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From expert to lay theories  
about corruption



Gabrielle Poeschl; Raquel Esteves; Marta Ferreira



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Observatório de Economia  
e Gestão de Fraude

>> **FICHA TÉCNICA****FROM EXPERT TO LAY THEORIES ABOUT CORRUPTION**

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## &gt;&gt; RESUMO

Para comparar as teorias dos especialistas com as teorias leigas sobre a corrupção, pedimos a 388 adultos portugueses, 204 homens e 184 mulheres, que preenchessem um de três questionários que continham uma parte comum e eram constituídos por uma tarefa de associação de palavras e diversas escalas de opinião. Os principais resultados mostram que os leigos (a) associam fortemente a política à corrupção; (b) consideram que alguns comportamentos são mais condenáveis do que outros, merecendo diferentes tipos de punição; (c) estão conscientes das diferentes consequências da corrupção; porém, apenas o efeito negativo da corrupção sobre a organização social prediz o grau em que as práticas corruptas são consideradas como condenáveis; (d) consideram que Angola apresenta níveis de corrupção, nomeadamente de pequena corrupção, mais elevados do que Portugal e sofre mais as suas consequências; contudo, contrariamente ao que era esperado, a experiência de vida num país com níveis de corrupção mais elevados conduz à formação de opiniões menos, e não mais, negativas sobre as consequências da corrupção. Estes diferentes aspectos das teorias leigas sobre a corrupção são analisados e discutidos.

## &gt;&gt; ABSTRACT

*In order to compare expert with lay theories about corruption we asked 388 Portuguese adults, 204 men and 184 women, to fill out one of three questionnaires, which had a common part and were made up of one task of word association and several opinion scales. The main results show that lay people (a) strongly associate politics to corruption; (b) view some behaviors as more condemnable than others and as deserving of different types of punishment; (c) are aware of the different consequences of corruption; however, only the negative effect of corruption on social organization predicts the degree to which corrupt practices are considered as condemnable; (d) view Angola as presenting higher levels of corruption, namely of petty corruption, than Portugal, and as suffering more from its consequences; however, contrary to what was expected, the experience of living in a country with higher levels of corruption leads to the formation of less negative, rather than more negative, opinions about the consequences of corruption. These different aspects of lay people's theories about corruption are discussed and synthesized.*

**Keyword:** corruption, lay theories, condemnability, punishment, consequences

**JEL:** Z19

## >> 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Expert theories

A review of the scientific literature on corruption demonstrates the wide divergences between authors in relation to the definition of the phenomenon (Blundo, 2000). Political scientists have traditionally used the term corruption to describe “the misuse of public office for private gain” (Treisman, 2000). Economists objected that there is a great variety of corrupt behaviors that may also be observed in the private sphere, as revealed by the innumerable cases of corruption observed in international companies, trade unions, or sport (Hodgson & Jiang, 2007). Moreover, the traditional definition cannot encompass all acts of corruption, since these acts do not always involve private gain, but may have different motives, including moral ends (Hodgson & Jiang, 2007).

Considering the difficulty in delimiting the concept, philosophers view corruption as fundamentally a moral rather than a legal phenomenon (Miller, 2005). They argue that to describe someone as corrupt is to present him or her as guided by an appetite for wealth, status and power, expressing moral disapproval. However, there is also disagreement about deciding whether someone is a corrupt person because of the divergent opinions about what are corrupt behaviors (Gardiner, 2002).

Examining corrupt behaviors, Heidenheimer (2002) proposed that these behaviors may be categorized into different levels of seriousness, which he called “black”, “grey” and “white” corruption, and which also illustrate how public opinion may vary. According to his categorization, “black corruption” refers to acts, like bribery or embezzlement, which are almost universally condemned and which people generally want to be punished; “grey corruption” refers to acts, like patronage or favors, which are held to be corrupt by some people, not by others, or about which people are ambivalent and find it difficult to decide whether they should or not be punished; “white corruption” refers to acts, like string-pulling, which are generally viewed as mildly or “not really” corrupt, widely tolerated and found not to deserve punishment (Gardiner, 2002; see also Gibbons, 2010; Sousa & Triães, 2008).

Heidenheimer (2002) argues that these categories are flexible. For example, similar practices are more severely condemned and possibly punished, as one moves from the top to the bottom of the hierarchical scale or as one moves from traditional to modern communities. Practices that benefit the community are also less severely condemned (Sousa & Triães, 2008).

Regardless how corruption is defined, there is broad consensus about the fact that corruption is present in all societies. There is more corruption in less developed countries that have a less democratic tradition and a weaker judicial system (Seyf, 2001). Even if the relationship between the level of development of the countries and their level of corruption is not linear, there is a relationship between poverty and corruption (Transparency International, 2009).

This relationship is revealed when one looks at the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) constructed by the non-governmental organization Transparency International and at the Human Development Index (HDI) constructed by the United Nations Development Program. The CPI ranks the countries on the basis of how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be and attributes them a score on a 100-point scale, where 100 means that a country is perceived as very clean. The HDI ranks the countries on the basis of three indicators (life expectancy; gross national income per capita; number of years of schooling) and attributes them a score between zero and one, where one corresponds to the highest score of development. For example, when comparing Angola and Portugal, we find that the reports of Transparency International indicated that, in 2013, Portugal occupied the 33rd position and Angola the 153rd position with, respectively, a score of 62 and of 23 (Transparency International, 2014), whereas the reports of the United Nations Development Program indicated that, in that same year, Portugal occupied the 41st position and Angola the 149th position with, respectively, a score of .822 and of .526 (UNDP, 2014).

The differences between countries arise mainly from the type of corruption and its scale (Seyf, 2001). Petty corruption seems to be more frequent in less developed countries where people must often pay a bribe to obtain the services that they should get for free (CMI, 2009; Riley, 1999; Shah & Schacter, 2004). However, grand corruption is also present in more developed countries, as revealed by the many cases brought to light by the media. There is also the case of state capture, which refers to “the efforts of firms to shape the laws, policies, and regulations of the state to their own advantage by providing illicit private gains to public official” (Hellman & Kaufmann, 2001, p. 1-2).

Presently authors generally agree to reject the previously held opinion that the benefits of corruption might exceed the costs (Leys, 2002). They argue, on the contrary, that corruption produces numerous negative social and economic consequences (Riley, 1999; Seyf, 2001). Specifically, corruption triggers injustice, inefficiency of services, mistrust of the government, waste of public resources, discouragement of enterprise, particularly foreign

enterprise, political instability, repressive measures (against accusations of corruption), and restrictions on government policy (McMullan, 1961). Moreover, economic benefits and national resources revert to the rich instead of being attributed to programs and services, making it impossible to fight poverty (CMI, 2009).

These arguments are supported by international institutions. For the United Nations Organization, “corruption is a complex social, political and economic phenomenon” that “undermines democratic institutions, slows economic development and contributes to governmental instability” (UNODC, 2014). For the World Bank (2014), corruption undermines policies and programs that aim to reduce poverty and is the greatest obstacle to poverty reduction.

## 1.2. Lay theories

Lay people are informed about cases or suspicions of cases of corruption by the mass media (Tumber & Waisbord, 2004). The information diffused by the media is then discussed in everyday conversations, where experts’ opinions are mixed with testimonies, judgments, second-hand information, as well as with personal observations and considerations (Moscovici, 1984). Social representations are thus co-constructed forming lay theories about corruption.

This process does not imply, however, that lay theories are homogeneous. The conversations happen within groups that differ in their living conditions, their norms and values, as well as in the information they receive from the media they choose because they match their thought system (Bourdieu, 1979). Besides, all the members of a group that share the same references do not share the same representation because they differ, for example, in their life experiences (Doise, 1992). Finally, lay theories are flexible and they may vary according to the particular contexts in which corruption is framed and analyzed (see for example, Poeschl, 2001).

Studies conducted in Portugal show, for instance, that thinking about corruption at the national level produces other thoughts than thinking about corruption at the global level (Poeschl & Ribeiro, 2010): thinking about corruption at the global level brings to mind illegal groups and activities as well as a world guided by interests and divided between the rich and the poor nations, producing poverty, war and hunger; thinking about corruption at the national level brings to the forefront particular fraudulent deals that occur in the worlds of football, politics and finances and are debated in the media. Studies also reveal that grand corruption is associated with the organizatio-

nal context, whereas petty corruption is associated with structural factors and, above all, with poverty (Poeschl & Ribeiro, 2012).

With regard to the actors of corruption, data reveal that someone who proposes and/or gives something to another person in return for not carrying out his or her duty is a person who occupies a position of power and commits an illegal, unjust offence, motivated by personal interest, money and ambition. However, someone who accepts and/or receives something in return for not carrying out his or her duty may be either an unscrupulous person who occupies a strategic position and accepts different types of favors out of opportunism and for personal benefits, or a person who acts out of weakness or cowardice, because of need or poverty (Poeschl & Ribeiro, 2014).

Continuing with the analysis of the representations of corruption, the general objective of the present work was to examine more precisely to what extent expert theories about corruption are reflected in lay theories. Five specific objectives were set:

- a. to look for possible changes over time in lay people's most accessible thoughts about corruption;
- b. to understand whether, in lay theories, there are categories of corrupt acts that are more worthy of condemnation than others, as suggested by Heideheimer (2002);
- c. to uncover what types of punishment are deserved for the acts grouped into different categories and know whether the acts view as more worthy of condemnation are seen as more punishable;
- d. to find out whether lay theories consider, as UNODC (2014) does, that corruption has social, economic and political consequences, to what extent these consequences are viewed as negative, and whether the degree of condemnability of corrupt practices may be predicted by the perception of their consequences;
- e. to verify our assumption, based on authors who present the consequences of corruption as particularly damaging in less developed countries (e.g., Riley, 1999), that people who have lived or are living in a less developed country with higher levels of corruption describe corruption more negatively than others.

## >> 2. METHOD

### 2.1. Participants

Participants were 204 men and 184 women, aged between 17 and 84 years (average age: 41 years), all but five of Portuguese nationality. With respect to their level of education, 106 had completed the primary school, 125 had completed high school and 156 had a university degree. With regard to religion, 293 of the participants were Catholics, 195 of whom were non-practicing. Their political orientation ranged from extreme left-wing (21) to extreme right-wing (9) but half of the respondents (190) declared themselves to be in the center politically.

### 2.2. Questionnaire

The questionnaire began by asking the respondents to write five words that came to their mind when they hear the word “corruption” and by asking them to rate the negativity of each of the mentioned words on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all negative; 7 = totally negative).

Then respondents were asked to assess the extent to which they consider reprehensible (1 = not at all condemnable; 7 = totally condemnable) each of twelve situations of corruption (see Table 2). These situations were constructed to represent the three – “white”, “grey” and “black” – categories of corruption of Heidenheimer (2002).

After this common part, diverse aspects of corruption were explored.

In Study 1, respondents ( $n = 120$ ) were asked to indicate which punishment was deserved by the perpetrators of the corrupt behaviors described in the twelve above-mentioned situations, using a 5-point scale, in which the points were labeled as follows: 1 = no punishment; 2 = admonition/reprimand; 3 = community work; 4 = fine; 5 = jail.

In Study 2, respondents ( $n = 148$ ) had to indicate the probability (1 = not at all probable; 7 = totally probable) that corruption might produce thirteen consequences (see Table 4) and to rate the negativity of these consequences if they occur (1 = not at all negative; 7 = totally negative).

In Study 3, respondents ( $n = 120$ : half of whom never had lived in Angola and half of whom were living or had been living in Angola) were asked to compare Portugal and Angola with regard to several aspects of corruption (see Table 7).

The last part of the questionnaire was dedicated to gathering socio-demographic data.

## >> 3. RESULTS

3.1. Is there a change in lay people's most accessible thoughts about corruption?

Globally 1809 responses were registered, among which 216 different words with a frequency of occurrence varying from 1 (86 words) to 131 (politicians). Table 1 presents the words mentioned by at least 10% of the respondents. As may be seen, the most frequent words, after politicians, were government (91), money (76), and theft (73).

*Table 1. Words associated with corruption by at least 10% of the respondents.*

	Frequency
Politicians	131
Government	91
Money	76
Theft	73
Politics	69
Football	67
Thieves	54
Security forces	45
Lies	44
Dishonest	40
Power	40

The words registered in Table 1 reveal that in this study the representation of corruption is largely organized around politics and politicians (altogether, politicians, politics and government were cited by 291 respondents out of 388, i.e. by 75% of the respondents). Football and security forces (police) are two other sectors that were associated with corruption. Money and power seem to be the motives for corruption, which implies theft and therefore thieves, lies and dishonesty. All these words, among others, were already mentioned in our previous studies, and politics, football and money were hypothesized to be part of the central nucleus of the representation (Poeschl & Ribeiro, 2010 for example). Traits of personality such as greed, lack of principle, ambition or selfishness were less cited in the present study, whereas groups such as security forces became more salient, a result which suggests a change from individual to contextual factors in the causes attributed to corruption by the respondents.

We may still note that the whole set of words has a very negative connotation: 6.08 on an opinion scale in which 7 = totally negative.

### 3.2. Do lay theories distinguish different categories of corrupt acts, as suggested by Heidenheimer?

In order to examine whether lay theories about corruption also distinguish categories of corrupt acts that are viewed as reprehensible to different degrees, we asked respondents to evaluate twelve situations of corruption. The degree of condemnability of the twelve situations of corruption is presented in Table 2.

*Table 2. Situations of corruption. Degree of condemnability (1 = not at all condemnable; 7 = totally condemnable).*

	Mean	Standard deviation
An influential lawyer manages to ensure that someone who committed a crime is not convicted because he offered a sum of money to the judge	6.88	0.40
At a friend's request a minister of the environment allows the construction of a hotel in a protected area	6.70	0.63
A football player is paid by the president of an opposing club to facilitate the victory of the opposing team	6.55	0.80
The minister responsible for the privatization of a company is appointed director of that company at the end of his mandate	6.20	1.22
A city council gives public lands, at symbolic prices, to the president of the local football club to build a coffee house	6.01	1.41
In order to avoid receiving a ticket that would revoke his driver's license for one year, an individual offers a sum of money to the traffic officer	5.98	1.32
An individual applies for a job for which there were 700 other applicants. He gets the job because his cousin is on the company's management board	5.81	1.48
A family doctor prescribes medications produced by a pharmaceutical firm that is sponsoring a congress in New York in which he intends to take part	5.80	1.46
A mayor authorizes the construction of social housing by a local company. Later, the owner of that company funds the reelection campaign of the mayor	5.79	1.45
To avoid failing his driving test, an individual offers a joint of smoked ham to the examiner	5.74	1.60
An employee does not report the fraud committed by his boss, in exchange for an increase in salary	5.67	1.50
An individual asks his aunt, who works at the Social Security Center, to speed up the processing of his application for subsidies	5.09	1.80

In Table 2, it may be observed that all the proposed situations were viewed as highly condemnable. An interesting point is that the consensus among respondents is weaker for the behaviors that are globally viewed as less reprehensible than for the behavior viewed as more so.

In order to ascertain whether the proposed situations represent the three degrees of corruption described by Heidenheimer (2002), we performed a hierarchical cluster analysis (using Ward's method and the squared Euclidean distance) on respondents' assessments of their degree of condemnability. The analysis revealed three distinct groups of situations, which did not entirely correspond to the three categories that were expected (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Situations of corruption grouped according to their degree of condemnability.

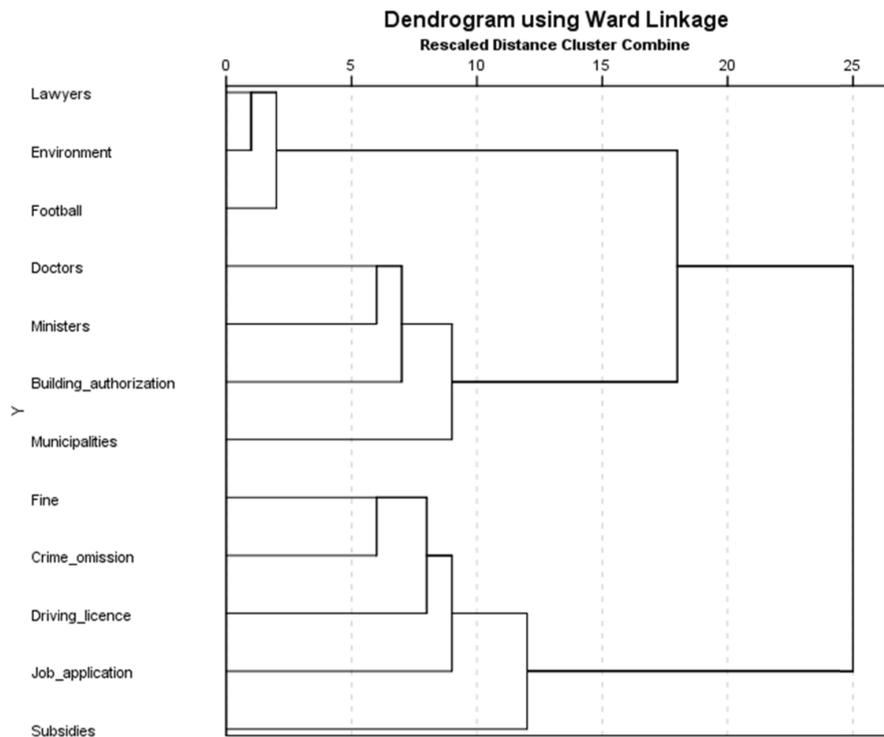


Figure 1 shows that the first group of situations includes behaviors that involve an exchange of money, buying or selling (buying a judge, a football player, selling land in a protected area); the second group includes cases of exchange of favors (doctor writing a false prescription; minister appointed after privatization of a company; campaign funding in exchange for housing

construction; construction of a café for the football club); the third group of situations comprises behaviors that involve small gifts and services that confer benefits to individual persons (avoiding paying a fine or getting a driver's license; getting a job, an increase of salary or subsidies).

To uncover whether there are types of situations that may correspond to Heidenheimer's (2002) three "shades" of corruption, we aggregated the items grouped by the hierarchical analysis on the basis of their means to form three variables (buying and selling:  $\alpha = 43$ ; exchange of favors:  $\alpha = 72$ ; small gift and services:  $\alpha = 81$ ) and we computed their average degree of condemnability. The analysis of variance with repeated measures performed on the means of the three variables indicated significant differences between the three groups of situations: for our respondents, buying and selling ( $M = 6.71$ ) may be viewed as corresponding to "black" corruption; exchange of favors ( $M = 5.95$ ) to "grey" corruption; small gifts and services ( $M = 5.66$ ) to "white" corruption,  $F(2, 774) = 212.32, p < .001$ , all three means being significantly different according to the *LSD* test for multiple comparisons,  $p < .05$ .

It seems thus that lay theories, like expert theories, distinguish degrees of seriousness among corrupt practices: the corrupt behaviors adopted by common citizens (without public or social responsibilities) were viewed as the least condemnable whereas the behaviors that imply an exchange of money in the exercise of a public office were viewed as the most condemnable.

### 3.3. Do the behaviors included in the different categories of corruption deserve different types of punishment?

In Study 1, respondents were asked to indicate which punishment was deserved by the perpetrators of the corrupt acts described in the twelve above-mentioned situations, choosing from among: 1 = no punishment; 2 = admonition/reprimand; 3 = community work; 4 = fine; 5 = jail. Table 3 presents the percentages of responses obtained by the five proposed types of punishment for the three categories of behaviors.

*Table 3. Punishment deserved by perpetrators of corrupt acts, in percentage.*

	no punishment	admonition/ reprimand	community work	fine	jail
Buying and selling	0.00	1.67	8.61	33.33	56.39
Exchange of favors	3.75	6.46	17.50	40.63	31.67
Small gifts and services	11.00	18.33	22.33	36.67	11.67

As expected, the three types of behaviors were seen as deserving different types of punishment,  $\chi^2(8) = 304.31, p < .001$ . Respondents considered that buying and selling should receive the heaviest punishment but only slightly over a half of the respondents (56.39%) declared that buying and selling deserves jail. Paying a fine appears as the more correct punishment for exchange of favors and small gifts and services. Only a small number of respondents (11%) stated that small gifts and services do not deserve punishment.

In other words, and as was expected, different types of corruption, corresponding to different degrees of seriousness, were viewed as deserving different types of punishment.

### 3.4. Do lay people consider, as UNODC does, that corruption has social, economic and political consequences? If so, how negative are they viewed and to what extent do they predict the degree of condemnability of corrupt practices?

To answer these questions, we asked respondents, in Study 2, to what extent they consider that corruption may have thirteen social, political or economic consequences and how negative these consequences would be. The principal component factor analysis performed on the responses extracted three factors with eigenvalue superior than one, which, together, explain 57.49% of the variance (see Table 4).

*Table 4. Principal component factor analysis on probable consequences of corruption. Percentage of explained variance.*

*Saturations and item mean (1 = not all probable; 7 = very probable).*

	F1 20.02%	F2 19.20%	F3 18.26%	
Corruption is likely to...	Saturation			Item mean
reduce trust in public institutions	.74	.13	.07	6.55
reduce trust in others	.73	.17	.05	5.80
threaten the stability of the government	.65	-.06	.33	5.97
discourage economic investment	.63	.26	.17	5.84
reduce trust in the government	.58	.11	.14	6.62
increase social inequalities	.16	.86	.11	6.30

increase social injustice	.23	.83	.08	6.51
contribute to economic impoverishment	.07	.58	.34	6.28
directly affect the more vulnerable	.17	.51	.42	6.39
indirectly affect the whole society	.18	.03	.80	6.11
make public services ineffective	.13	.28	.70	6.03
waste public resources	.11	.48	.68	6.30
threaten democracy	.44	.17	.56	5.92

The factors extracted by the analysis did not group the items according to the social, economic and political consequences of corruption, as had been expected. As may be noted, the first factor encompasses items related to trust, corruption being viewed as reducing trust in the government, in particular; the second factor includes items related to socio-economic consequences, which point more specifically to an increase in social injustice, and the third factor includes items which refer to social organization, namely to the wasting of public resources.

We constructed three scales aggregating the items grouped by the factors, after checking for internal consistency (reducing trust in people and institutions:  $\alpha = .74$ ; increasing social and economic inequalities:  $\alpha = .77$ ; undermining social organization:  $\alpha = .78$ ). The probability that the three types of consequences might occur is presented in Table 5 together with the degree of negativity attributed by the respondents to these possible consequences.

*Table 5. Consequences of corruption: probability of occurrence (1 = not at all probable; 7 = totally probable) and degree of negativity (1 = not at all negative; 7 = totally negative).*

	Probability	Negativity
Reducing trust in people and institutions	6.16	6.18
Increasing social and economic inequalities	6.37	6.49
Undermining social organization	6.09	6.33

As may be seen from Table 5, according to our respondents corruption is very likely to bring on all types of consequences. However, there are differences in their probability of occurrence,  $F(2, 294) = 11.84$ ,  $p < .001$ . Indeed, corruption was viewed as more likely to increase social and economic inequalities than to reduce trust in people and institutions or to

undermine social organization, according to the *LSD* test for multiple comparisons,  $p < .05$ .

The effects of all three types of possible consequences of corruption were held as highly negative, but there were also differences in their degree of negativity,  $F(2, 294) = 18.10, p < .001$ . Thus, increasing social and economic inequalities was viewed as more negative than undermining social organization, which in turn was viewed as more negative than reducing trust in people and institutions (all means being significantly different according to the *LSD* test for multiple comparisons,  $p < .05$ ).

To examine to what extent the degree of condemnability of corrupt practices may be predicted by the perception of their consequences, we performed a set of regression analyses on the three types of corrupt practices (buying and selling, exchange of favors and small gifts and services) using as independent variables the probability and the negativity of the consequences of corruption on trust, social and economic inequalities and social organization. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Predictors of condemnability of corrupt practices. Regression analyses (method: *enter*).

	Buying and selling	Exchange of favors	Small gifts and services
Probability of consequences on trust in people and institutions	.03	-.03	.00
Probability of consequences on social and economic inequalities	.19	.10	.13
Probability of consequences on social organization	-.03	.20	-.06
Negativity of consequences on trust in people and institutions	.02	-.00	.09
Negativity of consequences on social and economic inequalities	-.08	-.03	-.10
Negativity of consequences on social organization	.44**	.10	.52***

\*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

The regression analyses revealed that only the degree of condemnability of buying and selling and of small gifts and services may be predicted by the variables in test, buying and selling:  $R^2_{adj.} : .24, F(6, 141) = 8.63, p < .001$ ; small gifts and services:  $R^2_{adj.} : .27, F(6, 141) = 10.24, p < .001$ . As may be seen in Table 6, the degree of condemnability of these practices was predicted by the perception of their negative effect on social organization. However,

the degree of condemnability of exchange of favors was not significantly predicted either by the probability or by the negativity of the consequences of corruption,  $R^2_{adj.}: .07, F(6, 141) = 2.87, p = .011$ .

Thus, a stronger awareness that corruption jeopardizes trust in people and institutions or that it increases social and economic vulnerability does not imply a greater condemnation of situations of buying and selling (“black corruption”) or small gifts and services (“white corruption”). Moreover, no particular consequence of corruption is likely to predict the degree of condemnability attributed to the exchange of favors (“grey corruption”). Our respondents consider that corruption is highly reprehensible and triggers a whole set of negative consequences, but it seems that they do not have an organized view of its causes and effects.

### 3.5. Does the experience of living or having lived in a country with higher levels of corruption lead people to describe corruption more negatively?

In our third study, we asked people who were living or had been living in Angola, and people who had never lived in that country, to express their opinion on different aspects of corruption (see Table 7), comparing Portugal with Angola.

*Table 7. Opinions about corruption. Global mean scores and standard deviation (1 = not at all probable; 7 = totally probable).*

Corruption...	Global mean	Standard deviation
is practiced by those who hold political positions	6.23	.92
produces mistrust in the governmental institutions	5.95	1.20
produces negative social consequences for the country	5.89	1.28
increases social inequalities	5.88	1.12
produces negative economic consequences for the country	5.75	1.39
globally affects the community	5.65	1.26
produces insecurity in people	5.49	1.38
is visible	5.23	1.13
is tolerated	4.79	1.50
is practiced by common citizens	4.29	1.56
is fought by the government	3.24	1.72
is punished by the courts	3.14	1.51

As may be seen from Table 7, data globally supported previous results suggesting that, for most people, corruption is above all viewed as being practiced by politicians (Poeschl & Ribeiro, 2010, 2012). They also supported the results from Study 2 by showing that for our respondents corruption has negative consequences, namely producing mistrust in government, leading to negative social and economic consequences for the country, increasing social inequalities, producing insecurity in people, i.e. globally affecting the community. Corruption was also said to be visible, tolerated, but neither fought by the governments nor punished by the courts.

To examine the differences that emerge in opinions about corruption when the two subgroups compared the two countries, we performed an analysis of variance 2 (Country: Angola vs. Portugal) x 2 (Respondent: live(d) vs. have not lived in Angola) on the different aspects of corruption in test. The analysis revealed that respondents agreed only on one point, regardless of the country described: corruption is likely to be practiced by those who hold political positions. All other aspects presented differences between the two countries and/or between the two subgroups of respondents.

A comparison of the levels of corruption of the two countries indicated that corruption was viewed as unlikely to be fought by the governments, both in Angola and in Portugal (Angola: 3.13; Portugal: 3.35),  $F = 1.69$ , *ns*, although Portuguese respondents who live or have lived in Angola seemed to believe even less in the fight against corruption than the respondents who had never lived there (Never lived in Angola: 3.73; Live(d) in Angola: 2.74),  $F(1, 118) = 10.76$ ,  $p = .001$ .

Apart from that, corruption was viewed as more visible (Angola: 6.02; Portugal: 4.43),  $F(1, 118) = 92.29$ ,  $p < .001$ , more tolerated (Angola: 5.46; Portugal: 4.13),  $F(1, 118) = 57.93$ ,  $p < .001$ , and more likely to be practiced by common citizens (Angola: 5.08; Portugal: 3.50),  $F(1, 118) = 108.11$ ,  $p < .001$ , in Angola than in Portugal, whereas corruption was viewed as being more likely to be punished by the courts in Portugal than in Angola (Angola: 2.81; Portugal: 3.47),  $F(1, 118) = 15.19$ ,  $p < .001$ , even if both probabilities are low.

In addition, the significant interactions between country and respondent (practiced by common citizens:  $F(1, 118) = 32.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ; tolerated:  $F(1, 118) = 7.10$ ,  $p = .009$ ; visible:  $F(1, 118) = 11.82$ ,  $p = .001$ ) revealed that the differences between the two countries were particularly pronounced for the respondents who live or have lived in Angola (see Table 8). Indeed, respondents agreed in their description of corrupt practices in Portugal but disagreed when they looked at these practices in Angola: respondents who live or have lived in Angola considered that corrupt practices were more likely

to be practiced by common citizens,  $t(118) = 4.90, p < .001$ , more tolerated,  $t(118) = 3.80, p < .001$ , and more visible,  $t(118) = 2.42, p = .017$ , in Angola than respondents who never lived there.

*Table 8. Opinions about corruption. Scores by countries from respondents having lived in Angola and respondents not having lived there (1 = not at all probable; 7 = totally probable).*

Corruption...	Angola		Portugal	
	Never lived in Angola	Live(d) in Angola	Never lived in Angola	Live(d) in Angola
is practiced by those who hold political positions	6.47	6.17	6.25	6.02
is visible	5.75b	<b>6.28a</b>	4.73c	4.13d
is tolerated	4.88b	<b>6.03a</b>	4.02c	4.23c
is practiced by common citizens	4.32b	<b>5.83a</b>	3.60c	3.40c
is fought by the government	3.62a	2.63b	3.85a	2.85b
is punished by the courts	3.10b	2.52b	3.60a	3.33a

Note. On each line different letters indicate significantly different means,  $p < .05$ .

These results indicated that our respondents were aware of important differences in the levels of corruption of the two countries. This made it possible to examine the perceived effects of corruption in the two countries and to test our assumption that those who live or have lived in Angola and were more familiar with the realities of less developed countries were likely to attribute more damaging consequences to corruption.

Global comparisons between Angola and Portugal indicated no significant differences with respect to the probability that corruption may produce negative social (Angola: 5.96; Portugal: 5.83) and economic (Angola: 5.70; Portugal: 5.81) consequences for the country (both  $F_s < 2.00, p_s > .05$ ). However, for our respondents it was more likely in Angola than in Portugal that corruption produces mistrust in the governmental institutions (Angola: 6.12; Portugal: 5.78),  $F(1, 118) = 5.89, p = .017$ , insecurity in people (Angola: 5.80; Portugal: 5.18),  $F(1, 118) = 14.17, p < .001$ , increases social inequalities (Angola: 6.18; Portugal: 5.58),  $F(1, 118) = 16.29, p < .001$ , and globally affects the community (Angola: 5.91; Portugal: 5.39),  $F(1, 118) = 10.42, p = .002$ .

The comparisons of the two groups of respondents revealed that they only agreed that corruption is likely to increase social inequalities (Never lived in Angola: 6.03; Live(d) in Angola: 5.73),  $F(1, 118) = 2.29, ns$ . Thus, according to the Portuguese respondents who live or have lived in Angola it

was less probable that corruption produces mistrust in governmental institutions (Never lived in Angola: 6.23; Live(d) in Angola: 5.68),  $F(1, 118) = 6.65$ ,  $p = .011$ , negative social consequences for the countries (Never lived in Angola: 6.13; Live(d) in Angola: 5.65),  $F(1, 118) = 4.42$ ,  $p = .038$ , insecurity in people (Never lived in Angola: 5.89; Live(d) in Angola: 5.08),  $F(1, 118) = 11.11$ ,  $p = .001$ , and globally affects the community (Never lived in Angola: 5.98; Live(d) in Angola: 5.33),  $F(1, 118) = 8.42$ ,  $p = .004$ .

Moreover, the significant interaction between country and respondent,  $F(1, 118) = 4.66$ ,  $p = .033$ , also revealed that respondents who live or have lived in Angola were less likely than the other respondents to maintain that corruption produces negative economic consequences in Angola,  $t(118) = 2.32$ ,  $p = .022$  (see Table 9).

*Table 9. Opinions about probable consequences of corruption. Scores by countries from respondents having lived in Angola and respondents not having lived there (1 = not at all probable; 7 = totally probable).*

Corruption...	Angola		Portugal	
	Never lived in Angola	Live(d) in Angola	Never lived in Angola	Live(d) in Angola
produces mistrust in the governmental institutions	6.33a	5.90a	6.12a	5.45b
produces negative social consequences for the country	<b>6.28a</b>	5.63b	5.98b	5.67b
increases social inequalities	6.37a	5.98a	5.70b	5.47b
produces negative economic consequences for the country	<b>6.05a</b>	5.35b	5.83ab	5.78ab
globally affects the community	<b>6.18a</b>	5.63b	5.77b	5.02c
produces insecurity in people	<b>6.12a</b>	5.48b	5.67b	4.68c

Note. On each line different letters indicate significantly different means,  $p < .05$ .

In sum, it seems that the experience of living or having lived in a country with higher levels of corruption (62 vs. 23, according to the 2012 CPI index) does reduce, and not increase, as predicted, the perception of the negative consequences of corruption. The respondents who live or have lived in Angola seem to view corrupt practices as more common but less damaging than those who have not lived in that country.

## >> 4. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The objective of this work was to examine the extent to which expert theories about corruption were reflected in lay theories. First of all, results show that currently more than in previous years corruption is marked by political scandals, and that in the perception of its causes contextual factors are more salient than personality traits. In lay theories, as in expert theories, there are degrees of seriousness in corrupt practices. The situations in which public personalities exchange money to conclude illegal or immoral businesses are held as the least acceptable (“black” corruption), whereas the situations in which ordinary people ask for or give small gifts or services are viewed as the least worthy of condemnation (“white” corruption). The exchange of favors occupies an intermediate position (“grey” corruption) but, contrary to what is assumed in expert theories, all corrupt behaviors are viewed as deserving punishment.

Although in lay theories, as in expert theories, corruption is considered to produce very negative social, economic and political consequences, it is difficult to predict the degree of condemnability attributed to corrupt practices from the perception of their consequences. This result might reflect the fundamentally moral connotation of corruption (Miller, 2005) and the lack of understanding of the consequences of corruption often underlined by the authors working in this field of research (Rose-Ackerman, 2002).

Nevertheless, the result of the comparison between Angola and Portugal suggests that in lay theories, as in expert theories, there is a link between the degree of development of a country and its level of corruption. However, surprisingly, the experience of living or having lived in a country with higher levels of corruption reduces rather than increases the belief in the negative consequences of corruption. This result suggests that familiarity with corrupt practices trivializes corruption as people get used to encountering such practices in their everyday life.

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