



Institutions, Norms, and Accountability: A Corruption Experiment with Northern and Southern Italians

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Abstract

Anti-corruption research has highlighted the potential for grassroots monitoring to improve governance outcomes, but the conditions under which citizens are willing to report bribery remain under-studied. Are individuals from some societies socialized into a "culture of corruption" that makes them more accepting of malfeasance, or is the failure to denounce wrongdoing simply a response to low-quality enforcement institutions? I conduct a laboratory experiment to examine how the propensity to report corruption differs between Northern and Southern Italians, two populations experiencing different levels of corruption in everyday life. For each group, I experimentally manipulate the quality of enforcement institutions. When given high-quality institutions, all participants are more willing to report corruption. Moreover, Southerners and Northerners behave similarly when placed within the same institutional environments. These results suggest that high-corruption societies are not "culturally" predisposed to tolerate malfeasance. Rather, improving the capacity of enforcement institutions may significantly strengthen accountability norms.

Keywords: Corruption experiment, institutions, culture, accountability

INTRODUCTION

Scholars and policymakers have long struggled with the question of how to reduce corruption in public institutions. While one branch of this literature focuses

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on the design of optimal rules to reduce opportunities for graft and increase incentives for honesty (Andvig et al., 2001; Klitgaard, 1988; Rose-Ackerman, 1978), other work highlights the many ways in which ordinary citizens can bring about greater governmental accountability (Adserà et al., 2003; Besley, 2006; Grimes, 2013; Olken, 2007; Rose-Ackerman, 1999; World Bank, 2004). One important mechanism highlighted by this latter stream of research involves the reporting of corruption to formal oversight agencies.

As many scholars have noted, law enforcement authorities seldom have adequate time and resources to investigate all instances of potential malfeasance (McCubbins and Schwartz, 1984; Sunshine and Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2010). Many oversight agencies must therefore depend upon citizens to sound "fire alarms" to expose corruption and provide evidence against wrongdoers. Furthermore, while political elites may have incentives to block governance reform, the same is not true for citizens, who are often corruption's primary "victims," and therefore ideally placed to push for change (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2006). Indeed, case studies of successful anticorruption campaigns have highlighted the importance of grassroots monitoring in improving accountability (Grimes, 2013; Manion, 2009; Peruzzotti and Smulovitz, 2006).

Although the literature often assigns citizens (or civil society) a central role in controlling corruption, individuals' motivations to engage in such actions (particularly in endemically-corrupt societies) remain poorly understood. Does the willingness to participate in grassroots monitoring differ between high-corruption and low-corruption societies? And does the answer depend on whether individuals in these societies have access to effective and efficient enforcement institutions?

This article explores the empirical relationship between institutions, corruption exposure, and anti-corruption monitoring. I report results from an economic experiment involving participants from the North and South of Italy. Importantly, research has shown that the level of corruption differs significantly across these regions (Banfield, 1958; Chang et al., 2010; Golden and Picci, 2005; Putnam, 1993), and participants who are socialized in these separate environments may have internalized different accountability norms. The experimental design allows me to study the effect of these norms by holding the quality of enforcement institutions constant. Moreover, for each population, I also vary the probability that someone reported for corruption will be formally sanctioned, and thereby test whether regional effects depend upon the effectiveness of formal oversight agencies. By comparing individual decision-making under different norms and institutions, this paper contributes to the growing literature on "bottom-up" accountability (Barr et al., 2009; Bauhr and Grimes, 2014; Cameron et al., 2009; Grimes, 2013).

RELATED LITERATURE

Several studies have examined the relationship between cultural norms and corruption (Barr and Serra, 2010; Cameron et al., 2009; Fisman and Miguel, 2007;

Paldam, 2002; Treisman, 2000). Fisman and Miguel (2007) investigate the parking behavior of United Nations diplomats during a period in which they were immune from enforcement actions. Even in the absence of legal constraints, diplomats from low-corruption countries accumulated significantly fewer unpaid parking violations (a form of abuse of office), suggesting the importance of cultural norms in curbing opportunistic conduct. Barr and Serra (2010) report similar findings from a laboratory experiment in the UK: exposure to a "culture of corruption" in students' home countries is associated with a greater propensity to bribe in the lab.

While extant studies focus on variation in corrupt *behavior*, relatively little research has examined how corruption *tolerance* varies across societies (Cameron et al., 2009). However, a willingness to participate in corruption oneself does not necessarily imply an acceptance of such behavior on the part of others. Indeed, ethnographic research has shown that individuals can perceive the same corruption scenario as right or wrong, depending on whether they are the beneficiaries or the victims of the transaction (Hasty, 2005; Olivier de Sardan, 1999; Smith, 2010). Employing a rational-choice framework, Heckathorn (1989) argues that, under some conditions, it may be optimal for an individual to act opportunistically, while simultaneously policing others' behavior. Thus, it is important to study how everyday exposure to wrongdoing shapes accountability norms, as distinct from honesty norms.

In theory, greater exposure to malfeasance in daily life may socialize citizens into a "culture of corruption," and thereby increase acceptance of wrongdoing (Barr et al., 2009). This may be especially true if individuals come to believe that bribery is a routine strategy employed by all "normal" citizens to gain access to public services (Cameron et al., 2009; Miller, 2006; Persson et al., 2012). In this context, to sanction someone for accepting a "gift" would seem overly-scrupulous, hypocritical, and insensitive to "the way things work." Thus beliefs about the ubiquity of illicit payments serve to justify and excuse such behavior, thereby weakening the norm of accountability.

Cross-national empirical evidence would seem to support this argument. Figure 1 graphs the relationship between corruption tolerance and crosscountry corruption levels, as measured by Transparency International (TI)'s 2013 Corruption Perceptions Index. Higher scores along the *x*-axis indicate a more "honest" society. The y-axis displays the percentage of individuals who indicate that they would be willing, hypothetically, to report an incident of corruption. The data are drawn from TI's 2013 Global Corruption Barometer, and are available for over 100 countries. The figure shows that fewer citizens in high corruption societies are willing to report malfeasance, suggesting a direct relationship between corruption exposure and corruption tolerance.

However, this relationship is complicated by the fact that individuals in different societies also face different institutional constraints. In particular, while citizens can report corruption, they cannot directly enforce the law. Instead, they must depend



upon formal oversight agencies to act upon their complaints and sanction the perpetrators (Grimes, 2013). However, in countries where corruption is pervasive, such offices may be lacking, ineffectual, or themselves deeply corrupted (Bauhr and Grimes, 2014). Thus, citizens' apparent tolerance of corruption may not arise from moral lassitude, but rather from the perception that "sounding the alarm" is futile (Persson et al., 2012).

In principle, economic experiments can help to disentangle the influence of institutional and normative factors on the willingness to blow the whistle on corruption. By directly controlling the "rules of the game," experiments can isolate the effect of normative constraints, as well as simulate different institutional conditions. Yet, the few studies that have adopted this approach have produced inconclusive results. For example, Cameron et al. (2009) compared participants from four societies (Australia, India, Indonesia, and Singapore) in terms of their propensity to both engage in and punish bribery. While some results accord with our prior intuitions (e.g., Australians are more critical of corruption than Indians), other findings are rather surprising (e.g., Singaporeans tend to be more tolerant of bribery than Indonesians). Given these mixed results, more research examining how exposure to corruption affects accountability norms is needed. The experiment described below contributes to filling this gap.

METHODOLOGY

Setting

The experiment was conducted in two locations. A first set of laboratory sessions was implemented at [Northern Italian University] (NIU) in the Spring of 2013. with a follow-up in Summer 2016. These sessions involved both (regionally-native) Northern Italian students, as well as Southern Italians who were also enrolled at NIU.¹ However, in comparing these two groups, it is not possible to rule out that Southerners who choose to attend NIU may be different from Southerners who remain in their home regions. This self-selection may present inferential problems if, for instance, individuals decide to migrate precisely because they are frustrated with the level of corruption prevailing in the South (Casari et al., 2017). To address this possibility, a second set of sessions was conducted at [Southern Italian University] (SIU) in 2016. The full sample is thus composed of three subgroups: (a) Northern Italians enrolled at NIU, (b) Southern Italians enrolled at NIU, and (c) Southern Italians enrolled at SIU. All participants were recruited via ORSEE (Greiner, 2015), and the experiment was programmed in zTree (Fischbacher, 2007). In total, 20 sessions were conducted.² On average, each session lasted around 1 hour and participants earned approximately 13 euros (USD 17.50).

The corruption game

The experiment simulates petty corruption in a public hospital setting.³ This setting was selected because the medical sector is regarded as among the more corruption-ridden institutions in Italian society.⁴ Furthermore, while we may doubt that ordinary citizens have encountered corruption in other scenarios (e.g., public procurements), participants are likely to have a more concrete idea of how corruption in the health sector operates. Finally, since hospitals in Italy are public institutions, individuals should expect impartial treatment, and any personal favoritism is likely to be understood as corruption. Overall, the framing brings a measure of realism, and affords greater confidence that behavior in the lab will more faithfully reflect choices in real life.

³Although standard practice is to use neutral language, I deliberately chose to frame the experiment in order to simulate a real-life corrupt transaction. As noted by Harrison and List (2004), abstract context-free experiments do not necessarily provide more general findings if the context itself is relevant to the decision-problem facing participants. Empirically, studies yield mixed results concerning the influence of framing: while Barr and Serra (2010) find evidence of framing effects, Abbink and Hennig-Schmidt (2006) find that loaded language does not make a difference in the corruption game they study.

⁴A 2013 survey by Transparency International revealed that 54% of Italians rated the medical services in their country as either "corrupt" or "very corrupt."

¹The decisions of a small number of participants who were either foreigners or born in Central Italy are not analyzed.

 $^{^{2}}$ The NIU sessions sought to enroll a maximum of 24 participants, while the SIU sessions sought to enroll a maximum of 32 participants. However, it was not always possible to ensure a full session in all cases.

Interactions take place between participants assigned to one of three roles: Nurse, Early Patient (PE), or Late Patient (PL). Patients are told to imagine that they are waiting in line to see the doctor, but face different wait times depending on whether they are in the role of PL or PE. Waiting is costly for PLs, but they can potentially skip the line by offering the Nurse a "gift" in exchange for faster service. However, PEs are harmed by this transaction, and must decide whether to punish corrupt Nurses by reporting them to the hospital administration. The experimental manipulation, described below, relates to the efficiency of this reporting mechanism.

Overall, the experiment draws inspiration from the designs employed by Barr and Serra (2010) and Cameron et al. (2009).⁵ However, in contrast to these studies, the present paper is primarily interested in how social norms and institutions affect the decision to blow the whistle on corruption (as opposed to the decision to engage in bribery). Therefore, in my analysis, I focus attention only on the behavior of PEs, and the main dependent variable under consideration is the willingness of PEs to report corrupt transactions.

Participants were provided information about the various roles as follows. PLs begin with an initial endowment of 32 experimental currency units (ECU). Each PL is randomly matched to one Nurse, and has the option of offering this Nurse a "gift" worth 6 ECU in exchange for being allowed to jump the queue.⁶ If the offer is accepted, the PL transfers 6 ECU to the Nurse, but avoids a waiting cost of 16 ECU, and thus earns 32-6 = 26 ECU. However, as a consequence of having been skipped over, all PEs must now wait longer in line, and each loses 3 ECU. By contrast, if the PL does not offer a gift, or if his offer is refused by the Nurse, the PL pays the full waiting cost of 16 ECU (and therefore earns only 32-16 = 16 ECU), but the payoffs of PEs and Nurses are unaffected.

PEs begin with an initial endowment of 32 ECU, and are also randomly matched to one Nurse. Before receiving any information about the Nurse's actions, PEs must first decide whether they would, in principle, be willing to report a corrupt Nurse to the hospital administration, at the cost of a reporting "fee" of 3 ECU. In case a report is filed, the hospital administration may or may not impose a fine on the Nurse, depending on the treatment condition (described below).

Importantly, the PE's expression of a "willingness to report" results in an *actual* report only if the Nurse has, in fact, accepted a gift. By contrast, even if the PE is willing to report, a report is not filed if the Nurse has chosen to refuse gifts, and/or was not offered any gifts. However, so long as a report is made, the PE must pay the reporting fee irrespective of whether the Nurse is actually punished. Moreover,

⁶All exchanges are phrased as "gifts" or "favors" in the game. At no point in the experiment was the word "bribe" used.

 $^{^{5}}$ As in Cameron et al. (2009)'s experiment, the victim of corruption (the PE) is allowed to punish the beneficiaries. However, in the present experiment, the imposition of sanctions is dependent upon an exogenous institution (the hospital administration), which may or may not act on the report.

even *if* the Nurse is fined, corrupt PLs still remain at the front of the line, meaning that PEs lose 3 ECU for every PL who jumps the queue, irrespective of their own decisions. This feature ensures that punishment conveys no economic benefit to PEs.

Finally, Nurses begin with an initial endowment of 24 ECU, and are randomly matched to any number of PEs and PLs.⁷ Without knowing the decisions of the other players, Nurses must decide whether they would be willing to accept gifts from PLs matched to them, or whether they would, in principle, refuse such offers. If Nurses are *not* open to accepting gifts, then matched PLs must pay the full waiting cost of 16 Tokens, but no PEs are harmed.⁸ An exchange of favors takes place only if the Nurse indicates a willingness to accept gifts, and at least one of the matched PLs offers one. In this case, any (matched) offering PL earns a final payoff of 26 ECU, but all PEs lose 3 ECU for each PL who skips the line.

A Nurse who refuses gifts earns a certain payoff of 24 ECU. In contrast, corrupt Nurses' payoffs depend on both the treatment condition and the decisions of PEs. Specifically, the experiment is implemented under two different conditions, which simulate varying levels of institutional effectiveness. In the "strict enforcement" version, a corrupt Nurse who is reported is sanctioned 100% of the time. In this case, he forfeits any gifts he has received, and also pays a fine of 9 ECU, so that he retains only 24-9 = 15 ECU at the end of the round. However, in the "lax enforcement" version, the PE's report results in the imposition of a sanction only 50% of the time. The other 50% of the time, the Nurse pays no fine and keeps whatever gifts he has received. Importantly, although the incentives facing Nurses change across the two conditions, the monetary payoffs facing PEs remain identical: any report costs 3 ECU, regardless of whether punishment is actually imposed. The one-shot simultaneous game has a single equilibrium outcome: all PLs offer gifts, no PEs are willing to report corrupt exchanges, and all Nurses are willing to accept gifts.

In addition to the payoff structure, participants are also informed that they will play the corruption game for three rounds. Participants are randomly assigned to a role in round one, and will rotate through the remaining (unplayed) roles in random order in rounds two and three. This ensures that roughly one-third of participants are assigned to each role in every round.⁹ Participants are also rematched in every round, and feedback on the outcome of interactions in all rounds is provided only

⁷This matching procedure ensures that the experiment can be run with any number of participants. The tradeoff is that Nurses face some uncertainty about the exact number of players who can offer them gifts and report them to the administration.

⁸The same result obtains if the Nurse indicates a willingness to accept gifts, but is not, in fact, offered any.

⁹However, since the number of participants in each session may not equal a multiple of three, the proportion of participants in each role is not always constant (see footnote 8).

Covariate Datance across Subgroup Samples and Treatment Conditions											
	Sample		"Lax"	"Strict"	Diff-in-						
	Mean	SD	Mean	Mean	Means	<i>p</i> -value	z-stat				
A: Northern students at NIU											
Male	0.53	0.50	0.51	0.55	-0.04	0.58	-0.56				
Age	23.31	3.74	23.55	23.01	0.54	0.37	0.89				
Triennale	0.58	0.49	0.57	0.59	-0.02	0.81	-0.25				
Observations	156		87	69							
B: Southern students at SIU											
Male	0.46	0.50	0.50	0.43	0.07	0.49	0.70				
Age	21.80	2.68	22.02	21.59	0.43	0.44	0.22				
Triennale	0.69	0.46	0.67	0.71	-0.04	0.67	-0.43				
Observations	95		46	49							
C: Southern students at NIU											
Male	0.55	0.50	0.63	0.47	0.16	0.07	1.80				
Age	25.27	3.59	25.29	25.24	0.05	0.94	-0.24				
Triennale	0.45	0.50	0.55	0.34	0.20	0.03	2.24				
Observations	120		62	58							

 Table 1

 Covariate Balance across Subgroup Samples and Treatment Conditions

Note: p-values derived from two-sided *t*-tests. *z*-statistics from non-parametric tests-of-proportions (for Male and Triennale) and Wilcoxon rank-sum tests (for Age) are also displayed. The difference in the proportion of Triennale students is significant at the 5% level for Southerners enrolled at NIU (Panel C).

at the conclusion of the session. Finally, participants are provided with a summary of these rules when making their decisions.¹⁰

Participants

The data reported in this paper are drawn from 371 participants: 156 Northerners at NIU, 120 Southerners at NIU, and 95 Southerners at SIU.¹¹ Within each group, institutional treatments were randomly assigned at the level of the experimental session, with half of the sessions being selected to implement the "strict enforcement" condition, and the remainder implementing the "lax enforcement" version. Participants were unaware that there were two versions of the experiment.

In the overall sample, 51.8% of the participants were male (NIU: 53.6%, SIU: 46.3%), and the median age was 23 years (NIU: 24, SIU: 21). 56.9% of the overall sample is composed of *triennale* students (NIU: 52.5%, SIU: 69.5%), while the remainder is made up of *magistrale* students.¹² Table 1 compares demographic

¹⁰In a post-experimental survey, the vast majority of participants rated their own understanding of the game as excellent.

¹¹Northerners are defined as participants from the following regions: Bolzano, Emilia-Romagna, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Liguria, Lombardia, Piemonte, Toscana, Trento, Valle d'Aosta, and the Veneto. Southern regions include: Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Molise, Puglia, and Sicilia.

¹²In the Italian higher education system, the *triennale* is roughly equivalent to a three-year undergraduate degree, while the *magistrale* usually includes an additional two years of instruction.

characteristics across treatment conditions for the three subgroups: Northerners at NIU, Southerners at SIU, and Southerners at NIU. Aside from the proportion of *triennale* students among Southerners enrolled at NIU, there are no statistically significant differences across treatment conditions.

Research questions

If all individuals are perfectly selfish, nobody would report corruption in either of the institutional conditions, since reporting leaves PEs strictly worse off. However, if PEs are motivated by a norm of accountability, they may choose to denounce corrupt Nurses despite the monetary disincentives. The literature also shows that accountability norms can differ across societies (Cameron et al., 2009) in ways that may be related to the institutional environment (Bauhr and Grimes, 2014; Persson et al., 2012). The experiment therefore addresses the following research questions:

- 1. Are participants from societies with higher levels of corruption less willing to report bribery in comparison to participants from societies experiencing lower levels of corruption?
- 2. Do these effects depend upon the quality of enforcement institutions (i.e., the probability that these reports will be acted upon)?

RESULTS

Overall, 220 out of 371 participants (59.3%) indicated a willingness to report a corrupt Nurse. As a preliminary step, we can break this number down in two ways. First, pooling both institutional conditions, we observe very little difference between the subgroups: 57.1% of Northerners indicate a willingness to report, compared to 57.9% of Southerners at SIU, and 63.3% of Southerners at NIU. Second, pooling all three subgroups, we find evidence of an institutional effect: while only 51.8% of participants in the lax enforcement treatment are willing to report, this number rises to 67.8% in the strict enforcement treatment.

Next, I consider the possibility that Northerners and Southerners may behave differently depending upon the institutional condition to which they have been assigned. This interaction effect is illustrated in Figure 2. Moving from lax to strict enforcement increases reporting from 52.9% to 62.3% among Northerners, from 50.0% to 65.3% among Southerners at SIU, and from 51.6% to 75.9% among Southerners at NIU. These latter results suggest that individuals from high-corruption societies are not "culturally" predisposed to tolerate malfeasance. Rather, when facing the same institutional environments, Southern Italians appear to be just as vigilant as their Northern counterparts, if not more so.

To check the statistical significance of these findings, Table 2 presents results from linear probability models regressing the willingness to report on dummies for the enforcement condition (*Strict*) and sample subgroup. I report both

			8		8	1					
	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)		
Strict	0.158		0.158		0.094		0.201		0.117		
	(0.050)	0.01	(0.051)	0.01	(0.080)	0.34	(0.065)	0.07	(0.062)	0.08	
South-SIU			-0.003		-0.029						
			(0.064)	0.94	(0.092)	0.75					
Strict \times South-SIU			· · · ·		0.059						
					(0.129)	0.43					
South-NIU			0.056		-0.013				-0.003		
			(0.059)	0.53	(0.084)	0.93			(0.077)	0.98	
Strict \times South-NIU			()		0.148				0.126		
					(0.117)	0.45			(0.106)	0.45	
North					(*****)		0.019		()		
							(0.072)	0.81			
Strict \times North							-0.107	0101			
							(0.103)	0.41			
Constant	0.518		0.501		0.529		0.509	0.41	0.519		
	(0.036)	0.00	(0.046)	0.00	(0.054)	0.03	(0.048)	0.01	(0.014)	0.00	
Base group	(0.050)	0.00	(0.040)	0.00	(0.054)	0.05	(0.040) Sauth S	0.01	(0.044) Northern	0.00	
	—		inormerners		normerners		South NUL		Northern	S + L SIII	
							South-1	NIU	South-3	510	

 Table 2

 Regression Results: Willingness to Report

Note: heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors in parentheses. p-values derived from pairs cluster bootstrapped t-statistics are also reported in italics.



heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors, as well as *p*-values derived from pairs cluster bootstrapped *t*-statistics (clustered at the session level) to account for the number of sessions (Cameron et al., 2008; Harden, 2011).¹³

Column (1) confirms that participants are more willing to report under the strict enforcement condition: the coefficient on *Strict* is more than twice the size of the robust standard error, and adjustment for clustering results in a *p*-value <0.01. Column (2) shows that there are no baseline differences in reporting rates between the three subgroups, holding the institutional environment constant.

Column (3) adds interactions between *Strict* and the two *South* subgroups to test for differential responses to the change in institutional conditions. Additionally, Column (4) pools *South-SIU* with *South-NIU* and considers whether the treatment effect differs between Northerners and Southerners in general. Finally, I address the fact that the largest difference in reporting rates in Figure 2 appears among Southerners at NIU. This observation is consistent with the self-selection of individuals who are fed-up with corruption to attend university outside of the South. Accordingly, Column (5) tests whether the treatment effect differs between the South-NIU subgroup (e.g., migrants) and participants who remain in their home regions.

¹³STATA packages to estimate pairs cluster bootstrap models are provided by Esarey and Menger (2017).

Overall, none of the interactions in Columns (3)–(5) is statistically significant, indicating that the size of the treatment effect is similar across various partitions of the sample. However, a comparison of the coefficient on *Strict* across Columns (3) and (4) reveals an additional aspect of the main treatment effect. Specifically, Column (4) indicates that better institutions increased reporting by 20.1% among Southern participants, while Column (3) estimates that the corresponding treatment effect for Northerners is only 9.4% (n.s.). Thus, even though it is not possible to statistically distinguish the size of the treatment effect across subgroups, the results taken together suggest that the main treatment effect is driven most prominently by the behavior of Southern participants.

Additional robustness tests are reported in the Online appendix. Briefly, I show that the main treatment effect does not differ between the 2013 and 2016 waves of the experiment, and also that there are no "carry-over" effects from decisions taken in the PL and Nurse roles in previous rounds. I also drop subgroups one at a time to ensure that the results do not depend upon the inclusion of any particular subgroup. The main findings remain substantively unchanged across all specifications.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In sum, the experimental results offer little support for the idea that a "culture of corruption" underlies the tolerance of illicit practices (at least among Italians). When faced with the same institutional environment, Southerners are not more "culturally" predisposed to tolerate malfeasance as compared to their Northern counterparts. Rather, the experiment shows that individuals from a "high-corruption" society can indeed be engaged in grassroots monitoring, provided that the right institutional arrangements are in place. These results thus highlight the importance of institutional quality in shaping accountability norms.

The ability to distinguish between the institutional versus normative drivers of bottom-up accountability has important policy implications. If citizens are socialized into a "culture of corruption," then institutional reforms are unlikely to unleash a wellspring of popular action, and greater accountability most likely arises from more vigilant top-down monitoring. By contrast, if (as suggested by this article) citizens in highly-corrupt societies are responsive to institutional incentives, then it may be possible to harness this popular indignation in the fight against corruption, so long as the necessary institutional tools are available.

More generally, the findings suggest that "bottom-up" and "top-down" enforcement efforts may be mutually reinforcing. In particular, at the outset, enforcement authorities can demonstrate their credibility by acting upon citizen reports and punishing high-profile perpetrators. These actions then serve to strengthen the belief that citizens are now facing a "strict enforcement" regime, and thereby generate more frequent "fire alarms" from the public. Finally, the loop is closed as greater civic engagement multiplies the investigatory and

prosecutorial capacities of enforcement authorities, resulting in even higher punishment probabilities.¹⁴

Yet while the experimental results suggest that such a virtuous cycle is indeed possible, they also raise several questions about the scope conditions under which such a process might occur. How representative are North and South Italy of "honest" and "corrupt" societies more generally? How might these results depend upon the specific situational context (i.e., the hospital setting) examined? And given that whistleblowing in real life is rarely anonymous, how might social considerations (i.e., publicly playing the "hero" or the "rat") influence individual decision-making in different societies?

As Cameron et al. (2009) note, the relationship between corruption exposure and accountability norms is extremely complex, and this paper is one of the first to study this phenomenon with an eye towards incorporating institutional effects. However, more research on a wider range of societies with differing levels of corruption and institutional effectiveness is needed to fully resolve these outstanding questions.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

To view supplementary material for this article, please visit https://doi.org/10. 1017/XPS.2017.26

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¹⁴See Manion (2009) for a description of a similar process in 1970s Hong Kong.

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