

Operationalizing High-Level Corruption Tolerance in Peru: Attitude-Behavior Congruency and the 2006 Presidential Elections

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Abstract

Due to the exponential increase in the number and quality of empirical corruption studies spawned from the introduction of quantitative instruments, some necessary theoretical aspects of the phenomenon have somehow fallen behind in the academic agenda. One such example of empirical attention without proper conceptual construction is the case of ‘corruption tolerance’, or the acceptance and support of corrupt activities. The present study sets out to trace the emergence and employment of corruption tolerance as an academic concept, and building on past literature proposes a theoretical framework that operationalizes it on behavioral (or action-based) terms as opposed to previous attitude-centered approaches. To test the extent of the consequences of this departure from attitudes, an empirical indicator of high-level corruption tolerance based on the voting behavior of citizens in the 2006 presidential elections in Peru is constructed, and ordered logistic regression analysis is employed to address the effects of attitudes over behavior regarding high-level corruption. The results show that ‘attitudes’ only marginally affect an individual’s behavior, and hence they can best be understood as one among other determinants of corruption tolerance. This result highlights the necessity to reevaluate the implications for policy implementation of previous studies on the subject.

I. Introduction: Peru at the Beginning of the New Millennium

The day of September 14, 2000, can be considered a turning point in Peruvian politics, one of those dramatic moments whose impact is still very much present throughout the years, affecting the whole political experience of an entire generation. That day, passed 6pm, congressmen Fernando Olivera, Luis Iberico, and Susana Higuchi from the political party *Frente Independiente Moralizador* (FIM), presented the first videocassette of what would be later dubbed the *vladivideos* (in reference

to the President's main advisor Vladimiro Montesinos) to the attentive eyes of all the press corps and the Nation at large. On it, Montesinos was seen in a small office of the National Intelligence Service sitting down with 'turncoat' congressman Alberto Kouri, negotiating in monetary terms the latter's departure from the opposition party *Perú Posible* (PP) and his recruitment in the ranks of the government party. In short, the video was showing the effective bribing of a congressman to change his political allegiance, conducted by the person who had been publicly acknowledged throughout the decade of the 90s to be President Fujimori's right hand. Although high-level corrupt deals had always been something of a possibility (if not a rumored fact), such public display of the 'privatization' of a public office, as Rasma Karklins (2005) would probably call it, had never occurred in Peruvian history, let alone presented amidst an already convoluted climate of political instability and international media coverage.

That first vladivideo, as time would show, proved to be just the proverbial 'tip of the iceberg'. In the months to follow hundreds of videos showing Fujimori's advisor bribing and discussing corrupt (and other illegal) affairs involving members of all subsystems and groups in the country would be brought to light: From journalists, media owners, congressmen, military officials, and judges, to showmen, soccer players, and private entrepreneurs. The public moneys seemed to be endless and for the taking, until eventually the list of convicted figures included President Alberto Fujimori himself, who had to be extradited from Chile after spending some years running away from the Peruvian justice.

In an interview published on April 2001, the appointed Minister of Justice of the transition government, Diego García-Sayan, referred to the state of corruption in the country in the following terms:

[Referring to Montesino's *mafia*] "How did this huge corruption machine appear in Peru? Without a doubt, the mafia took over Peruvian institutions with the *tolerance* and interference of a big part of Peruvian society... What to do so it doesn't happen again? It's about, then, identifying the objective conditions that existed in our institutionalization and the *citizens' behavior that tolerated this situation to get produced and progress*¹. There are ethical and institutional matters that need to be identified to be able to face them and successfully fight the corruption phenomenon."²

But what does that supposedly *tolerance of corruption* mean, and why is it of interest? And more importantly, how can we operationalize such a concept in order to conduct proper, scientific

1 Italics are ours.

2 Translated from the Spanish. CARETAS, No 1666, "Anticorrupción, Operación Tenaza," April 19th, 2001.

political research? This discussion of corruption *tolerance* can be considered an effort to develop accurate instruments for the assessment of corruption and related concepts.

The present paper is structured as follows. Section II reviews briefly the emergence of the concept of corruption tolerance from the body of corruption-related studies more generally. Section III presents the literature review on high-level corruption tolerance (HCT), pointing out the lack of consensus on both its meaning and scope. Section IV discusses the suggested impact of corruption tolerance on the overall level of corruption in society. Section V proposes a theoretical framework for the assessment of corruption tolerance as a specific *behavioral* phenomenon (contrasted to a purely attitudinal one), adopting for such purpose a ‘vertical accountability approach’, and borrowing from the work of social psychologists in the area of attitude-behavior congruency. Section VI translates the theoretical commitments adopted in the previous section to the development of a purely behavioral indicator of HCT, focusing on the Peruvian presidential elections of 2006. Section VII analyzes the statistical relation between attitudes and behavior towards high-level corruption, employing data from LAPOP’s AmericasBarometer 2006 on the country case of Peru. Finally, section VIII presents the conclusions.

II. From Corruption to “Corruption Tolerance”

Corruption is a common blight that all countries of the international community suffer, albeit in different levels. Its distorting consequences are felt throughout all the subsystems of a country, with particularly corrosive consequences to economic, political, and social relations.

Despite the amount of corruption studies currently available, however, it wasn’t until the mid-90s that it became an important topic in social sciences. This ‘new interest’ in the causes and consequences of the phenomenon was a response to two different circumstances: First, the end of the Cold War shifted the priorities of the international public agenda of the West, catapulting the fight against corruption to an unprecedented height; and second, the newly developed measurement tools made possible the objective study of different corruption indicators that fostered an increasing number of papers empirically testing long-overdue theoretic approaches.

These new circumstances gave place to the emergence of a scientific trend that could be succinctly defined as the “*new economics of corruption*” (as dubbed by Ades and Di Tella 1997) and the *new politics of corruption*. These two approaches depart from the practices of previous decades, and try to apply empirical evidence to their assessments. Moreover, in the case of the political approach, finally a controversial debate was settled: corruption is no longer seen with the capacity of functioning as the ‘grease in the gears’ (Huntington 1968), but is now widely considered to be pernicious for the political system. Most importantly, corruption is treated by new empirical research as a threat to political legitimacy, and therefore, democracy in general. This problem is suspected

to have especially important ramifications in countries where democracy hasn't been totally consolidated, like the region of Latin America.

Treating political support mainly as *regime legitimacy*, studies focusing on the effects of corruption on democracy and democratic regimes have tend to use victimization survey data to address the influence of corruption-related events on citizen opinion (Seligson 2002). New attempts to go further, however, and to add the 'punishment' dimension as an expression of negative political support have developed (or more exactly, *utilized*) for this purpose the idea of *individuals' tolerance of corrupt activities* within a society (Cameron et al. 2009). The importance of this new construct has been succinctly summarized in the following way: "Apart from influencing evaluations of government's performance, a variation in corruption tolerance or one may even say corruption acceptance, may impact regime support in general, political trust, and political behavior" (Tverdova 2007: 9).

Nevertheless, and probably as a result of the highly differentiated levels of technical capabilities that have marked the guidelines and agendas of the pre and post 'measurement revolution' of the mid-90s, much of the new research strongly focuses on sophisticated econometric models without paying the same degree of attention to the theoretical backbone of each specific study. Whereas corruption studies have addressed in a profuse way the determinants and characteristics of bureaucratic corruption, on one side, and those of the private economic agents (either national or international) on the other, the citizen's participation in a corrupt transaction has been approached mainly in relation to political definitions such as trust, legitimacy, and support, while his/her impact on the reproduction of corruption itself has been only modestly pursued. With few exceptions, the citizen is understood so far as being in the periphery and just having a passive role in corruption.

III. "Corruption Tolerance": A Literature Review

In recent years there has emerged some interest in the role of the citizen as a determinant him/herself of the preservation and perpetuation of corruption, especially in underdeveloped countries: Studies addressing the corruption tolerance among citizens. By itself, this new venue of research appears to be trying to fill a void in previous corruption-related studies, but being a recently developed perspective, it still struggles with some basic elements and characteristics of what 'corruption tolerance' as a specific concept should cover.

A point in case can be made by quickly reviewing some of the studies that has addressed the concept of 'corruption tolerance' (either by directly constructing it as dependent or independent variable, or by referring to it with a rather natural, every-day meaning).

The literature on citizen's corruption tolerance can be divided in two main groups: a) tolerance as citizen's support for corrupt politicians; and, b) tolerance as citizen's willingness to engage in

corruption. It is the first group, which we will refer to as *high-level corruption tolerance* (HCT) that the present paper will focus on. This can be further divided in overt and covert support, depending on the research focus on reelection rates and/or voting behavior³, or mere attitudes towards politicians or political institutions, respectively.

An example of HCT as overt support can be found in Chang and Kerr (2009), where they link corruption tolerance with the citizens' behavior of "[throwing] the rascals out" (p. 5). Other studies treating tolerance as overt support have a stronger emphasis on the link between corruption scandals and reelection rates, and while they use the concept of tolerance in a barely explicit (and even entirely implicit) way, they have a longer history of existence and much work have been done around them. Such is the case of the work from Peters and Welch (1980) and Hibbing and Welch (1997), where they assess the effect of corruption charges in congressional elections. This early approach has been followed more recently by Winters and Weitz-Shapiro (2012: 13), who ask if Brazilian voters are more "tolerant of corruption when politicians provide public goods"; and by Chang and Golden (2004), showing that voters in Italy are as tolerant as American voters.

On the other hand, studies including the specific concept 'corruption tolerance' treated as covert support are found in Tverdova (2007: 9), where she succinctly comments that "tolerance... of corruption... may impact regime support in general"; Seligson (2002: 427), where he designates a respondent as "tolerant of corruption" when he/she lacks recognition of bribery of a deputy as a corrupt act; Gillespie and Okruhlik (1991: 87), when referring to tolerance of corruption as the level of social pressure (without going into specifics) over incumbents for the eradication of malfeasance; and McCann and Redlawsk (2006), showing that partisanship has an important impact on the judgment of corrupt scenarios. A similar treatment of the construct is given in the words of Tanaka (2005: 365), who posits that the citizens' tolerance of corruption is a function of the efficacy of the government in supplying tangible benefits to the population. However, the most important example of this line of research is given by Manzetti and Wilson (2009: 89), who include in their empirical study of public support for corrupt governments a measurement of corruption tolerance operationalized as the *justifiability of bribe-taking*. Finally, isolated mentions of corruption tolerance are present in Redlawsk and McCann (2005: 265) and Durand (2005: 287).

As we can see, the concept of *corruption tolerance* has indeed been on the rise in scholarly production since the beginning of the new century, in both explicit and implicit ways. However, to this moment, only one study (Chang and Kerr 2009)⁴ has cared to define it as a first step for

3 For a quick review of the literature on corruption scandals and their electoral consequences, see Barberá et al. (2013: 3–4).

4 They define it as denoting "citizens' proclivity to condone a political actor's engagement in corrupt transactions" (p.4).

its scientific inclusion in properly constructed corruption studies, while the rest remain using it in vague and anecdotic terms. Such carefree approach has resulted, as it can be perceived above, in a heterogeneous operationalization of the construct, which can be either considered a set of perceptions, attitudes, or behaviors, depending on the specific author and objective, with a seemingly higher preference for an attitudinal equation in more recent years.

Nonetheless, any attempt to study corruption tolerance only by reference to one of the three common manifestations mentioned above (i.e. perceptions, attitudes, and behavior) without proper consideration to the complex relation they might have to each other, and the effect each of them have on the corruption phenomenon as a whole, can be described as nothing short of intuitively and logically flawed. To briefly show the importance of taking a step back from attitudinal-centered conceptualizations (and also behavioral ones for that matter), let's take a look at the potential consequences for corruption tolerance of the difference in corruption perception among individuals.

On one hand, the perception (either correct or not) of high-level corruption involving the country's elites can be a powerful source of tolerance towards malfeasance and bribery committed by members of the political party to which the individual has a political allegiance, a way of justifying the behavior of his/her favored politicians by reference to that of others. As Del Castillo and Guerrero (2003: 2) state, "corruption tolerance has a lot to do with the perception that the individual has of himself and of the society where he/she interacts"⁵. This is so because citizens assess different candidates in an electoral process based in relative and not absolute terms, meaning that the value of any political attribute is set based on the comparison between the different electoral options. If a citizen perceives that all politicians are unavoidably corrupt, then the threshold of corruption that any politician can be engaged in before the citizen changes his/her attitude towards him/her will be higher. This seems to be the case in Lazar's research (2005) when she suggested that for the residents of El Alto there might exist degrees of corruption that may be acceptable given the reality of the circumstances: "Since most people felt all politicians to be equally corrupt, the issue of corruption did not enable electors to choose between the political parties. Ultimately, they assessed the value of a politician despite and beyond their presumed corruption" (Lazar 2005: 222).

On the other hand, the *capacity* to perceive an instance of corruption takes the argument and importance of corruption perception to more basic levels of rationality and decision-making. An eloquent piece of evidence of the potential consequences that the inability to perceive real cases of corruption for what they are, produced however from the perspective of petty corruption, is presented by Del Castillo and Guerrero (2003: 26), who report that in Mexico City up to 18.7% heads of

5 Translated from Spanish.

6 Similarly, Karklins (2005 : 68) reports that in Latvia "respondents struggled to distinguish 'gifts' from 'bribes' and 'corruption'.

household did not connect the image of a bribe to that of a corrupt behavior⁶; in other words, one fifth of Mexican subjects weren't able to perceive their own bribing behavior as corrupt. From this perspective, we cannot help but wonder if these circumstances may be mirrored by cases involving public figures, and the potential incapacity of many citizens to understand the corrupt nature of some 'scandals'. Van Vuuren (2004: 12) states in his analysis of South Africa:

“Media attention on cases of alleged grand corruption such as the arms deal has raised public awareness about what constitutes an act of corruption. This, combined with a greater awareness among citizens of their rights to fair administrative action may have resulted in respondents reporting corrupt behavior in 2003 that might have been regarded as ‘normal’ practice in 1998.”

In this short comment on the importance of considering ‘perceptions’ as an integral part of the discussion regarding corruption tolerance, both attitudinal and behavioral regards have been said to be somehow affected by the presence and extent of the individual's awareness of corruption, presenting a relationship of dependency that prompts us to keep in mind the relative place and significance of each of those terms commonly linked to the concept of corruption tolerance. That seeming inclusiveness of approaches, however, shouldn't compel us to ignore the problem of definitional heterogeneity, or even worse, lack thereof. The potential dividends from the scientific analysis of corruption tolerance prompt the need for some basic and common terms for the definition and operationalization of this multidimensional concept.

IV. The Impact of Corruption Tolerance

The level of corruption in any particular society is said to depend to a large extent on the decisions that citizens take when confronted with corrupt scenarios. Not only is this implicit throughout the reviewed literature treating the concept of corruption tolerance, but it is masterly pointed out by Manzetti (2000: 139) when he explains that “high corruption takes place when: (1) many checks and balances among the three branches of government and the institutional mechanisms to combat corruption are weak or are not used; (2) there are no self-restraints in profiting from corruption as commissions reach extremely high levels; and (3) corruption is so widespread at any social level as to be accepted and tolerated.” This perspective takes for the topic of corruption what has already been pointed out in the literature dealing with tax evasion. In an enlightening analysis of the causes of different levels of tax evasion in Chile and Argentina, Marcelo Bergman (2009) revisits the concept of equilibrium to explain why the same basic system of tax collection proves to be effective in Chile but fails in the case of Argentina. His argument is that the interaction between

voluntary compliance on the one hand, and the role of enforcement on the other, can develop in a stable environment of compliance or non-compliance equilibrium, upon which the citizen makes rational decisions based on the expected choices of others. In its basic terms, Bergman presents a model where individual compliance is based on, and reproduced by, society itself, and the final aggregated result depends as much on this society-based consideration as on the level and strength of governmental enforcement.

The same case seems to be the one raised by Manzetti in his list of three factors for an environment of high corruption. The first two, checks and balances and the level of self-restraint, are none other than the set of formal and informal “constraints that shape human interactions” (North 1990: 3) on the governmental side of the political system. The third factor, which will be the center of our research efforts, refers to the citizen’s compliance with that corrupt set of formal and informal rules, his/her acceptance and coexistence with corruption in society. As advanced by the theory of tax compliance, we can then address the level of corruption in any country mostly by referring to the characteristics of the formal institutions (understood only as the legal governmental structures, and the bureaucratic and political culture of those who fill such structures) and the level of corruption tolerance among the citizens.

V. The ‘Vertical Accountability’ Approach to High-Level Corruption Tolerance (HCT)

When Canache and Allison (2003) studied the impact of corruption perception on political support, they seemed to be tapping into the main core of what HCT is all about: “A vital step in combating political corruption is for citizens to be able to hold leaders accountable when they engage in malfeasance” (p. 2). If we recall, the literature has indeed been considering HCT as a citizen’s support for corrupt politicians, which for the discussion presented by Canache and Allison would be no other than the failure of citizens to “hold leaders accountable”; in other words, the failure of *vertical accountability*. For such kind of accountability to exist, they explain, three requirements must be fulfilled. First, citizens must be able to accurately perceive corruption when it exists. Second, citizens need to adjust their opinions of the relevant actors according to the previously perceived corruption. And third, citizens must punish in some way the corrupt actor; this is the final step where the internal attitudes translate into external behavior; or to put it in another way, the change in covert support emerges as a variation in overt support.

To sum up, what Canache and Allison (2003) were proposing was that vertical accountability (O’Donnell 1998) happens when the process presented in Figure 1 is satisfied.



Figure 1. The Process of Vertical Accountability

If it's particularly the presence of support (or conversely, the lack of punishment) what will describe HCT in a society, the first three consecutive stages described in the chart above could be very much present in the same context as corruption tolerance. Figure 2 reproduces the 'vertical accountability' process in a scenario of HCT.

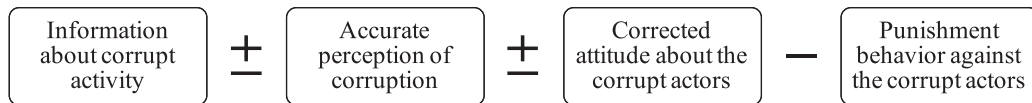


Figure 2. HCT as the Lack of Vertical Accountability

As we can see, in a scenario of HCT there are just two constants that we can identify. First, there must exist some kind of information about corrupt activities involving members of the government that is available to the citizens through the mass media⁷; and second, no punishment from the part of the citizens appears as a consequence of that information. Condensing it into a proper definition, we can say that HCT is the citizen's behavioral adherence to condone the corrupt behavior of the political actor.

With a proper definition laid down, the next logical step is to find a suitable indicator for measurement. We partly follow in this study the approach used by McCann and Redlawsk (2006) and focus on the voting behavior in congressional and presidential elections, understanding for corruption tolerance the act of *voting for a candidate in spite of its corrupt character*. This by no means imply that voting behavior is the only indicator with the potential to tap into HCT, but just that for the aims of this study it presents itself as the more feasible given the available sources of data and the trends already developing on the topic⁸.

7 Karklins (2005: 112) has referred to the availability of information to punish corrupt politicians as "[a] fundamental precondition for accountability". On its importance, see Winters and Weitz-Shapiro (2012), Barberá et al. (2013: 15), and Bagenholm (2009: 18); through its impact on perception, see Németh et al. (2011: 61).

8 Such strategy is also favored by Uslander (2008), although for the analysis of anti-corruption efforts. In his study of trust and corruption in United States, he argues that "[since] the Progressive Party focused primarily on clean government and structural reform, support for it is a reasonable proxy for public support in a state for anti-corruption initiatives." (2008: 228)

Attitude-behavior congruency and HCT measurement

Having gone this far, we can now see some of the problems surrounding the recent efforts to tap in any way into the level and implications of corruption tolerance in cases of high-level corruption. First, the studies showing a bigger concern in focusing specifically on the tolerance construct are the ones that treat it as covert support (with the important exception of Chang and Kerr 2009), hence not been able to explicitly cover the entire process as we have described it, specifically in relation to their lack of inclusion of the *punishment* stage, voting behavior. Second, the operationalization of covert support doesn't follow the basic considerations for an improved accuracy in attitude-behavior (A-B) congruency⁹.

The decision of previous research to discard a study of corruption tolerance attending to all four stages of the vertical accountability process described before, signifies the necessary preclusion of any determinant that may block the transition from attitudes to action, and hence account for a partial story. Beyond this self-evident issue, however, it can be accepted that, if the intention to stop at the attitudinal level has to do with the possibility of using those measures as a proxy for actual punishment, it could still arrive to nearly conclusive results. Scholarly efforts since the 1970's have been showing encouraging rates of success in the area of A-B congruency when concentrating in the prediction of voting behavior (Schuman and Johnson 1976), meaning that even when a HCT study is not measuring the actual voting behavior of citizens, it can still bring important results (although not complete) if measuring the same citizens' attitudes toward a particular candidate. Further development in A-B studies carried on by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) showed that measuring the specific attitude towards a behavior, instead of the attitude towards a person or an object, increases the possibility of predicting actual behavior, implying for the present research that a measure of a citizen's willingness to punish a particular corrupt political actor could also predict his/her political behavior when punishment is an option (as in the case of electoral processes) and bring close results to uncovering his/her corruption tolerance level.

Nonetheless, most of the literature reviewed earlier regarding corruption tolerance misses these two possible alternative measurement approximations (meaning 'attitude towards a particular corrupt political actor' and 'attitude towards *punishing* a particular corrupt political actor') and decides in one way or another to measure the citizens' *attitude towards a corrupt act* ('how wrong would it be if the political actor...?') without any further context. This treatment is most explicit when looking at the cases of Manzetti and Wilson (2009: 92) and Blake (2009: 102), where what is stated as an indicator of "tolerant of corruption" in the former, is called an indicator for "attitudes toward

9 A-B congruency can be understood as the degree of correlation between attitudinal measures of a latent disposition, and "behaviors that are not elicited by formal measurement procedures" (Schuman and Johnson 1976: 161).

bribe taking” in the latter. As it will be explained in detail later, attitudes towards an action can be a powerful predictor when referring to one’s own action, what we have called ‘attitudes toward the behavior’; but in the case of HCT, the classic measurement of attitudes can be actually described as a measurement towards corruption itself as an object¹⁰, and hence producing little A-B congruency.

All this said, the selection of a casted vote as an indicator for HCT still deserves some additional comments before we can continue with its testing.

The indicator of HCT: A problem of degrees

In 1972, Howard Schuman reproduced the results of a series of survey questions that were trying to assess the racial attitudes of white Americans in 1969. When asked about a simple, hypothetical scenario where a case of discrimination in a job interview against an African American was committed, most respondents showed disagreement with the validity of such discriminating behavior. Nevertheless, when confronted with the same hypothetical case in a context where economic and democratic values were added into the scenario, the rate of responses showed an increasing tolerance towards discrimination against African Americans in the same job interview. The intention of Schuman (1972: 352) was to show that this technique to measure attitudes was a “[test] of adherence to a single principle under various degrees of practical difficulty or counter-pressure” and that, as such, it didn’t mean that respondents were showing some kind of incongruence between questions, but that reality could be better captured in a survey by means of recreating the various sources of stimulus that make an individual behave in one way or the other.

The exact same problem can be said to affect corruption tolerance and voting behavior. When asking a citizen about his/her attitude towards an imaginary corrupt politician, there is no surprise that the citizen may express his/her disagreement with that behavior and find it punishable. The reason for such an answer is that the corrupt actor was shown in a vacuum, a particular case that very rarely can be found in reality¹¹. The most similar scenario could only be found by experimentally controlling every socio-economical and demographic variable that could determine the political support of a single citizen for a corrupt and a non-corrupt politician; the result will most likely, if not always, be the support for the non-corrupt politician¹². In an electoral process, nevertheless, voters

10 It is important to clarify that A-B congruency can effectively use the attitudes toward the object as a powerful predictor for voting behavior given that the object measured is the one over which the voting behavior is expressed. In this way, the attitude towards a candidate could predict voting for him/her or not, while attitude towards corruption should theoretically be able to predict the voting behavior in a referendum for an anti-corruption piece of legislation.

11 Zaller (1992: 49) have expressed this same idea when arguing that “individuals answer survey questions by averaging across the considerations that are immediately salient or accessible to them”. (Italics are ours)

12 In the words of Barberá et al. (2013: 2), “it is almost self-evident that, among a number of candidates, citizens will prefer to choose one that is not involved in illicit activities, *caeteris paribus*.”

must weight different and sometimes contradictory values to decide in which direction to orient their political support. It is precisely in those cases where we could see in action the degree to which a citizen can tolerate corruption, by placing such factor against other reasons for voting for a particular candidate¹³. In a scenario where different candidates hold a different record of corrupt activities (it doesn't matter if this record is objective or created by the media), the decision of the voter can be interpreted as the minimum level of corruption tolerance as expressed by a higher emphasis on other features of the candidate. To say it shortly, the more corrupt the candidate for whom the citizen is voting, the more tolerant of high-level corruption that citizen is.

Hence, we complete the above construction by saying that the individual's HCT level, as operationalized in the present study, is based on the minimum tolerance of the citizen expressed by voting in spite of the ratio of information about the corrupt character and the position of fight against corruption (in an index of electoral offers) of the candidate.

VI. Behavioral Indicator of HCT: Peru, 2006

After positing that high-level corruption tolerance should better be understood from a behavioral (or action-based) perspective, and operationalized by looking at the vote casted by the citizen in support of a corrupt politician, it is still unclear the precise corrupt potential of the various candidates running for office in any given presidential or congressional election. Leaving aside potential partisan influences skewing some of the electoral information provided by the media, due to the delicate nature of the topic most public and private sources of political discourse tend to remain silent regarding the relative positive or negative influence of the most important leaders of the country over the state of high-level corruption. Therefore, before attempting to test the implications of the theoretical commitments elaborated in the previous section for the validity and policy application of previous, attitude-based studies on corruption tolerance, we will need to empirically build our own indicator of *behavioral* high-level corruption tolerance (HCT) in clear and consistent terms.

Thus, now the focus will switch to the six most voted candidates in the first round of the Peruvian presidential elections of 2006, who in descending order were¹⁴: Ollanta Humala – UPP (30.6%), Alan García – APRA (24.3%), Lourdes Flores – UN (23.8%), Martha Chávez – AF (7.4%), Valentín Paniagua – FC (5.8%), and Humberto Lay – RN (4.4%). The development of an index of their potentially corrupt character (which will ultimately make possible a behavioral indicator of

13 This phenomenon is what Rundquist et al. (1977: 957) dubbed “the trading theory of corruption voting”. McCann and Dominguez (1998: 495) find, indeed, empirical results showing that, in the case of Mexican citizens, “for the most part they vote on the basis of considerations other than their perceptions of electoral fraud and corruption.”

14 <http://www.web.onpe.gob.pe/modElecciones/elecciones/RESUMEN/GENERALES/14.pdf>, accessed on September 20, 2013.

HCT regarding these political actors) will include both the candidates' (and their political parties' congressional list¹⁵) history related to corruption scandals (in other words, their *résumé*), and their anti-corruption *offers*, as explained earlier.

Ranking of corruption-related *résumé*

Considering the particularly problematic and controversial nature of the subject, this study endeavored to achieve a result as objective and replicable as possible, conducting what Kimberly Neuendorf (2001) would describe as *quantitative interpretative analysis*, a method resembling that of content analysis but which constructs its categories in a progressive way, close to the idea of grounded theory, and ends up quantifying its results and reorganizing them in specific arrangements.

The data used as primary source for this *ranking* is provided by the Peruvian news magazine *Caretas*, which is considered the leading source of political and investigative journalism in the country, with more than 50 years of work. Although its level of impartiality hasn't been scientifically addressed, in general terms its content covers most of the Peruvian political spectrum, and different perspectives and opinions are usually published in order to reflect the complexity of the subjects. Assuming the unbiased coverage (in both content and extension) of corruption-related stories involving different political tents, all the information published in the *Careta's* digital version¹⁶ was processed for the period between September 22, 2000 (first issue published after the burst of the *vladivideos* scandal), and April 7, 2006 (last issue published before the first round of presidential elections). This means 283 issues, in total.

The corruption-related categories developed in the process of analysis are as follows:

- Corruption (C): Cases where the party/candidate is directly or indirectly involved in the commission of a corrupt act.
- Against anti-corruption (-AC)¹⁷: Cases where the party/candidate shows tolerance to corruption, either by action or omission, or attacks/ignores anticorruption principles.
- Not corruption (-C): Cases where a point is made against previous information involving the party/candidate in the commission of a corrupt act.

15 This strategy is chosen in order to account for a potential *voto de arrastre*, or “coattail effect” (Lucinda 2005: 426) from the party to the presidential candidate.

16 <http://www.caretas.com.pe/Main.asp?T=3098>, accessed on September 20, 2013.

17 About ‘-AC’, Karklins (2005: 28, 33) states that, “[t]he lack of preventive work by more honest politicians is a significant part of the corruption experience... In addition to... active corruption of legislators, there also is passive corruption in the sense of omission and dereliction of duty”.

- Anti-corruption (AC): Cases where the party/candidate actively pursues/supports the fight against corruption without having as an apparent motive to earn equivalent political return.

As it can be observed, the four corruption-related categories are presented in a continuum that, to use the vocabulary of HCT, extends from high tolerance to low tolerance of corruption. At least one of these categories can represent each one of the pieces of information regarding the corrupt potential of the 2006 candidates, with some cases involving two categories. Other categories included to analyze the data were: Party or candidate involvement (or both), and the title/body presentation. To account for the relative importance of party/candidate and title/body distinctions, the following formula was applied:

$$Ct + (Cb / 2) + \{ [Pt + (Pb / 2)] / 2 \}$$

where Ct stands for *candidate in title*, Cb for *candidate in body*, Pt for *party in title*, and Pb for *party in body*. In other words, although each piece of information (disregarding the length) was given '1 point', a *body* point was valued as half of a *title* point, and points given for information involving the candidate's party, and not the candidate him/herself, were valued also as half. The results, excluding cases where two mutually contradictory categories were adjudicated to the same news entry, are presented in Figure 3¹⁸.

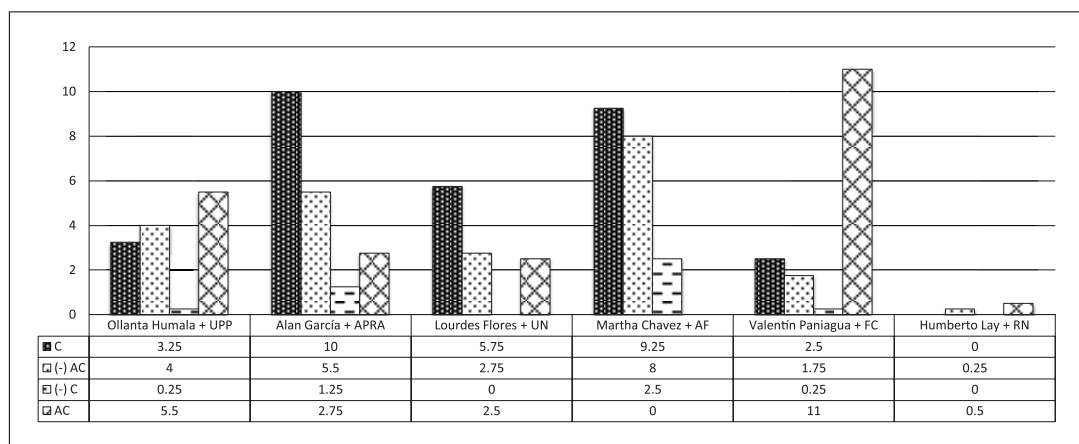


Figure 3. Corruption-Related Information Across Categories

18 The detailed information regarding corrupt (and anti-corrupt) activities of the six major candidates of 2006, and their political parties, as identified in Caretas, is available by contacting the author.

Finally, points were added and aggregated across corruption-related categories in the following way:

$$[(C) + (-AC) - (-C)] / [(C) + (-AC) - (-C) + (AC)] \times 100$$

The product, presented in Figure 4, gives us the percentage of negative news regarding corruption (news about corrupt activities plus the ones against anti-corruption, and minus the ones denying corruption) from the total of corruption-related information, for each candidate/party.

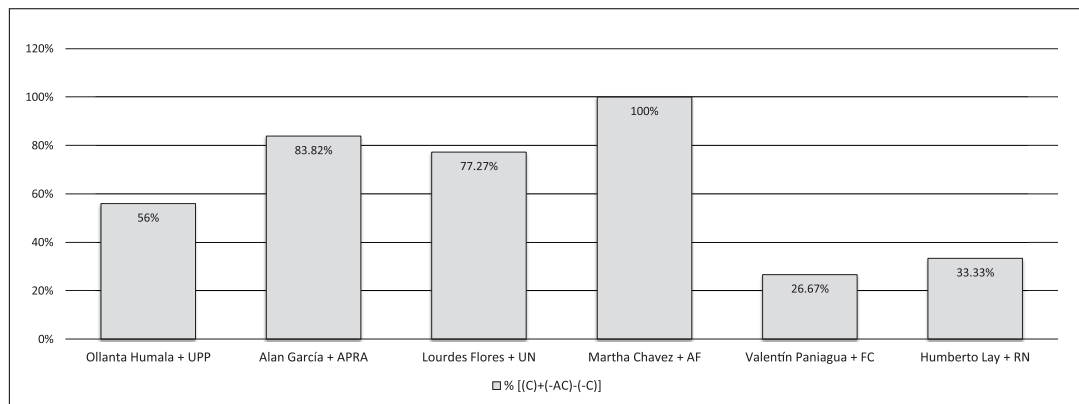


Figure 4. Percentage of Negative corruption-Related Information

Therefore we conclude that, regarding the corruption-related *history* of the six most voted candidates in the first round of the presidential elections in Peru of 2006, the ranking is as follows, in order of their *anti-corruption* potential: (1) Valentín Paniagua; (2) Humberto Lay; (3) Ollanta Humala; (4) Lourdes Flores; (5) Alan García; and, (6) Martha Chávez.

Ranking of anti-corruption offer

Above we have quantitatively resolved the question behind the presidential candidates' probity to conduct public affairs. Now, we shall do the same for the candidates' offers (included in their party platforms) in order to analyze the voters' reaction to the potential benefits that each candidate may bring to office in the fight against corruption. With this objective, we employ quantitative content analysis (as described by Neuendorf 2001) to assess the importance of the 'corruption construct' in the party platforms officially presented by each of the six most voted candidates for the Peruvian national elections in 2006¹⁹, with the exception of Martha Chávez's *Alianza por el Futuro*,

19 <http://agenciaperu.com/especiales/elecciones/planes.html>, last accessed on November 27, 2012.

which didn't present any.

The categories considered were: implicit (the 'corruption construct' is assumed from the reference to anticorruption-related terms) or explicit (the construct is mentioned in any variant); and the 'structural independence' of the construct, which is the length of its reference²⁰. The final ranking was calculated based in the formula

$$\text{Total amount of words in the document} / \{ [\text{explicit (2) implicit (1)}] \times [\text{length = word (1) sentence (2) paragraph (3) subchapter (4) chapter (5)}] \}$$

where the numbers in parentheses are the *points* given to each observation of the construct in order to calculate the weight of each party platform, and 'total amount of words in the document' refers to the entire content of the party platform. Consequently, the lower ratio of total/points will mean *higher* anti-corruption offer. The results are presented in Figure 5²¹.

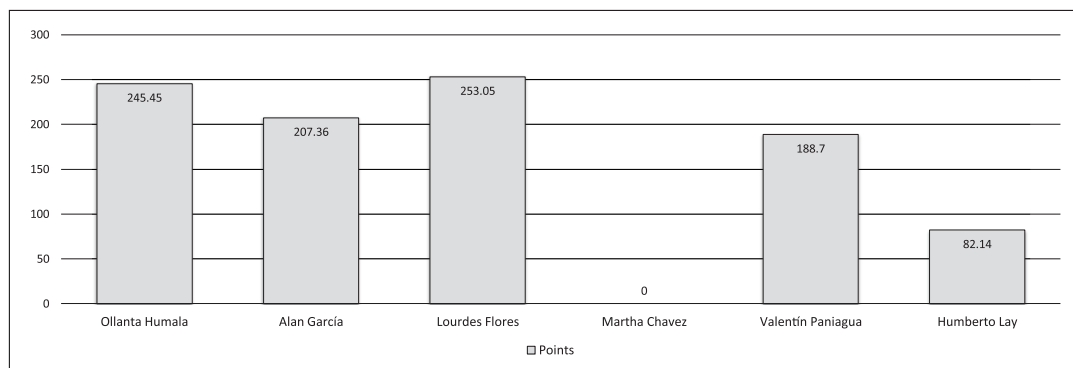


Figure 5. Ratio of the Corruption Construct in Party Platforms

From this, we can conclude that the candidates of 2006 who made the fight against corruption a bigger issue in their party platforms, in relative terms, are: (1) Humberto Lay; (2) Valentín Paniagua; (3) Alan García; (4) Ollanta Humala; (5) Lourdes Flores; and, (6) Martha Chávez.

Composite ranking

After obtaining results pertaining to the relative importance of the presidential candidates in

20 The length can be considered to be a word (construct with or without attached adjective and standing with other concepts), a sentence (statement about the construct, standing alone or repeated), a paragraph (two or more sentences), a subchapter, or a chapter.

21 The complete dictionary of corruption and anti-corruption-related terms, and the cases generated from the analysis, are available by contacting the author.

terms of their corruption-related *history* and electoral *offer*, we proceed to recombine both rankings by averaging the positions, an approach also employed by Transparency International in the construction of their annual Corruption Perception Index (Thompson and Shah 2005). However, the present study will take into account the average level of media exposure and readership prevalent in Peru, and consider the importance of party platforms as *half* of that of Careta's coverage²²; in other words, when averaging both rankings, the candidates' positions as discovered by the content analysis of the platforms will take half their value. The final, composite ranking of corruption-potential of the Peruvian presidential candidates of 2006 is as follows, from representing the most honesty to the most *dishonesty*: Valentín Paniagua (FC) – 1; Humberto Lay (RN) – 1.25; Ollanta Humala (UPP) – 2.5; Lourdes Flores (UN) – 3.25; Alan García (APRA) – 3.25; and Martha Chávez (AF) – 4.5.

As we can see, there is a tie between the candidates Lourdes Flores, from *Unidad Nacional*, and Alan García, from APRA. To decide their relative placement, we draw supportive data from an intention poll conducted in 2006 (PUCP 2006) in Lima and other cities of the country, which included a question regarding the “principal reason for casting their vote in support of the candidate...” Compiling the anticorruption-related perception²³ about four of the six candidates included in the present study, the resulting ranking is equivalent in order to the one presented as ‘composite’ above: Valentín Paniagua (FC) – 38.7%; Ollanta Humala (UPP) – 30.9%; Lourdes Flores (UN) – 14.4%; Alan García (APRA) – 0.5%.

The order taken by the four candidates included in the PUCP poll, hence, mirrors the composite ranking developed from their *history* and electoral *offer*, and helps us break the tie between the scores of Flores and García. Therefore, and following this partial support, we conclude that the candidate from APRA should be considered more potentially corrupt than his counterpart from *Unidad Nacional*.

With this information, finally, the set is ready to test the relation between an attitudinal and an action-based (or behavioral) indicator of HCT.

VII. A-B Congruency in HCT: Analysis and Results

To test the state of A-B congruency in cases of high-level corruption tolerance (HCT), we draw information regarding the attitudes and behavior of a set of 1,500 Peruvian subjects that were surveyed as part of the Latin American Public Opinion Project's (LAPOP) *AmericasBarometer* of 2006. Among a large number of questions, the survey assesses several items related to corruption in

22 This approach is also argued by Bagenholm (2009: 9) regarding the relative importance of party manifestoes and the media in Europe.

23 Percentage of answers indicating that the vote would be casted in support of the candidate because he/she is “honest and sincere” and/or “will fight against corruption”.

both its pervasiveness, and people's reaction towards it.

But before we can apply the previously elaborated ranking to the LAPOP database of 2006, the values of the self-reported information regarding “for which candidate did you vote for President in the last presidential elections?” are rearranged following the order of our composite ranking, becoming now a quantitative indicator of HCT, read as the ‘minimum high-level corruption tolerance of the citizen’.

On the other hand, an attitudinal indicator of HCT is obtained from the question “an unemployed individual is the brother-in-law of an important politician, and the politician uses his influence to get his brother-in-law a job. Do you think the politician is 1) corrupt and should be punished, 2) corrupt but justified, or 3) not corrupt?”²⁴, where the answers can be described as intolerant, tolerant, and highly tolerant of corruption, respectively, following the logic of the present study.

If past literature employing attitudinal indicators to measure corruption tolerance are correct and can be regarded as valuable knowledge to guide policy formulation against public malfeasance, then we will expect the level of A-B congruency to be high enough as to be able to employ data concerning individuals' attitudes as a good proxy for actual behavior, and to use it to undertake further studies addressing instances of tolerant attitude towards corruption and their determinants. Employing ordered logistic regression analysis, the voting behavior is regressed on the attitudes toward high-level corruption, and the results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Impact of Attitudes Over Electoral Behavior

Vote	Coefficient	Std. Error	Z
Attitude	0.218*	0.108	2.02

N = 1178 * p<0.05; ** p<0.01; *** p<0.001

Evidently, there is in fact a statically significant impact of attitudes over the citizens' electoral behavior, although not as marked as expected based on previous attitudinal studies. Translating this result to probabilities, indeed, we find a more clear interpretation of the way in which attitudes manage to affect the punishment capabilities of the electorate. As we can see in Table 2, a change in attitudes from highly tolerant to intolerant of corruption has only a limited impact on the amount of support for the three more honest candidates, the same way as the inverse trend does for the benefit of the two more potentially corrupt candidates (Alan García and Martha Chávez). The importance of attitudes over behavior is somehow unclear, however, for the case of the support for Lourdes Flores.

24 The frequency of observations (n=1178) for each category is 914 (77.59%), 232 (19.69%), and 32 (2.72%), respectively.

Table 2. Probabilities of Voting for a Candidate, Based on Attitudes Toward Corruption

Candidates	Intolerant attitude	Tolerant attitude	Highly tolerant attitude
Valentin Paniagua	5.87%	4.77%	3.87%
Humberto Lay	3.10%	2.57%	2.11%
Ollanta Humala	36.72%	33.00%	29.23%
Lourdes Flores	23.26%	23.75%	23.72%
Alan Garcia	28.09%	32.25%	36.56%
Martha Chavez	2.96%	3.66%	4.51%
Total	100%	100%	100%

In a simpler fashion, we look at the descriptive statistics regarding attitudes and behavior, tabulated in Table 3. As we can appreciate, more the 30% of surveyed people who stated that the corrupt behavior in question (nepotism) was indeed “corrupt and punishable”, still decided to cast their votes in support of the two most potentially dishonest presidential candidates of 2006, hence not actually living up to that punishment they expressed would be appropriate for such politicians.

Considering that the coefficient shown in Table 1, notwithstanding its real and quantifiable size, was still rather small to be considered anything close to a proxy for the punishment behavior implied by the concept of corruption tolerance, and that knowledge of an individual’s attitude towards corruption could only slightly improve our predictions of their supportive or punishment behavior, it is clear that the decision concerning the operationalization of corruption tolerance between attitudes and behavior can have a major impact on the empirical results of any study on the subject. How can A-B congruency, then, address this problem? The logical conclusion is to rely on the actual voting behavior of the citizenry, as proposed in the theoretical framework, and to regard its attitudes towards corruption exclusively as one determinant among others of its tolerant behavior.

Table 3. Percentage of Attitudes versus Behavior Regarding HCT

Candidates	Corrupt and punishable	Corrupt but justified	Not corrupt
Valentin Paniagua	5.69%	5.60%	3.12%
Humberto Lay	2.74%	3.88%	3.12%
Ollanta Humala	37.53%	28.88%	37.50%
Lourdes Flores	23.74%	22.84%	15.62%
Alan Garcia	27.13%	35.34%	40.62%
Martha Chavez	3.17%	3.45%	0.00%
Total	100%	100%	100%

VIII. Conclusions

The main purpose of the present study was, first, to elucidate the meaning and theoretical commitments behind the concept of *corruption tolerance*, and to subsequently employ it to address the difference between the attitudes and the behavior of Peruvian voters. Such an effort was undertaken here by methodically looking into past literature, adopting a framework of reference, and conducting an appropriate operationalization and testing on those grounds. The result was an argument against pretensions of attitude-behavior congruency regarding people's reactions towards high-level corruption, or at least against the way it has been dealt with until now.

Employing ordered logistic regression of a behavioral high-level corruption tolerance (HCT) indicator on an attitudinal indicator of the same dimension, the results showed that they are, in fact, statistically related. However, the size of the effect wasn't big enough (as evidenced by the actual probabilities of a behavioral change) to consider *attitudes* a reliable proxy for a behavioral HCT. If not for the argument developed regarding the theoretical framework for the study of corruption tolerance, based on Canache and Allison's (2003) model of vertical accountability, such result would have posited the question of the appropriateness of both indicators equally (as it becomes necessary to choose one of them for the operationalization of HCT). This, following the logic of our definition and subsequent operationalization of the concept, is not necessary anymore.

The consequences for the study of corruption in general, and corruption tolerance in particular, are not negligible. Any (and every) study focusing on the citizens' tolerance to corruption must necessarily start by relying on a theoretically and empirically sound indicator, tapping into the specific phenomenon of interest (conceptualized on the terms presented here, or others), before attempting to explain its causes and/or consequences, and its interaction with other relevant concepts explored by social scientists. Past approaches implicitly conceptualizing corruption tolerance as a matter of attitudes built their research efforts over the assumption that those attitudes would fundamentally explain or predict *actual* behavior of the individual, and therefore, have a specific impact on society. If not for the attitude-behavior correspondence, there would be no clear reason for choosing to explore a construct (corruption-tolerant attitudes) that has no effect whatsoever in reality. The assumption of the attitude-behavior congruence, however, as has been analyzed in this paper, has been proved both theoretically and empirically erroneous. In such a scenario, then, the logical course to follow is to conceptualize corruption tolerance as a specific behavior, and to operationalize it accordingly.

In this paper the chosen strategy was to adopt the individual's direction of electoral support as an appropriate manifestation of corruption tolerance from a behavioral perspective, employing for this purpose data from LAPOP's AmericasBarometer on casted votes for the Peruvian presidential elections of 2006. Such a strategy is compatible with the requirement for some form of overt support

or punishment from the part of Peruvian citizens, since it is commonly understood that elections in that country are the main venue for vertical accountability and political participation. This reality, however, does not theoretically precludes other considerations regarding alternative forms of support/punishment as long as they are open to assessment in behavioral terms. In that way, other forms of political participation or manifestation can be regarded as proper indicators of corruption tolerance as long as they are publicly activated (i.e. addressed to public authorities) in relation to high-level corruption and can be accurately measured, for example writing letters to political representatives, attending meetings of participatory budgeting, participating in rallies and other public manifestations, whistleblowing, etc. However, up to this moment, most of the manifestations of behavioral corruption (in) tolerance present insurmountable technical difficulties, without even considering the theoretical and empirical issue of accounting for the tolerant-stand of those individuals who decide to stay inactive and refrain from participating in any type of public activity.

Whereas the study of Peruvian corruption tolerance offered a case of compulsory voting, which enabled us to ignore any serious issues risen by abstentionism, the selection of other possible indicators of behavioral HCT that might account for alternative behaviors seems at the moment in clear technical disadvantage, and promises no added theoretical rewards for their adoption in the study of corruption tolerance. This said, however, future research could greatly benefit from a generalized agreement on behavioral HCT in terms of a casted vote, and start building the appropriate questionnaires around that particular manifestation of the phenomenon, which could include items as the ones developed in the poll used by PUCP (2006) and others that would produce more scientific data from the link between voting behavior and corruption tolerance.

We should have then a clearer road for the adoption of casted votes as a properly behavioral indicator, and for the subsequent inclusion of attitudes as a potential determinant, among others, for a thorough analysis of HCT, enterprise that awaits us in the near future.

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