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POLITICAL SCIENCE APPROACHES TO INTEGRITY AND CORRUPTION

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Abstract: Integrity ought logically to be a particularly important concept within political science. If those acting within the political system do not have integrity, our ability to trust them, to have confidence in their actions, and perhaps even to consider them legitimate can be challenged. Indeed, the very concept of integrity goes some way towards underwriting positive views of political actors. Yet, despite this importance, political science as a discipline has perhaps focused too little on questions of integrity. Where political science has looked at the subject of integrity, it has often done so without using the specific linguistic formulation "integrity". Most commonly, the focus has instead been on "corruption"—a strand of research which has produced results that cannot always be translated into discussions of integrity, by virtue of its narrower focus upon the "negative pole" of public ethics. Other measures, such as "Quality of Government", focus on positive attributes, notably impartiality, but this also fails fully to capture the notion of integrity: dishonesty can be impartial. Specific formal "codes" used within public life and among political practitioners can be much more nuanced than the most widely used measures, and can be much closer to what we understand—academically—as "integrity". This paper argues that the hard conceptual and empirical work of elaborating integrity into a fully operationalizable concept offers the potential reward of an analytical concept that is more closely aligned with political reality.

Key words: integrity; corruption; public ethics; politics.

Introduction

Any political system can be evaluated on at least two criteria: the extent to which the system produces the "outputs" desired by its citizens, and the *process* by which those outputs come about. Both of these are likely to be important for the long-term stability of a given political system (cf. Easton 1965). In broad terms, academic discussion in political science has tended to focus more on outputs than on processes. In particular, there has been a strong focus on the extent to which the policies put forward by political candidates and parties match the preferences of citizens, particularly the median voter, and the consequences of this (see for example Downs 1957; Stimson 1999; Powell 2000; Klingemann et al. 2006; van der Eijk and Franklin 2009). The case for the importance of outputs is intuitive. Indeed, it may be possible to claim that the primary purpose of any political system is to produce outcomes that are desired by politically relevant actors (a similar point is noted by Easton 1965, 230). Yet procedural issues are also important; it matters how decisions come to be made and how

policies are implemented (see Rothstein 2011). And it particularly matters because issues of process go to the heart of many definitions of democratic governance.

The concept of "integrity" is important for any assessment of the process of governing; most fundamentally, it underwrites a belief that the procedural quality of governance can be evaluated at all. If those operating within government systematically lack integrity, there is no rational basis for assuming that publically available information about the quality of governance within a state is accurate. Even in less extreme cases, the integrity of those who govern still underwrites their trustworthiness (Rothstein and Teorell 2008; see also Weatherford 1992, 155; Levi and Stoker 2000). Whilst the importance of trust in those who govern has been appreciated for decades (see esp. Miller 1974), such trust can be positively harmful when the governors themselves are not trustworthy. Simply stated, integrity is a crucially important factor underlying how citizens perceive, and relate to, their state.

The integrity of those who govern is not, then, a trivial matter. It might therefore be imagined that the issue of integrity would attract a lot of academic attention. Yet, despite its obvious importance, there is relatively little work in political science that focuses directly on the topic of integrity. Indeed, there is little agreement in existing studies about the very "meaning" of integrity.

This article provides a review of differing conceptualisations of "integrity" used both within political science, and within broader political discourses. In order to consider the utility of these interpretations, attention is focused on the role of integrity in political systems and how it should best be assessed.

The role of integrity

As Arthur Miller (1974, 951) observed, "a democratic political system cannot survive for long without the support of a majority of its citizens". Here, (lack of) support was conceptualized primarily in terms of the now-familiar US National Election Studies (NES) "trust in government" questions (Miller 1974, 954). Whilst it is certainly important to know whether citizens trust those who govern them, one question that naturally follows is whether they *should* trust them. Often in discussions about political trust, it is just assumed that those who govern ought to be trusted, or at least are essentially trustworthy (Hetherington 1998). Trusting someone places you under their power; and as trust is usually one-directional (you trust them without a reciprocal agreement) you have little recourse if they harm your interests (Hardin 1999, 28; Levi and Stoker 2000, 476).

If those who govern have integrity, to the extent it can be evaluated, this partly justifies placing trust in them. Integrity—in a general sense—means that those who govern are not mendacious, that they are not trying to harm your interests, and that they are not actively attempting to conceal information. Thus, integrity acts as a lubricant for political systems. It allows citizens to assume that those who govern are at least working in an open and honest way, and in turn they are given sufficient power (in terms of trust, or authority) and resources (for example, in terms of tax) to act authoritatively (on the "virtuous circle" effect of high trust in political authorities, see Hetherington 1998; della Porta 2000). If those who govern do *not* have integrity, to that extent it can be evaluated, then trust placed in them is in fact misplaced. Such trust allows them to consolidate their positions, and continue their (unjust) activities.

Thus, for citizens, integrity serves a "validating" function. In turn, for those who govern, knowing that others within the political system also have integrity allows business to be conducted more efficiently than would otherwise be possible: it removes the need to question motives and guard against potential fraud and duplicity. Theoretically, this should reduce internal costs and increase efficiency, as there is no need to hedge against improper actions by political rivals. Even internally, then, integrity provides a rationale for considering other actors trustworthy[1].

The argument that integrity underwrites a judgement that the authorities are trustworthy applies to a wide variety of political systems. However, the necessity of integrity, or trust, or even perceptions of legitimacy, applies less strongly to non-democratic regimes. Yet this does not mean that integrity is irrelevant in non-democracies. Indeed, (*ceteris paribus*) the higher the level of integrity within a state, the better the "outcomes" of that state—in terms of health, wealth, and well-being (Rothstein 2011). Public integrity can turn the fortunes of disadvantaged states for the better, whilst lack of integrity can squander advantages (Rothstein 2011, ch.9). This appears to be true for all system types (*ibid.*). It is thus no exaggeration to say that integrity is of central importance to the business of governing.

If it is the role of integrity to serve an underwriting function for judgements of trustworthiness, then the conceptualisation of integrity—and our measurement of it—must be able to support such judgements. It is to this question that this article now turns.

Existing conceptualisations in political science

Political corruption

Probably the most common approach to the study of integrity looks at its inverse: political corruption. In political science literature, as in many other academic disciplines, the term "corruption" is very broad in scope. In this regard, it goes beyond many legal definitions of corruption, which have a tendency to focus primarily upon bribery[2]. Corruption, in its broadest sense, is about the acquisition of improper advantage. For example, a widely cited definition of corruption is "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain" (TI 2012)[3]. This definition of corruption, by virtue of its breadth, includes not just bribery, but also improper influence, nepotism, inappropriate *quid-pro-quo* arrangements and so forth. In practice, of

[1] Discussion is limited here to assessments of the integrity of public officials, of one form or another, who can be considered (at a high level of abstraction) "governors". Of course, a similar discussion could also be applied to purely private actors.

[2] See, for example, the English *Prevention of Corruption Acts 1889-1916*, which in turn were repealed in 2010 and replaced solely by the Bribery Act.

[3] This, of course, is not the only definition of corruption; indeed, defining corruption has become something of an industry. However, it is most widely accepted definition, partly because of the influence of Transparency International. Moreover, this definition is congruent with earlier definitions; for example that given by Robert Brooks in his chapter in Heidenheimer's classic reader, *Political Corruption*: "the intentional misperformance or neglect of a recognised duty, or the unwarranted exercise of power, with the motive of gaining some advantage more or less personal" (Brooks 1970, 58).

course, such activities often entail financial exchange; but that is not necessary for something to be called "corrupt".

As has been noted, corruption is the inverse of integrity, and this has some implications for the utility of a focus upon corruption for questions of integrity. Whilst a corrupt politician (almost inevitably) lacks integrity, conversely a non-corrupt politician may or may not have a high degree of integrity. For instance, a politician could be systematically dishonest, and thereby lack integrity, without engaging in corruption as defined above.

The observation that integrity is not necessarily the antithesis of corruption is important as it shows a theoretical limitation upon the extent to which integrity can be understood within the political science framework, given the dominance of "corruption" as the analytic frame of "integrity" research. From the perspective of the role of integrity advanced above, a focus upon corruption cannot underwrite a view that those who govern act in good faith, and thus an absence of corruption cannot by itself justify considering them trustworthy. Game theoretic simulations have suggested similar findings. Evrenk (2011) provides a formal model showing that, under some circumstances, non-corrupt politicians have an incentive to support ineffective corruption regulation, since they gain a competitive advantage by being seen as "clean" candidates. Whilst such a situation may mean that the "clean" candidate is not corrupt (*per se*)[4], they certainly lack integrity.

"Corruption" thus cannot do the theoretical work that is required, conceptually, in order for us to use it as an inverse substitute for "integrity". Notwithstanding that, "corruption" can be an occasionally useful substitute; indeed, corruption does underwrite a *dis*trust of politicians. Lack of "corruption" may not be sufficient to suggest that the politicians are trustworthy, but it does indicate that they are at least not actively malevolent. This, at least, is helpful, since much existing work on "integrity" in political science is actually research about corruption. Moreover, a wealth of indicators covering a wide range of countries is available—thus significantly aiding in the task of conducting comparative research. Examples include: the Bribe Payers Index (BPI), the Global Corruption Barometer, the Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Surveys (BEEPS), and—most widely used—the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). Of course, these measures are not problem free, even if we define away the conceptual problems they pose. Scholars and practitioners alike have raised concerns about the extent to which such indicators provide accurate, valid and reliable measurements of corruption (see, for example: Philp 2006; Knack 2006; UNDP, 2008; Andersson and Heywood 2009; Olken 2009; Kenny 2009; Hawken and Munck 2009; Langbein and Knack 2010).

It is likely that the focus on corruption represents a historical "lock-in", given the investment that has been made over recent decades in measuring and recording corruption. This is a point alluded to by the UNDP (2008, 45) in their scathing critique of corruption research:

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[4] One could argue that such under-performing in creating anti-corruption regulation is not the "abuse of entrusted power for private gain", since not proceeding with potentially effective regulatory reforms is unlikely to be considered an abuse of power; unlike the situation in which a putatively effective reform proposal exists, but is actively prevented by a powerful individual. However, even the former situation (merely not creating effective reform) falls short of Brooks (1970, 58) definition of "the intentional misperformance or neglect of a recognised duty… with the motive of gaining some advantage more or less personal".

> Many… academics are critical of the methodologies used to generate these indices. Nevertheless, for academic users and researchers, the global coverage of data seems to trump data quality. After all, it is much easier and quicker to run a regression analysis using someone else's data, compared to the hard work of generating one's own.

The objective here is not to make the best the enemy of the good. "Corruption" is conceptually limited, relative to a proper understanding of integrity, and can be difficult to measure adequately. However, the research conducted using these imperfect measures remains genuinely useful, even if limited. Yet, the historical lock-in that favours work on corruption ought not to be allowed to define research in this area of the discipline indefinitely. The hard work—conceptually and empirically—of designing and implementing new measures remains incomplete.

Integrity

A direct formulation of "integrity" is rare within political science. Thus, unlike corruption, "integrity" does not have the benefit of a broad and deep literature, and a wide variety of measures to help operationalise the concept. Where "integrity" is discussed directly, the measures and analyses themselves often focus on "anti-corruption", with the implicit assumption that "anti-corruption" is the same as "integrity" (for an example, see the oft-cited book by Anechiarico and Jacobs 1996, titled *The Pursuit of Absolute Integrity: How Corruption Control Makes Government Ineffective*; see also TI 2011, 1; Scott and Leung 2012). However, notwithstanding the scarcity of data, both relative and absolute, some research still makes explicit use of the concept of "integrity". Most often, integrity is referenced in relation to systems of "integrity management"—those systems that ensure integrity (see, for example, Heywood 2012; Collins 2012; Webb 2012; Scott and Leung 2012).

Academic discussions about "integrity management" primarily focus upon questions of how systems of integrity management developed, the forms they have taken, and whether they place greater reliance on promoting personal values or on ensuring compliance with formal rules. Such studies have helped shift the debate away from an emphasis on anti-corruption, rather than integrity itself. However, the meaning of integrity is usually insufficiently defined or problematised. Instead, in much of the emerging integrity management literature, the focus has been firmly upon the "management" question (see, for example, Heywood 2012; Collins 2012; Webb 2012; Scott and Leung 2012). As a result, the meaning of "integrity" itself—at least as expressed within this literature—tends to be (implicitly, at least) reduced to anti-corruption, which is problematic in analytical terms.

Ironically, part of the difficulty within political science in developing a clear conceptual definition of integrity arises from the relative scarcity of effective measurement tools. Ideally, measurement would follow the development of a firm conceptual understanding of a concept; indeed, without such an understanding, the validity of any measure is always open to question. Yet, even imperfect and potentially invalid measures can spur useful conceptual research, which in turn can be used to refine both the concept and the measurement approaches. Indeed, something similar to this is happening with corruption research. Imperfect measures, such as the CPI, have spurred a varied and diverse literature attempting

both to refine our understanding of the meaning of corruption beyond "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain", and to critique, and thus improve, the measures themselves (see, for example, Philp 2006; Andersson and Heywood 2009; Langbein and Knack 2010).

To our knowledge, there are only two explicit measure of "integrity" that offer ostensibly comparative data across countries: Global Integrity's *Global Integrity Report* and Transparency International's *National Integrity System Assessment*. The Global Integrity Report comprises qualitative and quantitative elements, with the latter created through the use of Integrity Indicator scorecards, which

> [assess] the existence, effectiveness, and citizen access to key governance and anti-corruption mechanisms through more than 300 actionable indicators. It examines issues such as transparency of the public procurement process, media freedom, asset disclosure requirements, and conflicts of interest regulations. (Global Integrity 2012a). (http://www.globalintegrity.org/report/methodology)

Whilst this explicitly includes anti-corruption as an element of "integrity", it does not reduce integrity solely to anti-corruption. Despite the sophistication of its approach, the Global Integrity Report suffers from some drawbacks as a comparative measure of integrity. First, it covers a relatively limited number of countries when compared to measures of corruption, such as the CPI. Indeed, the 2011 Global Integrity Report covers just 30 countries (Global Integrity 2012b). Moreover, as these countries are intended to be a "sample" (Global Integrity 2012b, 3), some of the countries evaluated vary from year-to-year and thus the reports do not offer a consistent panel of countries across time. Secondly, the "overall score" in the "country scorecards" is an un-weighted amalgam of the "legal framework score" (i.e. a rating of the strength and utility the legal processes for ensuring integrity) and the "actual implementation score" (i.e. how well integrity is actually ensured) (see Global Integrity 2012b). It is thus theoretically possible for a perfectly corrupt country to nonetheless secure a rating of 50 out of 100 merely by having extremely good legal rules for regulating integrity, which are completely ignored in practice. This limitation is somewhat minimised by the availability of detailed data beyond the simple scores, showing across dozens of indicators exactly how the scores themselves were derived. Yet the existence of the amalgamated score itself is potentially misleading.

The *National Integrity System Assessment* (usually abbreviated to NIS assessment), conducted by Transparency International, differs from the other measures discussed thus far, in that it does not aim to provide a comparative measure of integrity in different systems. Instead, the NIS assessment aims to provide detailed information about the integrity of individual countries at a given point in time. However, the loss of some comparability (because the data come from different time-points) is compensated to an extent by the detail contained in the reports. Indeed, a country's NIS assessment provides a wealth of qualitative data about the regulation and enforcement of integrity, along with quantification of the data. Conceptually, however, the NIS assessments still approach integrity first-and-foremost as a question of anti-corruption (see, for example, TI 2011, 3). However, despite that, the indicators do provide a wealth of information about integrity under a broader conceptualisation.

The two measures of integrity discussed above offer a useful starting point for the construction of genuine, wide-ranging comparative indicators of integrity. Building such

indicators may, in turn, be a necessary precondition for further developing the concept of integrity, which in turn will prompt greater refinements of the measures themselves.

Quality of government

Quality of Government (QoG) is in principle a broad term; theoretically it relates to how well the government is performing on a whole range of ethical matters (for a recent, major re-statement of the conceptual meaning of QoG, along with a wealth of empirical analyses, see Rothstein 2011). In practice, as used by the Quality of Government Institute at Gothenburg (the main proponents of this term), the phrase relates primarily to the impartiality of the state (Rothstein 2011, 13). Impartiality is itself defined as meaning that "when implementing laws and policies, government officials shall not take into consideration anything about the citizen/case that is not stipulated beforehand in the policy or the law" (Rothstein 2011, 13). Conceptually, this is broader than corruption, at least where corruption is defined in terms of acquiring undue influence, since QoG allows us to assess the negative consequences of partiality of all kinds—even in situations in which the "partial" state actor gains no private benefit. One potential example would be a public official who has a systematic bias in favour of certain groups in society (the elderly, for instance), and therefore offers greater help to these people than they would to other groups. They are not (inherently) corrupt in their actions, as the expectation would be that they never intend to receive any personal benefit. Thus, whilst a focus upon corruption risks removing such issues from consideration, they would still contribute to a lower assessment in terms of QoG.

QoG also has the advantage of being "positively facing", i.e. it questions how much of a positive attribute is possessed by the government. Because of this, the conceptualization does not suffer from some of the limitations of "corruption": quite simply, the higher the QoG, the more integrity there will be in a system (*ceteris paribus*). This, therefore, allows QoG to go far further in underwriting a view that public officials are trustworthy than would a focus on corruption. If we, as citizens, can approach public officials knowing that we will be treated in line with the known and codified laws of the country in which we reside, it makes sense to trust the officials. Even if the laws themselves are unhelpful (for the citizen), the regularity and predictability of the actions public officials will take allows trust to be developed.

However, this conceptualization remains more limited than the broader notion of "integrity". High levels of QoG do not necessarily guarantee the highest levels of probity. By way of a hypothetical example, a regime that systematically lied about various aspects of governance would not necessarily exhibit low levels of QoG, so long as the lies were not part of an attempt to secure particular advantages for any group. Lies told for the purpose of presenting a (fictitious) positive view of the economic situation of a country would not inherently challenge QoG. However, it would be odd to say that a regime that was systematically (though impartially) lying has a high level of integrity. Similarly, in a point acknowledged by Rothstein (2011, 25), high QoG (*qua* impartiality) is compatible with apartheid regimes; racial characteristics are "stipulated beforehand in the policy or law" in such systems. In this sense, under such specific legal systems, QoG is more limited than integrity in how far it goes in underwriting a view of public officials being trustworthy.

Notwithstanding the officials' predictability, it does not make sense to trust someone who is operating within a system that is actively malevolent towards you.

As discussed, when attempting to understand public integrity, QoG has some notable conceptual advantages over corruption. However, in practice, the measurement of QoG relies primarily upon familiar measures of corruption rather than measures designed to take account of the conceptual distinctions between QoG and corruption. Such a focus upon corruption measures arguably obscures those elements that distinguish QoG research to (anti-)corruption research, and thereby reduces the utility of QoG for understanding integrity.

Political interpretations of integrity

Political systems themselves have also taken on the task of defining integrity at the conceptual level. These conceptualizations aim to elaborate the values that public officials ought to adhere to in order to ensure integrity. Here we focus upon how the UK public service has approached this task. Whilst there are inevitably differences in conceptualisations between countries, the challenges faced by the public services of liberal democracies are broadly equivalent, and as such findings from the UK case may be of more general relevance.

In the UK, two formulations have been advanced in this regard: the Civil Service Code, and the Seven Principles of Public Life. The Civil Service Code sets out the obligations of civil servants in the UK in terms of integrity according to four core values: integrity, honesty, objectivity, and impartiality. Each of these is elaborated briefly in the Code itself:

> "integrity" is putting the obligations of public service above your own personal interests;
> "honesty" is being truthful and open;
> "objectivity" is basing your advice and decisions on rigorous analysis of the evidence; and
> "impartiality" is acting solely according to the merits of the case and serving equally well Governments of different political persuasions.
>
> (Civil Service Code 2010)

Whilst this list explicitly includes integrity as a subtype of the general class of ethical behaviour, it is nonetheless helpful to view these four values together as a conceptualisation of integrity *in toto*. Indeed, it would be nonsensical to suggest that people lacking honesty and objectivity have "integrity" in the more general sense.

Somewhat similarly, the Committee on Standards in Public Life defined a set of seven "principles" that should govern ethical behaviour in government. Whilst, again, integrity is itself included as a separate principle, this does not preclude a broader understanding of integrity based upon all the principles collectively. The seven principles (Nolan 1995, 14) are:

> *Selflessness*: Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not act in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
>
> *Integrity*: Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity: In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards or benefits, holders of public office should make choices based on merit.

Accountability: Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness: Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands it.

Honesty: Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership: Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

Both the Seven Principles and the values outlined in the Civil Service Code can serve to underwrite the trustworthiness of public officials, to the extent that they subscribe to and apply them. These "principles" and "values" are especially important when considering how integrity is actually understood (conceptually) in real-world political settings. Importantly, these conceptualisations are far broader than the concept of "corruption" or "quality of government". This discontinuity is potentially unhelpful; the real-world political environment ought to weigh heavily upon academic conceptualisations (though need not override them). Holding to more restrictive concepts—both produces more restricted analyses, and moves analyses away from political reality—unnecessarily reduces the strength of our analyses, a point which reflects the recent powerful critique by French (2012).

Because such concepts are political codes, rather than academic classifications, explicit operationalisations of either the "Civil Service Code" view of integrity or of standards in public life are rare. Indeed, we are unaware of any attempt to measure integrity in a manner congruent with the Civil Service Code formulation. Standards in Public Life, as a conception of integrity, has however been measured. The Committee on Standards in Public Life includes a measure of this as part of their *Survey of Public Attitudes towards Conduct in Public Life*, which has been conducted every two years since 2004 (for the results of the surveys, see Hayward et al. 2004; Ipsos-MORI 2006; Hayward et al. 2008; Grasso et al. 2011). These surveys question "standards" directly—asking questions such as:

> Overall, how would you rate the standards of conduct of public office holders in the United Kingdom?

A clarificatory explanation is provided only if necessary:

> I mean how far Public Office Holders as a whole tend to be honest, act honourably and try to make sure they serve the interests of the public.

As is apparent, such questions probe perceptions of integrity, rather than the objective level of integrity within a system. Whilst probing perceptions is far easier, perceptions can be sensitive to individual high profile negative events. Moreover, probing such putatively complex issues in this way can sometimes be problematic, because there remains a risk that different groups of respondents will conceptualise the core concepts in distinct ways. Yet,

even though there are problems with such an approach, the patterns of answers gained from such questions do not vary widely by sub-group (see Grasso et al. 2011, ch.7), suggesting that at least the questions are interpreted in roughly the same way.

The task of measuring integrity directly, rather than perceptions of integrity, has not begun in a systematic fashion in the UK. Individual strands of relevant data exist, but there is presently no attempt to harmonise such data into coherent indices or variables. Consequently, this means that whilst perceptual data are the only available data, it is difficult to analyse whether these data are actually reflective of the underlying state of affairs.

Conclusion

Our understanding of integrity is conditional upon our conceptualisation of what it means, and our ability to measure it. If our conceptualisations are unhelpful, the validity of our understanding of integrity can be questioned. Poor measurement can compound this problem; yet, even the best measurement is unlikely to be helpful if our conceptual understanding is wrong. Of course, questions can be asked about whether the wider breadth afforded by a conceptualisation of integrity itself is necessary, or whether it just adds unhelpful complexity. It could be argued, for example, that impartiality itself could do much of the important conceptual work when thinking about integrity. After all, would it not be sufficient to ensure that everyone has a say in creating the rules (impartial democratic elections), everyone knows the rules (impartial reporting of laws), and that those rules are applied fairly and evenly (impartiality of process)? Moreover, would not impartiality imply objectivity, selflessness, openness, and (officially defined) integrity? Unfortunately, the answer appears to be "no": by using such an approach nuances, and subtle distinctions between other concepts, can be lost entirely. Impartiality may be important, but it is not the same as integrity; it is more limited, and offers fewer guarantees for citizens. This matters because citizens ought to be able to use integrity to make a judgement about the trustworthiness of officials. Restrictions here are unhelpful.

Ideally, then, the conceptual work of understanding integrity would begin in earnest, which would then allow the construction of comparative measures of integrity upon which more integrity-based research could be based. However, for practical reasons, it may not be possible to wait for our conceptual work to be completed before we begin the task of measurement. Wide-ranging, comparative, and reasonably well-constructed indices can create an interest in understanding and researching the concepts which putatively underlying them. Thus, the conceptual research need not always lead—but can follow—the creation of measurements and indices.

That is not to say that no conceptual work is available to guide us. In this article, putative conceptualisations of "integrity" have been evaluated according to whether they can underwrite a view that public servants are trustworthy. This, it has been argued, is the core of the work that integrity does within political systems. Such a view may be contentious, but it does provide an analytical starting point for exploring the meaning of integrity, its relationship to corruption, and how they can most effectively be measured.[5]

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