Knowledge of Lobbying Regulations and Attitudes towards Politics: Findings from a Survey Experiment in Cyprus

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Abstract: Does knowledge of lobbying regulations curb perceptions of political corruption and increase trust in politicians? The survey experimental data presented in this paper suggest that a rise in trust in politicians through knowledge of lobbying regulations is harder to achieve than a decline in perceptions of political corruption. In the case of trust in politicians, only full disclosure makes a substantive difference. In the case of perceived political corruption, some disclosure is enough to affect perceptions significantly, although full disclosure is necessary to make a substantive difference. These results suggest that policy-makers should take lobbying reform seriously and consider enacting and disseminating stringent lobbying regulations.
The policy-making and implementation process of every advanced democracy includes an element of interest group input. Interest groups constantly promote policy preferences to policy-makers. Yet, when only some interests start to dominate the decision-making process and/or the input of outside interests cannot be tracked by the public, the consequences of lobbying can become undesirable. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2009, 2012, 2014) has published three comprehensive reports on lobbying over the last few years that defend the sacredness of transparency in lobbying. Without transparency, citizens cannot monitor how policies are being influenced and by whom, nor hold elected officials accountable for their actions, which puts the notion of ethics in politics at risk. Transparency International (2015) followed the OECD’s lead, publishing a detailed report on lobbying in Europe, and advocating the enactment and implementation of stringent regulations.

Undue influence peddling can at times be more of a perception problem than a real problem. If people believe their elected representatives are ‘under the thumb’ of wealthy special interests, this can increase perceptions of political corruption and decrease trust in politicians, thereby negatively influencing the legitimacy of governments. Therefore, good governance experts and advocates argue for stringent lobbying regulations to be implemented worldwide. Such regulations would oblige lobbyists to report their names, the policies they lobby for and the amount spent on lobbying; this information would be committed to the public record as a measure of third-party influence on public policy.
Academics working on lobbying regulations have studied their effects on the diversity of interest communities (Gray & Lowery, 1998), interest group influence (Ozymy, 2010) and political equality (Flavin, 2015). Curiously, however, no study has attempted to measure if lobbying regulations succeed in their primary aim; that is, to positively influence citizens’ attitudes. Existing studies examine political elites’ or lobbyists’ perceptions of the effectiveness of lobbying regulations (Chari, Hogan & Murphy, 2010; Holman & Luneburg, 2012). However, public attitudes toward lobbying regulations remain a mystery. This could be because of a lack of academic attention to lobbying regulation as an anti-corruption and good governance policy in public administration literature. Menzel (2015), for example, reviewed research on ethics and integrity in governance in Public Administration Review and Public Integrity between 2005-2014 and found no studies on lobbying regulation policy. This study examines the impact of knowledge of lobbying regulations on public attitudes towards politics using a survey experiment.

Transparency, Perceived Corruption and Political Trust

Why should disclosure of lobbying data decrease the perception of political corruption and increase political trust? The answer can be found in the literature on the effect of transparency on political attitudes. “Transparency is the conduct of public affairs in the open or otherwise subject to public scrutiny” (Birkinshaw, 2006, p. 189). Transparency has become an indispensable part of governance partly because of the emergence of New Public Management (NPM) (Politt & Bouckaert, 2004) and ‘Good Governance’ (Ball, 2009; van Doeveren, 2011).

Theories striving to explain the relationship between transparency and corruption have been formulated in previous works. In the principal-agent framework, the agents (politicians and
civil servants) have much more leeway to deviate from the desires of the principal (the public) in non-transparent contexts since their actions are not exposed to the scrutiny of the latter (Holmström, 1979; Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Miller, 2005). Lindstedt & Naurin (2010), however, put forth a more sophisticated model, suggesting that transparency can only reduce corruption under two conditions: if the information that has been made transparent is sufficiently publicized, and if the agents are held sufficiently accountable. Therefore, mass media becomes an indispensable actor in this process, bringing the disclosed information to the attention of the public. Accountability mechanisms like free and fair elections and the rule of law should also be in place if transparency is to influence corruption. There is also the issue of education, as the public should be equipped to process the information disclosed. Lindstedt & Naurin (2010) also suggest that it is important who is responsible for making the information public. If the agents themselves are the ones releasing the information, the disclosure could be less effective in curbing corruption than when third parties like the media or whistleblowers release the information.

The current study is less interested in how transparency relates to corruption than in public attitudes towards political elites. This study’s motivation is to observe how transparency through lobbying disclosure requirements affect the perception of political corruption and trust in politicians. Some scholars contend that transparency should boost trust in political institutions and politicians. The idea is that secrecy creates public suspicion, since only those who have something to hide should oppose transparency. Accountability cannot be achieved without transparency; thus, without transparency, people sense a lack of control over the decision-making processes that affect them. Transparent decision-making processes are also perceived to be fairer (Hood, 2006; Heald, 2006; Roberts, 2006; de Fine Licht, Naurin, Esaiasson & Gilljam, 2014).
Political trust and perceived corruption have a symbiotic relationship, one influencing the other simultaneously (Morris & Klesner, 2010; Pellegata & Memoli, 2016). Perceived corruption can immensely affect the democratic legitimacy of a regime (Seligson, 2002; Linde, 2012; Villoria, Ryzin & Lavena, 2012; Erlingsson, Linder & Öhrvall, 2014; 2016). Political scandals, for example, tend to decrease trust in government (Chanley, Rudolph & Rahn, 2000; Pharr, 2000; Bowler & Karp, 2004; Chang & Chu, 2006). At the same time, however, actual corruption increases when people lose confidence in political institutions, in turn, increasing perceived corruption. If political institutions are not trustworthy, the risk of ‘getting caught’ and the incentives for acting honestly decrease (Della Porta, 2000; Morris & Klesner, 2010).

Transparency is expected to have a positive impact on both perceived political corruption and political trust (see Park & Blenkinsopp, 2011). It should, however, be acknowledged that there is limited evidence in the empirical literature that demonstrates the expected effect of transparency on political trust. Some studies have found a positive effect, some studies have found a negative effect and many studies have found a null effect; the evidence is mixed at best (see Cook, Jacobs & Kim, 2010; Worthy, 2010; de Fine Licht, 2011, 2014a; de Fine Licht, Naurin, Esaiasson & Gilljam, 2014; Grimmelikhuijsen, 2009, 2010, 2012; Grimmelikhuijsen & Prumbescu, 2013; Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2014; Bauhr & Grimes, 2014). Nevertheless, the theoretical relationship between transparency, perceptions of political corruption and political trust suggests that public’s knowledge of lobbying regulations (disclosing the names of lobbyists, which interests they lobby for and the amount spent on lobbying) could decrease the perception of political corruption and increase trust in politicians.
**H1.** *Knowledge of lobbying regulations decreases the perception of political corruption.*

**H2.** *Knowledge of lobbying regulations increases the level of trust in politicians.*

**Experimental Design**

There is an increasing interest in using theories of psychology in public administration research (Grimmelikhuijsen, Jilke, Olsen & Tummers, 2016). This has coincided with an increasing interest in the use of experimental methods in public administration research which are accepted to be the most scientific methods in individual-level research (Margetts, 2011; Blom-Hansen, Morton & Serritzlew, 2015; Anderson & Edwards, 2015; Jilke, Van da Walle & Kim, 2016). Through randomization, experiments ensure that the often-lamented confounding variables and endogeneity issues in social research is overcome. This provides the researchers an opportunity to test the effect of one variable on another variable without facing the problem of spuriousness and/or reverse causality (Blom-Hansen, Morton & Serritzlew, 2015; Anderson & Edwards, 2015; Jilke, Van da Walle & Kim, 2016). In a study closely related to the current one, Avkiran, Kanol & Oliver (2016) use a survey experiment to randomly vary information about campaign finance regulation to measure its effect on the perception of corruption and trust in politicians. This study uses a similar survey experiment to measure the impact of lobbying regulations on perceived political corruption and trust in politicians.

Four conditions have been established to observe how lobbying regulations affect the dependent variables, based on varying levels of transparency. In the first condition, people have no information regarding the names of lobbyists, the policies they lobby for, or the amount they spend on lobbying. In the second condition, people have information regarding the names of
lobbyists, but have no information about the policies they lobby for or how much they spend on lobbying. In the third condition, people have information about both the names of lobbyists and the policies they lobby for, but have no information about how much they spend on lobbying. In the fourth condition, people have information about the names of lobbyists, the policies they lobby for and the amount they spend on lobbying.

In the vignettes, respondents were provided a brief introduction about what lobbying is. Subjects were led to believe that the text described the regulatory system of a relatively unknown country (Liechtenstein). This was done to reduce the risk their responses reflected preconceived opinions based on knowledge of the context (Avkiran, Kanol, Oliver, 2016). Liechtenstein is a micro-state without a substantive influence on global politics. As such, the subjects were assumed to be less likely to be prepossessed of information about it, and the experiment, in turn, was thought less likely to be contaminated by subject bias (Avkiran, Kanol & Oliver, 2016). Any other ‘relatively unknown’ country could be used in the text. However, since the students in the university where the experiment was conducted come from Middle Eastern, Sub-Saharan African and Central Asian countries, selecting a microstate from Europe was a decision taken for validity reasons. If a large and well-known country like the United States of America which is active in foreign policy had been used in the experiment, the students could have provided negative answers without carefully reading the text provided to them or not being influenced by the treatments – different wordings used for different groups.

Perceived corruption was measured by asking subjects to react to the following statement: ‘Political corruption is a problem in Liechtenstein’. Trust in politicians was measured by asking subjects to react to the following statement: ‘Politicians in Liechtenstein can be trusted to represent the public interest’. Responses were measured on an 11-point scale, from ‘strongly disagree’ to
‘strongly agree’. The study also recorded subjects’ age, gender, ideology and country of birth to test the success of the randomization process. In addition, the author gathered the corruption scores based on the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) of Transparency International to see if their attitudes are affected by how corrupt their country of origin is.

The four vignettes are presented below, and the full questionnaire can be found in the appendix. Since subjects may potentially interpret each text somewhat differently when surveys are translated into different languages, all survey materials were presented in English only to eliminate this problem. Students were approached by a research assistant in English. Only those who were proficient in English were provided with the questionnaire to ensure the texts and questions were clearly understood.

**Condition 1**

“Lobbying is the act of trying to influence public policy by organizations such as business associations, firms, sector-specific associations, labor unions or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In Liechtenstein, there are no data available to the public regarding lobbyists’ names, which policies they lobby for or how much they spend on lobbying”.

**Condition 2**

“Lobbying is the act of trying to influence public policy by organizations such as business associations, firms, sector-specific associations, labor unions or non-governmental organizations
(NGOs). In Liechtenstein, lobbyists register their names on a publicly available list. The list does not report data regarding which policies they lobby for or how much they spend on lobbying”.

Condition 3

“Lobbying is the act of trying to influence public policy by organizations such as business associations, firms, sector-specific associations, labor unions or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In Liechtenstein, lobbyists register their names and the policies they lobby for on a publicly available list. The list does not report data regarding how much they spend on lobbying”.

Condition 4

“Lobbying is the act of trying to influence public policy by organizations such as business associations, firms, sector-specific associations, labor unions or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In Liechtenstein, lobbyists register their names, the policies they lobby for, and the amount spent on lobbying on a publicly available list”.

Using these texts on students randomly assigned into four groups, the researcher could measure the exact differences between lobbying systems per disclosure requirement in each type of polity. In the first condition, subjects are told that Liechtenstein has no lobbying regulation like in many countries in the world (see Chari, Hogan & Murphy, 2010). In the second condition, subjects are told that only the names of the lobbyists are made available to the citizens of Liechtenstein. There is clearly more transparency around lobbying in this case compared with no
disclosure requirement. However, having no other disclosure requirement would lead to the conclusion that there is only limited disclosure requirement, thus, limited transparency around lobbying in Liechtenstein. Subjects reading the third text are expected to perceive the existence of more transparency around lobbying in Liechtenstein because of an additional disclosure requirement; which policies lobbyist lobby on. Subjects in the fourth group should perceive complete transparency around lobbying as the amount of money spent on lobbying in Liechtenstein is also provided to the citizens of Liechtenstein. This kind of lobbying regulation system is usually found in highly regulated lobbying environments like the United States of America (Chari, Hogan & Murphy, 2010). Therefore, one can argue that the instruments used for the experiment reach a satisfying level of validity. It is, however, necessary to notify the reader that the current study tests the effect of knowledge of lobbying regulation on political attitudes. So, although the current study cannot provide evidence if citizens will have knowledge of lobbying regulation, the experiment enables the researcher to examine how knowledge of lobbying regulations could influence people’s attitudes.

Despite recurring discussion around threats to external validity when using students as experimental subjects, empirical data suggest that this concern has been rather exaggerated (Druckman & Kam, 2011). In the case of this study, using students coming from different countries as subjects may even have created an advantage, since respondents’ nationality can influence how they respond to transparency and political reform (Grimmelikhuijsen, Porumbescu, Hong & Im, 2013; Avkiran, Kanol & Oliver, 2016). In other words, although convenience sampling was used for this experiment, the nature of the sample has had advantages over using a random sample in Cyprus. A random sample would enable the author to generalize to the Cypriot population, however, it would not enable an analysis of how people coming from different countries react to
the treatment and if the treatment has the expected effect on people of different national backgrounds.

The researcher had the choice of either mentioning that a certain type of disclosure is required and not mention what is not required, or mention what type of disclosure is required and what is not required. It could be argued that mentioning the absence of a desired transparency law could positively bias the results by amplifying the strength of the treatments. However, if subjects were not informed about the absence of a certain type of disclosure requirement, their lack of knowledge of a technical regulation like lobbying regulation would result in a more serious validity issue. Subjects would simply not know what is regulated and what is not regulated. Thus, treatments could not have the desired effect because of limited information.

The data were gathered at a university in Cyprus through face-to-face interaction with 500 students, and with the help of a research assistant. Data gathering process was carried out between 23 October 2015 to 14 November 2015. Surveys were distributed to students all over the university, thus, the sample is comprised of students studying various topics. The research assistant asked the subjects face-to-face at cafeterias and near all faculty buildings if they would be willing to participate in a survey about lobbying which only takes one minute to answer. Response rate was 71%. Due to the very short time needed to answer the questions, students were not compensated. In line with university regulation, the head of department was informed before data collection began.

Results
Before comparing the perception of political corruption and trust in politicians across groups, the data are briefly described. 25% of the subjects were presented with the first condition, 25% with the second condition, 24.8% with the third condition and 25.2% with the fourth condition. The lowest age in the sample is 17 and the highest is 52, with an average age of 25.7 years old. The average respondent ideology on an 11-point scale is 5.5, suggesting that the sample is slightly right-wing oriented. The average for perceived political corruption is 6.2, thus, suggesting that the subjects are, overall, somewhat concerned about political corruption in Liechtenstein. The mean for trust in politicians is 4.8, suggesting that there is a slight concern about the trustworthiness of politicians in Liechtenstein.

The data are compiled from the responses of students from different countries, including Bangladesh, Cameroon, Nigeria, Algeria, Turkey, Northern Cyprus, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lithuania, Pakistan, Palestine, Russia, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom and Vietnam. Some of the students reported their country of birth as Arab (1.6%), Africa (3.2%) or Kurdistan (1.2%). 43.6% of the students are male and 56.4% are female. Dummy variables were created for the eight countries with the highest number of subjects in the data. Therefore, Nigeria (32.4%), Northern Cyprus (21.2%), Pakistan (11.2%), Iraq (6.2%), Egypt (4.8%), Syria (3.6%), Kenya (2.6%) and Tanzania (2.6%) are coded as dummy variables. Subjects from different countries are coded as ‘other’ since they were too few to run a statistical analysis.

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) are presented in Table 1. The means for each control variable along with the significance levels of variation of means of one group compared with others are provided. It can be clearly observed that the subjects are randomly assigned to the four groups in the case of their gender, age and ideology. Therefore, it can be
suggested that potential variables like ideology of the subjects cannot affect the bivariate relationship between the treatments and the dependent variables. However, it is observed that there is some variation across groups with respect to the national backgrounds of the subjects in the case of Turkish Cypriot, Pakistani and Egyptian subjects. To control for potential spuriousness in the data, bivariate tests are complemented with multivariate tests in multiple models.

**Table 1 – Descriptive statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>Group 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corruption</td>
<td>7.63***</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>6.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>4.32***</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>2.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>0.26*</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cyprus</td>
<td>0.3***</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>0.02**</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.1***</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
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<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
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<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI</td>
<td>26.8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>29.2*</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** The table provides the means and standard deviations of each variable for each group of subjects. Numbers with stars next to them imply that there is a significant difference between the mean compared with the means of other groups. ***significant at the 99% confidence level, ** significant at the 95% confidence level, * significant at the 90% confidence level.

The results for perceptions of political corruption as the dependent variable can be found in Table 2. In the first model, perceptions of political corruption were measured as a function of lobbying regulations. Dummy variables were created for each condition to measure the separate
effects of each type of disclosure. The first condition—the condition of no lobbying regulations—was used as the base. Relative to this, when the names of lobbyists were made public, perceived political corruption decreased by 12.8%. Disclosure of both the names of lobbyists and the policies they work on resulted in a 10.9% decrease in the perception of political corruption. Disclosure of the names of lobbyists, the policies they lobby for and the amount they spend on lobbying resulted in a 34.1% decrease in perceptions of political corruption. In the second model, control variables were introduced without any significant change in p-values or Beta values. In the third model, disclosure of the name of lobbyists decreases perception of corruption by 8.2%. Disclosure of the name and the policies lobbyists work on decreases perceptions of corruption by 6.7%, albeit there is no statistical significance. Full disclosure reduces perceptions of corruption significantly and substantively by 29.4%. However, the reader should note that there are no CPI data available for Northern Cyprus and the number of observations drops to 349 in the third model compared with 493 in the first model.

<p>| Table 2 - Knowledge of Lobbying Regulations and Perceptions of Political Corruption |
|------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Model 1 | Beta | P-value | Model 2 | Beta | P-value | Model 3 | Beta | P-value |
| Condition 2 | -1.28 | 0.01*** | -1.29 | 0.01*** | -0.82 | 0.09* |
| Condition 3 | -1.09 | 0.01*** | -1.1 | 0.01*** | -0.67 | 0.17 |
| Condition 4 | -3.41 | 0.01*** | -3.4 | 0.01*** | -2.94 | 0.01*** |
| Gender | 0.14 | 0.65 |
| Age | 0.04 | 0.38 |
| Ideology | -0.02 | 0.75 |
| Nigeria | 0.5 | 0.27 |
| Northern Cyprus | 0.22 | 0.66 |
| Pakistan | 0.4 | 0.48 |
| Iraq | 1.1 | 0.12 |
| Egypt | 0.21 | 0.79 |
| Syria | 1.01 | 0.25 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kenya</th>
<th>Tanzania</th>
<th>CPI</th>
<th>Constant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>-0.66</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.5</td>
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<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.01***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td>0.01***</td>
<td>6.31</td>
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<td>489</td>
<td>349</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>R-squared</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *significant the 90% confidence level, *** significant at the 99% confidence level

The results for trust in politicians as the dependent variable can be found in Table 3. In the first model, the impact of lobbying regulations on trust in politicians was measured. Disclosure of lobbyists’ names (3.2%), or of their names and the policies they lobby for (0.9%), did not significantly increase trust in politicians. However, full disclosure—that is, disclosure of the names of lobbyists, the policies they lobby for and the amount they spend on lobbying, resulted in a 13.8% increase. These numbers changed only very slightly when control variables were introduced in the second model, and did not alter the main findings: a 4.1% increase with disclosure of the names of lobbyists; a 1.3% increase with disclosure of both the names of lobbyists and the policies they lobby for; and a 14% increase with disclosure of the names of lobbyists, the policies they lobby for and the amount they spend on lobbying. In the third model, the number of observations drops to 353 compared with 497 in the first model, however, there is no substantive difference in strength of the treatments. Disclosure of the names of the lobbyists increases trust in politicians by 2.7% and disclosure of the names of the lobbyists and the issues they lobby increases trust in politicians by 2.9% without reaching statistical significance. Full disclosure increases trust significantly by 13.5%.

Table 3 – Knowledge of Lobbying Regulations and Trust in Politicians
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beta</td>
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<tr>
<td>Condition 2</td>
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<td>0.73</td>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Ideology</td>
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<td>R-squared</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** *** significant at the 99% confidence level

**Discussion and Conclusion**

The enactment of stringent lobbying regulations has become a salient topic all over the world (see McGrath, 2008, 2009, 2013; de Aragao, 2012; Dinan & Miller, 2012; Kanol, 2012; Köppl, 2012; Veksler, 2012; Vercic & Vercic, 2012; Lumi, 2014; Santos & Costa, 2014; Halpin & Warhurst, 2016; Crepaz, 2016). Lobbying scandals have in many cases been responsible for lobbying reform (Chari, Hogan & Murphy 2010). However, we do not know if these reforms can affect the perception of public integrity. Do knowledge of lobbying regulations curb perceptions of political corruption and increase trust in politicians? The survey experimental data presented in
this paper suggest that they can. However, the nuances in the findings should be considered carefully.

When the names of lobbyists are made public, perceptions of political corruption significantly decrease. However, disclosure of the names of lobbyists, as well as the policies they lobby for, is not shown to add value to the endeavor of decreasing perceived political corruption. The perception of political corruption is slightly higher when both data are made public compared to when only the lobbyists’ names are made public. Similarly, when both the names of lobbyists and the policies they lobby for are made public, trust in politicians slightly decreases or stays the same compared to when only the names of lobbyists are made public. Another interesting finding is that disclosure of lobbyists’ names significantly decreases perceived political corruption, but does not increase trust in politicians. When the amount spent by lobbyists is made public, however, there is an enormous decrease in perceptions of corruption, as well as a substantial increase in trust in politicians.

These findings suggest that knowledge of lobbying regulation influences perceptions of political corruption more substantively than trust in politicians. In the case of trust in politicians, only full disclosure makes a substantive difference. In the case of perceived political corruption, full disclosure may not be necessary to affect perceptions significantly, although it is necessary to make a substantive difference. Also, the findings clearly suggest that the public is strongly influenced by disclosure of the amount of finances spent on lobbying as it made the most substantive difference compared with other types of disclosure.

Avkiran, Kanol & Oliver (2016) found that knowledge of campaign finance regulation significantly decreases perceptions of political corruption by 7.48%. However, regulation did not
significantly influence trust in politicians. Findings in this paper imply that lobbying regulation’s effect on political attitudes is more pronounced. Full disclosure decreases perception of political corruption by up to 34.1% and trust in politicians by up to 13.8%.

It is important to realize, however, the limitations of this study. First, enacting legislation alone is not enough. This experimental study presupposes that the public is informed about such legislation. If the media does not report on the existence of regulations for lobbyists, the results obtained in this study do not reflect what would happen when governments enact lobbying reform. In such a scenario, lack of popular knowledge about lobbying regulations would probably result in no effect on citizens’ attitudes towards politics. Furthermore, it is known that the way lobbying regulations are framed in the media would condition public attitudes, as framing is an important indicator of political trust (Hetherington & Rudolph, 2008). De Fine Licht (2014b), for instance, found that the transparency of the actual decision-making process does not automatically translate into a perceived transparency of the decision-making process, and perceived transparency is what counts in practice.

Moreover, this study assumes that there would be no significant issues with respect to the implementation of lobbying regulations. The results, however, would most likely depend on the effectiveness with which lobbying legislation was implemented. The policy-implementation gap is a reality, and a lack of willingness or competence to implement lobbying reforms could mean such reforms would have no impact on citizens’ attitudes, or worse, a negative impact.

It should also be noted that the ecological validity of this experiment would depend on the type of data people are exposed to. Some citizens could grow even more cynical after being exposed to such data, realizing the degree to which the lobby registers favor the interests of the
wealthy. This possibility is in line with the allegation that transparency can actually hurt the perception of legitimacy by exposing things that could be perceived as suspicious (O’Neill, 2002). This is especially problematic when people are exposed to information about dubious behavior but are powerless to hold politicians accountable for their actions (van den Bos, 1999; Ulbig, 2008).

Furthermore, asking about political corruption and trust in politicians in a relatively unknown country could strengthen the internal validity of an experiment by eliminating the threat of knowledge about actual lobbying legislation in subjects’ own countries. On the other hand, however, this reduces the ecological validity of the research, since confirmation bias theory (Lord, Ross & Lepper, 1979; Nickerson, 1998; Kunda, 1999; Baron, 2007) shows that people’s attitudes are harder to change when it comes to something they have predispositions toward, and people are more likely to have predispositions toward politicians in their own country than towards those of a relatively unknown country.

All in all, however, the findings suggest that, in principle, people favor transparency in lobbying and would like to know what is going on in the black box of policy-making. If transparency in lobbying can be achieved through successful governance of lobbying reforms, with effective media collaboration, this might significantly decrease the perception of political corruption and increase trust in politicians. Together with other anti-corruption initiatives, lobbying regulations could partially remedy the problem of public cynicism towards politics. Pursuing this goal, of course, should be of utmost importance in an age when the legitimacy of many advanced democracies is being questioned.
Appendix

This survey is part of an academic study carried out by …….. Your data will be kept private. Please read the text below and answer the questions accordingly.

**Condition 1**

“Lobbying is the act of trying to influence public policy by organizations such as business associations, firms, sector-specific associations, labor unions or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In Liechtenstein, there are no data available to the public regarding lobbyists’ names, which policies they lobby for or how much they spend on lobbying”.

**Condition 2**

“Lobbying is the act of trying to influence public policy by organizations such as business associations, firms, sector-specific associations, labor unions or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In Liechtenstein, lobbyists register their names on a publicly available list. The list does not report data regarding which policies they lobby for or how much they spend on lobbying”.

**Condition 3**

“Lobbying is the act of trying to influence public policy by organizations such as business associations, firms, sector-specific associations, labor unions or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In Liechtenstein, lobbyists register their names and the policies they lobby for on a publicly available list. The list does not report data regarding how much they spend on lobbying”.
Condition 4

“Lobbying is the act of trying to influence public policy by organizations such as business associations, firms, sector-specific associations, labor unions or non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In Liechtenstein, lobbyists register their names, the policies they lobby for, and the amount spent on lobbying on a publicly available list”.

Please put a circle around the relevant answer:

1) Gender:
   Male  Female

2) Political corruption is a problem in Liechtenstein.
   Strongly Disagree  0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

3) Age:

4) In political matters people talk of ‘the left’ and ‘the right’. How would you place yourself on the following scale?
   Left 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Right

5) Politicians in Liechtenstein can be trusted to represent the public interest.
   Strongly Disagree  0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Strongly Agree

6) Country of birth:
**Bibliography**


