



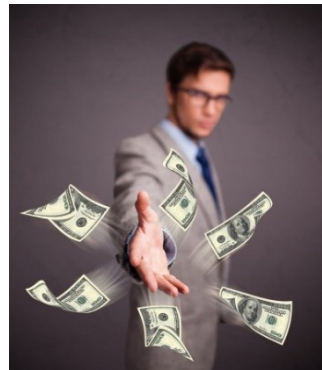
Voters' Perception of Pork Barrel Politics

PMCb1113 Money and Politics

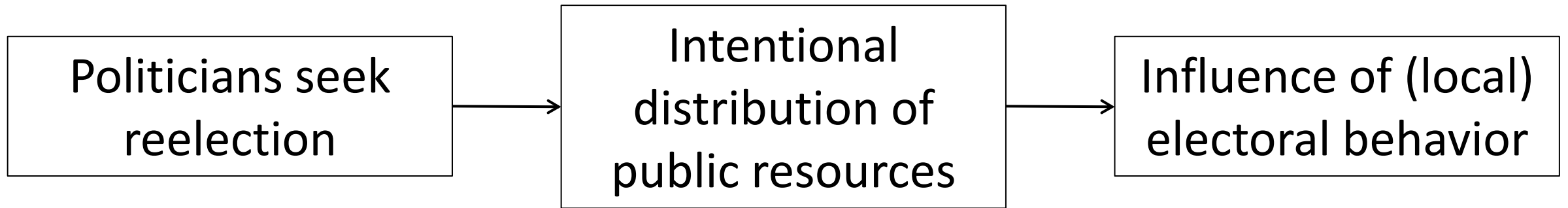
Voters' perception of pork-barrel - THEORY

- Classical notion - politicians **need to make favourable decisions** in order to please their constituents and secure re-election (Downs 1957, Schumpeter 1943)
- Social psychology “**Procedural fairness theory**” (Allen & Birch, 2014; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2002, 2008)
 - People care about how decisions are made
 - Basic principle – process should be fair (to maintain the trust and support from voters)
 - Personal motives can harm political trust – people less inclined to trust and vote
 - In politics: politicians/decision-makers should be impartial (without personal interests in the outcome)

- **Challenge:**
To please potential voters (favourable policies) and remain fair and impartial



Voters' perception of pork-barrel – THEORY vs. PRACTICE

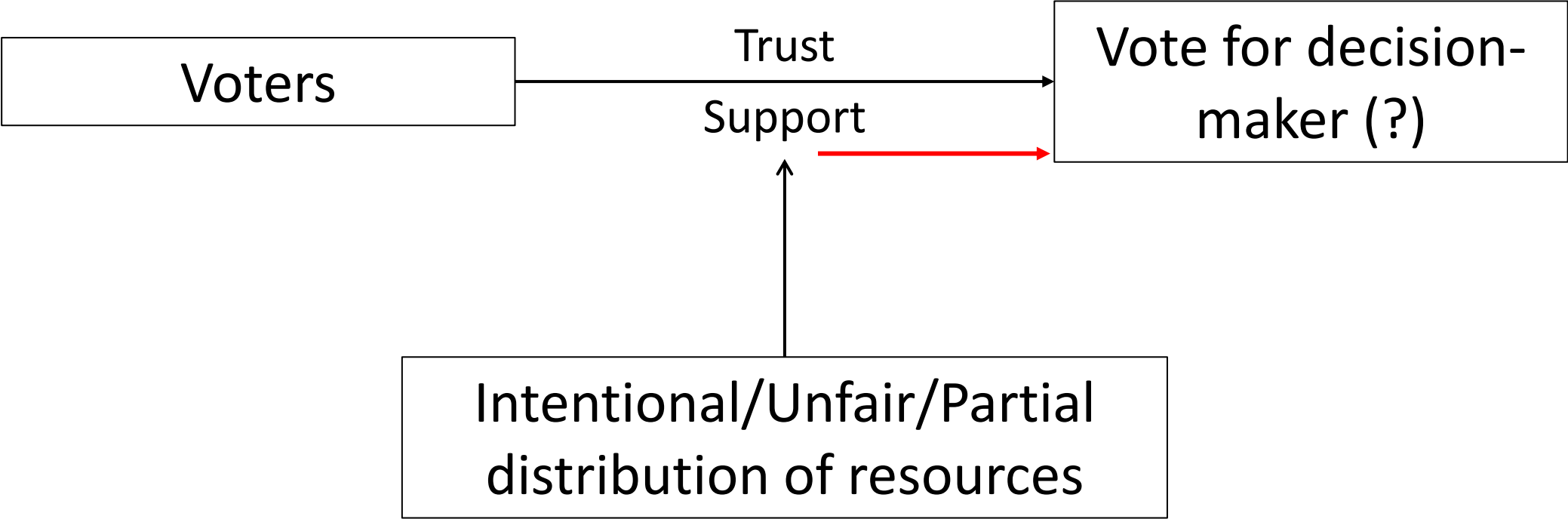


Downs, 1957
Mayhew, 1974
Popkin, 1991
Schumpeter, 1943

Costa-I-Font et al., 2003
Denemark, 2000, 2014
Milligan & Smart, 2005

Kitschelt, 2000
Kitschelt & Wilkinson, 2007
Stokes, 2005
Stokes et al., 2013

Voters' perception of pork-barrel – THEORY vs. PRACTICE



Motivation for research

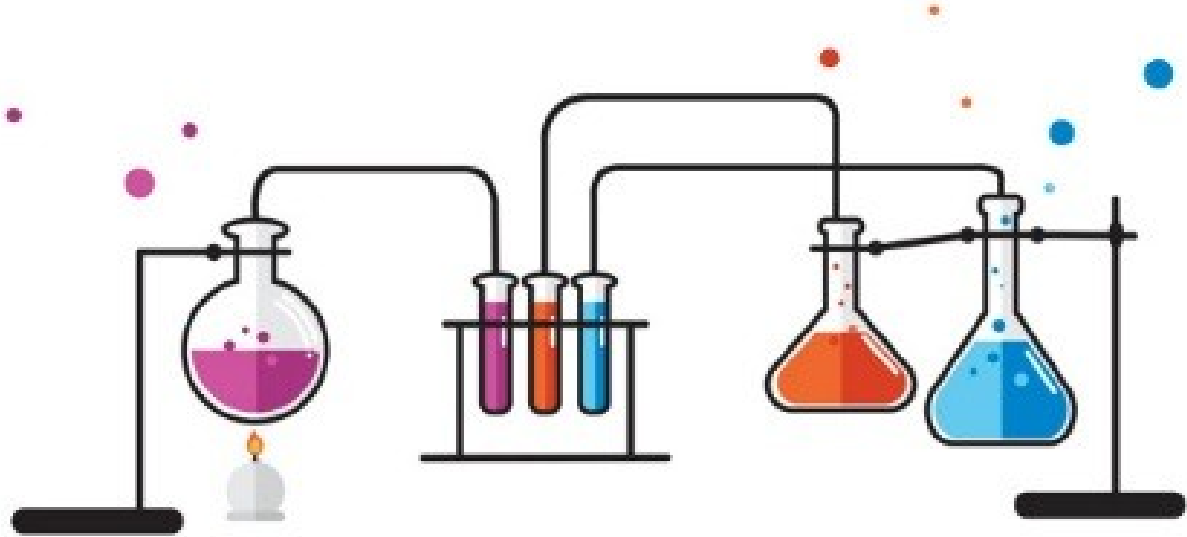
- „Pork-barrel“ – unfair/impartial allocation of public finances – tool for securing votes/reelection
- **UNFAIR = BAD**
- **UNFAIR + BENEFIT = ??**



How voters perceive this inherently unfair effort to ensure their votes in case they can benefit from it?

(Are openly expressed „pork-barrel“ efforts efficient for politicians?)

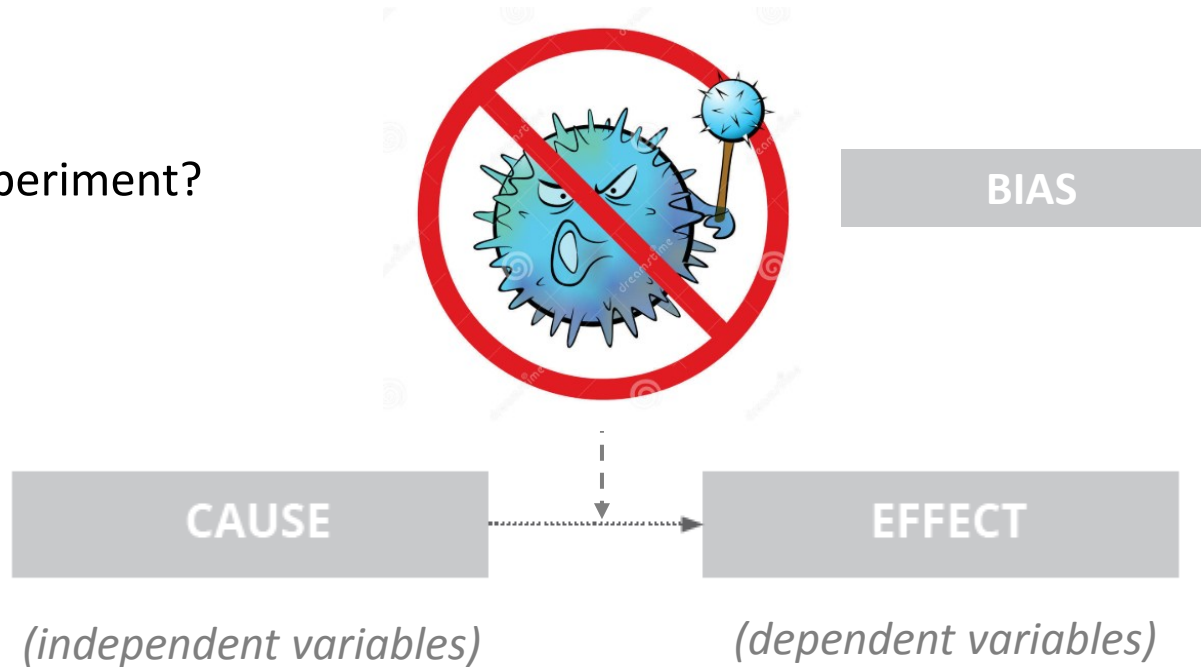
Best way to study voters (and perception?)



EXPERIMENT

Experiment (in political science)

Why/when do we need experiment?



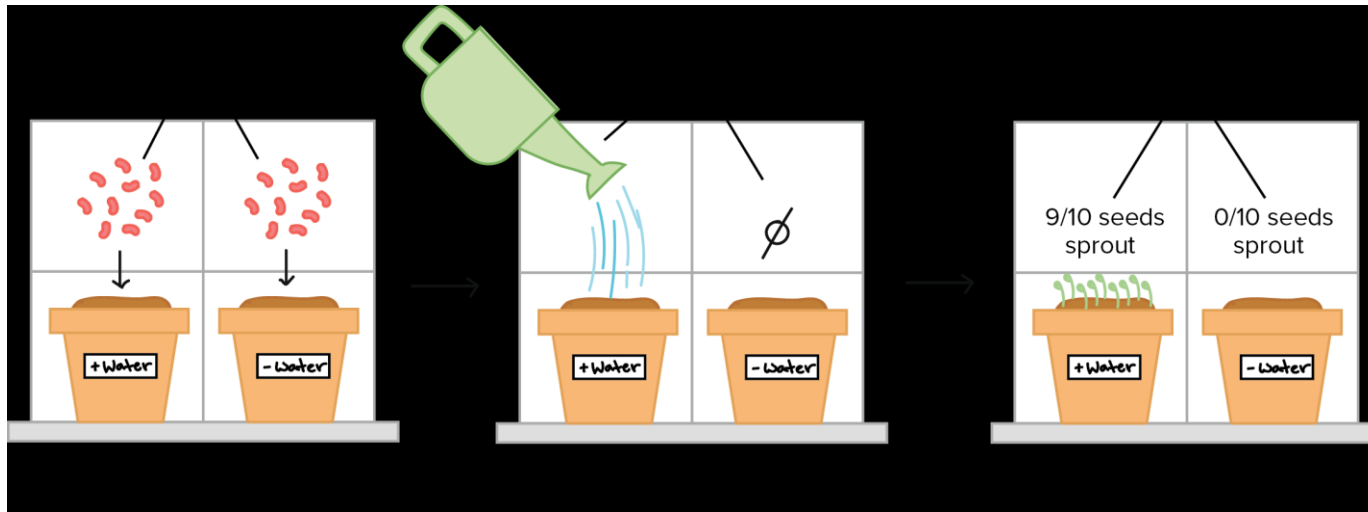
How?

- Randomization
- Standardization
- Placebo effect (medicine)

Experiment (in political science)

Randomization

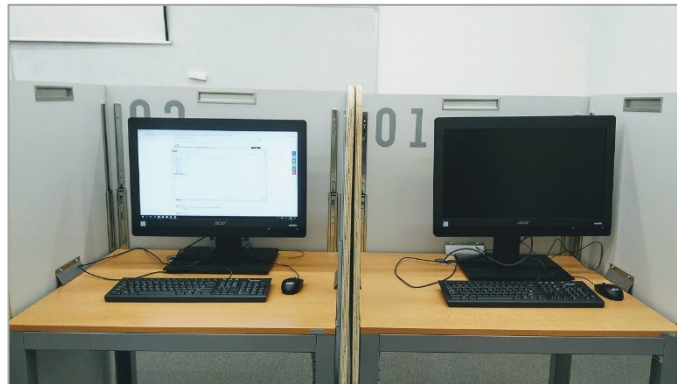
- Assignment of subjects into ***experimental conditions (groups)*** – difference in experimental manipulation
- ***Random*** assignment → even distribution of unseen factors → reduction of biases
- No systematic differences in subjects (and between groups)

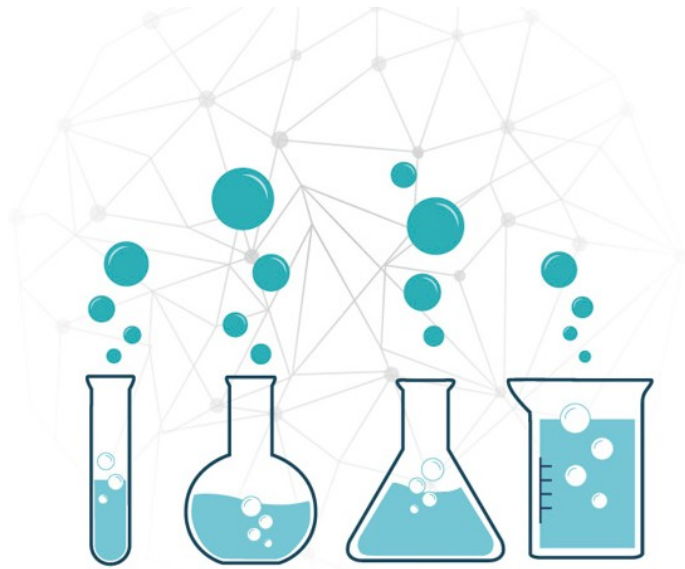


Experiment (in political science)

Standardization

- To ensure the same *procedures* and *measures* apply for *all subjects (respondents)*
- All experimental sessions administered in the *same way*
- Laboratory experiments (*controlled* environment)
- Only values of **independent variable** can be (and have to be) **manipulated**





designed by  freepik.com

Pork-barrel in lab

Braidwood (2015)

Desirable pork: do voters reward for earmark acquisition?



US
Congresspersons



money for the district
(pork-barrel
projects/earmarks)



appreciation from
constituents

- More **grateful constituents** v. general **public opposes pork-barrel** spending
- Braidwood: explain this discrepancy
- Experimental data



Braidwood (2015)

Desirable pork: do voters reward for earmark acquisition?

- **Scholars:** pork-barrel politics make elections more safe (higher voters' evaluation)
- **Theory:** voters must be able to successfully connect actions of elected officials to specific benefit – requires knowledge of the voters (Popkin 1991)
- **Evidence:** citizens are uninformed about spending (and politics)
- Braidwood first to directly measure connection between pork-barrel politics and opinions
- **Assumption: despite the “pork” is disliked in aggregate, can particular benefits increase politician's support?**
- **Personal economic well being** (new roads, schools, ...) – key factor in the candidate assessments



Braidwood (2015)

Desirable pork: do voters reward for earmark acquisition?

Hypotheses:

- *Information about money secured for the local benefit will increase favorable evaluations of responsible member of Congress*
- *Information about **personally relevant local benefit** will increase evaluations of responsible member of Congress*



People like local projects, especially those devoted to the issues that are personally important to them

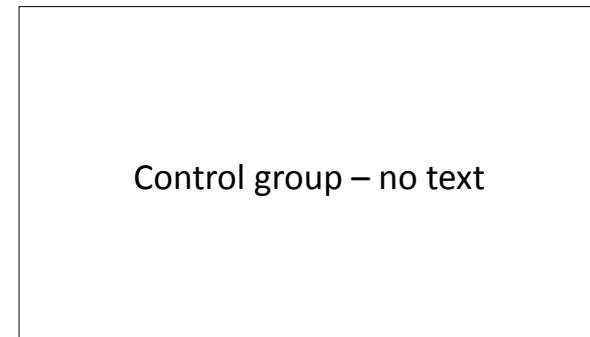
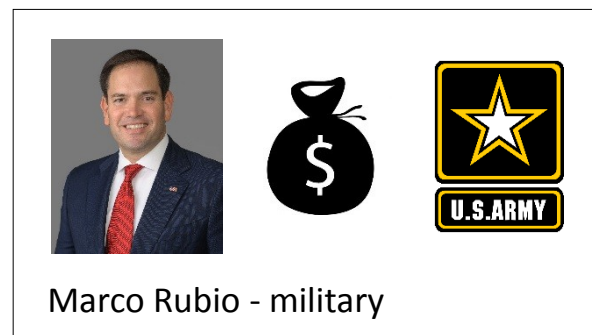
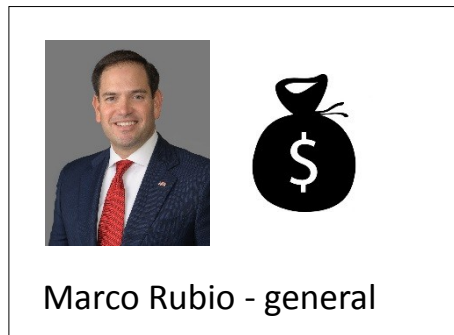
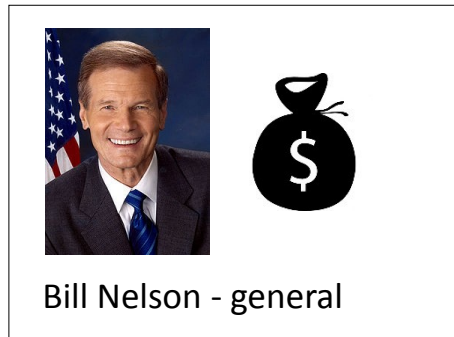


Braidwood (2015)

Desirable pork: do voters reward for earmark acquisition?

Experiment

- Survey-based lab experiment
- Subjects: Amazon's Mechanical Turk (Florida residents to ensure direct connection between MC and voters)
- 5 groups (5 experimental conditions):



Braidwood (2015)

Desirable pork: do voters reward for earmark acquisition?

Experiment

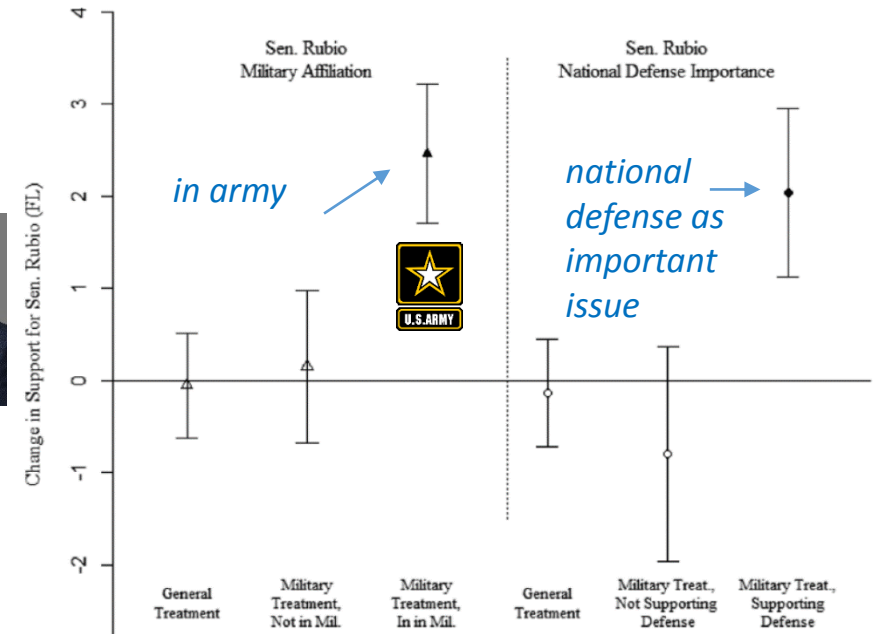
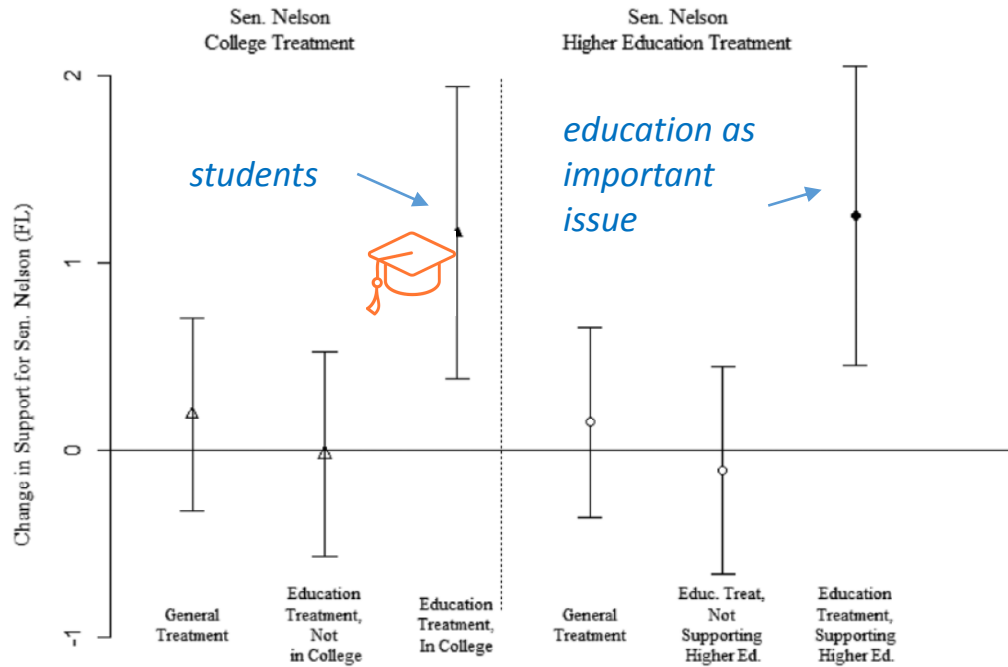
- Follow-up questionnaire
- Dependent variable: support for the MC
- Measure issue saliency
- Comparison of MCs evaluation



Braidwood (2015)

Desirable pork: do voters reward for earmark acquisition?

Results



Note: estimates represent the marginal treatment effect on support for the indicated Member with 95% confidence intervals. Solid symbols are statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level, two-tailed. Sen. Rubio Treatment N=161 for both conditions.

Braidwood (2015)

Desirable pork: do voters reward for earmark acquisition?

Results

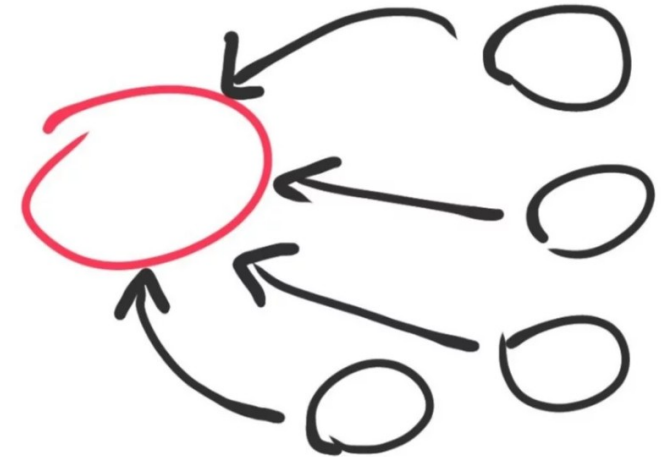
- Exposure to the general treatment did not affect assessment of congressmen
- Higher saliency of the issue increases positive evaluation of congressmen

CONCLUSION

- Earmarks/pork-barrel politics *may* help politicians

CONDITION!

- Issue/project must be individually **relevant to the recipient/voter**



Boggild (2016)

How Politicians' Reelection Efforts Can Reduce Public Trust, Electoral Support, and Policy Approval

- Experiment in Denmark
- Based on Procedural fairness theory (attention of voters to both outcomes and fairness of procedure)
- **Assumption:** people respond **negatively** to the reelection effort of politicians EVEN when such efforts are targeted at themselves (and provide them with **favorable outcomes**)

Impartiality/fairness = central determinant of vote choice (?)



Boggild (2016)

How Politicians' Reelection Efforts Can Reduce Public Trust, Electoral Support, and Policy Approval

Hypotheses:

- *Citizens will be **less inclined to trust** a political decision-maker who adopts a political decision motivated by winning reelection.*
- *Citizens will be **less inclined to vote** for a political decision-maker who adopts a political decision motivated by winning reelection.*
- *Citizens will be **less inclined to support a political decision** adopted by a political decision-maker motivated by winning reelection.*

Boggild (2016)

How Politicians' Reelection Efforts Can Reduce Public Trust, Electoral Support, and Policy Approval

Study 1

- Survey-based experiment
- Between subject design
- 2 x 2 factorial design (2 independent variables)
 - Decision maker *impartiality*
 - Outcome *favorability*
- Paper and pencil
- Subjects: Danish medical students (N = 154)
- 4 groups/experimental conditions

Boggild (2016)

How Politicians' Reelection Efforts Can Reduce Public Trust, Electoral Support, and Policy Approval

- **Treatment:**

Made-up newspaper article in *Politiken* describing fictitious policy initiative at the EU level (article described how were participating countries chosen to the new educational grant scheme)

	Impartial decision-maker	Partial decision-maker
Favourable	Decision maker: Danish Distribution: random (money goes to Denmark)	Decision maker: Danish Distribution: partial (money goes to Denmark)
Unfavourable	Decision maker: Belgian Distribution: random (money goes to Belgium)	Decision maker: Belgian Distribution: partial (money goes to Belgium)



Boggild (2016)

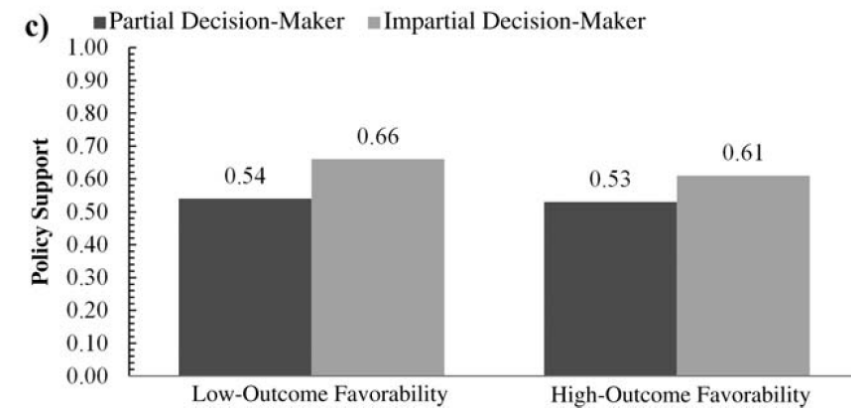
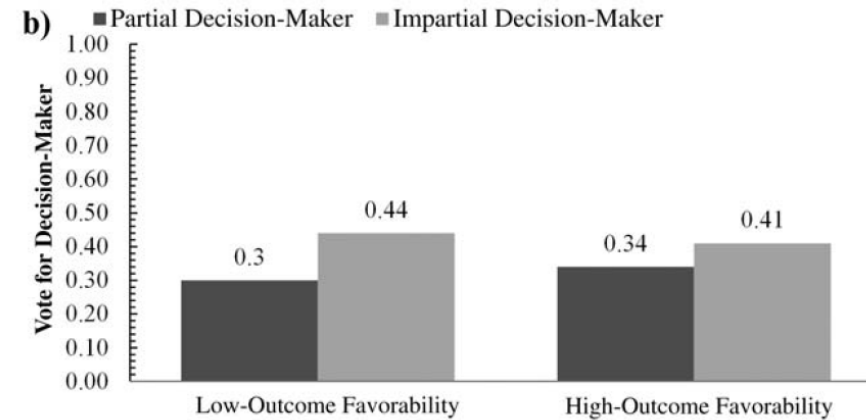
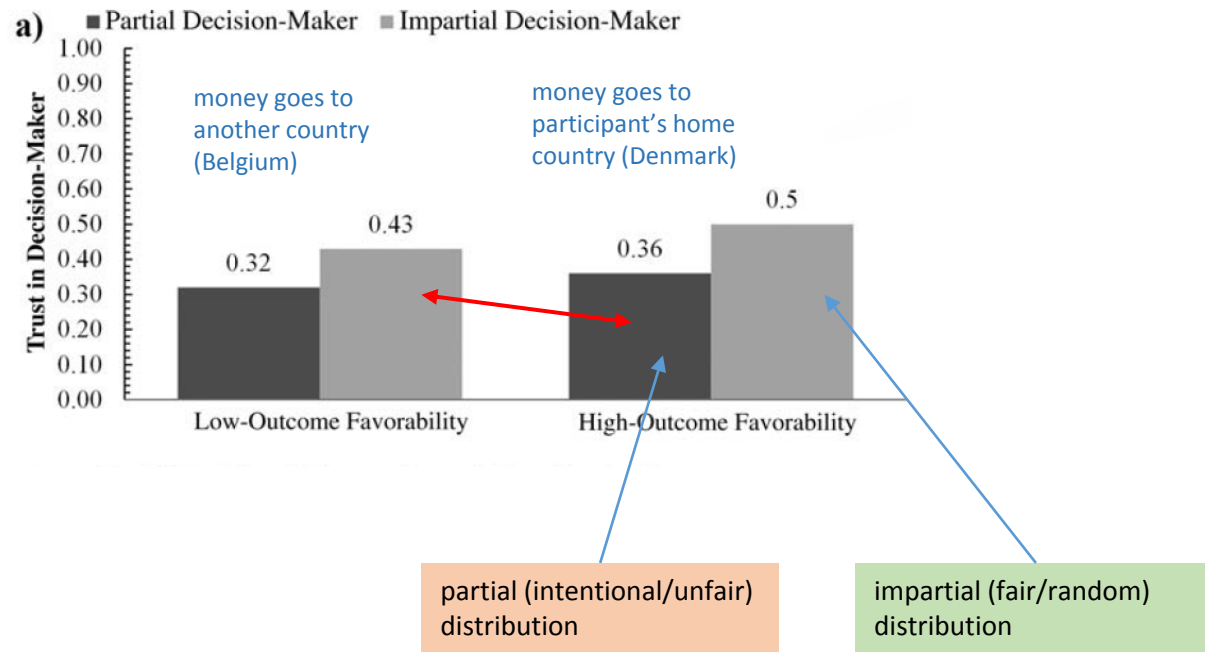
How Politicians' Reelection Efforts Can Reduce Public Trust, Electoral Support, and Policy Approval

- Follow-up questionnaire
- Measurement of dependent variables:
 - **Trust** in decision-maker
 - Inclination to **vote** for decision-maker
 - **Support** for decision (money distribution)
- Questions with 0-10 scale

Boggild (2016)

How Politicians' Reelection Efforts Can Reduce Public Trust, Electoral Support, and Policy Approval

Results:



Boggild (2016)

How Politicians' Reelection Efforts Can Reduce Public Trust, Electoral Support, and Policy Approval

Results:

- **Reelection efforts** of politicians can **depress** public **trust**, inclination to **vote** and **support** of the political decision
- Effect **persists even when people can benefit** from such efforts
- (Procedural) fairness matters



What we know so far?

- Existing findings limited and contradictory
- Experimental studies:



USA – subjects who benefited from redistribution (aimed to please the voters) appreciated such decision (Braidwood 2015)

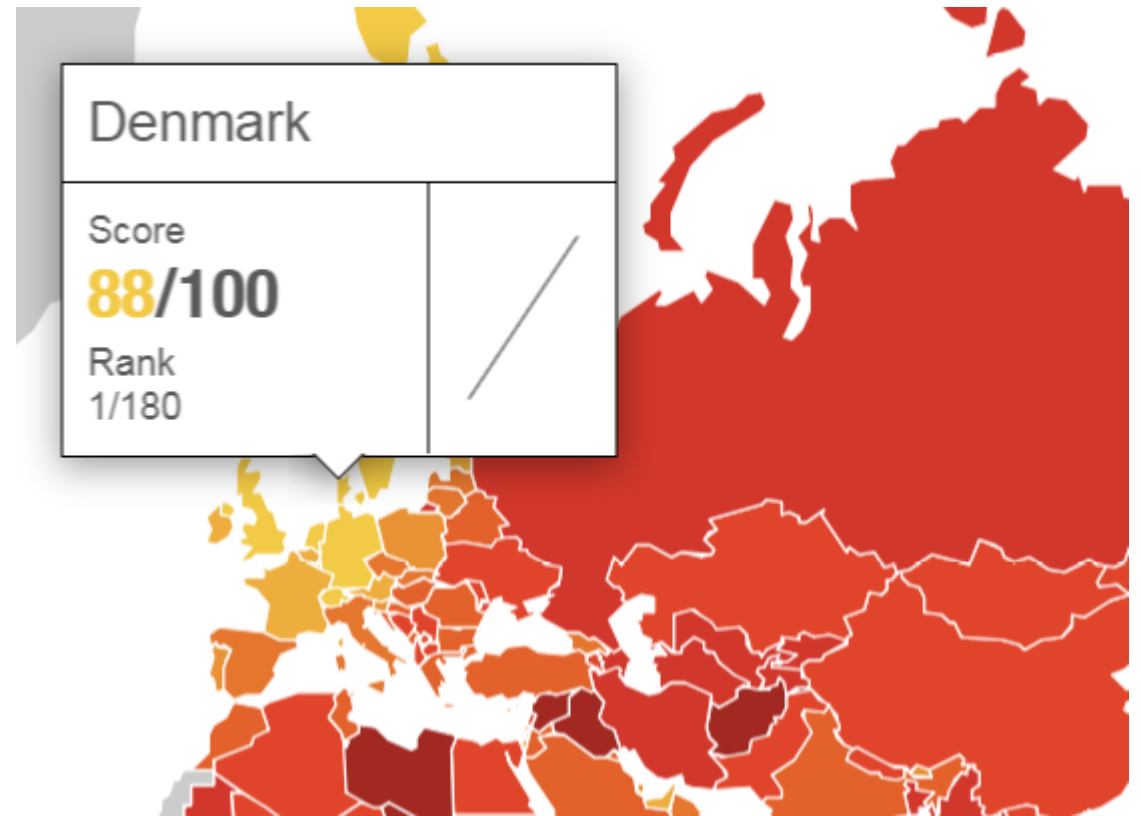


Denmark – subjects responded to reelection efforts of politicians (impartial redistribution of public finances) with lower level of trust and reduced willingness to vote even when they can benefit from redistribution (Bøggild 2016)

- Appears that voters can perceive pork-barrel strategies both in **positive** and **negative** way

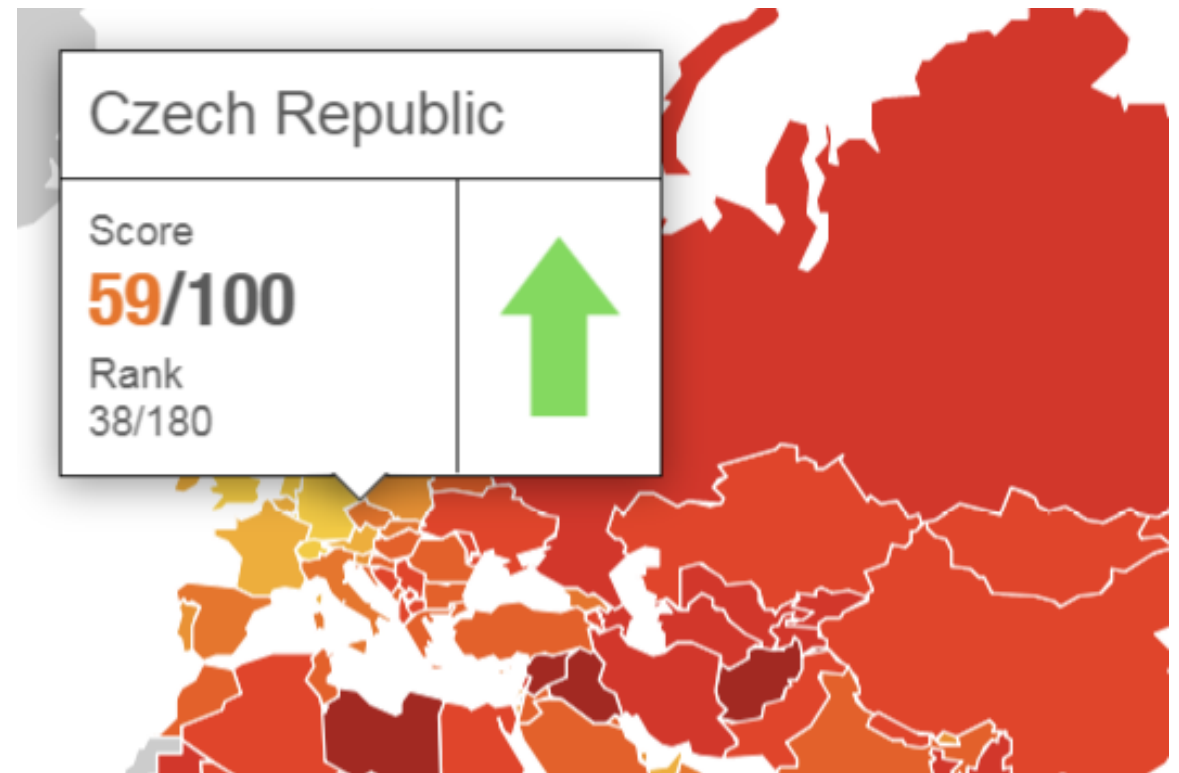
Contextually conditioned effect?

- **Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)** – „perceived levels of corruption“ – defined as „the misuse of public power for private benefit“
- Denmark vs. CE countries



Contextually conditioned effect?

- **Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)** – „perceived levels of corruption“ – defined as „the misuse of public power for private benefit“
- Denmark vs. CE countries



Contextually conditioned effect?

- **Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)** – „perceived levels of corruption“ – defined as „the misuse of public power for private benefit“
- Denmark vs. CE countries



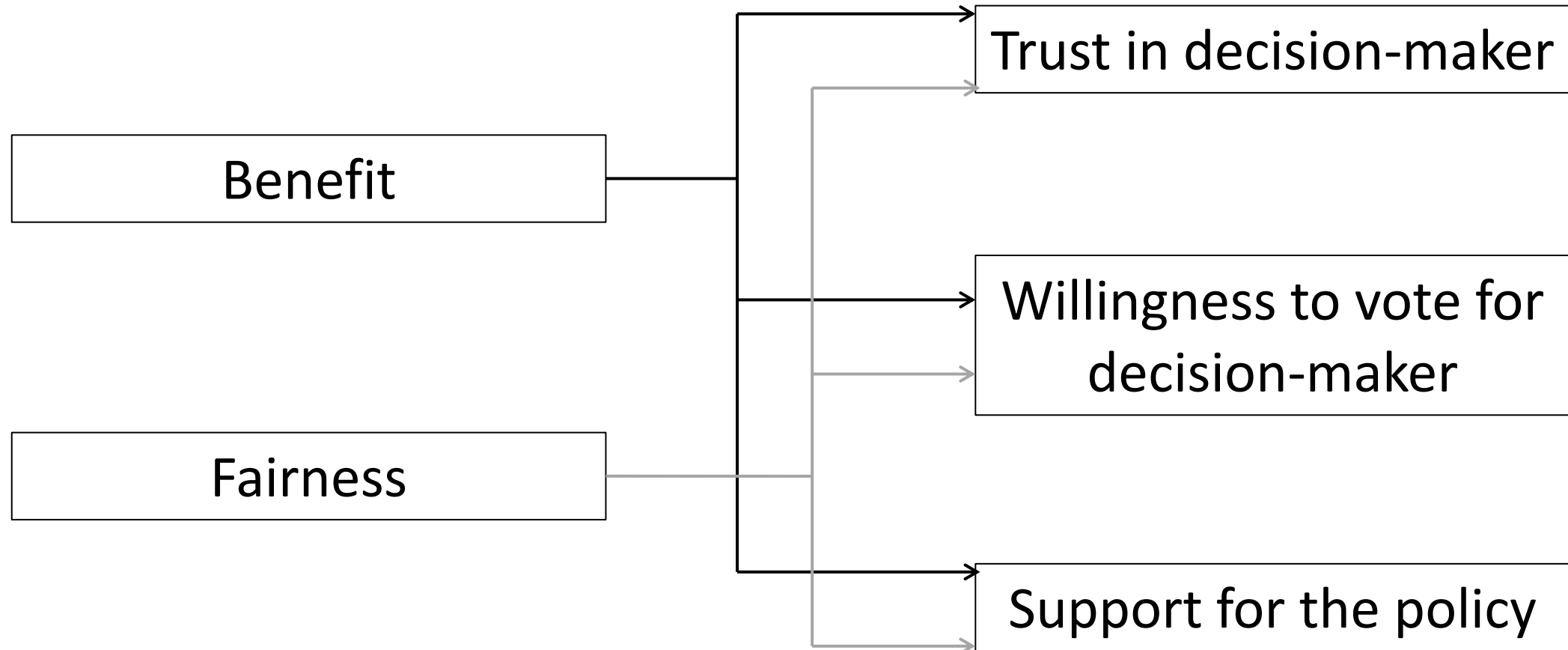
Tóth, Nemčok, Spáč (2021)

I Don't Like It Unless It's for Me: Perceptions of Pork-Barrel Politics in Central and Eastern Europe

- Project „**Distributive Politics in Central Europe**“ – study of pork-barrel politics in CE (patterns of distribution, strategies, factors influencing distributive politics etc.)
- **Experimental part** – better understanding of psychological mechanisms behind distribution of subsidies
- Series of survey experiments (manipulation based on Boggild's (2016) study) - **replication**
- **Pilot study:** summer 2018 – non representative sample of 87 subjects (survey distributed via social networks) – goal: test the design and manipulation
- **1st study:** 2018 – Slovakia – **representative sample** of 700 subjects
- **2nd study:** 2019 – Czech republic - **representative sample** of 1025 subjects – goal: replicate findings from 1st study

Tóth, Nemčok, Spáč (2021)

I Don't Like It Unless It's for Me: Perceptions of Pork-Barrel Politics in Central and Eastern Europe



Tóth, Nemčok, Spáč (2021)

I Don't Like It Unless It's for Me: Perceptions of Pork-Barrel Politics in Central and Eastern Europe

Experimental design:

- **Experimental manipulation:** newspaper article describing the way how money from made-up trial European health care grant scheme were distributed among several EU members
- **4 scenarios/versions:** differences:
 - **Benefit from distribution** - origin of the politician (decision-maker responsible for the distribution of the money)
 - Slovak/Hungarian
 - Czech/German
 - **Fairness of such distribution**
 - random draw
 - intentional (secure votes in upcoming elections)
- Participants randomly assigned to each condition



Tóth, Nemčok, Spáč (2021)

I Don't Like It Unless It's for Me: Perceptions of Pork-Barrel Politics in Central and Eastern Europe



Slovakia



Czech Republic

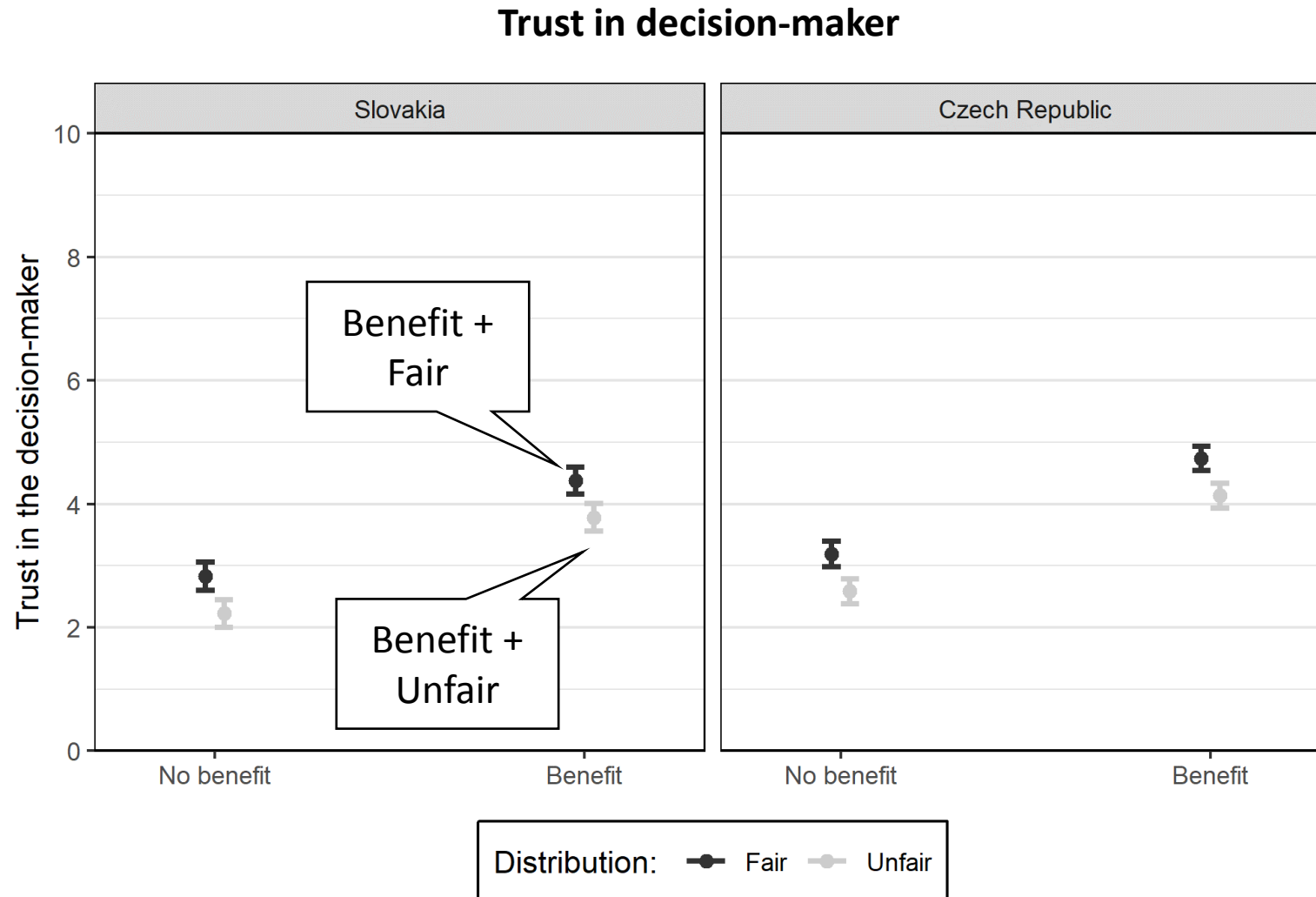
	Fair distribution	Unfair distribution
Benefit	<i>Decision-maker: Slovak</i> N = 186	<i>Decision-maker: Slovak</i> N = 174
No benefit	<i>Decision-maker: Hungarian</i> N = 171	<i>Decision-maker: Hungarian</i> N = 169
Total	700 participants	

	Fair distribution	Unfair distribution
Benefit	<i>Decision-maker: Czech</i> N = 269	<i>Decision-maker: Czech</i> N = 256
No benefit	<i>Decision-maker: German</i> N = 241	<i>Decision-maker: German</i> N = 259
Total	1,025 participants	

Tóth, Nemčok, Spáč (2021)

I Don't Like It Unless It's for Me: Perceptions of Pork-Barrel Politics in Central and Eastern Europe

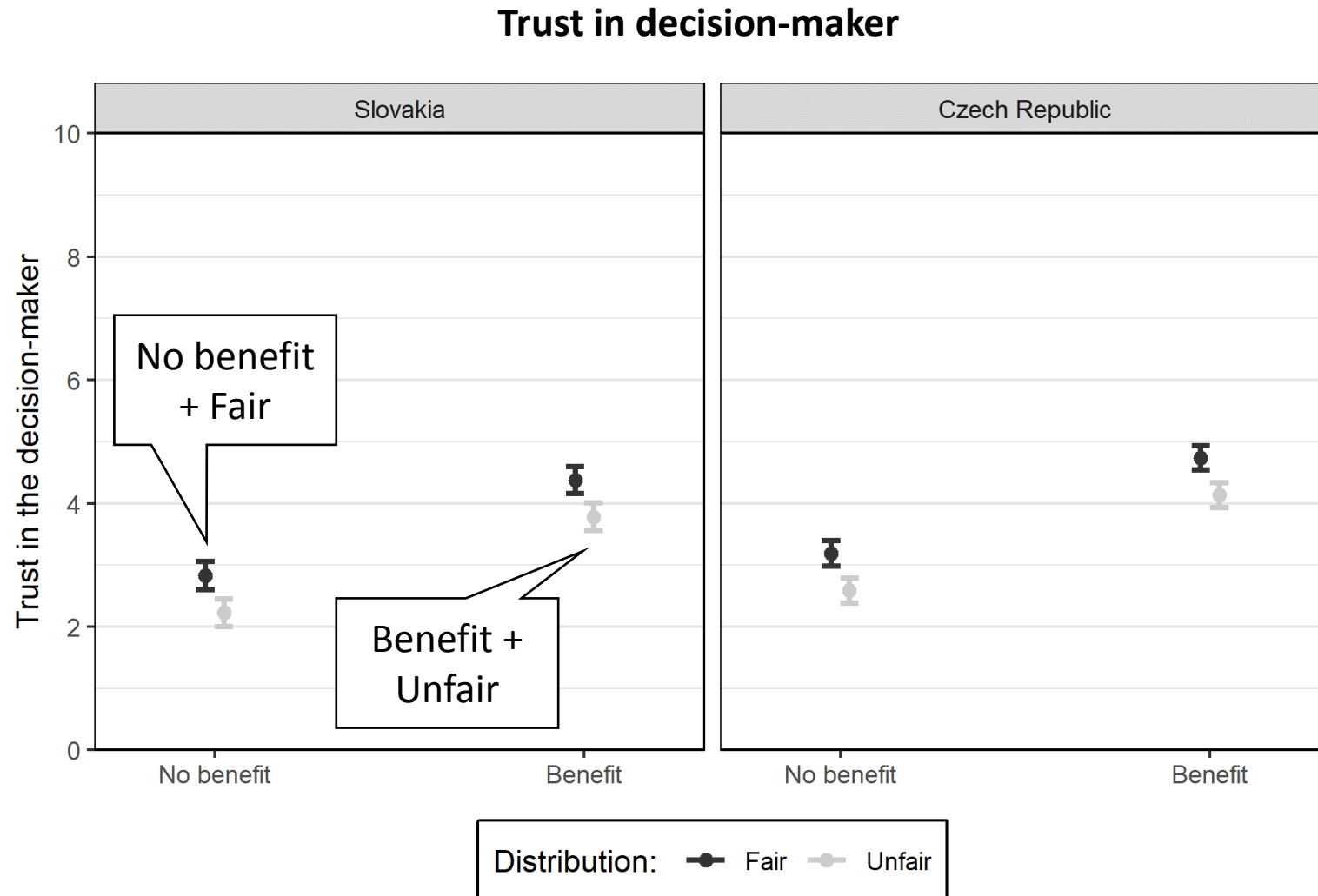
Results



Tóth, Nemčok, Spáč (2021)

I Don't Like It Unless It's for Me: Perceptions of Pork-Barrel Politics in Central and Eastern Europe

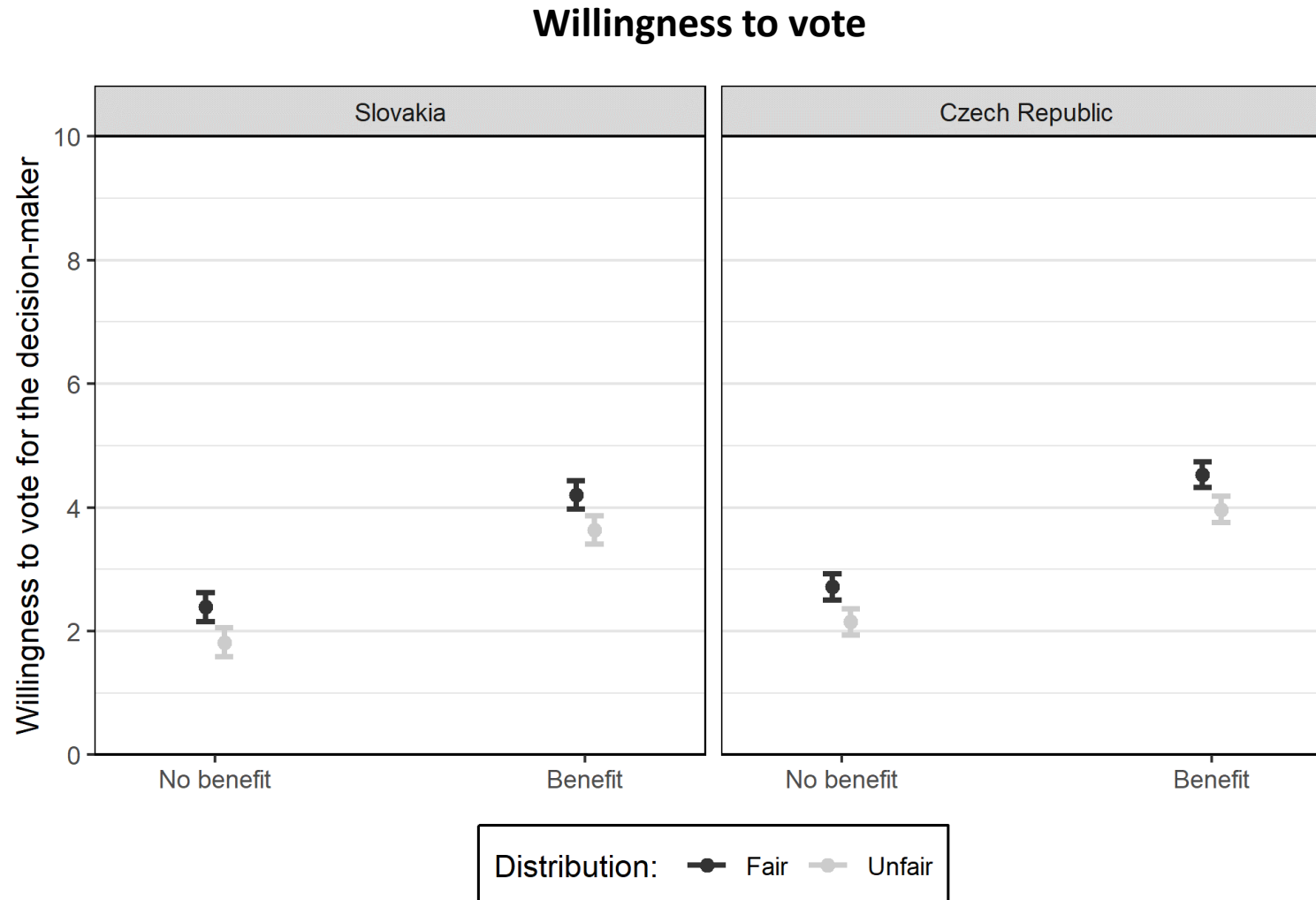
Results



Tóth, Nemčok, Spáč (2021)

I Don't Like It Unless It's for Me: Perceptions of Pork-Barrel Politics in Central and Eastern Europe

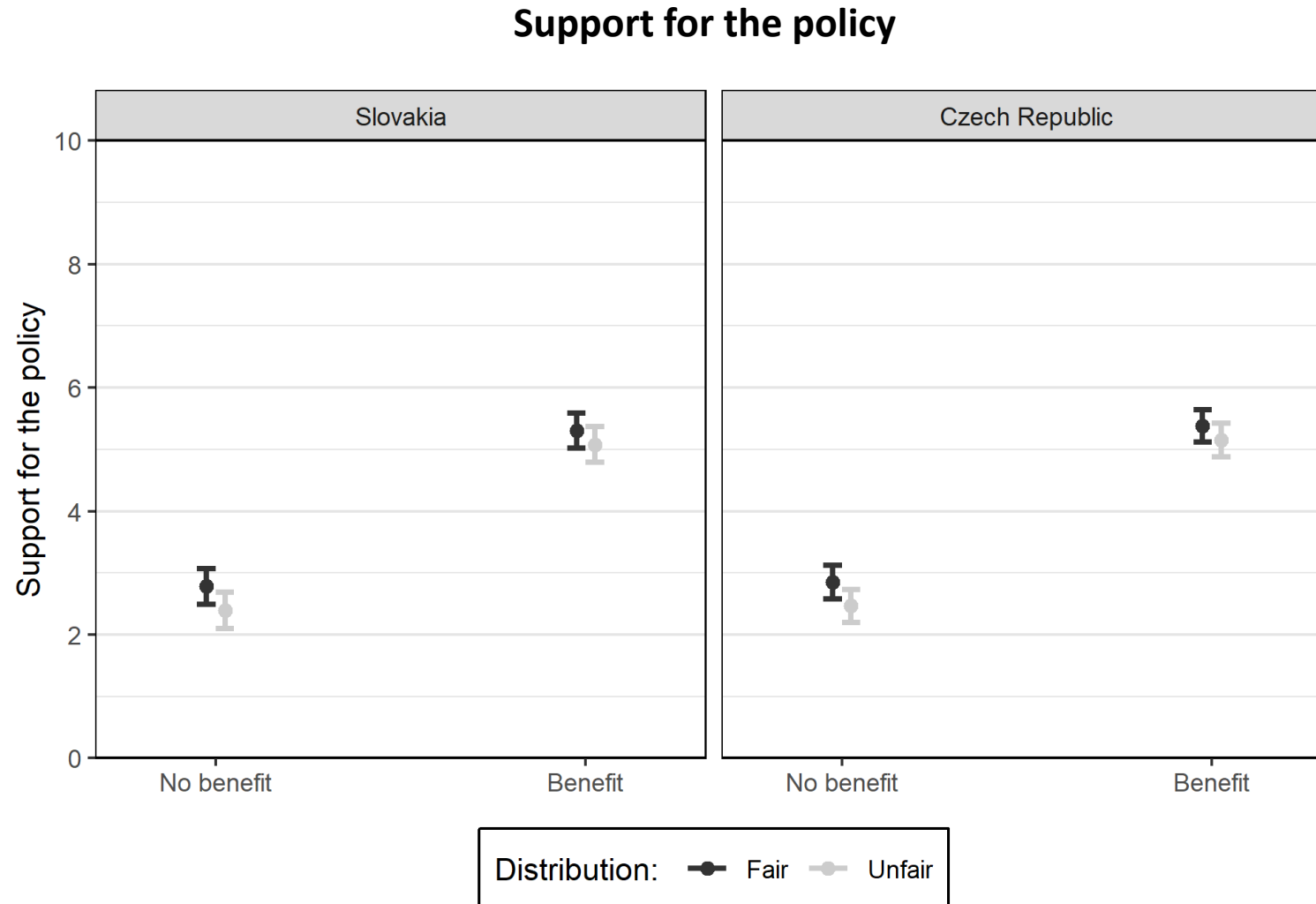
Results



Tóth, Nemčok, Spáč (2021)

I Don't Like It Unless It's for Me: Perceptions of Pork-Barrel Politics in Central and Eastern Europe

Results



Tóth, Nemčok, Spáč (2021)

I Don't Like It Unless It's for Me: Perceptions of Pork-Barrel Politics in Central and Eastern Europe

Conclusion:

- Subjects showed higher trust (and willingness to vote) to politician, who selected countries for funding on the fair basis (random selection)
- At the same time, they appreciated more if their country benefits from the funding program
- In contrast to Danish study (Boggild 2016), **results indicate that people in Slovakia and Czech Republic are willing to forgive „corruption“ (unfairness) providing they benefit from it**
- Reasons – context, characteristics of the sample (students v. population sample)
- **Main result:** Benefits beat fairness