined as simply the absence of corruption) became the latest panacea to the development woes of poorer countries. This has led to the development of organizations like *Transparency International* that focus on corruption and transparency, and transparency programs in development organizations such as the World Bank. However, although many attempts have been made to curb corruption over the last twenty years, it seems that corruption in both developed and developing countries has not decreased, and may well have increased (Bracking 2007). This is despite the millions of dollars spent by international organizations, donor governments, and NGOs on programs to increase transparency, strengthen civil society and the media, and create anti-corruption watchdogs (Stapenhurst et al 2006).

The social norms theory which I lay out above and the information theory – which argues for transparency and more information about corruption as a solution to the problem of corruption – are essentially at odds. The social norms theory posits that when corruption is common, the more information we have about corruption the more corruption becomes normalized and acceptable. The information theory posits that when corruption is common, the more information we have about corruption the more we will act to bring about less corruption.

I test the different positions laid out here – Social Norms Theory, and Information Theory – using several different sets of survey data on Italy since Silvio Berlusconi entered politics.

Building on the work on social norms, showing that perceptions of corruption increase the likelihood of a person both claiming that corruption is acceptable and the likelihood of a person engaging in corruption, I test the following hypotheses.

H1a: Respondents who claim that corruption is common are more likely to claim that corruption can be justified.

H1b: Respondents who claim that corruption can be justified are more likely to support Silvio Berlusconi.

H1c: Respondents who claim that *political* corruption is common are more likely to support Silvio Berlusconi.

It is possible that people do not (or did not) believe that Berlusconi is corrupt; Berlusconi himself has said that he is the victim of an activist judiciary, and this is certainly

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something that has been picked up by the international media (The Economist 2009).[31]

His supporters may have little faith in the integrity of the justice system and so believe

that Berlusconi is the victim of political enemies with an axe to grind, or of some sort of

conspiracy. Alternatively, his supporters may be poorly informed due to Berlusconi's

control of the Italian media market – those who trust television as an institution are likely

influenced by Berlusconi's spin, or selective coverage of political events. This can

broadly be termed the Information Theory: the only thing in the way of voters punishing

corrupt politicians and pushing for good governance is the lack of good reliable

information. This leads to three hypotheses.

H2a: Respondents who trust the Italian legal system are less likely to support Berlusconi.

H2b: Respondents who trust the institution of television are more likely to support

Berlusconi.

H2c: Respondents with lower levels of political knowledge are more likely to support

Berlusconi.

Economic Voting

One variable that immediately comes to mind in predicting support for a political party,

or its leader, is the state of the national economy. However, research has shown that

while economic voting models can be helpful in understanding voter behavior in some

countries (countries with high clarity of responsibility, where it is clear who is in power)

this is not the case for other countries (countries with low clarity of responsibility). Italy

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[31] http://www.economist.com/node/14710716

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is one of these low clarity of responsibility countries. Van der Brug et al (2007) found

Italy to be a low clarity of responsibility country for every year studied (1989, 1994,

1999). In their study the authors find that in low clarity countries the effects of the

economy on elections are contrary to expectation. Following Powell and Whitten (1993)

and Whitten and Palmer (1999), they conclude that "economic voting as traditionally

formulated does not exist in low clarity countries" (173). It is worth noting that van der

Brug et al do find that voters in low clarity countries are guided by prospective

expectations, rather than retrospective punishment of incumbents. This makes sense for

the Italian context for two reasons. The first is that Berlusconi consistently promises more

than he delivers. It seems to be these promises that help him get elected, rather than his

performance in office. The second is that Italy, more so than other low clarity countries,

is regularly governed by technocratic governments where it is not clear who is in charge,

or what party one would blame even if one wanted to vote retrospectively.

Data

I use three different datasets in this paper. The *European Values Survey* (EVS) began in

1981 with surveys in the original European Member states, and has grown to include 47

countries in the most recent wave.[32] The EVS is mainly concerned with human values:

the survey asks about family, work, religious, political and social values. While many of

the questions change over time, a core group of questions has remained the same. The

EVS also asks about voting behavior; respondents are asked for whom they would vote if

an election were held tomorrow. The four waves that have been carried out to date were

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[32] http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/evs/about-evs/

carried out in 1981, 1990, 1999 and 2009. In this paper, I use the data on Italy for 1999 and 2009.

The *Eurobarometer* (Eb) is a measure of public opinion in Europe.[33] The Standard Eurobarometer was established in 1973 and consists of about 1000 respondents per country, with questions on family, health, environment, etc. The Standard Eb can also contain supplemental questions. The Flash Eb is an ad hoc survey carried out on a special topic. There are also surveys that are fielded only in Central and Eastern Europe, and in countries that are candidates for EU membership. In this paper I use data on Italy from Eb 69.2, which focuses on elections and also has questions on the judiciary and television. This survey was fielded in 2008.

The Comparative Survey of Electoral Systems (CSES) focuses on electoral systems, but also contains questions on voting and demographics.[34] The CSES also takes suggestions for questions from researchers, and so the second wave (2001-2006) contains a question on corruption. I use the data on Italy in this second wave; the Italy portion of the survey was fielded in May 2006, the month after the 2006 Italian national election.

Because there are several datasets used in this paper, the models are not perfectly consistent throughout the paper. The first model, which extends the results of Dong et al (2013) replicates the model used in that paper. The rest of the models in this paper follow Anderson (2000) and control for age, gender, income, ideology and religiosity, as far as is possible. Where possible, I have estimated each model with controls for region.

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[33] http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/index_en.htm
[34] http://www.cses.org/

Understanding Silvio

Silvio Berlusconi's rise to prominence must be understood in the context of the Italian political crisis that occurred after the *Clean Hands* investigation – really a series of investigations – carried out by magistrates in Milan beginning in the 1990s. The corruption that was exposed was astounding, even to Italians, and meant the breakdown of the entrenched parties that had ruled Italy since the end of World War II. It is hard to overstate the effect of *Clean Hands.* In 1993 Gabriele Cagliari, the former president of the state owned energy group Ente Nazionale Idrocarburi (ENI), and Raul Gardini, the managing director of Ferruzzi – a huge agrochemicals group – both committed suicide while under investigation. In 1994 Bettino Craxi, who had twice served as President of the Council of Ministers (Prime Minister) fled to Tunisia after being found guilty of corruption. He was, by all accounts, the most despised man in Italy at that time.

By this time, Silvio Berlusconi was already a successful entrepreneur, and incredibly wealthy. He was well known in Italy due to his ownership of *Mediaset* (a subsidiary of his *Fininvest* holding company) and the soccer club AC Milan.

The funding sources for his early projects have never been made clear. The two most likely possibilities for the origin of this money are that it was either money that Berlusconi had illegally transferred out of the country and then brought back in through Swiss holdings, or that it was money laundered by the Mafia (*The Economist*, 'Silvio Berlusconi. An Italian Story.').

In the late seventies and early eighties Berlusconi created a television monopoly (aside from the state run stations). He did so in spite of laws prohibiting national commercial

stations. When the constitutional court ordered Berlusconi to stop broadcasting, his friend Craxi (who would later become PM) passed a law in the Council of Ministers ordering the resumption of broadcast. In 1990 a law was passed which allowed *Mediaset* to remain in its position as national broadcaster of three commercial stations (Ginsborg 2005, p37).

Aside from his television stations, in the seventies Berlusconi also bought the daily newspaper *Il Giornale* that (in 2005) had a circulation of 220,000 per day. He ostensibly sold the paper upon entering politics in 1994, but the sale was to his brother.

Italy is widely perceived to have the most independent judiciary in Europe. In 1992 the magistrates of Milan began to flex their muscle. They took aim at corruption in public life, and politicians, civil servants and business leaders were investigated. Berlusconi's friend and mentor Bettino Craxi, rather than continue to deny any wrongdoing, admitted to the initial charges, claiming that this was standard procedure, and that everyone – most importantly, every political party – was involved.

As the 1994 elections approached, the political establishment was in turmoil. At the end of 1993 the Forza Italia party ('Forward Italy', the chant of the Italian soccer team) was created. It was essentially created by the Fininvest firm and was filled with familiar faces from Berlusconi's companies. When national elections were announced in January 1994 Berlusconi allied with the Lega Nord ('Northern League') and the Alleanza Nazionale ('National Alliance') to make a pre-election center-right coalition. These were very different right wing parties. The Northern League (NL) was a sometimes separatist party based in the northern industrialized provinces. These are provinces that are generally wealthier and more developed than the South, and see much of their tax revenues flow

south to the poorer regions. The National Alliance (NA) was a nationalist party with somewhat fascist tendencies. Although these parties were strange bedfellows, the coalition won a majority in the lower house, and a near majority in the Senate. Forza Italia was strongly supported in northern regions that are generally associated with prosperity and efficiency, as well as high social capital (Putnam 1994). The party was also strong in the South, in provinces like Campania and Sicilia that are traditionally associated with corruption and underdevelopment. Berlusconi became prime minister of Italy for the first time in 1994.

In November 1994 Berlusconi received notice that he was under investigation for corruption. Berlusconi and his media accused the magistrates of an 'institutional coup d'état'. Nonetheless, Umberto Bossi, leader of the Northern League, pulled his support from the government, and Berlusconi's first government fell; a technocratic government headed by Lamberto Dini was formed.

The accusations by the magistrates were of tax evasion and bribery of the Financial Police. The magistrates finished their inquiry and recommended prosecution. Three years later, Berlusconi was found guilty and sentenced to almost three years in prison. However, as the case was appealed he did not yet have to serve time. In May 2000 the Appeals Court confirmed Berlusconi's guilt, but as the statute of limitations had expired he could not be sent to prison. A year later the highest court, Corte Suprema di Cassazione, declared there was insufficient evidence to find Berlusconi guilty. However, the court maintained the guilt of everyone else involved.

Unsurprisingly, beginning in 1994 – when Berlusconi stood accused of illegally financing political parties, bribing the Financial Police, tax fraud, the corruption of judges in Italy, and tax fraud and breach of anti-trust laws in Spain – those on Berlusconi's Mediaset channels began to attack the activist magistrates as criminals and anti-democratic communists.

National elections were not held until 1996, when Romano Prodi's center-left Olive Tree coalition won back power. The coalition held until the elections of 2001, when Berlusconi was once again well placed. He had brought the NL back into the fold, and had a simple program of lower taxes, infrastructure spending for the South, less bureaucracy in the government, zero tolerance on illegal immigration and more security in the cities. Perhaps more importantly, Berlusconi wrote and freely distributed to fifteen million homes a book about his life (this number is according to Ginsborg (2005); Stille (2006) claims it was only twelve million). Written in simple prose, this book tells of the obstacles Berlusconi overcame to rise to power and success.[35] The book was entitled *An Italian Story* (*Una storia italiana).* Berlusconi also presented and signed a 'Contract with Italians', modeled on Newt Gingrich's 'Contract with America'. He pledged not to stand for reelection unless at least four of his five promises were kept.

Berlusconi also had a huge media presence on his Mediaset channels, and parity of presence with others on the state owned RAI. Berlusconi's was the only face allowed on any Forza Italia materials. As a result, his face was everywhere, and a vote for Forza was a vote for Berlusconi. Berlusconi's new coalition, the House of Liberties (La Casa della

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[35] Although the paper format was 127 pages long, the pdf version available online is less than 40 pages without photographs and graphics.

Libertà) won majorities in the lower house and the Senate, and Berlusconi once again became prime minister.

Berlusconi's government passed a law requiring evidence admitted to court from outside Italy had to be original documents (complicating a case again him); Italy tried to block the introduction of a European warrant for arrest for crimes such as corruption; the Justice Minister tried to transfer one of the judges sitting on a case involving alleged corruption by Berlusconi and Craxi in the eighties. This would have caused the trial to restart, and so the statute of limitations would have meant that Berlusconi would have been beyond prosecution in this case. Another law was passed that meant that if a defendant was unable to get a fair trial in a particular area, the trial could be moved. Berlusconi's lawyers requested another trial in which he was involved be moved from Milan. Berlusconi did not get his way in either of these cases. In April, one of Berlusconi's associates and co-defendants was sentenced to eleven years in prison. Less than two years later, the government passed a law granting immunity for those holding the highest office in government for their time in office. This was weeks before a case in which Berlusconi was a defendant was set to finish up (the case which his justice minister had tried to have moved from Milan). Because of the statute of limitations in Italy, and the length of time that trials take (even if found guilty, a defendant does not have to face punishment until both appeals are heard) the immunity law seriously decreased the chances of those granted immunity being prosecuted with crimes they have ever committed. This immunity law would be found unconstitutional in 2004.

By 2005 Romano Prodi's center-left alliance appeared well positioned to take power in the next election. Berlusconi's government passed electoral reforms which seems

designed to disadvantage the center-left (the center-left coalition contained several small parties that would likely not reach the 4% of national vote threshold to enter parliament).

The election results were initially too close to call. Prodi's majority in the lower house was decided in court. Although the difference in votes between the two coalitions was less than 25,000, Berlusconi's new electoral law meant that there was a bonus for the majority in the lower house, meaning that Prodi's coalition was guaranteed a majority. Prodi's majority in the Senate was also confirmed in court. However this majority was tenuous and consisted of only two seats (Shin and Agnew 2008, p 112).

In June 2006 inquiries began into possible Mafia investment in Fininvest in the 1970s. In May 2007 another trial began against Berlusconi – this time for corrupting the course of justice. However, this trial would time out as there remained only eleven months in which to finish the trial (and both appeals).

Berlusconi registered a new party name in August, the People of Freedom. The People of Freedom party would absorb both Forza Italia and the National Alliance Party. The center-left had already merged to create the Democratic Party.

Prodi lost a confidence vote the following January and resigned. After failing to assign a technocratic government – the right refused to support it – the president announced elections for that April. Polls showed Berlusconi ahead, and indeed his coalition won a large majority in the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate. The People of Freedom party once more allied with the Northern League, and with a Sicilian party that sought more autonomy for Sicily. Berlusconi became prime-minister once more in May 2008.

Berlusconi once again seemed to set about protecting his own interests. The government approved a bill to ban eavesdropping in cases involving market abuse and insider trading, and to limit media coverage of criminal trials. Berlusconi also tried to avoid a European Court order regarding his *Rete 4* channel. In the name of law and order three thousand soldiers were deployed on the streets of Italy. A new immunity law protecting Berlusconi was passed.

In February 2009 Berlusconi's former advisor was sentenced to four and half years in prison for bribery. Berlusconi was also implicated in this case. Berlusconi's wife filed for divorce as she no longer wanted to be married to a man who "consorts with minors" (The Economist, 'Scuttlebutt'). This was followed by the announcement of an investigation in to a prostitution ring, in which some of the alleged prostitutes were women who had stayed at Berlusconi's house.

Soon afterwards, Berlusconi began proceedings to sue several media outlets over their coverage of him. On August 28th *La Republica* announced that Berlusconi was suing them for one million euro for asking ten questions about his personal life. *L'Unita* was sued for two million euro, and five of its journalists for two hundred thousand each. The Berlusconi-family controlled *Il Giornale* published a story about charges against a Catholic bishop who was the editor of a Catholic paper critical of the recent scandals involving the Prime Minister.

In October the constitutional court once again deemed as unconstitutional a law granting law makers immunity. That same month Berlusconi's Fininvest was ordered to pay €750 million ($1.1 billion) for bribing a judge in 1991. The judge also declared that Berlusconi

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was responsible for the bribe. A few days later Berlusconi announced that he would push for constitutional reform of the judiciary.

That December a call girl, Patrizia D'Addario, published a book about an encounter with Berlusconi, claiming he paid her for sex; Gaspare Spatuzza, a witness in a mafia trial, told prosecutors that Berlusconi made a deal with Cosa Nostra in 1994, upon entering politics.

In January 2010 two trials against Berlusconi resumed, following his loss of immunity. Berlusconi's lawyer David Mills had his case quashed due to the statute of limitations, a win for Berlusconi as he was also implicated in this case.

In October 2010 Berlusconi was hit by what is perhaps his most well-known scandal: Ruby Rubacuori (aka Ruby Heartstealer; aka Karima ElMahroug) appeared in an interview in which she claimed that Berlusconi gave her €7,000 cash as well as jewelry and gave the world the term 'bunga bunga party'. More seriously, it also emerged at this time that three men were being investigated for allegedly procuring prostitutes for Berlusconi, and that Berlusconi's office had contacted a police station in which Ms. Heartstealer was being detained on a minor offence claiming that she should be released to avoid an international incident (the police were told she was the granddaughter of President Mubarak of Egypt). As she was seventeen at the time, Ruby should have been sent to the Italian equivalent of Child Protective Services.

The calendar year was rounded out by a motion for a vote of no confidence in the parliament. Berlusconi survived, in both chambers, prompting rioting on the streets of Rome and fights within the chamber itself (DiPietro, leader of the Italy for Values Party,

accused Berlusconi of buying off members of the opposition after two of DiPietro's own party members voted with Berlusconi, as did thirty members of Fini's parliamentary group).

However, 2011 began with another setback for Berlusconi: a law allowing ministers to have cases against them put on hold was scrapped by the Constitutional Court, and prosecutors in Milan began to investigate the prime minister for paying an underage prostitute (Ruby Heartstealer), and more seriously, abuse of power (for contacting the police and having Ruby released from jail). Berlusconi was indicted that February and ordered to stand trial.

In June, voters rejected four referenda, one of which was to allow ministers to avoid court appearance by citing government business (Berlusconi had previously delayed his own trials with this tactic). However, Berlusconi once again won a vote of confidence in both houses of parliament.

The sex scandals continued into September when prosecutors released claims that Berlusconi put a government plane at the disposal of Gianpaolo Tarantini, a man who had got over 100 women to go to Berlusconi's parties and who was accused of pimping by prosecutors (while prostitution is legal in Italy for women over 18, pimping is not). By this time the Italian economy was in bad shape – Berlusconi finally stopped denying that this was the case – and the government was receiving help from the European Central Bank, with conditionality.

 In Novermber, Italy was placed under IMF monitoring, and on November 12 Berlusconi stepped down as prime minister.

The following October, Silvio Berlusconi announced that he would not run for office again. Later that month he was convicted for the fourth time, this time for tax fraud. He was sentenced to four years in prison, but appealed the case.

In December Mario Monti, the head of the technocratic government, lost the support of the People of Liberty party and announces he would resign (although he remained as prime minister until after the elections the following April). This was before he was able to pass electoral reforms – widely regarded as necessary for political stability in Italy. Soon afterwards Berlusconi had a change of heart and announced he would run in the next election after all. The election was a win for several protest parties with no one party having a clear majority in parliament. Letta formed a coalition dependent on Berlusconi's People of Freedom.

In June Berlusconi was found guilty of paying an underage prostitute (Ruby Rubacouri). In August the Supreme Court upheld the sentence against him for tax fraud. As he was in his seventies at this stage actual prison time was always unlikely. However, he was banned from holding public office because of an anti-corruption law passed by the Monti government, although he was at that time a member of the Senate.

Despite the tenuous position of the government, the Senate did vote to expel Berlusconi on November 27th 2013. He remained the leader of his party however. This is not unprecedented. In fact, Beppe Grillo, the leader of the Five Star Movement, is not a member of parliament: he is unable to run for parliament due to having a criminal record. And, Matteo Renzi would soon be the leader of the PD party while still mayor of Florence.

In January 2014, Renzi and Berlusconi – neither of whom hold national office – met and agreed on new electoral and constitutional changes. A month later, Letta lost his position as prime minister after the PD decided he should no longer remain. Renzi then became the next prime minister, with Berlusconi waiting in the shadows. Berlusconi's ban on public office was upheld by the courts in March 2014, and there is no clear successor to take over the reins of Forza Italia. Of course, if history is any indication Berlusconi will not loosen his grip on those reins any time soon.

Results

Why do voters support corrupt politicians? Taking Silvio Berlusconi as an example of a politician who continually succeeded in attaining public office despite corruption accusations, corruption charges, and corruption convictions, I explore several hypotheses.

I begin by testing the implications of the social norms theory. Dong et al (2012) show that perceiving others as carrying out acts of corruption increased the likelihood of one citing corruption as justifiable. I extend this theory by testing whether this justification of corruption means that one is more likely to vote for a corrupt politician.

First I retest the claim made by Dong et al (2012) that perceiving higher levels of corruption means that one is more likely to claim that corruption is acceptable.

H1a: Respondents who claim that corruption is common are more likely to claim that corruption can be justified.

Next I test the effect of claiming that corruption can be justified on the likelihood of supporting Berlusconi.

H1b: Respondents who claim that corruption can be justified are more likely to support Silvio Berlusconi.

I also test the effect of perceiving high levels of political corruption. This should have the same effect as perceiving corruption in one's peer group, causing voters to discount corruption charges as unimportant.

H1c: Respondents who perceive high levels of political corruption are more likely to support Silvio Berlusconi.

Berlusconi often claims that his legal problems stem from an activist liberal judiciary that is out to get him. I take this to be disinformation. However, the implication is clear: the legal system is not trustworthy, but partisan and vindictive.

H2a: Respondents who trust the Italian legal system are less likely to support Berlusconi.

Berlusconi's media empire *Mediaset* controls the three largest private television stations in Italy as well as a newspaper, and publishing house. While prime minister, Berlusconi also had some power over the state broadcaster. Commentators have claimed that Berlusconi's television stations provide a positively skewed image of Berlusconi and his party. Therefore, we can expect voters who mainly get their information from television, and who trust this information, to be more likely to vote for Berlusconi.

H2b: Respondents who trust the institution of television are more likely to support

Berlusconi.

I also add one related hypothesis to the Information Theory hypotheses: that those who

are better politically informed are less likely to support Berlusconi.

H2c: Respondents who are more politically informed are less likely to vote for

Berlusconi.

Does having a higher acceptance of corruption increase the probability of voting for Berlusconi? (EVS)

Using the *European Values Survey* (EVS), I test whether respondents who perceive high

levels of corruption are more or less likely to find corruption acceptable, and therefore to

vote for Berlusconi. I begin by estimating a model similar to the one used by Dong et al

(2012) to test whether an increase in a respondent's perception of corruption results an

increase in the likelihood of claiming that corruption can be justified. This dataset is the

file for Italy for all years that the survey was carried out (1981, 1990, 1999, 2009).

However, the question on whether others accept bribes was only asked in 1999.

In the model in Table 1, I use the control variables specified in Dong et al (2012). These

are standard in the sociology literature on corruption and include variables that may

reasonably effect whether one considers bribe paying to be justifiable. The controls

included are gender,[36] age, marital status,[37] interest in politics,[38] religion,[39] risk

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[36] Male=1; female=2.
[37] Coded as 1 if married or widowed; coded as 0 otherwise.
[38] How important is politics in your life? very (4), (rather 3), not very (2), not at all (1).
[39] Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, how often do you attend religious services these days? More than once a week, once a week, once a month, only on special holy days, once a year, less often, practically never or never(8= more than once a week to 1=practically never or never).

aversion,[40] income,[41] whether the respondent lives in an urban area,[42] employment,[43] and education.[44]

The main dependent variable in this model is a binary variable measuring whether the respondent believes that accepting bribes is justifiable.[45] As most respondents answer 'never justified', anything other than this is scored as 1 for the dependent binary variable. The main predictor variable is based on a question on the frequency of bribe taking.[46]

As was shown by Dong et al, perceiving others as accepting bribes does have a positive and statistically significant effect on the likelihood of claiming that accepting bribes is justifiable: respondents who perceive corruption are more likely to say that corruption is justifiable. The result is statistically significant at 99% confidence, and the control variables perform similarly to Dong et al (2012).[47] Going from the lowest perception of corruption to the highest means that a respondent goes from a 13% probability of claiming that bribery can be justified to a 26% probability, holding all other variables at their means. Older respondents were less likely to claim that accepting bribes was

[40] Here are some aspects of a job that people say are important. Please look at them and tell me which ones you personally think are important in a job? (15 items). Risk aversion: Good job security (1=mentioned).

[41] The income variable used is x047d. This variable is reconstructed to capture the income in purchasing power of respondents in 1999 (when Italy used the Italian lira) and 2009 (when Italy used the euro).

[42] Size of town: 1. Under 2,000; 2. 2,000 - 5,000; 3. 5 - 10,000; 4. 10 - 20,000; 5. 20 - 50,000; 6. 50 - 100,000; 7. 100 - 500,000; 8. 500,000 and more.

[43] Because this is a categorical variable with several categories, including 'self-employed' and 'student' (ie, not a binary variable for employed/unemployed), I also estimated a model using the i.employment variable and found that none of the categories was statistically significant.

[44] At what age did you complete or will you complete your full time education, either at school or at an institution of higher education? Please exclude apprenticeships.

[45] Please tell me for each of the following statements whether you think it can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between: (…) someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties (1=always justified, 10= never justified).

[46] *"According to you, how many of your compatriots do the following: Accepting a bribe in the course of their duties?" (4=almost all, 1=almost none)* This is scored as 0 if the respondent responded 'almost none, and 3 she responded 'almost all'.

[47] The Dong et al (2012) paper was a cross national study, using all countries in the EVS.

justifiable, all else equal. The same is true of people who were married, and those who

are more educated. Those in higher income brackets were more likely to claim that

accepting bribes can be justified, all else equal. Overall, we find strong evidence in

support of H1a: perceiving corruption as common increases the likelihood of claiming

that corruption can be justified.

Table 1.

	Justify Accept Bribes
Others Accept Bribes	0.164***
	(0.0588)
Gender	-0.127
	(0.0810)
Age	-0.00874***
	(0.00317)
Married	-0.297***
	(0.0989)
Politics Important	0.0100
	(0.0451)
Religiosity	-0.0252
	(0.0178)
Risk Aversion	-0.107
	(0.0897)
Income	0.106***
	(0.0384)
Urban	0.0231
	(0.0190)
Employment	-0.0137
	(0.0207)
Education	-0.0497***
	(0.0153)
Constant	-0.168
	(0.317)
Observations	1,440
LogLik	-693.3

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Table 1. The probability that a respondent claims that accepting bribes is justifiable.

This begs the question of whether this acceptance of corruption translates into voting for

a corrupt politician. While the question on how common it is for others to accept bribes is

not included in EVS for both years, the question on whether corruption can be justified is

included for both years.[48] Claiming that corruption can be justified increases the

likelihood of voting for Silvio Berlusconi's party (Table 2).[49] This result is statistically

significant at 99% confidence.

Table 2.

	Both Years	1999	2009
Bribery as Justifiable	0.104***	0.117***	0.132**
	(0.033)	(0.0444)	(0.0622)
Gender	-0.0798	-0.157	0.016
	(0.0925)	(0.127)	(0.00535)
Age	0.00304	0.000632	0.00675
	(0.00300)	(0.00426)	(0.00535)
Religiosity	0.0390*	0.0931***	-0.0204
	(0.0222)	(0.0314)	(0.0410)
Education	0.0323*	-0.0112	0.0656*
	(0.0164)	(0.0229)	(0.0308)
Income	-0.0539	0.0974	-0.141*
	(0.0395)	(0.0601)	(0.077)
Ideology	0.308***	0.216***	0.495***
	(0.0215)	(0.0293)	(0.0419)
Constant	-3.303***	-2.620***	-4.274***
	(0.298)	(0.529)	(0.730)
Observations	1,355	792	520
LogLik	-516.77	-283.6	-168.97

Standard errors in parentheses
*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$
(Tests for the Bribery as Justifiable variable are one-tailed.)
Models show the likelihood of a respondent voting for Berlusconi's Forza Italia party.
Regional control variables are included for 1999 and 2009 but are not shown. See Appendix.

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[48] For the voting model I revert to the ten point scale for whether the respondent believes bribery to be justifiable. In this and all subsequent models I control for religiosity[48] and ideology,[48] as well as age, gender, education, income and region, following Anderson (2000).A voting model using perceptions of corruption instead of a measure of bribery as justifiable as the main predictor variable is also included in the appendix.

[49] That is, Forza Italia in 1999 and Il Popolo della Libertà ('People of Freedom') in 2009. For this model I revert to the control variables used in the voting models throughout the rest of the paper.

When we disaggregate by year, the effect is substantively strong in both years, and the effect is significant at 99% confidence for both years.[50] We can see that the effect of the control variables remains broadly the same.

Looking at the results for 1999, a respondent who scores lowest on the measure of whether bribery can be justified has a 10% probability of supporting Silvio Berlusconi, holding all other variables at their means. For a respondent who scores in the middle of the scale (5) the probability is 20%, and for a respondent who scores highest on this measure the probability is 40%. Thus, going from the lowest to the highest level on the measure of whether bribery can be justified quadruples the probability of a respondent voting for Berlusconi in 1999.

Looking at the model for 2009, a respondent who scores lowest on the measure of whether bribery can be justified has a 13% probability of voting for Berlusconi, holding all other variables at their means. For a respondent who scores in the middle of the scale (5) the probability is 27%, and for a respondent who scores highest on this measure the probability is 52%. Thus going from the lowest to the highest value on this variable quadruples the likelihood of a respondent voting for Berlusconi in 2009, as it did in 1999.

It is interesting to see what was happening in Italian politics in the years that the survey was fielded. In 1999 Romano Prodi's center-left coalition was in power. Berlusconi had been investigated for crimes including bribing judges and the Financial Police, and tax fraud, but it was the center-left government that was responsible for raising taxes, and at

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[50] As the region is coded differently for the different year, I control for region in the 1999 model and the 2009 model, but not in the pooled model. The inclusion of region does not change the results.

least threatening to make some of the needed structural reforms to Italy's economy. Two years later Berlusconi would go on to win a large majority in both houses of parliament.

The 2009 interviews were conducted between November and December. In 2009 Berlusconi's former advisor was sentenced to prison for bribery; Berlusconi attended the birthday party of an 18 year old model (with rumors of an affair between the two of them); his wife filed for divorce; Berlusconi was investigated as part of a prostitution ring; pictures of a party at his house were published containing images of naked women and a naked former PM of the Czech Republic; Berlusconi sued several publications and butted heads with the Catholic Church when *Il Giornale* published accusations against a Bishop who was mildly critical of Berlusconi's behavior; the Constitutional Court deemed an immunity law unconstitutional, and Fininvest was ordered to pay over $1 billion in reparations over bribes it paid (bribes for which a judge pronounced Berlusconi responsible). The year was rounded out by Italians taking to the streets of Rome for 'No Berlusconi Day'; a call girl, Patrizia D'Addario, publishing a book about an encounter with Berlusconi, claiming he paid her for sex; and Gaspare Spatuzza, a witness in a mafia trial, telling prosecutors that Berlusconi made a deal with Cosa Nostra in 1994, upon entering politics.

Thus, there was likely a social desirability bias at play here. That is, it is possible that considering the raft of allegations against Berlusconi at this stage – although only some of them are actually to do with corruption – many people who would in reality vote for him chose not to answer this question (from 1999 to 2009 the percentage of respondents who answered this particular question went from 70% to 52%), or chose to answer untruthfully. It is also possible that many of his supporters genuinely would not have

voted for him at this stage.[51] Considering this, it is quite impressive that the model nonetheless reports similar results for 2009 and 1999, and that the results are so strong in both years. Despite the noise that is likely introduced because of social desirability the model still reports a strong substantive effect at 99% confidence.

This finding extends the literature on corruption and social norms and provides evidence that social norms related to corruption do affect how voters choose their political representatives. Following on from work that shows that people who perceive corruption as common are more likely to engage in corruption themselves, we can see here that those who feel that corruption can be justified are more likely to vote for a corrupt politician (in this case, Silvio Berlusconi). Or, stated more generously, those who think that bribery can be justified are more forgiving of a politician who has been accused of corruption. Thus we have evidence of another mechanism that promotes a culture of corruption: those who perceive corruption to be common and so are more likely to say that corruption can be justified, are in turn more likely to vote for a corrupt politician. Thus, we find strong evidence in support of H1b: Respondents who claim that corruption can be justified are more likely to vote for Silvio Berlusconi.

Does perceiving politicians as corrupt affect support for Silvio Berlusconi? (CSES)

The second wave of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) contains a question on how widespread corruption such as bribe taking is amongst politicians in

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[51] The question in the EVS survey does not ask who the respondent voted for in the last election, but who she would vote for if an election were held tomorrow (var e179).

Italy.[52] The respondent can choose an answer from 1 (very widespread) to 4 (it hardly

happens at all). I combined options 3 and 4 (as almost no respondents answered that bribe

taking hardly happens at all) and reordered the variable so that on a scale of 1 to 3, 1 is

the lowest frequency of corruption and 3 is the highest. The survey also asks respondents

whom they voted for in the most recent election, and the previous election. Based on

these responses, I created two binary variables, which capture whether the respondent

said they voted for Berlusconi's Forza Italia in 2001 and 2006 respectively.[53]

It is important to note that this is different from the measurement of corruption above.

This is specifically about political corruption, whereas the previous measure of corruption

was of one's compatriots, and can thus be seen as a measure of corruption in one's peer

group.

All interviews for this wave of CSES in Italy were carried out on the 10th of May 2006.

Berlusconi lost this election by a hair. Prodi's majority in each chamber was decided in

court and his majority in the Senate was only two seats.

Following Anderson (2000) I once again control for religiosity[54] and ideology,[55] as well

as age, gender, education, income and region. As the dataset contains a variable for which

party the respondent voted for in 2001 I include this as a control variable in the 2006

model.[56]

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[52] Q23. How widespread do you think corruption such as bribe taking is amongst politicians in [country]: very widespread, quite widespread, not very widespread, it hardly happens at all?
[53] *Forza Italia* did not become *Il Popolo de Libertà* until August 2007.
[54] From question B2024, where 1 is 'no religious beliefs' and 4 is 'strongly religious'.
[55] This is where the respondent self identifies on a scale of left (1) to right (10),
[56] I estimate the same model without controlling for who the respondent voted for in 2001. The corruption variable is no longer significant, but the effect is in the same direction.

The results (Table 3) show that the effect of perceptions of political corruption on support for Berlusconi is not constant over time. In 2001 increased perceptions of political corruption meant that the voter was more likely to vote for Berlusconi's Forza Italia, while in 2006 increased perceptions of political corruption meant the opposite. The results for 2001 are statistically significant and in the expected direction (one-tailed p-value of 0.03). A respondent who perceives the lowest level of political corruption has a 20% probability of voting for Forza Italia, holding all other variables at their means. A respondent who perceives the highest level of corruption has a 31% probability of voting for Forza Italia. Thererfore, going from the lowest to the highest perceptions of political corruption means that a voter is 11 percentage points more likely to support Berlusconi's party.

In the 2006 model, the effect is the opposite. Having a higher perception of corruption actually had a negative effect on the likelihood of voting for Forza Italia. Having the lowest perception of political corruption meant that one had a 21% probability of supporting Forza Italia, holding all other variables at their means. Having the highest perception of political corruption meant that one had a 5% probability of supporting Forza Italia. This effect is also significant at standard levels (p = .04, two-tailed).

Table 3.

	Forza Italia 2001	Forza Italia 2006
Forza 2001		2.215***
		(0.324)
Perceptions of Corruption	0.177**	-0.428**
	(0.139)	(0.222)
Age	0.00236	-0.00463
	(0.00619)	(0.00944)
Gender	0.0826	0.0259
	(0.179)	(0.292)
Income	0.148**	-0.0647
	(0.0735)	(0.105)
Education	-0.116*	0.142
	(0.0706)	(0.114)
Religiosity	0.254**	0.00233
	(0.125)	(0.190)
Ideology	0.170***	0.180***
	(0.0349)	(0.0637)
Constant	-3.305***	-2.447*
	(0.778)	(1.297)
Observations	298	215
LogLik	-150.6	-61.63

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
(Tests are one-tailed for Perceptions of Corruption variable.)
The effect of perceptions of political corruption on the likelihood of voting for Forza Italia in 2001 and 2006. Regional control variables are included in the model, but not shown. See Appendix.

At first, this result seems puzzling. However, it lines up with the results of Ferraz and

Finan's (2008) study of Brazil's randomly assigned municipal audits. These audits

detailed the federal funds allocated to selected municipalities and any irregularities that

auditors found after thorough investigation. Ferraz and Finan initially find no effect of the

audits. However, when they control for the level of corruption reported they do find that

very high levels of corruption result in a loss of vote share for the incumbent mayor. The

authors find that an audit reporting one violation has no effect on incumbent reelection

rate. However, two violations results in a seven percentage point drop in reelection rate,

and three violations results in a fourteen percentage point drop in reelection rate. The reelection rate actually increased for incumbents in those municipalities where no violations were reported. Thus, it seems that voters reward politicians who are less corrupt than previously believed, and punish politicians who are much more corrupt than they believed. For politicians who are about as corrupt as expected, the new information had no effect.

From the biography section of this paper we can see that as Berlusconi's career progressed, the list of corruption charges, and the evidence that he was guilty of these charges, continued to grow. During Berlusconi's 2001 – 2005 administration his government passed a law limiting how evidence from abroad could be admitted to court (which would benefit Berlusconi particularly in one of this trials); tried to block the introduction of a new EU warrant for crimes such as corruption; tried to transfer a judge from one of Berlusconi's trials (which would have caused the stature of limitations to kick in); passed a law that trials could be moved (which Berlusconi tried to use to move another of his trials); passed an immunity law for the prime minister (that would be found unconstitutional in 2004). Thus is may have appeared that Berlusconi was now not simply another corrupt politician whose corruption could be discounted, but was above the average level of corruption.

This finding is also important as it indicates that perceptions of corruption in one's peer group have a different effect than perceptions of corruption in the political realm. It is possible that these mechanisms work against each other, or at least that they sometimes do. For what we can tell here, perceiving corruption as common in one's peer group, or amongst one's compatriots, has a simple positive effect on the likelihood of supporting a

corrupt politician. However, the effect of perceiving political corruption may not be as simple. Evidence provided here seems to match up with the argument presented by Ferraz and Finan who claim that voters punish corrupt incumbents when they are much more corrupt than expected, but not when the level of corruption is about what they previously believed it to be.

Overall, we find evidence in support of H3 for 2001 and evidence against H3 for 2006. It appears that in 2001 perceiving political corruption as common increased the likelihood of a respondent voting for Berlusconi's Forza Italia party. In 2006, perceiving political corruption as common had the opposite effect.

Berlusconi and the Activist Judiciary (Eb)

Berlusconi has long claimed that his political woes are caused by an activist liberal judiciary that is out to get him. Some researchers claim that this has helped his reelection prospects: if voters believe that the judiciary is biased and so out to persecute Berlusconi, the allegations against him will not diminish the likelihood of their voting for him.

Eurobarometer 69.2 (which was carried out in 2008) asks respondents whether they trust the legal system in Italy.[57] Respondents were also asked about their voting behavior in the previous national election. I have created a binary variable *VotedForza*, coded as 1 if the respondent said that she voted for Forza Italia in the previous election, and 0 if she voted for another party. The binary variable measuring trust in the judiciary is coded as 1 if the respondent said that the Italian legal system is trustworthy, and 0 otherwise.

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[57] I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it.
Justice/the Italian legal system.

Results show that going from claiming the legal system is not trustworthy to claiming

that it is trustworthy actually increases the probability of the respondent saying she voted

for Berlusconi's Forza Italia (Table 4). This is statistically significant at 90% confidence

for a two-tailed test.

Table 4.

	Voted Forza	Voted Forza
Trust Justice	0.265	
	(0.192)	
Trust TV		0.452***
		(0.181)
age	-0.0113*	-0.0116*
	(0.00667)	(0.00671)
education	0.00680	0.0140
	(0.0320)	(0.0324)
gender	0.445**	0.432**
	(0.174)	(0.175)
ideology	0.343***	0.340***
	(0.0415)	(0.0409)
Constant	-2.841***	-2.828***
	(0.559)	(0.555)
Observations	409	400
LogLik	-149.5	-145.3

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Tests for trust variables are one-tailed.
Regional controls not shown. See Appendix.

Nevertheless, we can reject H3a. A respondent who claims that the Italian legal system is

trustworthy is not less likely to vote for Berlusconi. There is no statistically significant

correlation between supporting Berlusconi and a lack of trust of the Italian legal system.

Indeed, if anything, trusting the legal system actually increases the probability of voting

for Berlusconi in 2008.

Eurobarometer 69.2 also asks about trust in the institution of television.[58] As was mentioned above, Berlusconi has a huge media presence in Italy. His *Mediaset* owns three of the six nationally broadcast cable stations, and he owns a publishing house, while his brother owns a national newspaper. Many commentators have claimed that this control over Italian media is the reason why Berlusconi has been able to be so successful politically.

I estimate a probit model that estimates the probability of a respondent voting for Forza Italia. I include a binary variable for trust in the institution of television as the main predictor variable (Table 4).

Those who have trust in television as an institution are more likely to say that they voted for Berlusconi's Forza Italia. The effect is statistically significant at 99% confidence for a one-tailed test. Looking at the marginal effects, trusting television increases the likelihood of supporting Berlusconi by 10 percentage points, from 10% to 20% holding all other variables at their means. This is more than moving one step to the right on the 10 place ideology scale (which is a 7 percentage point increase in the likelihood of voting for Forza Italia, on average).

This can actually be seen as evidence in favor of the information hypothesis: it is likely that those who trust television as an institution, and therefore are more likely to support

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[58] I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it. Television.

Berlusconi, do so because Berlusconi's television stations portray a favorable image of him that plays down accusations against him.

However, the mechanism is unclear: those who trust television are even more trusting of the legal system than those who don't trust television (Table 5). This effect is statistically significant at 99.9% confidence, and substantively strong. Therefore it seems unlikely that these respondents trust Berlusconi over the judiciary that he claims is trying to persecute him. Of course, this does not preclude Berlusconi's media from crafting and presenting a careful and positive image of Berlusconi and his party.

When we look at the marginal effect of the variable for trusting television, holding the other variables at their means, going from not trusting the institution of television to trusting it means a 30 percentage point increase in the likelihood of the respondent saying she trusts the judicial system, going from 23% to 53%. Nevertheless, overall this evidence supports H3b: Respondents who trust the institution of television are indeed more likely to vote for Berlusconi.

An obvious objection may be that those who trust television as an institution are likely to watch a lot of television and so have low political knowledge. In this survey at least, the data back up that objection. This version of Eurobarometer asks political knowledge questions to determine how much respondents know about the European Union. This questionnaire asked respondents about: the number of member states in the EU; whether Switzerland is a member; the EU presidency; the number of Euro Area members. I create a new knowledge variable, which gives each respondent a score for how many of these

questions she answered correctly.[59] I estimate a probit model to test the effect of political

knowledge on whether the respondent trusts the institution of television, once again

controlling for age, education, gender, ideology, income and region. The results below

show that in fact higher levels of political knowledge decrease the probability of the

respondent saying she trusts television: those who are less well-informed are more likely

to trust television (Table 5.). Respondents who answered all questions incorrectly have a

48% probability of saying they trust television, while those who answered all questions

correctly have a 29% probability of saying so. Considering that the results above show

that trusting television results in a 6% increase in the probability of supporting

Berlusconi, this is certainly evidence in favor of the information theory.

One caveat is that these four political knowledge questions were all concerning

supranational politics, not Italian politics per se. While the two may be closely linked

(that is, knowledge of Italian politics and knowledge of EU politics), that is not

something that can be investigated here.

Nonetheless, I also estimate a model that tests the effect of political knowledge on the

likelihood of supporting Berlusconi. The results below indicate that an increase in

political knowledge is associated with a decrease in the likelihood of voting for

Berlusconi's party: those with higher political knowledge are less likely to support

Berlusconi. Going from the lowest level of political knowledge to the highest results in a

more than seven percentage point reduction in the likelihood of a respondent voting for

Forza Italia: respondents with the lowest level of political knowledge have a 17%

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[59] The variable is scored as 0 for respondents who answered all four questions incorrectly, and 4 for respondents who answered all four correctly.

probability of voting for Forza Italia, while those with the highest level of political

knowledge have a 10% probability of doing so, holding all other variables at their means.

However, the knowledge variable is not significant in this model.[60]

Table 5.

	Trust Justice	Trust Television	Voted Forza Italia
Trust Television	0.792***		
	(0.125)		
Knowledge		-.1342 ***	-.0865
		(.0555)	(.0820)
Age	0.00285	-.0054	-.0101
	(0.00480)	(0.0043)	(.0063)
Education	0.0383	0.0029	.0242
	(0.0236)	(.0225)	(.0317)
Gender (male)	-0.0863	-.0427	-.4303***
	(0.124)	(.1172)	(.1683)
Ideology	-0.0319	0.0256	.3352***
	(0.0241)	(.0221)	(.0387)
Constant	-0.365	.2629	-.20748***
	(0.362)	(.3514)	(.5169)
Observations	520	536	435
LogLik	-293.4	-342.60	-159.18

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Regional control variables not shown. See Appendix.
Test for trust variable is one-tailed.

Conclusion

What can we say about Berlusconi's supporters? We can say that certain factors make a

voter more likely to support Silvio Berlusconi. Claiming that accepting bribes can be

justified has a statistically significant – and substantively large – positive effect on the

likelihood of supporting Berlusconi both in 1999, and in 2009. And, perceiving

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[60] Although, estimating the model without the regional control variables results in the knowledge variable being significant at 95% confidence for a one-tailed test.

corruption as common has a strong effect on whether one finds accepting bribes to be justifiable.

Perceiving higher levels of corruption amongst politicians increases the probability that a respondent voted for Berlusconi in 2001, but decreases the likelihood in 2006.

We are therefore presented with a puzzle: why were those who perceive higher levels of political more likely to vote for Berlusconi in 2001, but not in 2006?

One possibility relates to Ferraz and Finan's (2008) study of Brazil's randomly assigned municipal audits. The authors found that voters reward politicians who are less corrupt than previously believed, and punish politicians who are much more corrupt than they believed. For politicians who are about as corrupt as expected, the new information had no effect.

From the biography section of this paper we can see that as Berlusconi's career progressed, the list of corruption charges, and the evidence that he was guilty of these charges, continued to grow. It seems likely, in light of this, that Berlusconi passed the threshold of whatever many voters believed to be the average level of corruption. Therefore, while those who perceived higher levels of corruption in 2001 were more likely to support Berlusconi in 2001 as he seemed to be just about as corrupt as everyone else, by 2006 he seemed more corrupt than most other politicians.

Unfortunately, because of the different datasets used, we cannot estimate a model that includes both a measure for perceptions of corruption in one's peer group (which has a positive effect on the likelihood of voting for Berlusconi's party) and perceptions of

political corruption (which has a positive effect in 1999 but a negative effect in 2006). Nonetheless, the results indicate that perceiving corruption in one's peer group and perceiving corruption in the political realm may have quite different effects.

Surprisingly, respondents seem oblivious to the supposed feud between Berlusconi and the judiciary: respondents who claimed that they trust the judicial system were not less likely to support Berlusconi. In fact, it seems they were more likely to do so. As predicted, those who trust television as an institution were significantly more likely to support Berlusconi. However, these respondents were also significantly more likely to trust the judicial system. Trusting television is also associated with lower levels of political knowledge.

We therefore have evidence in favor of the social norms theory, and the information theory. In addition, we see the information theory working over time. Perceiving higher levels of political corruption increased the likelihood of voting for Berlusconi in 2001 when the full breadth of his corruption was unknown, but decreases the likelihood in 2006 when more is known.

This is a strong endorsement of the information theory: Although it seems that there is a segment of the population that is less likely to care about corruption (those with social norms accepting of corruption), exposing corruption may still cost corrupt politicians the support of a significant segment of the population.

The implications for policies and organizations that wish to reduce political corruption are important. Social norms that accept bribery as justifiable have important consequences in electoral politics as they mean that a voter is less likely to punish a

corrupt politician. Perceptions of political corruption are important also: if voters believe political corruption to be common they may be less likely to punish a corrupt politician when his acts are made public (that is, unless the politician's level of corruption is much worse than what the voter believes to be the norm). Thus, the refrain of 'they're all corrupt!' likely does much more harm than good. The implications for media coverage that focuses continually on political corruption could be that voters become desensitized to this information and come to expect politicians to be corrupt, discounting corruption allegations and charges when deciding which candidate to support.

Future research should take into account how voters perceive the level of corruption amongst politicians and the culture of corruption more generally in order to better understand when voters choose to support a corrupt politician.

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APPENDIX: Alternate Specifications of Models

The effect of perceiving corruption as common on the likelihood of voting for Forza

Italia, 1999.

VARIABLES	Berlusconi
OthersAcceptBribes	0.234**
	(0.0964)
female	-0.158
	(0.128)
age	-0.00102
	(0.00429)
religiosity	0.0900***
	(0.0312)
education	-0.00765
	(0.0231)
income	0.0939
	(0.0601)
ideology	0.210***
	(0.0293)
	-0.324
V. Aosta	(0.639)
	-0.214
Lombardia	(0.270)
	-0.498
Veneto	(0.616)
	-0.203
Friuli V.G.	(0.301)
	-0.404
Liguria	(0.590)
	0.0284
Emilia-Romagna	(0.345)
	-0.659*
Toscana	(0.341)
	-0.272
Umbria	(0.306)
	-
Marche	
	-1.126**
Lazio	(0.559)
	-0.709**
Abruzzi	(0.319)
	-1.009*
Molise	(0.562)
	-

Campania	
	-0.498
Puglia	(0.323)
	-1.003***
Basilicata	(0.362)
	-
Calabria	
	-0.0950
Sicilia	(0.375)
	-0.390
Sardegna	(0.293)
	-0.551
	(0.493)
Constant	-2.644***
	(0.537)
Observations	782
LogLik	-283.4

Table 2. The effect of acceptance of bribery as justifiable on the likelihood of voting for Berlusconi for 1999, including regional control variables.

VARIABLES	Berlusconi
Bribery as Justifiable	0.117***
	(0.0445)
female	-0.157
	(0.127)
age	-0.000807
	(0.00426)
religiosity	0.0932***
	(0.0314)
education	-0.0113
	(0.0229)
income	0.0975
	(0.0602)
ideology	0.216***
	(0.0293)
V. Aosta	-0.537
	(0.623)
Lombardia	-0.124
	(0.273)
Veneto	-0.458
	(0.620)
Friuli V.G.	-0.134
	(0.303)
Liguria	-0.349
	(0.591)
Emilia-Romagna	0.0703
	(0.346)
Toscana	-0.555
	(0.341)
Umbria	-0.127
	(0.308)
Marche	-
Lazio	-1.084*
	(0.561)
Abruzzi	-0.557*
	(0.319)
Molise	-0.767
	(0.546)
Campania	-
Puglia	-0.333

	(0.325)
Basilicata	-0.811**
	(0.359)
Calabria	-
Sicilia	0.131
	(0.374)
Sardegna	-0.287
	(0.296)
	-0.352
	(0.494)
Constant	-2.620***
	(0.530)
Observations	792
LogLik	-283.6

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The effect of seeing bribery as justifiable on the likelihood of voting for Berlusconi in

2009. Regional control variables included.

VARIABLES	2009
Bribery as Justifiable	0.132**
	(0.0622)
gender	0.016
	(0.00535)
age	0.00675
	(0.00535)
religiosity	0.0204
	(0.0410)
education	0.0656*
	(0.0308)
income	-0.141*
	(0.077)
Ideology	0.495***
	(0.0419)
Nord-Ovest - Valle d'Aosta	0.994
	(0.915)
Nord-Ovest - Liguria	0.132
	(0.472)
Nord-Ovest - Lombardia	0.135
	(0.311)
Nord-Est - Provincia Autonoma Trento	-0.449
	(0.618)
Nord-Est - Veneto	0.278
	(0.350)
Nord-Est - Friuli-Venezia Giulia	0.594
	(0.444)
Nord-Est - Emilia-Romagna	0.225
	(0.339)
Centro (l) - Toscana	-0.0536
	(0.389)
Centro (l) - Umbria	0.183
	(0.460)
Centro (l) - Marche	0.271
	(0.484)

Centro (l) - Lazio	0.154
	(0.362)
Sud - Abruzzo	0.175
	(0.562)
Sud - Molise	-
Sud - Campania	0.695**
	(0.339)
Sud - Puglia	0.364
	(0.355)
Sud - Basilicata	0.279
	(0.573)
Sud - Calabria	0.383
	(0.381)
Isole - Sicilia	0.783**
	(0.352)
Isole - Sardegna	-0.210
	(0.460)
Constant	-4.274***
	(0.730)
Observations	541
LogLik	-290.9

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The effect of perceptions of political corruption on the likelihood of voting for

Berlusconi's Forza Italia, regional variables included.

	Forza Italia 2001	Forza Italia 2006	Forza Italia 2006
Forza 2001		2.215*** (0.324)	-
Perceptions of Corruption	0.177* (0.139)	-0.428** (0.222)	-0.1566 (0.1598)
Age	0.00236 (0.00619)	-0.00463 (0.00944)	0.0044 (0.0065)
Gender	0.0826 (0.179)	0.0259 (0.292)	0.0419 (0.0839)
Income	0.148** (0.0735)	-0.0647 (0.105)	0.0419 (0.079)
Education	-0.116* (0.0706)	0.142 (0.114)	0.0672 (0.0790)
Religiosity	0.254** (0.125)	0.00233 (0.190)	0.1944 (0.1399)
Ideology	0.170*** (0.0349)	0.180*** (0.0637)	0.2281 (0.0436)
V. Aosta	-	-	.6813 (0.999)
Lombardia	0.450 (0.399)	-0.248 (0.606)	-.123 (0.424)
Veneto	-	-	-
Friuli V.G.	-	-	-
Liguria	0.697 (0.550)	-0.193 (0.852)	-0.0783 (0.601)
Emilia-Romagna	0.251 (0.439)	0.727 (0.643)	0.229 (0.438)
Toscana	0.219 (0.447)	-0.116 (0.694)	-0.2717 (0.490)
Umbria	-	-	-
Marche	-	-	-
Lazio	0.922* (0.493)	-0.444 (0.765)	0.0559 (0.521)
Abruzzi	0.121 (0.549)	-	-
Molise	-	-	-

Campania	0.492	-	-1.037*
	(0.410)		(0.602)
Puglia	1.084**	0.384	.3635
	(0.449)	(0.615)	(0.4557)
Basilicata	1.148**	-0.545	-.1864
	(0.476)	(0.723)	(0.532)
Calabria	1.271*	0.369	0.161
	(0.658)	(1.015)	(0.723)
Sicilia	1.144***	-0.0875	0.366
	(0.359)	(0.562)	(0.364)
Sardegna	-0.0680	-	-
	(0.765)		
Constant	-3.305***	-2.447*	-3.241***
	(0.778)	(1.297)	(0.884)
Observations	298	215	288
LogLik	-150.6	-61.63	-116.53

Standard errors in parentheses

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

(Tests are one-tailed for Perceptions of Corruption variable.)

The effect of trust in the institutions of television and the justice system on the likelihood
of voting for Forza Italia, including regional control variables.

	Justice Model	TV Model
Trust Justice	0.265	
	(0.192)	
Trust TV		0.452***
		(0.181)
age	-0.0113*	-0.0116*
	(0.00667)	(0.00671)
education	0.00680	0.0140
	(0.0320)	(0.0324)
gender	0.445**	0.432**
	(0.174)	(0.175)
ideology	0.343***	0.340***
	(0.0415)	(0.0409)
Liguria	-1.333**	-1.481**
	(0.667)	(0.691)
Lombardia	0.0142	-0.0786
	(0.351)	(0.341)
Veneto	-0.190	-0.167
	(0.431)	(0.400)
Friuli, Venezia, Giulia	-	-
Emilia Romagna	-0.170	-0.414
	(0.444)	(0.458)
Toscana	0.281	0.166
	(0.551)	(0.546)
Marche	-0.0734	-0.164
	(0.449)	(0.433)
Umbria	-	-
Lazio	0.00888	-0.262
	(0.410)	(0.415)
Molise and Abruzzi	0.0778	-0.162
	(0.580)	(0.583)
Campania	-0.225	-0.247
	(0.399)	(0.389)
Puglia/Basilicata	0.550	0.536
	(0.454)	(0.449)
Calabria	-1.285	-1.319*
	(0.809)	(0.762)

Sicilia	0.830**	0.801**
	(0.369)	(0.356)
Sardegna	1.329***	1.249***
	(0.444)	(0.424)
Constant	-2.841***	-2.828***
	(0.559)	(0.555)
Observations	409	400
LogLik	-149.5	-145.3

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Tests for trust variables are one-tailed.

The effect of trust in the institution of television on trust in the justice system, regional controls included.

	Trust Justice
Trust TV	0.792***
	(0.125)
age	0.00285
	(0.00480)
education	0.0383
	(0.0236)
male	-0.0863
	(0.124)
ideology	-0.0319
	(0.0241)
Liguria	-0.233
	(0.319)
Lombardia	-0.236
	(0.264)
Veneto	-1.389***
	(0.427)
Friuli, Venezia, Giulia	-0.740
	(0.652)
Emilia Romagna	-0.549*
	(0.288)
Toscana	-0.654**
	(0.313)
Marche	-0.728**
	(0.357)
Umbria	-0.724
	(0.576)
Lazio	-0.508*
	(0.297)
Molise and Abruzzi	-1.443***
	(0.469)
Campania	-0.163
	(0.263)
Puglia/Basilicata	-0.559*
	(0.307)
Calabria	-0.588*
	(0.347)
Sicilia	-0.697**
	(0.285)

Sardegna	0.467
	(0.362)
Constant	-0.365
	(0.362)
Observations	520
LogLik	-293.4

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The effect of political knowledge on trust in the institution of television (left) and the effect of political knowledge on the likelihood of voting for Forza Italia (right). Regional controls shown.

	Trust Television	Voted Forza Italia
Knowledge	-.1342 ***	-.0865
	(.0555)	(.0820)
age	-.0054	-.0101
	(0.0043)	(.0063)
education	0.0029	.0242
	(.0225)	(.0317)
Gender (male)	-.0427	-.4303***
	(.1172)	(.1683)
Ideology	0.0256	.3352***
	(.0221)	(.0387)
Liguria	.3535	-1.566***
	(.3206)	(.6633)
Lombardia	-.2277	-.0864
	(.2527)	(.3293)
Friuli, Venezia, Giulia	-.6993**	-.4129
	(.3123)	(.3842)
Emilia Romagna	-	-
Toscana	-.3086	-.2425
	(.2733)	(.4033)
Marche	-.6116**	.0883
	(.3096)	(.5286)
Umbria	-.2322	-.3046
	(.3342)	(.4372)
Lazio	-.2407	-
	(.5193)	
Molise and Abruzzi	-.0542	-.1229
	(.2843)	(.3999)
Campania	-.2351	-.0493
	(.3658)	.5563
Puglia/Basilicata	-.3221	-.3143
	(.2540)	(.3791)
Calabria	-.4260	.4061
	(.2916)	(.4281)
Calabria	-.7130**	-1.325*
	(.3403)	(.7777)
Sicilia	-.5979**	.6322*
	(.2668)	(.3431)
Sardegna	-.1350	1.205***

	(.3259)	(.4237)
Constant	.2629	-.20748***
	(.3514)	(.5169)
Observations	536	435
LogLik	-342.60	-159.18

Standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1
Test for trust variable is one-tailed.

Political Position and Environment: When do Voters Tolerate Corruption?

Abstract: This paper uses a unique survey experiment to measure changes in the support of voters for corrupt politicians. Results show that context matters, with voters' sensitivity to corruption being shaped by the type of political post held by politicians and the overall corruption in the political system. Experimental results show that voters are more forgiving of acts of corruption among higher ranked politicians in executive politicians, when corruption is common. Voters are no more forgiving of legislators when corruption is common than when it is uncommon. This article provides an important link between corruption and attribution of responsibility models.

Introduction

This project attempts to answer two questions that are difficult to answer using observational data. The first is whether voters are more tolerant of corrupt politicians when they operate in an environment of corruption. The second is whether voters take the political position held by the corrupt politician into account when evaluating corruption allegations: do voters treat corrupt executives differently than corrupt legislators?

The first question cannot be answered sufficiently using observational data as those people whose politicians operate in an environment of corruption are generally not the same people as those whose politicians operate in an environment without corruption. Recent experimental work has shown that those in high corruption countries do in fact evaluate corrupt politicians differently than those in low corruption countries (Klasnja and Tucker 2013). However, that project uses separate pools of subjects – one that is from a high corruption country and one that is from a low corruption country – and so cannot definitively say that it is the subjects' considerations of the politician's environment which causes subjects to be more or less forgiving of acts of corruption by the individual politician. To determine whether voters take this into account we would need to randomly assign a pool of subjects to evaluate a politician in a high corruption environment or to evaluate a politician in a low corruption environment. This is what is done here.

The second question is tough to answer using observational data because there is so much noise surrounding these issues. In effect, in order to measure the effect that political position has on voter evaluation of corruption we would require the same person to be

accused of the same offence when the person is both in an executive position and a legislative position, at the same time.[61] Of course, this is impossible in reality, but can be tested using experimental methods. There are many infractions that can be counted under the umbrella of corruption, and there is reason to believe that voters respond differently to each of these (eg, Botero et al 2014). An experimental approach allows us to hold the type of corruption in question constant. While we have good data on some countries, such as Chang et al's (2010) data on the Italian parliament, this does not allow us to see the effect of political position on voter evaluation of corrupt politicians. The design presented here allows us to get some insight on this issue.

This paper presents results from a unique survey experiment. Participants in the survey experiment were presented with a fictitious newspaper article about a fictitious corrupt politician in College Park, MD. The politician was presented either as the mayor or as a member of the city council of the city of College Park. The level of corruption in the city government was varied, with some participants being told that corruption in the city government was common, and others being told that the city was 'a model of good governance'.[62]

Respondents were a convenience sample from the University of Maryland consisting of undergraduate and graduate students as well as university staff who chose to take part in the study. The fictional politicians used were presented as local city politicians for several reasons. The first is that while those who study and work at the university likely do not

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[61] By executive position I mean an elected executive position such as a mayor or governor. While parliamentary systems have executives (prime ministers) elected from within the legislative branch I do not deal with these in this project.
[62] While 'good governance' carries with it other connotations besides a lack of corruption, the term is generally used as the converse of corruption. See IMF (2014).

follow city politics they are nonetheless invested in the city. Most undergraduates and graduate students live in or around the city. Although many staff may live farther away they have a longer time horizon as they are likely to be connected to the university and the city indefinitely. Therefore the sample presents a combination of ignorance of real city politics, and some connection to and investment in the city. This means that it is reasonable to assume that the design overcomes many of the problems of hypothetical vignettes that are often used in survey work. The respondents are not answering on a hypothetical case, but on what they believe to be a real case that has real world consequences.

The second reason that the politicians were presented as local city politicians is that while it is possible to deceive subjects as to the identity and activities of local politicians it would be much more difficult, likely impossible, to deceive a sample of respondents regarding the identity and activities of politicians at higher levels of government. It would be interesting to say the least if we could randomly change the identity and activities of the president of a country, or even the governor of a state, so as to determine how voters react to corrupt governors and presidents relative to legislators but of course this is impossible. In keeping with this limitation, we must be wary of extrapolating from these results to all executive politicians and all legislative politicians.[63] However, such scope conditions are not unique to experimental work and should not be seen as a weakness of the study.

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[63] For example, voters may view executives in national government differently than local executives, and the same for legislators. In addition, legislators that have leadership positions may be judged differently than backbenchers.

This paper is concerned with how voters react to political corruption. The negative effects of political corruption – defined as the misuse of public office for private gain – have been well noted.[64] Political corruption retards economic prosperity in both macro level (Mauro 1996) and micro level studies (Fisman and Svensson 2007). Corruption is bad for social trust (Uslaner 2008), political legitimacy (Seligson 2002), public service delivery, and tax revenues (Friedman, Johnson, Kaufman, and Zoido-Lobaton 2000). Gone are the days when corruption was seen as grease in the wheels of the economy, or "functional to the maintenance of a political system" (Huntington 1968, p64). However, the puzzle remains as to why voters do not punish corrupt politicians out of hand (Kurer 2001, Golden 2005). Explaining this puzzle is crucial is if we hope to understand why democratization and transparency programs have been unable to curb corruption (Weyland 1998).

There is renewed interest in recent years in explaining the lack of sanctioning of corrupt politicians by voters. It is possible that voters do not really care about corruption and that respondents' negative views are simply 'cheap talk'. Indeed, macro level research consistently finds little electoral consequence for acts of corruption by public officials. Golden and Chang's (2001) work on Italy from the first post-World War II parliament to the 1990s shows a lack of punishment of corrupt politicians in all but one parliament studied. In his study of Japan, Reed (1999) finds that legislators who are indicted of corruption only lose a few percentage points in vote share in subsequent elections, and can often gain in percentage of vote share. In the US, Peters and Welch (1980) find that corrupt members of the House of Representatives were more likely to win reelection than

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[64] This definition is used by the World Bank (1997) and most researchers. This project focuses on corruption by elected officials, not bureaucratic corruption.

to lose, although they did suffer some loss in vote share.

Limitations to country level research led to more extensive micro level research on corruption and voter behavior. Recent experimental work has exposed respondents to information on corrupt mayors (Chong et al 2011; Ferraz and Finan 2008; Klašnja and Tucker 2013; Winters and Weitz-Shapiro 2013), with results showing that voters are averse to corrupt politicians once exposed to credible information about them.[65] However, there is no research that measures the level of attribution of responsibility for politicians at varying levels of authority. After all, not all politicians are mayors and it is at least possible that voters consider the type of position held by politicians as relevant. That is, voters could discount corruption at a higher rate for politicians who have higher levels of responsibility or opportunity for corruption. Extensive research, for example, has shown that attribution of responsibility varies consistently among politicians charged with different levels of political responsibility (Hellwig and Samuels 2008; Alcaniz and Hellwig 2011). In light of the existing findings on responsibility attribution, existing analyses of corruption may be over or under reporting the voters' willingness to punish corrupt politicians when focusing on mayors.

There is also reason to believe that context matters: whether corruption is seen as common within the political system may matter to how a voter evaluates the performance of a politician. Voters may perceive corruption as an unavoidable behavior in corruption-ridden environments, where clean politicians may be perceived as weak or unable to act of the best interest of voters by not learning how to play the game. In this context, voters

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[65] Although Ferraz and Finan (2008) cannot technically be considered an experiment I refer to is as such for the sake of simplicity because the authors use an experimental design that draws on exogenous variation in how voters are exposed to information on corruption.

may be more tolerant of corrupt politicians when corruption is seen as pervasive or unavoidable. A formal treatment of this problem is eloquently described by Fearon (1999), who argues that elections are an opportunity for voters to choose a 'good type' rather than necessarily evaluate politicians in the way we traditionally believe. What counts as a 'good type' may change depending on the environment in which this person must act.

In this article I seek to address these important lacunas in existing research—that politicians may differ in the extent that they are considered responsible and that contextual corruption matters—and experimentally test two sets of hypotheses related to corruption and electoral accountability. Firstly, the experiment tests whether the overall level of corruption may explain responsibility deflection. That is, whether corrupt politicians face lower sanctions when committing acts of corruption in an environment in which corruption is common. Secondly, the experiment measures the extent to which voters attribute responsibility for acts of corruption when the accused politician holds a legislative rather than an executive position.

The experiments were carried out using a convenience sample at the University of Maryland, College Park, and participants were asked to read a fictitious (but ostensibly real) newspaper article about a fictitious politician and answer a variety of questions. The treatments were embedded in the newspaper article and were randomly assigned among participants: some subjects were exposed to information that described the corrupt politician as the mayor of College Park, some that he was a member of the City Council;

some subjects were told that corruption is common in the city government, some were told that the city is a model of good governance.[66]

Results provide clear evidence that people are more tolerant of corrupt politicians when they are told that corruption is common in the environment in which the corrupt actor operates. They also show that people do consider the political position of a politician when evaluating acts of corruption.

Recent micro-level work has attempted to go beyond merely testing whether voters dislike corruption, taking into account the source of the information (Winters and Weitz-Shapiro 2014), the type of corruption in question (Botero et al 2014), partisanship (Anduiza et al 2013), and the political environment in which the politician operates (Ashworth, Bueno de Mesquita and Friedenberg 2014; Klašnja, Little and Tucker 2014). This paper builds on and engages with this work bringing together several strands of the corruption literature and testing these experimentally. These results contribute to our understanding of how voters evaluate the misdeeds of politicians.

While much previous work has not taken into account the importance of context when dealing with issues of corruption, and indeed the importance of how information is presented to voters, evidence presented here indicates that this may be an important consideration when approaching issues of accountability. Voters who are told that corruption in a political environment is common are less likely to bother punishing a corrupt politician, if the replacement is likely to come from this same environment.

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[66] There are therefore four separate conditions: Corrupt Mayor, Corruption is Common; Corrupt Mayor, Corruption is Uncommon; Corrupt Legislator, Corruption is Common; Corrupt Legislator, Corruption is Uncommon.

Rather than rally voters to stamp out corruption, presenting corruption as common may serve to dissuade voters from doing so when it comes to their own political representatives. The experimental approach demonstrates that it is not the case that there is 'something different' about voters in corrupt countries that makes them appear to be more tolerant of corruption. Rather, even respondents in a relatively corruption-free country can be more tolerant of corruption when they are told that corruption is common.

This project also highlights the importance of the position of the politician, e.g., whether the politician is in an executive or legislative position. The results presented here show that this also has an effect on how political misdeeds are evaluated.

Theory and Hypotheses

The saying goes that sunshine is the best antiseptic. However, this assumes that context does not matter and that voters punish political misdeeds indiscriminately: voters should react in the same way to information about corruption regardless of the environment of the political actor or who the corrupt actor is. Tavits (2007) argues that increased clarity of responsibility encourages politicians to choose good policies and avoid corruption because they are likely to be punished by voters if they do not do so. According to this reasoning, voters will punish politicians they know to be corrupt, ceteris paribus. The observable implications of this are that respondents should react similarly negatively regardless of whether the politician is presented as operating in a corrupt political environment, and whether the politician is presented as a mayor or a city council member.

However, there is reason to believe that context matters. And, there is reason to think that voters do not treat executives and legislators the same when evaluating politicians. This is an issue that has received scant attention in the literature although some theorists have touched on it (Golden 2005, Walzer 1973).

Fearon (1999) eloquently illustrates that voters likely approach elections as opportunities to choose 'good types' rather than as opportunities to sanction politicians. Fearon shows this to be the case by examining how voters approach the issue of elections. He makes three observations to illustrate his claim that voters do not approach elections as opportunities to sanction. Firstly, voters dislike 'office seekers', seeing as negative the trait of 'just wanting to be reelected'. If voters viewed elections as opportunities to sanction, they would be happy to see politicians whose goal is reelection: these politicians would be more responsive to the electorate. Secondly, voters are generally against term limits. If voters wanted elections for the purpose of sanctioning then term limits would rob voters of this ability: choosing a politician who can only serve one term means that one is choosing a politician who can never be sanctioned. Thirdly, voters seem to respond to consistency in their office holders, even when the consistent position is far from their own position on the issue. Fearon gives the example of Ronald Reagan whom many supported because they felt they knew where he stood on important issues, even when they disagreed with him on these issues.

Rather than considering elections as an opportunity to sanction politicians, Fearon proposes that we view elections as an opportunity to choose a 'good type' for political office. Furthermore, he argues that voters in fact already do this.

In this paper I argue that what a voter considers a 'good type' varies according to the environment and to the political position of the politician. Assuming that voters choose politicians who they consider good types it stands to reason that voters' understanding of what a good type is would change according to the environment in which the politician operates. There is also reason to believe that voters may evaluate politicians differently depending on the type of office the politician holds (in this case, executive versus legislative positions).

Following Fearon I take competence and honesty to be two important criteria when choosing the type one wants in office. In an environment in which corruption is rare one can expect a high level of honesty. This is because if the politician's level of honesty falls below a certain threshold – for example, the average level of honesty in the political environment – then one can sanction the politician and assume that the replacement will likely be at or around the average level of honesty. That is, the replacement will likely be at a higher level of honesty than the original. For low corruption environments this strategy works well: voters can punish a corrupt politician and he will most likely be replaced by an honest one. However, for high corruption environments, the average level of honesty in the environment is low. Sanctioning a politician whose level of honesty is low in an absolute sense but whose relative level of honesty is merely the same as that of the environment from which politicians are chosen may appear pointless. This is because one can assume that the next politician will be at the same level of honesty as the environment. This is even more likely if we approach the selection of the next politician as a random draw. It is possible that the level of honesty will be significantly higher than the average, but it is not likely. In addition, it is possible that this new politician will be

even less honest than the original. Given the low level of honesty in the environment this is a real fear: better the devil you know than the devil you don't.

Therefore, if a politician is competent and his level of honesty matches the overall level of honesty in the environment then the voter is better off sticking with this politician than drawing from the environment. The draw from the environment is not likely to be more honest. And, the competence of the potential replacement is difficult to determine before he takes office.

The observable implications of this are that voters should not punish a competent politician who is corrupt in a corrupt environment.[67] At the same time, voters *should* punish a competent politician who is corrupt in a clean environment, assuming that the politician's competence is not highly unusual.[68]

This logic of where the replacement politician is chosen from also effects how one considers politicians at different levels or different political positions. The replacement for a mayor is likely to come from the political establishment – that is, the replacement for a mayor is likely to come from the city council or somewhere else in the political environment. This is simply in virtue of the fact that the mayoralty is a higher level position. Although outsiders and reformers often do manage to become elected to such

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[67] This paper does not deal with the issue of different types of corruption. Botero et al (2014) argue that voters react differently to different types of corruption. For our purposes here, we can assume that the corrupt politician whose environment is corrupt does not have a higher or lower level of corruption than is the average in his environment. It seems reasonable that an ultra-corrupt politician in a high corruption environment would be more likely to be sanctioned than a politician who is corrupt but not egregiously so relative to the environment.
[68] Work by Klasnja, Tucker and Little (2014) has shown formally that voters in high corruption environments are not harmed by one additional corrupt politician. The opposite is true of voters in low corruption environments. For this reason, voters in low corruption environments are incentivized to root out corruption, whereas voters in high corruption environments are insensitive to corruption.

positions, in 'politics as usual' lower level politicians work their way up to such positions.

However, for a lower level position there is greater chance that the replacement will come from outside this environment. Thus there may be different considerations when deciding whether one is content with a competent but corrupt mayor versus a competent but corrupt city council member. For a corrupt mayor in a corrupt environment the replacement will likely be corrupt also (but with an unknown level of competence). For a corrupt city council member in a corrupt environment the replacement will be less likely to be corrupt as this lower level position is more easily attained by an outsider. Assuming that the average person is less corrupt, or more honest, than the average city council member on a corrupt city council, there may be little reason to stick with the corrupt city council member. That is, the voter may be inclined to take a random draw from the public as a replacement.

Nonetheless, the voter is still taking a gamble when replacing a competent council member with an unknown replacement. The replacement may be less corrupt but may also be less competent. To what extent might this matter to the voter? In a relative sense, it should matter less than for a mayor. After all, executives like mayors have a large amount of agency and so must be competent to run an administration, make executive decisions, be the public face of the city, etc. This is not the case for council members. There is a sense in which the competence of one individual member is tempered by the competence of the body as a whole. If a voter could simultaneously replace all members with new members that had maximum levels of both honesty and competence,

presumably she would. However, taking a gamble on a replacement council member is not a very high risk move. The potential brilliance of this replacement will be tempered by the abilities of the other members, as will the potential incompetence. The potential for disaster is limited. One may reasonably take a risk on a council member; one wants the candidate for mayor to be tried and tested.

Therefore, we should observe corrupt mayors in corrupt environments receiving more support than corrupt council members in corrupt environments. Replacing a corrupt mayor is a bigger gamble than replacing a corrupt council member because of the high level of agency that a mayor has, and so the high level of competence required of the position. In addition, a replacement mayor is likely to come from the political establishment (which in this instance is also corrupt). The lower position of city council member is not only one that allows for less agency and so requires less competence, but also is more attainable for someone outside the political environment. Assuming that those outside the political environment are more honest, this means that the replacement council member has a greater likelihood of being more honest than does a replacement mayor.

Of course, if corruption is uncommon we should see no difference in the level of support for politicians of different offices.

The theory has several observable implications.

First of all, looking at all the data, without taking the position of the politician into consideration, if corruption is common respondents should be more likely to support a corrupt incumbent.

H1: respondents are more likely to support a corrupt politician when the environment is corrupt than when it is clean, all else equal.

Looking only at the respondents who were told that the politician was the mayor, respondents should be more likely to support a corrupt mayor when corruption is common in the city government than when it is uncommon.

H2: respondents are more likely to support a corrupt mayor when the environment is corrupt than when it is clean, all else equal.

Looking only at the respondents who were told that the politician is a member of the city council, respondents should support the corrupt council member at the same rate regardless of whether corruption is common or not (because the replacement for the corrupt politician will not come from the corrupt political environment).

H3: respondents are no more likely to support a corrupt council member when the environment is corrupt than when it is clean, all else equal.

Looking only at respondents who were told that corruption is common in College Park, respondents should be more likely to support the corrupt mayor than the corrupt council member (as the mayor's replacement would probably be from the corrupt political environment anyway).

H4: respondents are more likely to support a corrupt mayor than a corrupt council member when the environment is corrupt, all else equal.

Finally, looking only at instances where respondents were told that corruption is very uncommon in College Park, we should see no difference in support for the corrupt mayor and the corrupt council member (the replacement for either one would probably not be corrupt, since corruption is so uncommon).

H5: respondents are no more likely to support a corrupt mayor than a corrupt council member when the environment is clean, all else equal.

Data and Methodology

The data for this project were collected using a unique survey experiment. Participants in the survey experiment were presented with a fictitious newspaper article about a fictional corrupt politician in College Park, MD. The use of fictitious newspaper articles ostensibly taken from real publications is common in the literature (Kam and Utych 2011). The politician was presented either as the mayor or as a member of the city council of the city of College Park. The treatments were embedded in a fictitious but ostensibly real newspaper article. The level of corruption in the city government was varied, with some participants being told that corruption in the city government was common, and others being told that the city was 'a model of good governance':

> "The College Park City government has long had a reputation as being somewhat corrupt. The most common allegations are of 'pay to play' politics where

developers and business interests allegedly pay members of the city council to

avoid dealing with permits and inspections commonly associated with

construction and local businesses."

or

"Prior to these allegations the College Park City government had a reputation as a

model of good governance, unlike many college towns where allegations of

corruption between city government and property developers are often rife."

Thus the fictitious mayor is placed in the high corruption environment for half of the

respondents who are given the mayoral condition, and in the low corruption setting for

the other half. Similarly, respondents who are presented with an article about a corrupt

City Council member are given a high corruption environment half the time, and a low

corruption environment half the time.[69]

The fictitious article presents the politician (whether mayor or city council member) as

having been reasonably effective as a politician in the past. The corruption of which he is

accused is taking bribes in order to fast track building permits for a local property

developer. The article presents the evidence against the politician as damning: e-mails

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[69] In effect, this means that the article on the corrupt mayor contains reference both to a corrupt city government generally, and to a corrupt city council specifically. The article on the corrupt city council member contains the same, but does not contain reference to a corrupt mayor. It may appear at first glance that the mayor is potentially exculpated because of having to deal with a corrupt city council; the city council is not exculpated because of having to deal with a corrupt mayor. However, this apparent imbalance is in keeping with the intended treatment. The mayor's realm is the entire city government. That is, the nature of being mayor is that the environment one works in is larger than if one is a city council member. The individual city council member's environment is the city council but not the mayor's office. Therefore, in presenting a corrupt legislator who works in a corrupt environment there should be no need to mention the mayor specifically.

showing the *quid pro quo* between the politician and the developer have been leaked to the public.

The experiment was carried out in the Experimental Psychology Laboratory at the University of Maryland over four weeks in April and May of 2014. The university campus is located in College Park, MD. While the treatment articles were about fictional politicians, the politicians were presented as actual city politicians. This was an attempt to increase the external validity of the survey experiment, as many students and campus employees feel somewhat invested in the city of College Park, even if they do not follow city politics. Largely for this reason, the survey experiment was not carried out online – respondents' first reaction would likely have been to look up the politician they were reading about online. This made the experiment more expensive and time consuming but overcomes some of the criticisms of experiments that use hypothetical politicians and situations.[70] As deception was used all participants were debriefed at the end of the study.[71]

The sample consists of 281 people, mainly students, who chose to participate in the survey experiment. Respondents were recruited to participate in a current events study that would take no more than ten minutes. While most were undergraduates (53% answered 'some college credit' when asked about their education), 26% had a bachelor's

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[70] In fact, several respondents sought me out after they finished the survey and read the debriefing to tell me that they had been 'fooled' by the fake newspaper article. A total of 8 respondents were able to correctly identify the current mayor of College Park, Andrew Fellows. This amounts to less than 3% of the survey sample.

[71] You have taken part in a study to better understand how people react to information about corrupt politicians. The articles you read were fictional, and the politician about whom you read does not actually exist. The petition and meeting referred to are also fictional. While some corruption exists in state and national politics, the United States ranks very well on international measures of corruption. The researchers know of no allegations of corruption in the College Park City government.

degree or higher. While 48% of the sample was between 17 and 21, 52% was 21 and over

and the oldest respondent was 61. Household income was skewed toward higher income

brackets, with 44% responding that their household income was $100,000 or more

(students who were financially dependent on their parents were asked to report their

parents' income). The sample was 57% female. Although there was variation in the party

affiliation of the participants, Democrats were over represented at 68%, with 17%

Republicans, 9% Independents, and 5% third party.[72]

Respondents are similar across conditions. Descriptive statistics show that the conditions

were effectively randomized (see Appendix). The only instance in which there is a

statistically significant difference between two groups tested is when looking at the age

and income for the two conditions tested for H5. However, I do not consider this to be a

problem for two reasons. The first is that aside from examining the difference in means

between conditions, I also treat the data as observational and control for standard

demographic variables (see Appendix). The second is that there is no clear theoretical

reason why such substantively small differences between the groups would matter.

Prior to treatment, respondents were asked a series of demographic questions as well as

questions on political attitudes. After reading about a fictitious politician, respondents

were asked how likely they would be to vote for the politician. Following other

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[72] Respondents were asked about party affiliation after they had read the news article. This was because the article does not mention the party of the politician. Asking about party affiliation may have primed the respondent to take note of the fictional politician's party affiliation. This worked surprisingly well as respondents did not notice that the politician's party was not mentioned, when asked afterwards in informal discussion.

experimental work on corruption, the variable on how likely the respondent would be to vote for the politician serves as the main dependent variable in the study.[73]

Nonetheless, the sample poses two potential problems. The first is the external validity that comes with all convenience samples. As Kam et al write, many researchers defer to "the simplistic heuristic of 'a student sample lacks external generalizability'" (Kam et al. 2007, 421). This is despite the fact that there is a long tradition of convenience samples in the social sciences, most obviously psychology and behavioral economics, and that Kam et al show that up to 70% of experiments in some more specialized political science journals between 1990 and 2006 relied on student samples. Of course, the sample for this experiment is not entirely made up of students, but is still somewhat open to these criticisms. However, going on Druckman and Kam (2011), the fact that there is some variation in the sample means that the criticisms against the sample as one of convenience is largely negated. That is, the sample is not made up entirely of one group, eg, freshman psychology majors. As Druckman and Kam also point out, achieving a representative sample does not mean that one has sidestepped variation across situations and time. In addition, the strengths of the experimental method are the standardization of the treatment and the randomization of the participants, which of course remain when using a convenience sample (McDermott 2002).

The second potential problem is using a sample from a country with relatively low levels of political corruption to study how people react to corruption. This is compounded by the fact that recent work by Klašnja and Tucker (2013) has shown that study participants

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[73] Following Winters and Weitz-Shapiro (2012), I collapse this from a four category variable to a dichotomous variable.

in a high corruption country (Moldova) were less likely to punish a hypothetical corrupt politician than those in a low corruption country (Sweden). However, the fact that one would expect participants in a study carried out in a country with a relatively low level of corruption to react more negatively to information about corruption further bolsters any results that show participants being willing to support a corrupt politician.

To summarize, this paper uses a unique survey experiment to expose respondents to information about fictitious corrupt politicians. In order to determine whether people react differently to information about politicians in executive positions than to information about politicians in legislative positions, respondents are randomly assigned a condition where the corrupt incumbent is a mayor or a condition where the corrupt incumbent is a city council member. In order to determine whether people take the level of corruption in the environment in which the politician operates into account, respondents are randomly assigned to a condition where corruption is common, or to a condition in which corruption is uncommon.

Results

The first question is whether respondents treat the corrupt politician the same regardless of whether corruption is common. That is, regardless of the position of the politician, are respondents more likely to support a corrupt politician when corruption is common? Looking at the difference in means between the two treatment groups, 20% of respondents would vote for the corrupt politician when corruption is common, while only 14% would vote for the corrupt politician when corruption is uncommon.[74] This is a

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[74] For this test, the mayor and council member groups have been combined.

difference of 6 percentage points in the expected direction, and is statistically significant (p= .07, one-tailed test). Respondents were 42% more likely to support a corrupt politician when they were told that corruption is common in the city government.

Therefore, we find evidence in support of H1: respondents are more likely to support a corrupt politician when the environment is corrupt.

The second hypothesis tests whether respondents are more likely to support a corrupt mayor when corruption is common than when corruption is uncommon. Looking at the difference in means between the two treatment groups, 29% of respondents would vote for the corrupt mayor when corruption is common, compared to 16% who would vote for the corrupt mayor when corruption is uncommon. This is a 13 percentage point increase in support: almost twice as many respondents would vote for the corrupt mayor when corruption is common as would vote for him when corruption is uncommon. This difference is statistically significant at standard levels (p= .03, one-tailed test).

Therefore, we find strong evidence in support of H2: respondents are indeed more likely to support a corrupt mayor when corruption is common in the environment than when corruption is uncommon.
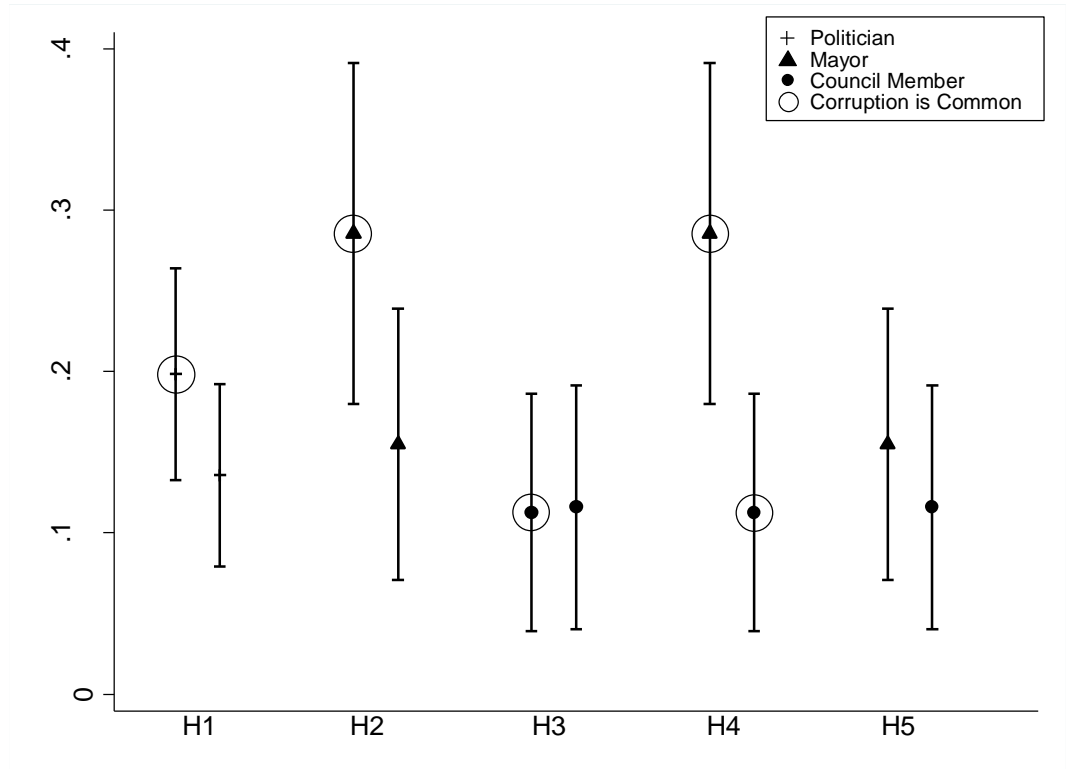
Graph showing paired comparisons for all hypotheses. 'Politician' is a combination of the mayor and council member categories. Point estimates without a hollow circle are for treatment groups where corruption is uncommon.

The third hypothesis tests whether respondents are more likely to support a corrupt city council member when the environment is corrupt than when it is clean. Looking at the difference in means between the two treatment groups, 11% of respondents would vote for the corrupt city council member when corruption is common, compared to 12% that would vote for him when corruption is uncommon. That is, there is no statistical difference between the two treatment groups (p=.95, two-tailed test). Respondents would support a corrupt city council member at the same rate when corruption is common as when corruption is uncommon.

Therefore, we find strong evidence in support of H3: respondents are not more likely to support a corrupt city council member when corruption is common in the environment than when corruption is uncommon in the environment.

The fourth hypothesis tests whether there is any difference in when respondents would support a mayor or a council member, when corruption is common. Looking at the difference in means between the two groups, 29% of respondents would vote for the corrupt mayor when corruption is common, compared to only 11% that would vote for the corrupt city council member. This is a difference of 18 percentage points. More than twice as many people would vote for a corrupt mayor than for a corrupt legislator, when corruption is common – even though the politicians have been accused of the same crime and are identical except for the office they hold. This result is statistically significant at 99% confidence (p= .00, one-tailed test).

Therefore, we find strong evidence in favor of H4: respondents are more likely to support a corrupt mayor than a corrupt city council member when the environment is corrupt.

Finally, the fifth hypothesis tests whether respondents are more likely to vote for a corrupt mayor than a corrupt city council member when corruption is uncommon in the environment. Looking at the difference in means between the treatment groups, 15% of respondents would vote for the corrupt mayor when corruption is uncommon, while 12% would vote for the corrupt city council member when corruption is uncommon. However, this difference is far from statistically significant (p= .5, two-tailed test).

So, when told that College Park city government is corruption free, respondents are no more likely to support a corrupt mayor than a corrupt council member. Therefore, we find evidence in support of H5: respondents are not any more likely to support a corrupt mayor than a corrupt city council member when corruption is uncommon.

Overall, looking at differences in means alone, it is clear that the treatments had an effect, and that the effects were in the expected direction. These results show that respondents were more tolerant of a corrupt mayor than a corrupt council member when corruption was common in the political environment. And, respondents were more tolerant of a corrupt mayor when corruption was common in the political environment than when corruption was uncommon.

At the same time, the level of corruption did not matter for when respondents would support a city council member. And, when corruption was uncommon, the position of the corrupt politician did not matter. Voters are equally likely to punish a corrupt mayor as a corrupt city council member, when corruption is uncommon.

From these results, it is clear that respondents did distinguish between the different offices that politicians held: a different calculus was used to determine whether to support a mayor than a council member. It is also clear that respondents distinguished between political environments in which corruption is common and in which corruption is uncommon.[75]

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[75] Probit models that include demographic variables produce the same results. These results are reported in the appendix.

Discussion and Conclusion

The claim that sunshine is the best antiseptic implies that once a voter knows about corruption she will punish the corrupt actor regardless of the actor's position or the political context. Overall, it is clear that this was not the case here. Respondents did not treat all actors in the same way. Results show that voters take the level of corruption into account for a corrupt mayor, but not for corrupt legislator. I have argued that this is to be expected as a replacement mayor would likely be drawn from the corrupt political environment, while a replacement council member would likely be drawn from outside this environment. Therefore, respondents do not take the level of corruption in the political environment into account when evaluating legislators, but do take it into account when evaluating higher level executives.

The fact that respondents did take the political environment into account is a result that adds to recent formal and experimental research on corruption and is further evidence that voters in high corruption environments act differently, and evaluate politicians differently, than voters in low corruption environments. It is also evidence that voters may quickly and easily change their behavior when they perceive an environment to be one in which there is a high level of corruption.

Overall, this paper is the first research to deal with how voters use different standards to evaluate corrupt politicians in different positions (executive or legislative). This is important for policy as well as academic reasons. Policy makers who seek to reduce corruption may want to consider where they spend their energies in increasing information about corruption. Corrupt politicians in executive positions may be much

more insulated from the wrath of the public when they run for reelection. Academic researchers may want to consider the position of politicians used in experiments, and consider how generalizable results that focus on a particular political position can be. In fact, the results presented here indicate that experimental work that focuses on mayors may be underestimating the effect of information about political corruption on support for the incumbent, relative to other political positions.

The results on the environment of corrupt politicians are also important for policy reasons and academic reasons. Policy makers should appreciate that voters in high corruption environments will act differently than voters in low corruption environments. Work on corruption traps must be incorporated into strategies that aim to reduce political corruption: merely exposing voters to information is not enough. These results also raise interesting questions about how the media cover corruption. We saw here that just a few lines in a newspaper article, claiming that corruption is common, was enough of a treatment to change the behavior of respondents. Media coverage that presents political environments as completely corrupt may actually be doing more harm than good, if it means that voters are less likely to punish any given corrupt politician. For academic research, these results bolster claims made in formal theory research showing that the same institutions can have high and low political performance and accountability.

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Appendix 1: Descriptive Statistics

H1: Corruption Common Vs Corruption Uncommon

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Diff	P
Age (Common)	140	22.6	6.62		
Age (Uncommon)	140	23.29	7.48		
				-0.692	0.412
Gender (Common)	140	1.58	0.494		
Gender (Uncommon)	140	1.56	0.497		
				0.021	0.718
Education (Common)	141	4.92	1.637		
Education (Uncommon)	140	5.06	1.71		
				-0.135	0.5
Income (Common)	141	4.6	1.86		
Income (Uncommon)	139	4.96	1.61		
				-0.325	0.11
Democrat (Common)	141	0.588	0.493		
Democrat (Uncommon)	140	0.685	0.465		
				-0.097	0.09

H2: Mayor (Corruption is Common) Vs Mayor (Corruption is Uncommon)

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Diff	P
Age (Common)	69	22.76	7.23		
Age (Uncommon)	71	24.83	8.97		
				-2.06	0.13
Gender (Common)	70	1.57	0.498		
Gender (Uncommon)	71	1.6	0.492		
				-0.034	0.68
Education (Common)	70	4.91	1.725		
Education (Uncommon)	71	5.35	1.749		
				-0.437	0.13
Income (Common)	70	4.64	1.77		
Income (Uncommon)	71	4.9	1.6		
				-0.258	0.366
Democrat (Common)	70	0.585	0.496		
Democrat (Uncommon)	71	0.676	0.471		
				-0.09	0.26

H3: Member (Corruption is Common) Vs Member (Corruption is Uncommon)

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Diff	P
Age (Common)	71	22.43	6		
Age (Uncommon)	69	21.71	5.16		
				0.726	0.444
Gender (Common)	70	1.6	0.493		
Gender (Uncommon)	69	1.52	0.505		
				0.078	0.35
Education (Common)	71	4.94	1.55		
Education (Uncommon)	69	4.76	1.64		
				0.175	0.51
Income (Common)	71	4.63	1.95		
Income (Uncommon)	68	5.02	1.63		
				-0.395	0.19
Democrat (Common)	71	0.591	0.495		
Democrat (Uncommon)	69	0.695	0.463		
				-0.104	0.2

H4: Mayor (Corruption is Common) Vs Member (Corruption is Common)

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Diff	P
Age (Mayor)	69	22.76	7.23		
Age (Member)	71	22.43	6		
				0.331	0.76
Gender (Mayor)	70	1.57	0.498		
Gender (Member)	70	1.6	0.493		
				-0.028	0.73
Education (Mayor)	70	4.91	1.71		
Education (Member)	71	4.94	1.55		
				-0.029	0.91
Income (Mayor)	70	4.64	1.77		
Income (Member)	71	4.63	1.95		
				0.009	0.97
Democrat (Mayor)	70	0.585	0.496		
Democrat (Member)	71	0.591	0.495		
				-0.005	0.94

H5: Mayor (Corruption is Uncommon) Vs Member (Corruption is Uncommon)

	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Diff	P
Age (Mayor)	71	24.83	8.97		
Age (Member)	69	21.71	5.16		
				3.12	0.01
Gender (Mayor)	71	1.6	0.492		
Gender (Member)	69	1.52	0.503		
				0.083	0.32
Education (Mayor)	71	5.35	1.74		
Education (Member)	69	4.76	1.64		
				0.583	0.04
Income (Mayor)	71	4.9	1.6		
Income (Member)	68	5.02	1.63		
				-0.128	0.64
Democrat (Mayor)	71	0.676	0.471		
Democrat (Member)	69	0.695	0.463		
				-0.019	0.8

Notes:

All differences between treatments and control and between treatments are statistically insignificant at p = 0.05, except for age and education for H5.

Gender coding: 1 = male; 2 = female.

Education coding: 1= 1st to 8th grade; 2 = Some high school, but no diploma; 3 = High school diploma or equivalent; 4 = Some college credit, but no degree; 5 = Trade/technical/vocational training; 6 = Associate's degree; 7 = Bachelor's degree; 8 = Master's degree; 9 = Doctoral degree

Income (household) coding: 1 = less than $10,000; 2 = $10,000 - $24,999; 3 = $25,000 - $49,999 ; 4 = %50,000 - $74,999; 5 = $75,000 - $99,999; 6 = $100,000 - $149,999; 7 = $150,000 or more

Democrat coding: 0 = not a Democrat; 1 = Democrat

Appendix 2: Probit Models

Table 1. The effect of environmental corruption on the likelihood of supporting the incumbent.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Corruption is common treatment	0.209	0.429**	-0.122
	(0.190)	(0.264)	(0.302)
Age	0.00743	-0.00519	0.0288
	(0.0163)	(0.0219)	(0.0288)
Female	-0.580***	-0.718***	-0.437
	(0.191)	(0.265)	(0.302)
Education	0.0108	0.0648	-0.0459
	(0.0698)	(0.0934)	(0.119)
Income	-0.0762	-0.0585	-0.130
	(0.0636)	(0.0941)	(0.0981)
Democrat	-0.322	-0.336	-0.415
	(0.215)	(0.284)	(0.371)
Independent	0.318	0.602	0.0785
	(0.326)	(0.498)	(0.492)
Student	0.0814	0.221	0.0549
	(0.245)	(0.329)	(0.411)
Constant	-0.545	-0.561	-0.550
	(0.717)	(1.001)	(1.122)
Observations	278	140	138
LogLik	-115.8	-64.37	-45.65

Standard errors in parentheses

*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

Tests for the corruption is common variable are one-tailed.

The corruption is common variable is coded as 1 if the respondent is told that corruption is common in city government.

Model 1 is for all cases.

Model 2 is for cases where the politician is a mayor.

Model 3 is for cases where the politician is a city council member.

Table 2. The effect of political position on the likelihood of supporting the incumbent.

	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Mayor	0.496***	0.759***	0.219
	(0.194)	(0.279)	(0.288)
Age	0.00390	0.0109	0.00306
	(0.0162)	(0.0256)	(0.0227)
Female	-0.611***	-0.799***	-0.381
	(0.194)	(0.270)	(0.290)
Education	-0.00266	0.00271	0.0142
	(0.0696)	(0.112)	(0.0946)
Income	-0.101	-0.109	-0.0676
	(0.0644)	(0.0884)	(0.108)
Democrat	-0.323	-0.494	-0.156
	(0.217)	(0.302)	(0.330)
Independent	0.394	0.172	0.590
	(0.333)	(0.448)	(0.539)
Student	0.118	0.259	0.0707
	(0.247)	(0.352)	(0.368)
Constant	-0.464	-0.573	-0.835
	(0.692)	(0.954)	(1.115)
Observations	278	139	139
LogLik	-113	-57.94	-52.77

Standard errors in parentheses

*** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.1$

Tests for the mayor variable are one-tailed.

The mayor variable is a dummy coded as 1 when the politician is the mayor and 0 when the politician is a city council member.

Model 4 is for all cases.

Model 5 is for cases where corruption is common.

Model 6 is for cases where corruption is uncommon.

Appendix 3: Newspaper Articles

Council Member; Corruption is Common

College Park Council Member Exposed for Corruption

By Philip Blake and John Rucker, **The Baltimore Sun**

1:15 p.m. EST, January 8, 2014

A series of newly disclosed e-mails and text messages suggests that College Park City Council member Richard Wildstein received benefits from property developers in return for fast tracking zoning permits in the city of College Park. The allegations come months before Wildstein is to stand for reelection and cast doubt over his political future.

E-mails leaked to the public show Wildstein soliciting favors in return for building permits. Some of these favors included a position for his son at one of the construction companies and a discount on a condominium built by another of the companies.

The College Park City Council has long had a reputation as being somewhat corrupt. The most common allegations are of 'pay to play' politics where developers and business interests allegedly pay members of the city council to avoid dealing with permits and inspections commonly associated with construction and local businesses.

Prior to this incident Wildstein was generally regarded as an effective member of the council. As well as successfully applying for state and federal funds for the development of the city, he was seen as a reliable representative of his constituents and someone to whom residents could turn with problems.

Local resident Samantha Meyers commented, "This has been going on for years. I'm not surprised. Overall he does a good job. I'll continue to support him."

Another local resident, Patrick Smyth, commented, "You hear stories of this kind of thing, but I didn't think it actually happened. I definitely won't be voting for Wildstein in the next election."

Mr. Wildstein did not respond to requests for an interview.

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Prior to these allegations the College Park City Council had a reputation as a model of good governance, unlike many college towns where allegations of corruption between city government and property developers are often rife.

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Conclusion

Overall, this project has shown that there is more to ensuring the electoral defeat of corrupt politicians than transparency. Evidence presented here has shown that issue salience will cause voters to discount charges of corruption against corrupt politicians. When politicians are close to voters on issues they care about, voters are likely to support them even if they are corrupt. The more a voter cares about the issue, the less she cares about corruption. However, high institutional trust will decrease the effect of issue salience, while perceptions of corruption will increase it. I have shown that social norms, created in one's peer group, affect the likelihood that one will support a corrupt politician, as do perceptions of political corruption. Finally, I have presented evidence that politicians who operate in corrupt political environments are less likely to be punished by voters, especially if they are in higher level positions (where the replacement would likely be taken from this corrupt political environment).

It is not clear from these findings how anti-corruption practitioners should proceed. Certainly, it seems that presenting any political environment as completely corrupt will not be helpful in rallying voters to stomp out corruption. While anti-corruption parties emerge from time to time it is unclear whether these collective attempts to reduce corruption are successful. Rather, it seems that voters discount allegations of corruption when corruption is presented as the norm.

The findings on issue salience point to one way in which politicians can protect themselves when allegations of corruption are made against them. Issue trespassing, whereby a politician focuses on an issue that he or his party do not usually own, can

allow politicians to evade electoral punishment. Certainly, moving toward hot button issues or populist rhetoric on important issues is something an embattled politician might easily default to. But, the fact that institutional trust can undo the importance of issue salience when a voter chooses whether to support a corrupt politician is hopeful. Although trust in the institution that the corrupt politician is a member of may be difficult to nourish, it is possible that trust in other institutions can encourage a general institutional trust that is sufficient to increase the likelihood of electoral defeat for corrupt political actors. Certainly, the extent to which institutional trust can be increased by trust in non-electoral institutions is something that is an important avenue for future research.

Of course, perceiving political corruption to be common has the opposite effect of institutional trust. As mentioned in the introduction, the two are related and there may exist some mutual causality (Morris and Klesner 2010). However, this result has important implications for how corruption is presented by the media and NGOs. Presenting political corruption as an everyday occurrence that all politicians engage in, may prime voters to expect such behavior and so discount the importance of allegations of corruption when they arise. Certainly, it likely goes against every fiber of every journalist's being not to report on corruption. And, silence on corruption is not something I would advocate. However, it may be prudent to consider the effects of constantly presenting political corruption as the norm when this approach means that voters become desensitized to reports of political corruption.

Voters also seem to discount corruption when they perceive it amongst their peer group. It is curious to think that reducing everyday engagement in corruption such as bribery or clientelism could reduce political corruption at higher levels. Nonetheless, evidence

presented here indicates that this could be the case. Theories in sociology such as the 'broken window' theory have previously advocated a zero tolerance approach to minor infractions in order to solve larger issues (Kelling 1997). This theory is not without its critics (Harcourt and Ludwig 2006), and the practical application of the broken window theory has resulted in (or at least been accompanied by) a serious increase in incarceration in the United States (Harcourt 2009). Certainly, this is not something to be advocated in order to reduce high level corruption! Nonetheless, an anti-corruption strategy that took into account the creation of social norms in one's peer groups may be more successful than one that focuses on transparency alone.

The third paper shows evidence that voters take into account the political position of the corrupt politician. Specifically, a higher level corrupt politician may be shielded from electoral punishment if it seems that his replacement will likely be from a corrupt political environment. Anti-corruption advocates may then have better luck targeting lower level politicians whose replacements may realistically be from outside the corrupt political environment. This low level approach may also increase institutional trust as anti-corruption strategies that start at the lowest rungs of the political ladder may increase trust in local government, contributing to a general institutional trust that could reduce tolerance of corruption by higher level politicians. Again, this is an avenue for future research.

Any research project is limited in its scope and methods and this is no exception. Future research should focus on the scope conditions of issue salience as a predictor of support for corrupt politicians. It is not clear that salience on all issues will work the same way as salience on abortion and the death penalty. It is possible that 'moral issues' such as these

elicit a stronger response than do issues related to tax policy or infrastructure spending. Then again, given the polarized and charged nature of contemporary US politics, it is possible that any issue could elicit the same passion as abortion in the United States. Nonetheless, a survey instrument that expands the issues used in the first paper, and lengthens the Guttman scales used would give more nuanced data than currently available. Of course, replication of the survey in several more countries could also produce interesting data.

The scope conditions of the paper investigating the effect of political position on voter tolerance of corruption should also be investigated. It is unclear whether the results presented here apply to local government only, or whether a governor would be shielded the way a mayor would be. Equally, it is possible that a legislator in a state legislature would benefit from some of the tolerance that the fictitious mayor received. It certainly seems likely that a governor would be less likely to be punished for corruption if the members of the state legislature were also perceived to be corrupt. However, this might change if a realistic anti-corruption candidate emerged, showing that the replacement for the corrupt governor need not come from the political establishment.

The goal of this dissertation was to go some way toward answering the question of why voters support corrupt politicians. As is so often the case in social science, I am unable to give one definitive answer. However, I can say that there is more to the fight against political corruption than transparency. The first paper showed clearly that voters are willing to support a corrupt politician under conditions that come even somewhat close to the tradeoffs involved in real life voting. The third paper showed that even people living in the United States, which is relatively corruption free, easily change their behavior

when told that corruption is common in the political environment, and opt to support a corrupt incumbent. This is without dealing with issues of party loyalty, clientelism, or any of the institutional factors that decrease the likelihood of voters punishing corrupt politicians.

Overall, this project has shown the limitations of transparency, but solutions to the problems of political corruption are less obvious. Nonetheless, focusing on social norms that are created from the ground up, institutional trust, and being aware of how political corruption is presented, as well as targeting lower level corrupt politicians rather than higher ones, are all promising avenues in the fight against political corruption.

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