

## Meanings in research on corruption

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This article aims to give an overview of the accumulated discussions about corruption, identifying and gathering its main occurrences in scientific research. The texts found during the literature review process reveal the heterogeneous and asymmetrical character of scientific literature on the subject. From the scarce or barely existing number of articles devoted exclusively to the literature review on corruption to the multitude of texts that tackle its causes, effects and perception, the subject is approached with different interests in the scientific community. This article aims to contribute to Public Administration studies by identifying the senses of research on corruption and organizing them into six groups or thematic axes.

**Keywords:** corruption; literature review; thematic axes; scientific research; Brazil.

### Os sentidos da pesquisa sobre corrupção

Este artigo pretende traçar um panorama geral sobre as discussões acumuladas em torno da corrupção, identificando e agrupando as principais ocorrências relacionadas com ela na pesquisa científica. Os textos encontrados durante o processo de revisão de literatura revelam o caráter heterogêneo e assimétrico da produção científica sobre o tema. Do parco ou quase inexistente número de artigos dedicados exclusivamente à revisão de literatura sobre a corrupção até a infinidade de textos que atacam suas causas, efeitos e percepção, o tema é abordado com interesses diferentes no meio científico. Nosso artigo pretende prestar uma contribuição aos estudos de administração pública ao identificar os sentidos das pesquisas sobre corrupção e organizá-los em seis grupos ou eixos temáticos.

**Palavras-chave:** corrupção; revisão de literatura; eixos temáticos; pesquisa científica; Brasil.

### Los sentidos de la investigación sobre corrupción

En este artículo se pretende dar una visión general de los debates acumulados alrededor de la corrupción, identificando y recogiendo las principales ocurrencias en la investigación científica. Los textos encontrados durante el proceso de revisión de la literatura revelan el carácter heterogéneo y asimétrico de la literatura científica sobre el tema. De la escasa o casi inexistente cantidad de artículos dedicados exclusivamente a la revisión de la literatura sobre la corrupción a la multitud de textos que atacan sus causas, efectos y percepción, el tema se aborda con diferentes intereses en la comunidad científica. Nuestro artículo pretende hacer una contribución a los estudios de la administración pública identificando los sentidos de la investigación sobre la corrupción y organizándolos a partir de seis grupos o ejes temáticos.

**Palabras clave:** corrupción; revisión de literatura; ejes temáticos; investigación científica; Brasil.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Corruption is a major enemy of organizations, and in the contemporary world, scientific research has been constantly challenged to understand it.

This article intends to uncover the directions in which studies on corruption take place. It is not, therefore, an effort to understand the nature, or to offer a definition for corruption, but rather to draw a panorama of the discussions accumulated around this topic, identifying and grouping the main occurrences in scientific research.

The article is divided into three parts. The first part explains the procedures used in the literature review including the method and details of steps taken in each phase.

The second part explores the meanings or directions of research on corruption. Instead of a “trend” in studies, as the word ‘directions’ may suggest, the intention is to explore the topics that appear when observing these meanings. Meanings, directions or perspectives were named from the type of concern expressed in the texts. For example, in an introductory or conceptual meaning, or in a way that relates to forms of controlling corruption.

In the third part, we have established some notes about the research on corruption in Brazil, highlighting its connection with studies in the field of public administration. This was possible thanks to the results obtained in the second part. Based on these observations, the study intends to uncover particularities of the literature produced in the country: the way in which it is organized, the main actors, and the stage in which it is in the field of public administration.

Against this backdrop and aware that the task is to present an introductory panorama of research on corruption, this study expects to contribute to systematize the research efforts and provide elements for future work in the field.

## 2. DISCOVERING THE MEANINGS OF THE RESEARCH: PROCEDURES TO MAP THE LITERATURE ON CORRUPTION

The interest of the scientific community over the issue of corruption has grown in the last decades. A search on the ScienceDirect database reveals that at the beginning of the 2000s about 500 articles were published per year on the subject, an amount that, 10 years later, would more than double, then jump at the beginning of the 2010s from 1,570 articles to reach 2,845 registered by the end of 2015.

If, on the one hand, the presence and circulation of the theme in journals of high impact expresses an interest of researchers on the subject of corruption, on the other hand, this means that the increase in interest does not always come together with an equivalent effort of systematization.

To offer a first organization of the studies on corruption, the research adopted procedures derived from the combination of two forms of literature review: a scoping review and an integrative review.

According to Armstrong and collaborators (2011), the scoping review offers a structured approach to collect information by mapping or selecting existing literature on a given topic, without, however, engaging in exhaustive analysis and synthesis procedures or qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the publication. One of its great advantages is the possibility to inform current or future research in the area.

Rumrill, Fitzgerald and Merchant (2010) agree, pointing out that the scoping review is not only exploratory — that is, of examining the variety and nature of a given research area, determining

whether a systematic review should be carried out — it also summarizes and disseminates research, insofar as the researcher uses it to identify existing gaps in the literature.

In the field of public administration and organizational studies, according to Botelho, Cunha and Macedo (2011), the integrative review has the power to facilitate the exchange between theoretical and experimental research already done. This allows the researcher, through the manipulation of criteria, to retrieve them and make connections during the reviewing process.

In this study, the literature review first involved the delimitation of the research question to the meanings of the studies on corruption: what are the main topics addressed in the scientific literature regarding corruption?

In the second stage, the selection of the topics and the definition of the research question were conducted together with the search for articles in electronic databases of journals, through reviewing books and essays published about corruption. The selection included the criteria authority, respectability and prestige enjoyed by authors in the field of research on corruption, beyond the actuality and permanence of their studies, the extent to which the content is treated by the authors, as well as the objectivity and accuracy of the texts. The studies were found using firstly the ScienceDirect electronic database, and later the databases Scopus, JSTOR, Web of Science, Spell and Scielo.

The belief that the meanings of research on corruption could be easily achieved through consultations with existing literature reviews led to the initial searches being guided by the keywords: corruption, review, literature, research, and studies. The meager existence of this type of material, however, meant that it was later necessary to restrict it to the isolated use of the term ‘corruption’.

The variety of texts found led to grouping the articles in thematic axis according to the meaning the research attributed to the issue of corruption:

- a) introductory articles, i.e., composed of texts that present and problematize studies on corruption;
- b) conceptual and phenomenological texts, which are concerned with the definition of corruption and the forms and cases in which it is manifested;
- c) paradigmatic research, where authors intend to introduce forms of analysis and interpretation on corruption based on specific areas of human knowledge;
- d) deal with the perception, causes and effects of corruption;
- e) are focused on the control of corruption; and
- f) investigate how the media deals with corruption cases.

Four procedures were used for the classification of the texts in each of the groups, as well as for excluding those that did not fit the criteria: analysis of the title; abstract; keywords; skimming; and comparing the articles’ content with the meanings identified in the research. It is clear that the final number of texts presented in each group could be higher, but the intention was to work with a sufficient number of articles that could express the ‘meaning’ that characterized the group. Therefore, the literature analyzed that fit the criteria were considered for the study and the others were excluded.

The classification of an article or book in a particular group may raise doubts and disagreements, but it is important to point out that the nature of the concerns that were preponderant in the texts on corruption was not always clear. Although an article or book presumably presents a conceptual tone, the answer it gives to the question “what is corruption?” May end up providing elements that mean it is classified as a text that deals with paradigms of interpretation or even of causes, effects and perceptions of corruption. In this way, choosing the best framework was not always easy and did not always result in a satisfactory solution through the keywords.

Aware of these limitations, the next section presents the results obtained with the research and classification of texts.

### 3. THE MEANINGS BUILT BY THE RESEARCH ACTORS: MAIN GROUPS, CONCERNS AND GAPS IN THE LITERATURE ON CORRUPTION

The first thematic group of articles identified expresses an introductory nature of the research on corruption. It is composed of texts that offer an initial presentation of the theme and carry out a problematization of its studies from the main theories and discussions on corruption. Articles devoted exclusively to literature reviews is something very rare, so the organization of such studies becomes an important task for future research in the field. Among the texts that use some kind of revision or systematization of the literature are Brei (1996b), Torsello and Venard (2016), Judge, McNatt and Xu (2010), Mény (1996), Biason (2012a) and Filgueiras (2008b).

#### BOX 1 INTRODUCTORY MEANING OF RESEARCH ON CORRUPTION

<i>Literature review</i>	Currents of thoughts and theoretical frameworks	Brei (1996b); Biason (2012a); Filgueiras (2008b)
	Anthropological studies	Torsello and Venard (2016)
<i>Meta-analysis</i>	Empirical studies on causes and effects of corruption	Judge, McNatt and Xu (2010)
<i>Others</i>	Evolution of the studies on corruption	Mény (1996)

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

The article by Brei (1996b) focuses on the review of the main current of thoughts on corruption, classifying them into four groups: texts that define corruption from the market point of view, those that take into account the public interest, those who conceptualize corruption from the public opinion and those who recognize it from the legal point of view. Considering the scarcity of reviews, this is a starting point for thinking about the definitions of corruption, even if it does not include the

perspectives of the first and second decades of the 2000s, such as the anthropological one, revisited in the text by Torsello and Venard (2016). In their article, the authors carry out a review of the literature in the field of anthropology, explaining how a new understanding of morality can contribute to studies on corruption. The idea defended by the authors is that the understanding about corruption must be returned to the context in which it arises, not being examined a priori, nor definitively, as something negative. Judge, McNatt, and Xu (2010), in turn, conduct a literature mapping process that relies on the meta-analysis of 42 empirical studies, which classify scientific production on corruption in three broad areas: political or legal, economic and sociocultural. Mény (1996) makes his contribution by explaining how the phenomenon of corruption gained prominence over time and how, by becoming more complex, it gave rise to different modes of interpretation. Biason (2012a) outlines the main theories of corruption (personalistic, functionalistic, legalistic, economic, political, etc.), while Filgueiras (2008b) resumes its theoretical frameworks, especially those that underlie neoinstitutionalistic visions and modernization.

Part of the research effort on corruption is concerned with definition and the presentation of its forms, types or practices. We call this meaning of “conceptual” and “phenomenological”. The group of articles that has this concern counts on the contribution by authors such as Williams (1999), Philp (1997), Johnston (1996), Silva (1994), Filgueiras (2006), Agatiello (2010), Ribeiro (2000), Carvalho (2008), Pinto (2011) and Furtado (2015).

**BOX 2 CONCEPTUAL AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL MEANING OF RESEARCH ON CORRUPTION**

<i>Concept</i>	Definition difficulties	Williams (1999)
	Classic and current notions	Johnston (1996); Silva (1994)
	Corruption as a syndrome	Johnston (2005)
	Corruption as transgression	Carvalho (2008)
<i>Nature</i>	Political (instrument of power) or economic (goal)?	Agatiello (2010)
	Political	Philp (1997); Filgueiras (2006)
	Anthropological and political	Ribeiro (2000)
<i>Cases and practices</i>	Form of government	Pinto (2011)
	Agencies and actors of public administration	Furtado (2015)

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

Williams (1999) emphasizes the need to focus on defining and refining the concept because of the diversity of existing studies on the causes, consequences, and control of corruption. The author examines the evolution of the concept in contemporary social sciences and ensures that they more often express the causes of corruption than corruption itself. Philp (1997) denounces the difficulties encountered in determining the political nature of corruption, its limits and consequences in the institutional environment. Johnston (1996) puts these difficulties in perspective, by advocating for the reconciliation between the classic and modern approaches towards corruption. The thought revealed by the author at that time (1996) is far from the formulation reached almost a decade later, when Johnston published “Syndromes of Corruption” (2005). In this work, the author understands corruption as a “syndrome” whose origin lies in the way people exchange power and wealth. He argues that it is possible to identify at least four syndromes of corruption: influence markets; elite cartels; oligarchs and clans; and official moguls. Embedded in the liberal context, Johnston’s (2005) approach demonstrates originality in thinking about the systemic problems of corruption. Silva (1994) resumes the attempt to define functional corruption and, although it is linked to more traditional ways of understanding this practice, it is one of the rare efforts made in the area of Brazilian public administration to think about corruption. Filgueiras (2006) associates the definition of corruption with the understanding of its languages and the historical-social process that establishes it, advocating for the prevalence of ethical and moral principles for the adequate functioning of institutions. Agatiello (2010) examines the influence of notions of political integrity, democracy and economic difficulties in defining the concept of corruption. These attempts lead to questioning whether it is possible to explain corruption exclusively by economic bias, according to which it would not be an instrument, but a purpose. Ribeiro (2000) claims the importance of an expanded view on the subject, defending the combination of a political and anthropological perspective, without which it is not possible to measure the social costs of corruption. Carvalho (2008) thinks of it from the logic of transgression. Although the refusal to take corruption exactly by the way it is named implies the perpetuation of some impasses, the author develops reflections on the relationship of the Brazilian people with the law and practices of corruption throughout history. Part of these practices are also examined by Pinto (2011). The author highlights some cases in order to illustrate how the types of corruption that exist in the Brazilian political system (nepotism, patrimonialism, clientelism, for example) are associated with a way of exercising power that has taken root in the country. Several cases of corruption are also analyzed by Furtado (2015), who offers an approach closely linked to the organizational perspective of public administration.

If the literature review and the intention of defining corruption did not inspire great interest from the point of view of scientific studies, the case for the paradigms of analysis and interpretation of corruption is different. The paradigmatic meaning constructed by researchers brings together explanations about corruption from the most diverse areas of human knowledge: from economics, culture, organizational theory, political science, linguistics, psychology, philosophy, and others. Bardhan (1997) and Aidt (2003, 2009) analyze, for example, the economic paradigm. They try to problematize the impact of corruption on the economy through variables such as efficiency and development. Bardhan (1997) emphasizes arguments that favor the positive relationship between



corruption and increased administrative efficiency, while Aidt (2009) goes the opposite way, to prove the inefficiency and the costs of corruption practices, in terms of jeopardizing the development. Although important, the economic discussion does not seem to find a conciliatory solution, able to provide positive and negative aspects of corruption with respect to the context in which it appears. The cultural paradigm, in turn, redirects the discussion to a surprising number of topics. Mishra (2006) investigates, for example, the persistence and tolerance of corruption in certain societies, while Barr and Serra (2010) and Miller (2006) evaluate the role that social norms and values play in corruption. Dong, Dulleck and Torgler (2011), as well as Balafoutas (2011), are interested in investigating whether it is possible to talk about “contagion” or transmission of corruption. In these studies, the authors focus on the relationship between the perception of corruption by a given society and the engagement of its members in corrupt practices. As for the organizational context, interpretations on corruption stand out, such as those by Frost and Tischer (2014), considering it a routine; by Karmann and collaborators (2016), who evaluate corruption in relation to the entrepreneurial orientation; and by Rosenblatt (2012), who uses the theory of social dominance to explain the rooting and perpetuation of corrupt practices in organizations. It is a promising area of study, especially from the perspective of treating corruption as a social practice. In this case, the political paradigm reflects on corruption using arguments that resume the democratic theory. The main study in this aspect is by Warren (2004), who argues that corruption, in addition to expressing a violation of the norm of democratic inclusion, points to the existence of a serious democracy deficit. This analysis is to some extent innovative within the political area in which it appears, and it is presented as an alternative to traditional approaches. The use of other paradigms, such as the linguistic one, developed in Machado’s (2010) study, reaffirms the attempt to elaborate other ways to approach corruption, out of the traditional semantic fields. Roberts (2015) undertakes an equivalent effort, providing an explanation for corruption through the psychological paradigm, supported by the studies Lacan and Foucault developed about the processes of subjectivation and the psychic processes of attraction for corruption. Martins (2008) uses philosophy to question and challenge corruption based on common sense definitions, while Avritzer and collaborators (2008) and Brei (1996a) offer an overview of the perspectives of analysis of corruption.

**BOX 3 PARADIGMATIC MEANING OF RESEARCH ON CORRUPTION**

<i>Economic</i>	Efficiency and development	Bardhan (1997); Aidt (2009)
	Corruption persistence and tolerance	Mishra (2006)
<i>Cultural</i>	Role of norms and values on corruption practices	Barr and Serra (2010); Miller (2006)
	Is corruption “contagious”? The influence of corruption perception on the involvement of bureaucrats in such practices	Dong, Dulleck and Torgler (2011); Balafoutas (2011)

*Continue*

<i>Organizational</i>	Routine	Frost and Tischer (2014)
	Wrong use of power (or entrepreneurial orientation) for personal gains	Karmann and collaborators (2016)
<i>Political</i>	Theory of social dominance	Rosenblatt (2012)
	Democratic theory	Warren (2004);
<i>Linguistic</i>	Semantic analysis	Machado (2010)
<i>Psychologic</i>	Processes of submission and psychic attraction for corruption	Roberts (2015)
<i>Philosophical</i>	Opposition towards the common sense	Martins (2008)
<i>Others</i>	Currents of thought about causes, consequences and solutions to corruption	Brei (1996a); Avritzer (2008)

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

Studies on perception, causes and effects of corruption are frequent in scientific research and have a special meaning. A classic work in this area is that of Rose-Ackerman (1999). The author studies the causes and consequences of corruption, especially, in the economic field. Although political and cultural aspects are also examined — and expanded in the second edition of her book — they are not discussed in depth as it is the economic aspect. The author's belief in economics as a powerful tool of explanation, combined with her history working for institutions such as the World Bank, explains the inclination of the thoughts for an institutional logic and the reasons why she situates self-seeking or rent-seeking behavior in the basis of corruption. It is against this backdrop that further studies on corruption, its causes and effects must arise. Contributions to the causes of corruption can be further verified in the articles by Goel and Nelson (2010), Roman and Miller (2014), Lee and Guven (2013), Sobhani and Bechara (2011) and Theobald (1999).

Among the causes listed in the scientific literature are the historical and geographical factors presented by Goel and Nelson (2010), status and kinship, examined by Roman and Miller (2014), cultural norms and gender issues, highlighted by Lee and Guven (2013), brain injuries and dysfunctions, researched by Sobhani and Bechara (2011), as well as characteristics of underdevelopment, such as patrimonialism, studied by Theobald (1999). At first sight, the causes suggest some differences. A deep analysis, however, reveals that these research belong to the same group of texts that entrusts the causality of corruption to the prevalence of cultural aspects. This is why the investigation by Sobhani and Bechara (2011), which describes corruption as a trait not properly cultural but biological of the human being, sounds dissonant. This conclusion must be revisited and questioned, especially for the ethical consequences it brings to the understanding of corruption and free will.



**BOX 4 CAUSES OF CORRUPTION, ACCORDING TO SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**

<i>Causes</i>	Self-seeking/rent-seeking	Rose-Ackerman (1999)
	Historical and geographical factors	Goel and Nelson (2010)
	Status and kinship	Roman and Miller (2014)
	Cultural norms and gender issues	Lee and Guven (2013)
	Cerebral lesion and dysfunction	Sobhani and Bechara (2011)
	Underdevelopment, patrimonialism practices	Theobald (1999)

**Sources:** Elaborated by the authors.

When speaking of consequences, it is necessary to take into account the existence of a large number of texts that propose to reflect on corruption through its effects.

The articles by Nye (1967) and Petrou and Thanos (2014) provide a more general picture of these discussions, while others such as Budak and Rajh (2014) and Méon and Weill (2010) discuss the existence of negative and positive effects of corruption. Tay, Herian and Diener (2014) intend to establish its relationship with people's well-being, while Praça (2011) assesses its impact in triggering institutional reforms.

Studies that question the consequences of corruption in the economic and institutional field have strong empirical appeal, and this is why they end up prevailing over theoretical studies of corruption. In addition, such studies often contribute to the confusion between the definition of corruption and the explanation of its causes and effects.

**BOX 5 EFFECTS OF CORRUPTION, ACCORDING TO SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**

<i>Effects</i>	General discussions	Nye (1967); Petrou and Thanos (2014)
	Positive for business	Méon and Weill (2010)
	Negative for business	Budak and Rajh (2014)
	For people's well-being	Tay, Herian and Diener (2014)
	In institutional reforms	Praça (2011)

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

When it comes to the way corruption is perceived, a broad field of studies in the scientific literature arises alongside the research on its causes and effects. Abramo (2005), Olken (2009), Dreher, Kotsogiannis and McCorriston (2007) and Sah (2007) highlight the difficulties involved in measuring corruption practices, which makes indices and indicators of perception unreliable instruments in describing this practice. Poeschl and Ribeiro (2010) stress the differences in perception that arise in different social, local and global contexts, while Santos, Guevara and Amorim (2013) assess the relationship of perception of corruption with education, gender and age of people in private organizations. Filgueiras (2009) explores the contradiction between moral values and corruption in Brazilian public opinion, explaining to what extent this distance is determined by the way we perceive corruption. This perception, as well as the role it plays in the formation of public opinion, is studied by Heidenheimer (1996) through the so-called processes of scandalization.

**BOX 6 PERCEPTION OF CORRUPTION, ACCORDING TO SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**

<i>Perception</i>	Measurement and use of indicators	Abramo (2005); Olken (2009); Dreher, Kotsogiannis and McCorriston (2007); Sah (2007)
	Different social context (local and global)	Poeschl and Ribeiro (2010)
	Organizational context (age, gender and education)	Santos, Guevara and Amorim (2013)
	Brazilian public opinion	Filgueiras (2009)
	Scandalization	Heidenheimer (1996)

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

One of the most captivating topics that emerged in recent decades of research, shaping the research on corruption in a different direction is the topic of control mechanisms. In this sense, two works are worth mentioning: Klitgaard (1994) and Anechiarico and Jacobs (1996).

In his book, Klitgaard (1994) explores case studies with the purpose of elaborating anti-corruption policies from them. The author elaborates a mathematical formula, in which corruption corresponds to the arrangement of variables such as: monopoly, discretion and accountability. Although the work has become a classic of the scientific literature, it has been responsible for disseminating an institutional recipe for the fight against corruption confined to poor and developing countries, beyond which little is known about its outreach.

The work of Anechiarico and Jacobs (1996) is another classic of anticorruption studies, based on the investigation of anti-corruption measures adopted by the New York City Police Department.

The study deals with the idea that anti-corruption efforts can be as damaging as corruption itself, contributing, to the limit, to the inefficiency of government. Despite the controversial view introduced by the authors, it is a material that obliges the researchers to nurture a certain skepticism in the study of anti-corruption measures, weighing its positive and negative aspects.

In high influential journals, the discussion about the meaning of ‘control’ is taken in depth when it comes to its modalities or implementation forms: institutional, bureaucratic, social or democratic, electronic and media.

**BOX 7 FORMS OF CORRUPTION CONTROL, ACCORDING TO SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**

<i>Institutional</i>	Reforms, structures of internal control and ethical commitment	Gong and Wang (2013); Truex (2011); Rose-Ackerman (2002); Klitgaard (1994); Anechiarico and Jacobs (1996)
<i>Bureaucratic</i>	Street level	Filgueiras and Aranha (2011)
<i>Social or Democratic</i>	Social participation	Warren (2005)
<i>Electronic (ICT)</i>	Internet	Lio, Liu and Ou (2011)
	Social media	Bertot, Jaeger and Grimes (2010)
	E-government	Andersen (2009)
<i>Media</i>	Freedom of press	Camaj (2013); Bhattacharyya and Hodler (2015)

**Source:** Elaborated by the authors.

Among the institutional controls, it is possible to highlight: the creation or reformulation of agencies responsible for fighting corruption, phenomenon that was examined by Gong and Wang (2013) when looking at the experience of Hong Kong; the celebration of ethical commitments, emphasized by Rose-Ackerman (2002); and the promotion of education to the population, analyzed by Truex (2011). Parallel to institutional control, there is also bureaucratic control, which is not manifested directly in institutions, but in the staff. Filgueiras and Aranha (2011) suggest that effective control over corrupt practices presupposes a reduction in the discretion of bureaucrats at street level. The perspective, although empirically inviting, creates theoretical edges that needed to be rethought. The first is to resume the relationship between discretion and corruption: will the discretion really be decisive for the appearance of corruption practices? The second is to suggest the persistence of corruption in lower strata of the administrative hierarchy, where it would be more expressive: would the occupiers of senior management be exposed to similar practices, since they have a certain freedom in the definition of their choices? These issues are important and should be answered in order to clarify the limits of management reforms in terms of corruption control, especially in Brazil. Another aspect

of anti-corruption studies focuses on social or democratic control. Warren (2005) is an enthusiast of this idea and, in his text, demonstrates how the organization or empowerment of civil society and institutions can favor accountability and, consequently, no corruption in the political activity. This perspective deserves to be compared with the initiatives already existing in the institutional field, in order to ascertain, more precisely, the degree of autonomy and independence that social accountability has over the control carried out by institutional control agencies.

Parallel to democratic control, we have seen growing interest in electronic forms of fighting corruption. Lio, Liu and Ou (2011), Bertot, Jaeger and Grimes (2010) and Andersen (2009) explore the capacity of electronic means and tools of information and communication technologies such as the internet, social media and e-government, in offering a counterpoint to corruption. These studies inspire the belief in the resignification of the activity of control, stimulating mainly the prevention, to the detriment of repressive actions.

The last facet of corruption control, although little explored in the scientific literature, intends to give the press a prominent role in combating this practice.

Bhattacharyya and Hodler (2015) argue that the combination of incentives for democratization and freedom of the press is a major initiative in the fight against political corruption. Camaj (2013) examines the relationship between press freedom and levels of corruption, suggesting that places where little corruption is practiced are also places where the media has more freedom to carry out its activities.

This relationship between the media and corruption starts, to some extent, an all-new meaning in scientific research. Besides the role played by media in corruption control, there is an interest in literature to think about the treatment media uses to refer to the issue of corruption. These studies focus on building narratives about corruption especially from the processes of scandalization and dramatization.

Breit (2010) examines these processes and uncovers forms of speech hitherto not enunciated in the literature, such as transgression, political discourse, individualism, and scapegoating. Giglioli (1996) makes a similar effort but focuses on examining the role played by the media in the judicial investigation of a concrete case of political corruption in Milan in the 1990s. The importance of the reflections developed by the author is to demonstrate how the approaches used by the press serve to achieve a market logic that often precedes the logic of political support.

Silva and collaborators (2005) seek to understand, in the field of discourse analysis, the meanings about corruption constructed by the newspaper *Folha de S.Paulo*, in a corruption case involving a multinational in the food field. Considering the scarcity of this type of study in our country, the study serves as a starting point for new research that deepens the examination of discursive practices in newspapers, magazines, news magazines and other media vehicles.

## BOX 8 TREATMENT OF CORRUPTION BY THE MEDIA, ACCORDING TO SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

<i>Narratives</i>	Discourse building and analysis	Breit (2010); Giglioli (1996); Silva and collaborators (2005)
<i>Role of communication means</i>	Simplification of reality	Barros Filho and Praça (2014)

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Another approach to topics related to corruption that are dealt with by the media is the approach by Barros Filho and Praça (2014). They use the philosophical discourse and political science to undo many of the simplifications that journalism is lavish in producing, helping to understand the meanings associated with corruption.

#### **4. THE RESEARCH ON CORRUPTION IN THE BRAZILIAN CASE AND ITS INTERFACE WITH THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

Once the meanings present in research on corruption have been presented, it is crucial to ask what are the particularities of Brazilian academic production about corruption, and what are the connections of this issue with public administration.

The first particularity is that the studies carried out by Brazilian authors are published in essays and books, whereas the international production is usually published in the form of scientific papers and in highly influential journals. Some of the Brazilian works have appeared in recent decades, such as that of Filgueiras (2008a), Avritzer and collaborators (2008), Pinto (2011), Biason (2012b), Martins (2008) and Furtado (2015). Most of them, however, do not originate in public administration, but in political science.

The presence of the theme in journals in Brazil is quite timid. A consultation of Spell database shows how the Brazilian scientific production on corruption is still small in the area of public administration. When applying the keyword ‘corruption’ in the database’s search engine, only 53 articles are found — a number that is reduced dramatically when adding “public administration” in the system’s filter “knowledge area”. In this case, the result counts seven articles, of which four take corruption as the central theme of the study. In this scenario, the work by Brei (1996a, 1996b) stand out, which introduce a more general discussion on corruption from its currents of thought, causes and consequences; in addition the recent research by Caldas, Costa and Pagliarussi (2016), which considers the relationship between corruption and the composition of government spending on health and education at the municipal level; as well as a short article by Silva (1994).

Based on these results, the Brazilian scientific production on corruption in the field of public administration needs to increase, not only with regard to the thematic range — to welcome new discussions — but also in terms of the nature of the approaches, still closely linked to a classic idea that corruption must be explained in the clash between public and private spheres.

The second particularity of Brazilian production is that a significant part of it originates in centers of study on corruption, among which it is worth mentioning the Reference Center of Public Interest (Crip), of the Federal University of Minas Gerais, and the Center for Studies and Research on Corruption (CEPC), of the State University of São Paulo. These centers of study are responsible for the organization of scientific meetings that directly and indirectly promote the production of national literature on the subject.

Finally, the third particularity is that, although the Brazilian studies have developed quite vigorously over the last decade and have been experiencing, more recently, their effervescence, a significant part of our intellectual production is constituted from an international theoretical framework.

Thus, although the progress of the more general studies on corruption in Brazil is due to the existence of a national literature on the subject, it is necessary that researchers work in building a Brazilian bulk of reflections, especially in the field of public administration, where the studies are currently scarce.

## 5. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES: AN AGENDA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH ON CORRUPTION

When analyzing how public administration research is organized today, a close relationship is observed between the research and the government agenda. This means that the concerns experienced in the daily practice of local, regional and national governments serve as catalysts for research that will be further developed in the scientific field.

In the case of corruption, based on the literature review presented above, we are inclined to believe in the prevalence of a state in which governmental activity has not really stimulated scientific experiments, nor demanded explanations for the difficulties encountered by public administrators.

Therefore, one of the challenges to be faced by researchers is to connect their work with the governmental agenda, so that they gain space next to the administrative praxis.

In this context, strengthening a research agenda on corruption brings together challenges and opportunities that can be translated into research questions such as the following:

- Are the studies on corruption produced in the last decade – supporting a wider cultural view on this subject – in fact, welcomed by entities impregnated with rational logic such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (who believe that corruption could be explained by the way public officials make choices and maximize private interest)?
- Do the strategies or practices adopted by the Brazilian public administration to combat corruption, especially at the municipal level, reflect the diversity of conceptions that the scientific literature has on the topic of ‘control’?
- Is the perspective on the high costs of the activities of corruption control, elaborated by Anechiarico and Jacobs (1996) in the early 1990s, still updated and able to explain the consequences that control activities produce (especially in countries such as Brazil, where major anti-corruption operations are under way)?
- Is the widespread perception that holders of elected positions (political agents) and appointed personnel produce more corruption than civil servants (who accessed the positions in a meritocratic way) sustained by quantitative analysis based on the number of removals, exonerations and dismissals — connected with eventual wrongdoings — of civil servants?
- Should advances in scientific studies that highlight the prevalence of the biological aspect in corruption, such as those carried out by Sobhani and Bechara (2011), be taken forward? What impact could such studies have on the recruitment of civil servants in the future?
- Alberto Guerreiro Ramos (1983) was skeptical before the Commission for the Development of the Administration in Latin America, and stated that corruption was understood until the 1970s as a phenomenon “painted with exaggerated colors or interpreted erroneously by the authors”. Is this a ‘portrait’ that is still found in current scientific research?
- How can we think of the imbrication between relations of power, organizational culture and corruption, especially with respect to the way in which these phenomena contribute to the formation of coalitions, bonds of trust and networks of collective action necessary for the practices of corruption?

It is important to emphasize that the consolidation of a research agenda is not exhausted in the examples given above. On the contrary, it will take shape and expand whenever the researchers can



extract from the set of studies that form the meanings of the research on corruption, a number of questions, problems and hypotheses that justify new incursions.

## 6. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The extensive literature review on corruption showed that the studies are not homogeneous: the results point to concerns in scientific research that give rise to the meanings or directions of studies on corruption: they are introductory; conceptual and phenomenological; paradigmatic; and related to perception, causes, effects of corruption, or its control and form, it is presented by the media.

These meanings attract the scholars' attention in an asymmetrical way. From the scarce or almost nonexistent number of articles dedicated exclusively to the revision of the literature on corruption to the infinity of texts that attack its perception, causes and effects, the theme is approached with different interests in the academic milieu.

Overcoming this difficulty requires selecting and framing the theme of the scientific production — attitudes that favor the first contact of the researcher with the most up to date research and facilitate the organization of this extensive production that, despite its advance, has not been rigorously reviewed and grouped.

Quantitative studies would represent, in this sense, a strategy to provide the researcher in the area of public administration with data that allow them to investigate the subject in other directions. In order to fill the gap left by the scarcity of existing articles on the subject in the field of public administration, we suggest the search of existing theses and dissertations in Brazil, following the example of Sacramento and Pinho (2009).

In order to advance the understanding of corruption practices, it is important that we value initiatives that also deepen the analysis of the discourse associated with them. Existing studies in this field are rare and, for the most part, result from isolated or discontinued efforts of researchers.

The lack of teaching materials on corruption is another matter to be addressed, and initiatives to stimulate the teaching of corruption cases, especially in public administration, are welcome.

The intention of this work was to contribute to studies in public administration by exploring the meanings or directions of research on corruption, which we presented in six thematic axes. It is worth stressing that this is not a definitive but an initial contribution in the sense that it offers researchers and scholars a starting point for deepening the topics and discussions on corruption in the scientific literature.

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