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THE PERCEPTION OF CORRUPTION AS SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL PRESSURE: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF CULTURAL BIASES

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Abstract: This study is an empirical approach to answering the question: are there any universal factors that account for the origin, diffusion and persistence of corruption in human societies? The paper enquires whether the perception of corruption in politics and economics can be tackled as a form of cultural adaptation, driven by exogenous and endogenous forces. These are respectively: freedom of access and management of economic resources, and the pressures towards human grouping. Following the analytical insights of cultural theory, developed by Mary Douglas and later Aaron Wildavsky, variation is introduced through the ways in which corruption is perceived through the different behavioral and cultural biases that prevail in societies. This research introduces a cross-country comparative analysis of 57 countries attempting to test quantitatively whether institutional pressure and emphasis towards social grouping are correlated with corruption perception at country levels.

Key words: corruption; cultural theory; anthropology; cross-cultural values.

Introduction

According to the World Bank's conservative estimates corruption has a worldwide annual turnover of over 1 trillion USD. In spite of the sophisticated and multidisciplinary approaches to studying the origins, causes, consequences and costs of corruption, there is still little agreement in the social sciences as to whether an all-encompassing theoretical approach can be fruitfully developed. What renders this task difficult is the tension between the universality of the effects that corruption exerts on the economic, political and business institutions, and the high degree of variation in the social and cultural factors that influence its scope and features. Moreover, corruption (both in politics and in the private sector) is a phenomenon that trespasses temporal and spatial boundaries; as no world country can claim to have never experienced corruption, and no historical époque has been devoid of such a phenomenon. It is because of these features, I argue, that so far no comprehensive theoretical model aimed at dealing with corruption has been successfully developed. Departing from this assumption, this paper proposes an experimental way of looking at corruption in society as a form of cultural response driven by universal factors, here defined as social and institutional

pressures. These pressures, that generate forms of cultural variations, make up the bases for behavioral biases that tend to prevail in societies and affect the general perception of corruption.

The leading argument of this paper is that corruption is one of the human responses that intervenes to adjust or to upset institutional performance. As such it can be interpreted as a universally adaptive (or maladaptive) mechanism that restitutes (or increases) individual agency under circumstances of high control from institutional and social mechanisms. Here, I am not interested in tackling corruption as a maladaptive mechanism, following the dominant stream of research that addresses this as an "incurable disease" of human society (Rose-Ackerman 1999; Doig and Theobald 2000; Johnston 2005), rather, I am concerned with the opposite perspective that considers its functional aspects in, for instance, facilitating bureaucratic performance, increasing political participation and even economic development (Leff 1964; Huntingon 1968; Montinola and Jackman 2002). By assuming that corruption has its own rationality, which may be rather devoid of standardized moral concerns of the social damage it causes, I am interested in testing whether corruption responds differently to the cultural biases which affect the performance of institutions in the perception of individuals, in the tradition of cultural theory (Chai and Swedlow 1998).

Cultural theory and corruption perception

There are three main analytical problems with the empirical study of corruption: its complex rationality, its universality in time-space, and high cultural variability. Anthropological accounts of corruption have been rather disconnected, although original, in their approaches and have, among many things, stressed the difficulty of dealing with this notion in a cross-cultural and comparative fashion (Torsello 2011). For one thing, the anthropological approach has revealed, through the richness of its ethnographic data, how difficult is it to relate the true understanding of the notion to the performance of state and local, market and even third sector organizations (Pardo, Prato, this issue). In other words, by reminding us, if that was ever necessary, that corruption is everywhere, even in the most 'sophisticated' democracies and in the top world economies, anthropology has contributed to breaking down the modernization and development paradigms that dominated the social sciences until a few decades ago. In spite of these contributions, anthropologists, with the only notable exception of James Scott's early work (1972), have been shy to compare corruption systematically across societies. In what follows I will argue that, a degree of comparativeness can be fruitfully introduced, while recognizing the clear limits of drawing generalizations on the cross-cultural applicability of corruption and, more importantly, perceptions of it, because of its universalistic nature. This approach, which is only at the mere experimental level in this paper, will be applied using quantitative tools.

An analytical investigation into corruption needs to start from some premises. First, when assessed for political clientelism (Gellner and Waterbury 1977), widespread corruption causes damage to a larger number of individuals than it benefits. Therefore corruption is not an economically rational strategy from a large group perspective, although it is extremely rational from an individual (or clique) perspective. This suggests that a rational choice approach is doomed to failure (Rothstein 1998, Rothstein and Teorell 2008). Secondly,

corruption assumes different behavioral patterns, interpretations, values and even ritualized features in the countries or regions in which is found (Torsello 2011). The main problem with an empirical study of this phenomenon is that it is mostly limited to the perceptions social actors have of the benefits and damages of this practice. Thus, an approach that studies corruption from the perspective of legislative and control measures is imperfect if it does not take into account both the actual and the perceived damage to the socio-political realities. Third, a normative approach that understands corruption as a breach of morality is also extremely weak. Here, ethnographic accounts have been conspicuously illuminating, proving that not only does there not exist a single set of moral norms which account for transparency and integrity in different political systems, but also that different moral standards can be introduced and followed at different points in time (Pardo 2004; Nujiten and Anders 2007).

The question is whether we can develop a comprehensive analytical approach that tests the applicability of cultural biases in order to produce a common outcome, i.e. the widespread and common perception of corruption in society. In order to frame corruption in a cross-cultural comparative perspective I will follow the analytical approach of cultural theory.[1] Cultural theory, developed by Mary Douglas (1970, 1982), constitutes one of the most comprehensive theoretical models in the social sciences that takes into account the complexity of socio-cultural forces influencing both individual and group action. Its main strength is that its methodology focuses on two primary control mechanisms of human existence: control of resources and sociality. The first is expressed as the pressure humans feel under to fit in within institutions, or "systems of classification" governing the control and management of resources (and power). This is called grid. In developing her idea of grid, Douglas started from a comparison of the categories that constitute a world view. In her view, grid is "the scope and coherent articulation of a system of classification as one social dimension in which an individual must find himself" (Douglas 2003, 62). Grid is the sum of those social arrangements perceived by the individual as a classification system that determines the environment in which all forms of social action (and hence of economic production) take place. On the other hand, the second category refers to the pressure felt by individuals to increase or decrease social interaction. This is called group. Grid and group mutually enforce one another and they work to keep the system stable, even if this does not happen in reality, or should it require a perfectly insulated social system.

Cultural theory provides space to account for social change by introducing four configurations of grid-group, or what Wildavsky termed cultural biases (Thompson, Ellis and Wildavsky 1990). These are individualist, egalitarian, hierarchist and fatalist.[2] Each of these four biases has its own characterization in terms of the degree of grid and group pressure on individuals (Table 1).

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[1] For a bibliographic list of the multiple disciplinary applications of cultural theory see for instance http://ponderingmind.org/cultural_theory/cultural-theory-bibliography/.

[2] To this a putative fifth initial position, called autonomy, is added, where both grid and group score equals 0. This would, ideally, refer to individuals who do not feel either the need for grouping, or for building ruling institutions. This vision, however, is distorted and partially misleading, as explained by the fact that man has been a forager for most of his life on earth and not a hermit alone (*18*).

Table 1. Grid-group biases in cultural theory

High Group Low Grid **Egalitarianism** GGPOS: **2**	High Group High Grid **Hierarchism** GGPOS: **3**
Low Group Low Grid **Individualism** GGPOS:**1**	Low Group High Grid **Fatalism** GGPOS: **4**

GGPOS: grid-group positioning code

Egalitarian societies (low grid and high group) perceive nature as ephemeral. They are more interested in managing human needs than resources, and less emphasis is put on economic growth than on harmonization of collective needs. They tend to avoid risk, or to blame others for provoking risky conditions and situations. Where there is economic recession or political upheaval, egalitarian tendencies may rise to a level at which excessive pressure is exerted on grouping. This may result in a generalized loss of trust and an increased strength of grid, which encourages a migration of individuals towards the following bias, fatalism.

Fatalists (high grid and low group) see nature as capricious and incontrollable. They tend to blame fate for their conditions and are, consequently, poor managers of both resources and needs. Economic growth tends to be interpreted mainly as an individual or a small exclusive group (clique) achievement. Risk is poorly valued; whenever possible this is delegated to others, or even ignored. Fatalists show a high degree of apathy towards the political performance of institutions, which make this bias the least trusting in the benefits of democracy and cooperation. Economic opportunities are, however, often exploited through the tendency to line up with winners when they appear. This position, in cases of economic and institutional crises, may develop into entropy and to a serious reduction in the scale of economic development. If it is successful, the tendency is to move towards the individualist bias.

Individualist societies (low grid and low group) perceive nature as benign, since they are able to see opportunities in risk-taking. They tend to manage both resources and human needs, pursuing personal gain through economic growth, and learning by practicing innovations. Individualists need a well-functioning political mechanism to maintain satisfactory levels of trust in grid, thus, a malfunctioning mechanism may produce apathy and generate fatalism. The basic optimism of individualists can be challenged by systemic failure and market collapse, because this is at odds with the invisible hand paradigm that dominates their world vision. In cases of repeated economic failure, the opposite tendency to increase both grid and group can manifest itself and move individuals towards hierarchism.

Hierarchists (high grid and high group) face the vagaries of nature, which they see as both perverse and tolerant. They are more interested in managing resources than needs, their

primary concern being to produce and maintain institutional order. They share a tendency to blame deviants for system failures, thus delegating risk whenever possible. In cases of crisis, transaction costs can become unbearable, affecting good economic performance. Transactions in this position are sustained by a bureaucratic apparatus that, by definition, needs to be rationally functioning, therefore unexpected economic failure is viewed with surprise, and blame is often placed on internal (system) failure rather than on external competitors. This is perhaps the most conservative position, in which escape is sought only in extreme cases of system collapse, and with similar degrees towards all the other three biases.

Rather than taking these as pure, insulated categories, however, Douglas and some of her critics suggested that it is in the proximity of cultural biases that more interesting insights can be gained, where different aspects of the four biases combine and account for social change.

Methodology

Douglas had developed the grid-group diagram in order to control as much as possible the issue of cultural variation in comparative cosmology. But cosmology is one of the fields of investigation where the highest possible degree of cultural variation is encountered. By contrast, in this paper I am taking the opposite perspective, studying a phenomenon which, in its basic manifestations, is almost universal, and hence attributing to it the cross-cultural variations that may derive from the way it is perceived under different social conditions. I will take a cross-country perspective which departs from the individuation of samples of the population's perceptions and values relating to grid and group. This is done using cross-national survey data sets, which although not representative of the whole population, can still provide a contrastive framework on which to expand and test the applicability of cultural theory. I do not wish to claim that the empirical data on which this study is based can provide an exhaustive interpretation of the variations and universality of corruption, because cross-national surveys tend to be imperfect and non-representative of the complexity of human society. My main aim is to test whether a cross-country analysis can detect meaningful trends in the study of corruption as socio-cultural perception. Here, corruption perception is not expected to impact equally within the four biases, thus a degree of relativism must be allowed in the model I will test. I am interested in establishing possible meaningful correlations and co-variations between corruption perception and grid and group scores, framing but not determining them within the four cultural biases. The following are the main research hypotheses:

1. Corruption perception strengthens in response to high institutional control (grid) of individuals' access to economic reforms.
2. Corruption perception is related to high pressure to create social groupings[3] in a society.

[3] By social grouping I mean the tendency to privilege social interaction, which can emerge spontaneously, or may have been mediated through institutional arrangements, such as in civic, religious or political associations. In the idea of social grouping, natural affiliations such as kinship ties are excluded to the degree that, because of their universality, they are deemed to be of scarce relevance to the model. Therefore values that refer to the importance of the family and kin group have been deliberately omitted from the analysis.

3. Low tendencies to create social groups and low institutional control of economic resources are the conditions under which corruption is perceived as a less optimal strategy.

Of course, cultural theory does not consider these biases as static compartments for two reasons. The first is that each human group (here countries) is composed of actors and groups who may tend towards different or even conflicting orientations in the course of their lives. The second is that contiguity areas are of particular interest, because they allow for a more complex conceptualization of how a determinate cultural bias may assume contradictory features at one time. Therefore, it is unreasonable to expect clear-cut results attesting to the incidence and cultural variation of corruption in each of these biases. However, the nature of these biases, with their different balances between grid and group pressure on individuals, may still inform us as to the trends in the comparative perceived functions of corruption.

The methodology of this research follows three steps. The first individuates grid and group scores for the sampled countries, and predicts the applicability of grid and group variables in order to measure respectively the degree of freedom in access to economic resources and the pressure towards social grouping. The second step defines countries' and world regions' positioning in terms of grid-group theory according to prevailing cultural biases. The third step tests the significance of grid and group with regards to levels of corruption perception.

Grid and group country positions

Concerning the first step, grid and group country positions have been computed through national datasets of World Value Surveys (WVS). [4] The normalization of WVS results has been performed on an overall sample of 57 countries. Taking the last complete wave of World Value results (2005-2006)[5], I have individuated 10 values questions relative to grid and group positions.[6] These are, for grid, importance of religion in life, interest in politics, importance of strong leaders in political systems, importance of having experts making decisions, and government deciding on environmental pollution. The group related values are independence as an important quality in children education, membership of church/religious organizations, the importance of making an effort to live up to friends' expectations, income equality, the importance of private versus state control of ownership (Table 2).

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[4] World Value Survey scores have been chosen over other similar databases, such as GLOBE or HRAF because they are more consistent in terms of time and have a comparatively wide coverage of countries. Nonetheless, because the number of countries varied in some questions, the overall sample could not be made larger.

[5] In a limited number of cases only data relative to the 1999-2000 Wave results was available. Our decision to rely on this data set is nonetheless justified by check-tests conducted on those countries which provided responses to all Waves. Over 90% of cases did not show significant degrees of variation in responses in the waves pertaining to the decade 1999-2008.

[6] The number of value questions is reduced with respect to other similar studies (Chai, Liu and Kim 2009). The 10 questions in this research were selected on the grounds that they introduce the highest degree of variation among the sampled countries.

Table 2. Grid and group value categories

Variable	Value	High	Low
Grid1	Religion in life	Important	Not important
Grid2	Interest in politics	Interested	Not interested
Grid3	Importance of strong leaders	Important	Not important
Grid4	Having experts take decisions	Important	Not important
Grid5	Government decides on environmental pollution	Agrees	Disagrees
Group1	Independence as quality of child education	Important	Not important
Group2	Membership in religious organizations	Yes	No
Group3	Live up to friends' expectations	Agree	Disagrees
Group4	Income equality	Important	Not important
Group5	Private versus state control of ownership	State	Private

The cross-country results are presented in Table 7 (grid and group scores) and their positions in the cultural biases is illustrated by Figure 1, where the X axis represents grid and Y group positions. The average for the grid score among all countries is 0.57. For this variable countries' positions are well balanced: 28 cluster above, and 30 below average. The lowest grid positions are those of Sweden (0.35), Vietnam (0.39), Norway (0.40) and Finland (0.42). The highest grid scores are those of Thailand (0.76), Mali and Iran (0.74), Brazil and Macedonia (0.73). All the Western European and Northern American countries score below average, whereas about half of the Eastern European countries are above average, proving that individuals still value the strength of institutions in many post-socialist countries. Eastern Asian countries mostly have low grid scores, whereas in Southeastern Asia high scores dominate. In all African countries (except for Ghana, which has an average position), institutions are perceived as important and influential in shaping human values. Latin America has a scattered pattern: Brazil and Mexico are high, while Argentina, Chile and Uruguay have low grid scores.

The country average for group position is slightly lower, at 0.45. In this case there is a roughly unequal distribution, with 25 countries above and 33 below average. This seems to confirm a general trend towards a decreasing global predominance of values emphasizing the importance of social grouping. Countries with high group positions are Nigeria (0.65), Brazil (0.60), Mali (0.60) and Slovakia (0.57). The country with the lowest group score is, surprisingly, Japan (0.28), followed by Bangladesh (0.31), Serbia (0.33), Sweden and Norway (0.34). Results in group scores are more difficult to interpret. The most visible trend is that Western Europe (except for Spain) and North America have low group positions, while Middle-Eastern, African and Latin American countries tend to have higher group scores. Mixed trends are observed in all other world regions. This outcome may suggest that values attached to social grouping are more complex to interpret and reflect less on regional cultural patterns. However, it is precisely this idiosyncrasy that can be tested to account for the variation in the corruption perception.

Testing grid and group

In order to test the applicability of the grid-group model I have introduced four variables: GDP per person employed (GDP PPP)[7] and domestic credit to private sector (DC) for grid, and GINI coefficient and annual population growth rate (POG) for group. Social grouping refers to the degree to which citizens in a country increase social grouping in response to population growth and to income inequality. As suggested in the ethnographic literature on informal social exchange, an overall increase in inequality may strengthen human predisposition towards the consolidation of social ties and networks as a coping strategy. The GINI index expresses the income disparities in absolute terms, which in my analysis refers to the social pressure on building group ties to balance out social differences. The assumption is that higher income disparities foster strategies for strengthening social groups. The second measure, the annual rate of demographic growth, represents social reproduction. I expected that the higher the growth the greater the opportunity to form social groups. Thus, the working hypotheses on the use of these variables are

1) Variables GDP PPP and DC are used to predict grid. The working hypothesis is that they are inversely correlated with grid: the higher the degree of generalized accessibility to economic resources (competitiveness), the lower the grid.
2) The variables GINI and POG have a combined influence on group as socio-demographic variables. High GINI scores, testifying to high degrees of social (income) inequality, would lead people to strengthen groups as a coping strategy. On the other hand, high population growth is expected to be positively correlated with human grouping tendencies.

The regression (OLS) models used as empirical tests of the two working hypotheses reveal statistically and substantively significant effects. In both cases, the variables of interest explain over 42% of the variation in the dependent variable (Table 3).

Table 3. Regression models for predicting grid and group

	Model 1 (Dependent=**Grid**)	**Model 2** (Dependent=**Group**)
Constant	.695***	.443***
GDP PPP	-.498***	-
Domestic Credit	-.249.	-
GINI	-	-.114
Population Growth	-	-1.667*
Growth*Gini	-	2.268**
R^2	.430	.423

Note: . = Sig. <0.1; * = Sig. <0.05; ** = Sig <0.01; *** = sig ~0.00. Slopes are standardized.

[7] This has been chosen over standard GDP measures because the former more accurately determines a country's general living standards, which is intended to measure the degree of accessibility to economic resources.

Correlation tests are included in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlations: grid and group

		GDP PPP	**Domestic Credit**
GRID	Pearson Correlation	-.612**	-.438**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.001
	N	54	56
GROUP		**GINI**	**Population growth**
	Pearson Correlation	.407**	.519**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.000
	N	56	56

High grid is associated with lower GDP PPP and DC. In predicting group, both GINI and POG perform notably worse in the regression model compared to their direct correlations with group. This is possibly due to the fact that the two variables are not mutually independent. In order to solve this problem I have introduced an interaction variable (GINI*POG), which isolates the reciprocal effects of these two variables. In this case the association is more evident, highly significant and positively correlated, suggesting the following: increase in group is observable in conditions of high population growth and high inequality, as well as low inequality and low population growth. Low social grouping is a function of high GINI and low population growth, or of low GINI and high population growth (Table 5).

Table 5. Group explained through GINI*Population Growth

High Group High GINI High Population Growth	**High Group** Low GINI Low Population Growth
Low Group High GINI Low Population Growth	**Low Group** Low GINI High Population Growth

These tests confirm the validity of grid and group as measures of respective institutional pressure on (economic) competition and human tendencies to form social groups.

Cross-cultural biases

Grid scores reflect those values that individuals attribute to institutions, and as such they are externalizations of the culturally constructed ideas of how people should deal

with exogenous pressures (the economy, for instance). Group values, on the contrary, are externalizations of desirable levels and patterns of socialization and reproduction, which are endogenous pressures. Therefore, through the combination of grid and group scores the four cultural biases emerge as graphic representations of those which, according to the value surveys, are screened as dominant values in sample population strata.

Individualist countries include all Western European and Northern American countries (except Spain, scoring as egalitarian). Japan and Vietnam are also individualist countries. Southern American countries are mainly located in the egalitarianist bias, with the exception of Mexico and Brazil, which score as hierarchists. China and South Korea are also among the egalitarians. All African countries are in the hierarchist group, save for Ghana, which belongs to the egalitarianist bias. The southeastern Asian countries are mainly fatalists, except for India that, expectedly, scores as hierarchist. The most interesting group is made up of Eastern European countries. These countries are scattered all over the map, having experienced profound institutional and values transformations over the last two decades. Among them, Slovakia and Czech Republic score as egalitarian, Poland as hierarchist, Slovenia, Serbia, Russia and Bosnia as individualist, and finally, Moldova, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Georgia and Montenegro as fatalist. Finally, most of the Middle-East and the northern African countries are hierarchist (save for Morocco, which is fatalist). The map of cultural biases presents a number of contiguity positions, which may appear interesting to the external observer, such as for instance, those of the USA, Italy and Bosnia. Cultural theory considers the adjacent areas to be zones in which biases change or overlap producing outcomes that may be interpreted in different ways. Among these, those of particular significance in the individualism-egalitarianism position are China, Spain, Switzerland and Albania. In the contiguity individualism fatalism category we find Italy, Bosnia, the USA, Serbia and Indonesia; hierarchist-egalitarianist countries include Slovakia, Mexico, Ghana and Peru; and Poland, Ukraine, Morocco, Georgia and Thailand are hierarchist-fatalist. The high number of these contiguity positions, which accounts for about 40% of the sample, is itself proof that it is difficult to individuate a static country positioning within the grid-group diagram, also considering that these positions have been constructed on value surveys. However, it may be worth analyzing further the correlation between the contiguity positions, and hence the degree of social change that these express and the level of perceived corruption. All the above mentioned countries, except for the USA and Switzerland (which present high levels of inner variations in forms of value expressions), have high levels of perceived corruption.

The cultural biases of perceived corruption

The final and main goal of this paper is to establish to what extent the perception of corruption can be related to the application of cultural theory to social diversity. I have attempted to achieve this goal through the use of three variables: corruption perception scores at country level, grid and group. The variable selected to measure perceived levels of corruption in the sampled countries is the most widespread global ranking of corruption, the Corruption Perception Index. This index, which has been criticized for a number of imperfections (Thompson and Shah 2005, Sampford et al. 2006), is still acknowledged to be the most comprehensive global corruption measurement method. It introduces a measurement

scale from 0 (highest corruption perception) to 10 (lowest corruption perception) on a sample of 178 countries in the Index adopted (2010). Although critiques of the CPI have argued against its usefulness as a whole, particularly concerning the idea of representing corruption through perception only, this is the most relevant aspect to my research. I do not support the analytical validity of the CPI; rather I have selected this as a variable because its use can be related to the perceived strength and importance of institutional arrangements and social group pressures in the sampled countries.

Due to the size of the country sample, breaking them down into four grid-group positions has hampered the feasibility of linear regression testing models. Moreover, the aim of this research is to test the relevance of grid and group per se, and not of the four positions, which, as forms of cultural biases, function more as reference rather than explanatory frameworks. The ANOVA tests were chosen with two goals in mind. The first was to consider the degree of difference between and within grid-group positions. The second was to calculate variations in terms of CPI relative to each of the four positions: (1) individualism, (2) egalitarianism, (3) hierarchism and (4) fatalism. The working assumption is that countries in position 1, determined by low grid and low group, might perceive less incidence of corruption. This is expected because the main hypothesis of this paper is that increases in grid and group correlate with higher levels of corruption perception. Therefore, by proceeding to measure the variations in CPI for positions 2, 3, 4 with respect to 1, it is possible to test the main hypothesis.

The ANOVA test has produced the expected result F (3,52) = 12.254. The variation in CPI between groups (mean square: 36.365) is remarkably higher than that within groups (mean sq.: 2.968). This suggests that countries tend to be rather clustered within their grid-group positions, whereas much greater differentiation arises between these positions.

Regarding the difference in CPI scores among positions, the average CPI scores for each of them suggest that the order from the lowest to the highest corruption perception in terms of positions is 1-2-4-3 (Table 7).

Moreover, Table 6 illustrates the results of the Tukey post-hoc test to gauge the significance and direction of the mean differences in CPI between the four groups.

Table 6. Tukey post-hoc test: grid-group positions expressed by CPI

GGPOS (I)	GGPOS (J)	Mean difference (I-J)
1	2	1.9909**
	3	3.3357***
	4	3.1667***

Note: . = Sig. <0.1; * = Sig. <0.05; ** = Sig <0.01; *** = sig ~0.00

Taking Position 1 as the lowest corruption perception, increases in corruption scores (measured as decreases in CPI) are registered following the same trend, from low to high corruption perception: 2-4-3. This result suggests that the increase in corruption perception levels co-varies with increases in grid and group scores, which are at their maximum in

hierarchist societies (Position 3, high group-high grid). Finally, upon calculation of the difference between the average CPI scores of high with low grid and group positions, the following emerges:

High Grid (positions 3,4) – Low Grid (pos. 1,2) = 2.49
High Group (positions 2,3) – Low Group (pos. 1,4) = 1.37

This suggests that grid variations have a stronger impact on corruption than group variations, but that the latter are nonetheless significant in expressing changes in CPI scores among countries, particularly when considering the overall relevance of group scores in the four cultural biases.

Table 7. Average CPI in cultural biases

Cultural Bias	Number	CPI Average Score
Individualist	1	6.7
Egalitarian	2	4.7
Hierarchist	3	3.4
Fatalist	4	3.5

Conclusion

This paper has attempted a comparative analysis of corruption as a cross-cultural phenomenon. Bearing in mind the complexity of the task and the limits imposed by the high degree of socio-cultural variation and approximation which the value survey datasets and CPI struggle to deal with, the research nonetheless presents a new approach. On the one hand, the bias towards a focus on the perception of corruption may be resolved considering that the cultural theory analysis of cross-country data frames the phenomenon as universal in its manifestations and outcomes, despite it being socio-culturally diverse in terms of perception. On the other hand, the inadequacy of value surveys that tend to depict countries' social realities as artificially homogenous wholes is clearly represented by the high number of contiguity positions

In this paper I have shown that there may be some general tendencies that explain corruption and its distribution across social variability. The first is that, in line with other findings of mainstream literature, excessive institutional pressure tends to be significantly correlated with high perceptions of the social incidence of corruption. As ethnographic and other studies have proved, this conclusion may suggest that not only weak, but also strong and intrusive state institutions may account for significantly high levels of perceived corruption.

The nexus between corruption and social grouping is more complex, and far from self-evident. This may have something to do with the interdependence of these two categories, as Douglas initially warned. The results obtained from the ANOVA and regression tests

indicate that countries characterized by high group biases tend to score higher on corruption perception, and this result is even more evident when high institutional pressure (grid) is added. On the other hand, in those countries in which institutional control and social grouping exert less pressure on individuals, there is less evidence of corruption perception.

Does this study perhaps suggest that corruption is not only related to the performance of governing institutions, as most of the mainstream literature assumes, but also to patterns of social interaction, or to the two combined? The answer is still far away. The ethnographic literature has proved, on the basis of worldwide evidence, that at least some (petty) forms of daily corruption are best characterized as social rather than political forms of exchange. In keeping with this, the quantitative analysis of this paper has set out to demonstrate that this may be more the case than is commonly assumed. Moreover, there is a need to address the validity of the cultural theory approach more openly and bravely in relation with the mutual reinforcing of grid and group as cultural expressions of the social world in which individuals live. However, more empirical research is needed to test the working indications emerging out of this study, in particular to prove whether claims on the universality of the phenomenon can be effectively contrasted with the behavioral biases influencing perceptions on the phenomenon.[8]

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