When Do Voters Punish Corrupt Politicians? Experimental Evidence from Brazil

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MIT

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University of Oslo

Symposium on Institutional Capacity, Corruption, and Development
University of South Carolina
April 11, 2014
Motivating Questions

1. Is candidate corruption a factor in voting behavior?
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2. What are effective ways to design transparency initiatives that result in electoral accountability?
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2. What are effective ways to design transparency initiatives that result in electoral accountability?
3. What are the consequences of negative campaigning?
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- Ignores political context including the party system, and voter perceptions.
- Heterogeneity across candidates is also largely ignored in the extant literature.
- We suggest the nature of the party system and voter attitudes mediate information in important ways, and ultimately shape the conditions under which voters punish corrupt politicians.
2. What are effective ways to design transparency initiatives that result in electoral accountability?

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- “In contrast to the mounting scholarly research on the consequences of good governance, our knowledge about what causes governments to be clean and efficient is still at its infancy.” - Adsera, Boix, and Payne (2003)
2. What are effective ways to design transparency initiatives that result in electoral accountability?

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- Transparency is seen as one important way to improve accountability
2. What are effective ways to design transparency initiatives that result in electoral accountability?

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- Transparency is seen as one important way to improve accountability

- Our findings show that, under certain conditions, corruption information can suppress voter turnout
3. What are the consequences of negative campaigning?

- Extremely divided in the extant literature
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- Empirical work either lacks credible causal inference strategies or does not map to real behavior
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- Extremely divided in the extant literature
- Empirical work either lacks credible causal inference strategies or does not map to real behavior
- To our knowledge, ours may be one of the first field experiments in negative campaigning
When Do Voters Punish Corrupt Politicians?
Research Question
When Do Voters Punish Corrupt Politicians?

Treatment
Corruption Information of Candidates
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Overview</th>
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<td><strong>Research Question</strong></td>
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## Research Question

When Do Voters Punish Corrupt Politicians?

## Treatment

Corruption Information of Candidates

## Outcomes

Vote Choice, Spoiled Ballots, Turnout

## Empirical Strategy

Integrated Field Experiment, Survey Experiment & Survey
A Unique Set of Circumstances

1. The Candidates
A Unique Set of Circumstances

1. The Candidates
2. The Parties

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2. The Parties
A Unique Set of Circumstances

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2. The Parties
3. The Lista Suja (Dirty List)
A Unique Set of Circumstances

1. The Candidates
2. The Parties
3. The *Lista Suja* (Dirty List)
4. Mandatory Voting
Vale a Pena Relembrar!

FOLHA DE S. PAULO

Associação de juízes decide incluir Kassab na 'lista suja'

AMB atribui ato de uma semana para identificação contra prefeito ao lado do TJ

Gilberto Kassab (DEM), está na Lista Suja

- Gilberto Kassab foi condenado por improbidade administrativa, segundo a AMB (Processo N. 583.53.1997.423352-7 TJ - SP).
- Gilberto Kassab foi acusado por publicar um anúncio em jornais com o intuito de defender seus "interesses pessoais".
- Gilberto Kassab foi absolvido pelo TJ-SP em maio de 2007.

Você sabia que, segundo pesquisa do DataSenado, 88% dos eleitores mudariam seu voto se descobrissem que seu candidato está na Lista Suja?

E aí? O que você vai fazer a respeito?

No dia 26 de outubro, não esqueça de votar!
When Do Voters Punish Corrupt Politicians?

The Fliers

When Do Voters Punish Corrupt Politicians?

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Juíza torna Marta inelegível por 3 anos

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Field Experiment Research Design

- Randomized voting precincts
  - 400 precincts in randomization group
  - 100 precincts in Treatment I (Kassab), 100 precincts in Treatment II (Suplicy)
  - 200 precincts in Control Group
Field Experiment Research Design

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- Treatment
  - 187,177 fliers/households (roughly 50% Kassab, 50% Suplicy)
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- Treatment
  - 187,177 fliers/households (roughly 50% Kassab, 50% Suplicy)

- Distribution
  - Delivered to individual households Oct. 22-25, 2008 (1-4 days before the election)
  - Strong enforcement system in place
The Distribution of Precincts

Average Monthly Household Income

Monthly Income (Brazilian Reais)

- [6,411)
- [411,532)
- [532,660)
- [660,821)
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Suplicy + Kassab + Control Precincts
# Suplicity Flier Results

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Estimate</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard Error</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95 % Conf. Int.</td>
<td>[-0.5, 3.4]</td>
<td>[-0.8, 0.8]</td>
<td>[-0.4, 0.2]</td>
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<tr>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.49</td>
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Possible Mechanisms

- No Differences
  1. Intensity of Candidate Support
Possible Mechanisms

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  2. Evaluations of Candidate Corruption (Whether Their Own Candidate or the Opposing Candidate)
Possible Mechanisms

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- However there is a difference on the emphasis PT v. non-PT voters place on corruption in their voting decision
Corruption information is typically presented solely as a valence issue.
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Ignores political context including the party system, voter perceptions, and heterogeneity across candidates.
Conclusions

1. Corruption information is typically presented solely as a valence issue.
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Conclusions

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2. Information transparency with candidate corruption can lead voters to switch votes AND abstain
Conclusions

1. Middle class & poor voters, under certain conditions, act on corruption information
2. Information transparency with candidate corruption can lead voters to switch votes AND abstain
3. Publicizing a candidate’s corruption record can alter voters’ behavior, but effects are contingent upon importance placed on clean governance
We offer suggestive evidence that PT voters’ expectations about the PT’s anti-corruption reputation was a central dimension of their voting behavior.
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Negative information can suppress turnout and move votes, but effects are varied.
Conclusions

1. We offer suggestive evidence that PT voters’ expectations about the PT’s anti-corruption reputation was a central dimension of their voting behavior.

2. Negative information can suppress turnout and move votes, but effects are varied.

3. Replication is needed in varied institutional, temporal & spatial settings.
Current Work: Why Do Voters Punish Corrupt Politicians?

- Qualitative (Focus Groups + Field Interviews) and Experimental Work
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- Qualitative (Focus Groups + Field Interviews) and Experimental Work
- Treatments
  1. Corruption Type
  2. Court Rulings
  3. Party Labels
  4. Core v. Swing Voters
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Thank You!
Additional Slides
Knowledge of the Dirty List

Knowledge about Dirty List by Vote in 2004

- Know Both on List
- Know Kassab on List
- Know Suplicy on List

Proportion

● Serra Voter
● Suplicy Voter

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When Do Voters Punish Corrupt Politicians?
Descriptive Statistics

- **Turnout % (2008)**
- **DEM/PFL Vote % (2008)**
- **PT Vote % (2008)**
- **PT Vote % (2004)**
- **(Number of Voters)/100**

When Do Voters Punish Corrupt Politicians?
Suplicy - Interactions

Interaction: Education
- Below Median
- Above Median

Interaction: Income
- Below Median
- Above Median

Interaction: PT Strength
- Below Median
- Above Median

DV: PT Vote Share
- Estimate: -10 -5 0

DV: Turnout
- Estimate: -10 -5 0
Kassab - Interactions

Interaction: Education

Interaction: Income

Interaction: PT Strength

Estimate
Above Median
Below Median
Above Median
Below Median

DV: PT Vote Share

DV: Turnout
1. Is candidate corruption a salient factor in voting behavior?

- On one hand, corruption may not be of importance to voters, especially in the developing world.
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- On one hand, corruption may not be of importance to voters, especially in the developing world
  - “For the less educated, who support breaking rules the ‘Brazilian way,’ there is also a tendency to show high tolerance of corruption. For many of these people, there is no ‘forgetting’ when it comes to these allegations; they simply are not important.” (Almeida & Young 2007)
1. Is candidate corruption a salient factor in voting behavior?

- On one hand, corruption may not be of importance to voters, especially in the developing world
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- On the other hand, theoretical literature posits information improves accountability to mass publics
1. Is candidate corruption a salient factor in voting behavior?

- Recent empirical literature is mixed
  - Ferraz & Finan (2008) (Brazil): Information about municipal corruption audits decrease the probability of politicians being reelected
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### Covariate Balance

#### Motivation

- Context
- Research Design
- Results
- Conclusions

#### # of Registered Voters

- 1st Round Blank Vote % (2008)
- 1st Round Invalid Vote % (2008)
- 1st Round Kassab Vote % (2008)
- 1st Round Suplicy Vote % (2008)
- 1st Round Turnout % (2008)
- DEM City Council Vote % (2008)
- PSDB City Council Vote % (2008)
- PSDB Congress Vote % (2006)
- PT City Council Vote % (2008)
- PT Congress Vote % (2006)
- PT Mayor Vote % (2004)
- PT Pres. Vote % (2006)

#### p Value

- Variable
- Statistic
- $t$-Test
- KS-test

#### de Figueiredo, Hidalgo & Kasahara

When Do Voters Punish Corrupt Politicians?
Covariate Balance (Precinct Size)

- **Motivation**
- **Context**
- **Research Design**
- **Results**
- **Conclusions**

**Covariate Balance (Precinct Size)**

- **Number of Voters**
  - **Mean Difference**: 298.38
  - **Standard Error**: 133.42
  - **t-test p-value**: 0.03
  - **KS test p-value**: 0.09

**Variables**

- # of Registered Voters
- 1st Round Blank Vote % (2008)
- 1st Round Invalid Vote % (2008)
- 1st Round Kassab Vote % (2008)
- 1st Round Suplicy Vote % (2008)
- 1st Round Turnout % (2008)
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- PSDB Congress Vote % (2006)
- PT City Council Vote % (2008)
- PT Congress Vote % (2006)
- PT Mayor Vote % (2004)
- PT Pres. Vote % (2006)
- PT Pres. Vote % (2008)

**Legend**

- t-Test
- KS-test

**Statistical Tests**

- **t-test**
- **KS-test**

**Graph**

- Scatter plot showing covariate balance (precinct size) with various vote percentages and number of registered voters.

**Additional Information**

- de Figueiredo, Hidalgo & Kasahara

**Title**

- When Do Voters Punish Corrupt Politicians?
Precincts are the unit of analysis. Estimates without covariates are from the simple ITT estimator. Estimates with covariates are from a linear model, including a treatment indicator, PT vote share in 2004, total number of registered voters in the precinct, and block fixed effects. All standard errors account for heteroskedasticity. Robust standard errors are used in covariate adjusted results. Intent-to-treat estimates do not assume equal variance across treatment conditions.
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Testing Mechanisms: Survey Evidence

Ranking Candidates on Perceived Corruption by Vote in 2004

- Suplicy is more corrupt
- Kassab is more corrupt
- Both equally corrupt
- Don't Know

De Figueiredo, Hidalgo & Kasahara

When Do Voters Punish Corrupt Politicians?
## Research Design Overview

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**de Figueiredo, Hidalgo & Kasahara**

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Research Design Overview

- **Treatment I** (Kassab) [100 precincts]
- **Treatment II** (Suplicy) [100 precincts]
- **Control** [200 precincts]

Field Experiment: Oct 22-25, 2008
Election: Oct 26, 2008
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Field Experiment Oct 22-25, 2008

Election Oct 26, 2008

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- **Field Exp**: October 22-25, 2008
- **Election**: October 26, 2008
- **Survey/Survey Exp**: October 27, 2008-Nov 5, 2008
Flier Delivery
## Testing Mechanisms: Survey Experiment Evidence - Overall

### Survey Experiment Results for Suplicy and Kassab Fliers

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The dependent variable is the post-treatment minus pre-treatment candidate evaluation on feeling thermometer on a scale of 0 to 10.
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