### E ROTOMAC

Maria Petrova ()

Political Scandals in the

### Media Economics Workshop, Bogota October 20th 2012

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Discussion of Fonseca, Snyder, and Song Newspaper

Varket Structure and Behavior Partisan Coverage of

10/20/2012



Discussion of Fonseca et al

## This paper

- Part of accountability literature: Corruption -> Media coverage -> Voting behavior -> Policy outcomes
- Detailed analysis of media coverage of corruption scandals in early American newspapers, as a function of newspaper affiliation and competition in newspaper market
  - shows that media competition ensures impartiality, while monopoly newspapers substantially underreport scandals about members of their parties
- Results imply that corruption was associated with media coverage, especially in places with more comepetitive media markets, but is it possible to explore the mechanism further?
  - media coverage > voting behavior
    - \* is it true that in places in which scandals were covered people voted differently for the cadidates of involved parties?
  - media coverage -> policy outcomes
    - \* subsequent scandals, behavior of Members of Congress (NOMINATE data)

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## Questions and concerns

- Main concern: demand side explanation
  - places with more newspapers were different from places with just one newspaper (show covariate balance? use matching?)
  - could be that people in places with more newspapers are less extreme and interested in more impartial coverage
- Investment in digging for information
  - competing newspapers might exert less effort than a monopoly newspaper, thus a difference between the amount of coverage of opposite party scandals
  - in such a setup, not clear if competition is always better from social welfare point of view!
- Monopoly newspapers might be larger
  - placebo test: any search term (e.g. article "the")
    - \* coefficient for newspaper frequency is positive and significant suggests newspapers reporting are different from non-reporting newspapers

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# Additional suggestions

- Newspaper competition vs political competition any interactions?
  - e.g. effect of competition might depend on competitiveness of local/state politics
- How often the same newspapers covered different scandals?
  - can entries of exits of competitors change its behavior
- Use binary measure (monopoly newspaper or not) as an alternative specification
- Effects of change of political control, from RDD based on close elections (a-la Gentzkow et al. 2012)