

17.50, Introduction to Comparative Politics (Fall 2006)  
Prof. Chappell Lawson  
**Session 17: Corruption in Mexico...and what to do about it**

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**So how much corruption is there?**

- Mexicans especially cynical about their government
- Ruling party famously corrupt
- Inside the government, corruption is open secret
- Police
- Media
- Personal and cultural sphere
- Population itself (The World Values Survey: Trust in other people)

**How to measure corruption**

1. Hard to get data
2. Draw a distinction between "high" and "low" corruption

**What causes corruption?**

- Cultural explanations (most familiar explanation)
- Social structure explanations
  - Inequality
  - Ethnic cleavage
- Institutional explanations
  - The political system
  - Overregulation
- People at the top; if they're dirty, everyone is
- Worth noting as you think about causes that some sectors of economy are relatively dirty in almost all countries
  - Construction
  - Waste management
- Evidence cross-nationally (Treisman): What does this study suggest?

**Solutions**

- If you believe the problem is cultural, then education might help
- If you believe it's the people...Zedillo fired tens of thousands of police officers
- Perhaps you're stuck in a bad dynamic; then only the leader can really effect change
- If you believe this has to do with the political system, then electoral competition should help fix it
- Other institutional solutions
  - Draconian penalties
  - Higher salaries
  - Civil service reform
- Economists' solution to corruption
  - Get rid of bureaucracy
  - Allow rival agencies to bid for bribes; can't really do this with the police, and if you do, you might have more problems where they shoot at each other (Viborilla)
  - Decentralize

**Article:** McKinley, James C. "A Mexican Mother Turns Detective, Driven by Devotion to Her Kidnapped Son." *The New York Times*, Late Edition. April 4, 2006.