12. Why women are less corrupt than men

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Why should we care about the link between gender and corruption? The short answer is that it tells us something about how societies progress. Cross-country comparative research has established that societies that elect large numbers of women tend to be less corrupt than societies that elect few women (Dollar et al. 2001; Swamy et al. 2001). In a similar vein, research at the individual level has presented evidence that women tend to be less involved in corruption than men (Bailey and Paras 2006; Treisman 2007; Melnykovska and Michailova 2009). Whether these patterns have anything to do with *gender*, however, is disputed. The suggestion has been made that liberal democracy is the denominator for good governance as well as for gender equality (Sung 2003). The suggestion has also been made that the crucial factor is the access people have to situations where corrupt transactions take place; that is, due to their responsibilities in the private sphere, women are filtered out in earlier stages (Mocan 2008). What is common to both these strands of research is that they tone down the importance of the gender factor.

The main argument of this chapter is that the way research in the field is currently developing suppresses theoretical progress. Scholars are far too occupied with constructing or rejecting monolithic theories, that is, theories with the ambition to offer a foundation for all cases within a certain area. There is a need to develop a framework where multiple theories are used to study the relationship between gender and corruption. The mechanisms at work might, for example, differ between the electoral arena and everyday life situations among ordinary citizens.

Scholars are also far too occupied with constructing gender-neutral understandings, that is, theories with the ambition to explain effects of gender with factors such as accessibility. There is a need to seriously consider gendered aspects of corrupt and non-corrupt behavior. The argument is not to abandon other theories, but to more fully explore the effect that societies' gender systems have on male and female behavior. Gender is decisive for behavior in many spheres of society. Criminologists,

for example, tend to find that women "always and everywhere" are less likely than men to commit criminal acts (Steffensmeier and Allan 1996; Mendoza 2003). Corruption is perhaps not that different from other forms of illegitimate behavior.

So far, cross-country comparative research has dominated the field, but recent research, focusing on the subnational level, adds new fuel to the debate. Findings from Mexico indicate that the pattern established in cross-country comparative studies is also visible at the subnational level: Mexican regions/states with a high number of women elected tend to be less corrupt than regions/states[1] that elect a low number of women. This result is a call for further elaboration of the gender perspective, since findings of within-country variation substantiate the view that there are more factors at work than those connected to general democratic developments.

The chapter starts with an examination of main threads in previous research. The conclusion of that section is that agency aspects have been underemphasized in earlier writings. The study then proceeds to the examination of the variation in corruption among the Mexican states and a discussion of the complexities that are revealed. The chapter ends with the launch of a rationality perspective that contributes a new understanding of women as actors in processes at the crossroads between democratic developments and old power structures. The concept of rationality implies conscious reasoning; the conclusion is that, when calculating costs and benefits, women more often than men *actively* choose to abstain from corrupt behavior.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

"Are women really the 'fairer' sex? Corruption and women in government", by David Dollar and colleagues at the Development Research Group of the World Bank, initially sparked off research on gender and corruption. The article presents a large cross-country study and establishes that the proportion of women in parliament has a significant effect on corruption, even when other factors, such as overall level of social and economic development, political and civic freedom, average years of schooling, and ethnic fractionalization, are taken into account (Dollar et al. 2001). In this first extensive study, the assumption that women are more honest than men was never tested, but it was underpinned by results from previous research findings pointing in the direction that women are more likely than men to exhibit "helping" behavior and to a larger extent base voting decisions on social concerns (Goertzel 1983; Eagly and Crowley 1986).

Note that there are few studies that reject the presented relationship.

However, a number of authors have criticized the study by Dollar et al. regarding their failure to address the issue of the possibility of reversed causality – political regimes committed to impartiality and probity might also provide opportunities for women to attain positions of political power. Hung-En Sung, one of the most fervent critics of the research initiated by Dollar et al. suggests that "gender equality and government accountability are both great achievements of modern liberal democracy" (Sung 2003, p. 718).

The main dividing line brought forward so far is between a theoretical perspective saying that gender and corruption are parallel phenomena without much connection, highlighting a *spurious correlation*, and a theoretical perspective highlighting effects of *gender differences/sex roles* in society. Swamy et al.'s (2001) article represents a typical work from the latter strand of research. They emphasize the use of "several distinct data sets" and "careful analyses" when they underpin their argumentation:

> We are making a simple point: to question the central finding of this paper, one needs to argue that the results of careful analyses of several distinct data sets have, by sheer fluke, all been biased in the same direction. Our conclusion, that there is indeed a gender differential in tolerance for corruption, is more plausible. (p. 25)

The quote illustrates that the authors rely heavily on the strength of the empirical evidence. There is no thorough theoretical reasoning, but a number of hypotheses are brought forward in the concluding part of the study; however, most of these hypotheses concern socialization aspects, for example, that women are brought up to be more honest/law-abiding than men (ibid., p. 26).

Later studies in the same vein have fleshed out the argument, but the mechanisms suggested continue to imply socialization aspects or, put differently, internalized instead of conscious behavior. In a study using data on eight Western European countries from the World Values Survey, covering the 1981–99 period, Torgler and Valev (2006) examine relationships between gender and age in the field of corruption. The results show that older individuals of both sexes were found to have similar stricter moral perceptions; young men are singled out as the deviant lawbreaking group. Torgler and Valev highlight lack of self-control among young men as an explanation for their tendency to be involved in illegal activities. They point to corruption as a criminal act and refer to the finding among criminologists that there is a rather universal gender gap in crime.

Another strand of research relies on a theoretical perspective saying that the relationship between gender and corruption has to do with opportunities to commit "reckless" acts (see ibid., p. 138). Theories of *opportunity*

structures basically comprise two versions, one focusing on conditions in the everyday lives of citizens and one focusing on conditions in the decision-making arena. In a study from Ghana, Namawk Alhassan-Alolo (2007) concludes that, when exposed to an opportunity for corruption, women in public life do not prove less corrupt than men. This conclusion is supported by a study on clientelist practices among male and female political candidates in Thailand (Bjarnegård 2009; see also Stockemer 2011). Anne-Marie Goetz (2007, p. 99) opposes a "myth-making" about male and female nature in corruption research and suggests differences in recruitment to political positions as an alternative approach:

> The point is that the ways women are recruited (or not) to the leadership and rank-and-file of political parties restrict their opportunities for engaging in corrupt activities. These restrictions have to do with women's relative exclusion from male patronage networks, and the sexual danger associated with inclusion.

It is a common understanding in corruption research that it is important to focus on corrupt subsystems, sustained by the collective action of interest groups that benefit from the corruption. The expression "old boys' networks" is sometimes used to illustrate the duration of these subsystems and the fact that in most countries, there are relatively few women in positions of power. There is an analogy here with the research on gender and crime that points to the fact that one of the most significant gender differences in crime is the overwhelming dominance of males in organized illegal activities (Steffensmeier and Allan 1996, p. 466).

Turning to the citizen level, what is highlighted in research on opportunity structures is that women usually earn less money than men and that, due to family responsibilities in the private sphere, they are also less involved in public matters. Naci Mocan (2008) develops the logic behind the argument:

> All else the same, highly educated and high-income individuals should have higher exposure to being asked for a bribe by a government official because of their higher earning capacity and because they are likely to have more opportunities to interact with government officials. (p. 495)

The main argument in this strand of research is that gender has an indirect effect; women are less corrupt than men because they are not, to the same extent, found in certain layers of the population.[2] The term that can be used to describe women's behavior is "passive rejection".

Table 12.1 presents an overview of the main hypotheses in previous research on gender and corruption. What becomes evident is that theories in this field need to address mechanisms at different levels of society

Table 12.1 Main hypotheses in previous research on gender and corruption

Theoretical perspective	Effect of gender on corruption	Driving forces
Liberal democracy	Gender has no independent effect on corruption; spurious correlation	• Liberal democracy is the driving force behind a high number of women elected, as well as good governance
Gender differences/sex roles	Gender has a direct effect on corruption	• Risk behavior/lack of self-control: men dominate most criminal activities • Role as caregiver: women exhibit more social/helping behavior
Opportunity structures	Gender has an indirect effect on corruption	• Women are, due to family responsibilities, less involved in public affairs • Women, when they enter decision-making arenas, tend to be excluded from "old boys' networks"

Note: The different theoretical perspectives are presented more fully in the text.

– regarding both decision-making arenas and everyday life situations of ordinary citizens. The driving forces behind less corrupt behavior among women seem to differ depending on the arena studied.

Currently, more and more studies in the field use experimental designs to assess the relevance of the gender perspective. The overall impression from these studies is that gender in its pure or basic sense has little impact (McCabe et al. 2006; Alatas et al. 2009).[3] Experimental studies are interesting, since they suggest that gender differences found in previous research may not be nearly as universal as stated in some of the early writings. Experimental research thus provides a ground for rejecting a unified gender perspective, but not for rejecting contextualized understandings of the interaction between gender and corruption.

THE MEXICAN CASE

The Mexican case constitutes fruitful ground for delving into matters of corruption. Although never under the control of a military dictatorship

as many other countries in Latin America, Mexico was ruled by a single party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), for more than 70 years. For much of this time, the PRI indiscriminately used state resources to serve its own needs (Bruhn 1996). It is far-fetched to single out the PRI as the only source of corruption in Mexico; however, the hegemonic situation fostered a climate where informal exchanges became ubiquitous and where power was in the hands of a few close to the president (Morris 1991; Magaloni 2006).

Since the mid-1990s, Transparency International and the World Bank have measured levels of corruption in Mexico.[4] Results from both organizations display the same pattern: Mexico is consistently found at the bottom of the "control of corruption scales", leaning towards the end category "highly corrupt state". It should also be noted that results from both organizations show small fluctuations over time. In 2000 the hegemonic rule by the PRI came to an end, when Vicente Fox from the centre-right Partido Accíon Nacional became president. Even though important changes towards democratization have been taking place, corruption is still a persistent phenomenon in Mexico. Stephen D. Morris, a prominent scholar of corruption in Mexico, reminds us that democratization in Mexico is an ongoing process:

> In stunning contrast to just a decade ago, the effort against corruption and abuse of power has taken new adherents and, ideologically at least, has become the norm rather than the exception. Still, as Mexico struggles to address a range of pressing issues in its transformation from an authoritarian into a truly democratic state, corruption continues to shape the nature and course of Mexican politics. (Morris 2009, p. 239)

However, what is important for this study is that data from the subnational level indicate considerable variation. There is a Mexican chapter of Transparency International (TI Mexico), which since 2001 has regularly conducted a National Survey on Corruption and Good Governance, and this survey is designed in ways that enables subnational comparisons. The survey covers perceptions, as well as experiences, of corruption at the household level. The backbone of the survey is a set of questions that records the frequency with which acts of corruption take place in requesting or receiving public services. About 35 services are included, such as obtaining water, collecting garbage and receiving an approval for working or selling in a public area. Questions also concern payment of bribes in connection with "services", such as avoiding a ticket from the transport police.

On the national level the data from TI Mexico, in accordance with the data from Transparency International and the World Bank, show a stable

situation. In the first study, in 2001, the national average in the National Survey on Corruption and Good Governance showed corruption in 10.6 percent of transactions. In subsequent surveys the national average has been 8.5 percent (2003), 10.1 percent (2005) and 10.0 percent (2007). Turning to the comparison among the states, the data from TI Mexico regularly single out Distrito Federal – the national capital Mexico City – as most corrupt.

To substantiate the picture of variation among the states, we shall look further at data from 2005. The National Survey on Corruption and Good Governance has served as the basis for constructing two indexes: (i) a "full" index which includes all 35 services in the survey (this is the index used by TI Mexico itself) and (ii) a "thin" index which excludes items that relate to bribe-paying in cases such as parking illegally or avoiding having one's car towed away. The thin index has been constructed (Grimes and Wängnerud 2010) to get an indicator of corruption that purely concerns entitlements. The thin index also excludes services that are normally seldom required. The logic behind the thin index is thus to get an indicator that captures administrative corruption, taking place here and now, in citizens' everyday lives (see Appendix 12A for items included in the thin index; see Grimes and Wängnerud 2010 for details of index construction).

The results from an analysis of these two indexes show that the full and the thin index differ in the estimate of corruption levels. The full index indicates that, on average, every tenth transaction in Mexico involves bribery, whereas the thin index indicates the same is true for every 25th transaction. However, both indexes display variation across regions – for the full index the variation ranges from 2.0 to 19.8 percent corrupt transactions, and for the thin index the variation is from 1.0 to 11.5 percent corrupt transactions. In both indexes, the state of Querétaro appears as least corrupt and Distrito Federal as most corrupt.

Morris (2005) has conducted a comparative analysis of corruption in Mexican states, using the full index from TI Mexico. The overall conclusion is that very few cross-national findings could be duplicated at the subnational level. For example, Morris finds only a weak hint that poorer states suffer more corruption than wealthier states, and corruption was largely unaffected by the level of electoral competition in the state. Moreover, despite the long reign of the PRI, PRI-controlled states were not shown to differ from states held by opposition parties. The only factor that showed a robust significant effect was population: the larger the population, the higher the frequency of corrupt transactions. Morris argues that population affects the level of corruption because of its impact on demand for government services, but what he really stresses is that the analysis, ultimately, provides little to truly account for the variation (ibid., p. 17).

THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE

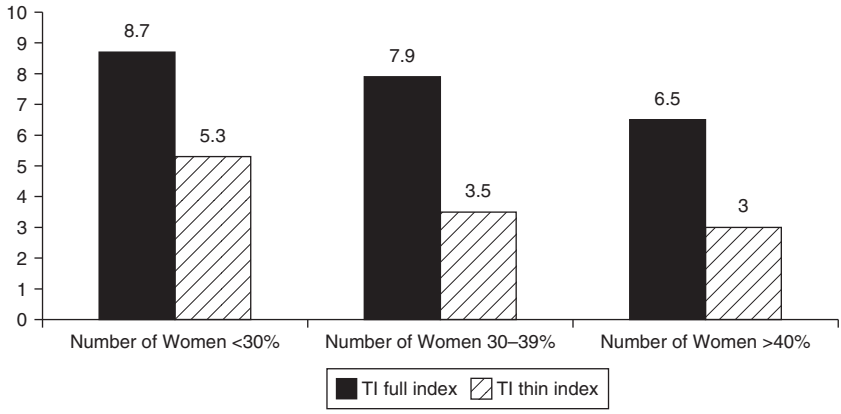
The aim of this study is theory development. Data from the subnational level in Mexico are used to illustrate shortcomings in previous research and to suggest a complementary perspective highlighting agency aspects. An important point of departure is the fact that variation exists among Mexican states not only in terms of corruption but also in terms of the number of women elected.

In the political sphere, the visibility of women has increased in Mexico since the 1990s. The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing 1995, sparked a worldwide quota trend with significant impact in Latin America. In 1996 a temporary law was approved in Mexico recommending that political parties consider adopting gender equality policies in their party statutes. In 2002 the reform was made into legislation: at the national level, Mexican law stipulates that parties are to have no more than 70 percent candidates of the same sex (Dahlerup 2006; Jaquette 2009; Zetterberg 2009).[5]

Some Mexican states have enacted quota laws for the state legislative bodies, but the laws are sometimes very weak, and the presence of a quota law does not say much about the actual outcome. In fact, the average number of women elected is highest at the municipal level. In 2005 the national average for the number of women elected to municipal legislatures was 30 percent, and the national average for state legislatures was 20 percent.

However, in this study it is the variation among Mexican states that is interesting. In 2005 there were five states with an average of more than 40 percent women in municipal legislatures (Campeche, Tamaulipas, Chihuahua, Zacatecas, Sonora) and two with an average below 20 percent (Durango and Chiapas). With regard to state legislatures, in that same year there were no states with more than 40 percent women elected, but three had more than 30 percent (Quintana Roo, Distrito Federal, Campeche). At the state level, in 2005 there were 17 states with less than 20 percent women elected.

A closer look shows that there is no correlation between the number of women elected to state legislatures and the level of corruption.[6] However, there is a correlation between the number of women elected to municipal legislatures and the level of corruption. Figure 12.1 shows the level of corruption in Mexican states by the average number of women elected to municipal legislatures. The level of corruption is captured through the full and the thin indexes presented previously. The states have been divided into three groups: states with less than 30 percent women elected, states with 30–39 percent women elected and states with more than 40



Note: Data from the National Survey on Corruption and Good Governance by Transparency International Mexico, which records the frequency with which acts of corruption are reported in requesting or receiving 35 public services (full index) or 18 public services (thin index). Number of persons interviewed ~15,000. Data on the number of women elected were provided by Sonia M. Frias. All data from 2005. Distrito Federal and Oaxaca are excluded. Distrito Federal (the national capital, Mexico City) does not have municipalities. The case of Oaxaca is not comparable to the other states, because the majority of municipalities in this state elect their governing body through "usos y costumbres", which means that indigenous communities are allowed to use customary laws in elections, and these laws sometimes exclude women from participation.

Figure 12.1 Level of corruption in Mexican states by the number of women elected to municipal legislatures

percent women elected. For each group the average level of corruption is calculated.

Both indexes display a reduction in corruption as the number of women elected increases: in Figure 12.1 the full index shows 8.7 percent corrupt transactions in states with the lowest number of women elected compared to 6.5 percent in states with the highest number of women elected. The thin index shows 5.3 percent corrupt transactions in states with the lowest number of women elected compared to 3.0 percent in states with the highest number of women elected.

The results suggest that any of the two indexes could lay the ground for further scrutiny; however, the thin index will be the main indicator in the following sections, where the gender perspective is further elaborated. The argument is that the thin index focuses on entitlements and excludes those situations where, for example, a citizen has broken the law and pays a bribe to avoid a ticket from the police. Most of the services included in the estimation are handled by public authorities, but a few, such as connecting a telephone line, are in the hands of private concessions (see Morris 2009, pp. 195–6).

ELABORATING THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE

Hung-En Sung was previously presented as one of the most fervent critics of the gender perspective. His claim is that liberal democracy is the denominator for good governance as well as gender equality (Sung 2003). Alejandra Ríos-Cázares and Guillermo M. Cejudo have studied accountability mechanisms in Mexico. They found variation at the subnational level; however, most importantly, they found that accountability mechanisms are incomplete in all Mexican states: "Even in those cases where the legal framework has been updated and the institutions are in place, the incentives and capacities of those institutions fail to guarantee that governments will be held accountable" (Ríos-Cázares and Cejudo 2009, p. 27). This means that the situation we have at hand in the Mexican case is more complex than the liberal democracy perspective predicts.

In this study, a strategy of contrasting cases has been employed to further elaborate the gender perspective. The Mexican states were classified into different groups according to the number of women elected and the level of corruption.[7] The strategy of contrasting cases means that we shall look at results from a comparison between the states with a high number of women elected and a low level of corruption (12 states) and those with a low number of women elected and a high level of corruption (9 states).[8] The elaboration is thus founded on those cases that fit the pattern found in previous cross-country comparative research, but the deviant cases will be touched upon in the concluding discussion.

The first step in the analysis is to scrutinize four indicators regarding socioeconomic stratification. The comparison includes a measure of population size, since this factor has shown significant effect in previous studies on variation in corruption among Mexican states (Morris 2005). It also includes two indicators on the level of inequality, an index of marginality[9] and a measure on the percentage of population with low income, since international findings tell us that inequality is fertile ground for corrupt behavior (Rothstein and Uslaner 2005). Furthermore, the comparison includes an indicator on the percentage of rural population.

The result of the comparison regarding socioeconomic stratification is quite clear: states with a high number of women elected and a low level of corruption are – in comparison with states with a low number of women elected and a high level of corruption – less populated, have a lower percentage of rural population, a lower percentage of population with low income, and a lower percentage of marginalized households. This result means that transitions towards a high number of women elected and a low level of corruption are intertwined with "general" equality/modernization processes.

For this analysis we use macro-level data on the situation in Mexico, but some of the hypotheses in previous research on gender and corruption concern mechanisms at the individual level. Macro-level data are, however, extremely useful for producing a bird's-eye view of society, and at least theories on opportunity structures can be reformulated to fit macro-level analysis. Theories on opportunity structures, focusing on the citizen level, stipulate that women are less corrupt than men, because they usually earn less money than men and, due to family responsibilities in the private sphere, are less involved in public matters. Following that line of reasoning, states with low levels of corruption should display more traditional gender roles than states with high levels of corruption. More traditional gender roles mean that a comparatively high number of women are excluded from the layers of population where corrupt transactions usually take place.

In a rich analysis on variation in gender equality at the subnational level in Mexico, Sonia M. Frias (2008) concludes that differences among the states are surprisingly small. She constructs a Gender Equality Index in Mexican States, assessing the level of gender equality in the economic, educational, political and legal spheres. The economic sphere includes measures such as employment and women's presence among business owners; the educational sphere includes measures such as college degrees and the presence of women in male-dominated areas such as natural sciences; the political sphere includes measures of the number of women in elected office, but also of those in appointed positions such as in the state-level administration; the legal sphere includes measures of legislation granting women's rights, such as access to abortion and publicly funded women's shelters.[10]

To facilitate comparisons, Frias standardizes all indicators and calculates a ratio where the score of 100 represents full equality between women and men, and scores tending towards zero reflect greater inequality favoring men (ibid., p. 218). First, what the results in Frias's study tell us is that, even though women are making steady progress towards gender equality in the political sphere, there is a long way to go before there will be full gender equality. For example, the index on gender equality in the economic sector shows that for every 100 men there are, on average, about 40 women in equivalent positions. Developments have come a bit further in the educational sector, where there are about 60 women for every 100 men.

Second, and most important for this study, is that the ratio does not, on average, look different in the states with a high number of women elected and a low level of corruption than in the states with a low number of women elected and a high level of corruption. A flat pattern occurs,

regardless of whether the economic sector, the educational sector or the legal sphere is in focus. Frias (p. 242) herself concludes that "Mexican states are quite homogenous in terms of structural [gender] equality. As opposed to the situation in the US . . . there are not regional differences in Mexico". Interestingly enough, she makes an exception for the political sphere: "[T]he indicators of political gender equality reveal higher levels of heterogeneity across states, and larger gender gaps compared to those of the economic and educational spheres" (p. 230).

One indicator in Frias's study that actually gave rise to some difference between the cases selected for this study was the indicator on female *síndicos* (trustees), which is a highly visible and politically important position at the municipal level. The ratio (gender gap) for this position was, on average, lower in the states with a high number of women elected and a low level of corruption than in the states with a low number of women elected and a high level of corruption. In sum, there is little basis to say that variations in the prevalence of traditional gender roles among citizens are linked to the variation in corruption among the states. However, the argument that gender equality in the electoral arena might matter is somewhat strengthened through the data from Frias's study.

THE LEGACY OF THE PAST

The main conclusion from the previous section is that the situation in Mexico is more complex than expected from findings in previous research. However, corruption is about deep structures in society. Before the discussion on gender and corruption is developed further, it is therefore useful to know to what extent the variation in corruption in 2005, the year in focus of this study, is a legacy of the past.

TI Mexico made their first survey in 2001 and that year will serve as a reference point. As stated previously, indicators on corruption concerning the national level in Mexico show small fluctuations over time. This pattern, small fluctuations between 2001 and 2005, is confirmed for the subnational level, when the full index from TI Mexico serves the role as an estimator of corruption. However, it should be remembered that the full index includes "services" such as preventing a car from being impounded by transport police or releasing an impounded car, which is the worst public transaction ever in Mexico from the perspective of corruption: in 2001 57.2 percent of transactions connected to this "service" involved bribery; in 2005 the corresponding figure was 60.2 percent.[11]

The point is that the overall impression might be one of small fluctuations, or even a small increase, as in the case of the transport police, but

a comparison between 2001 and 2005 regarding the thin index concerning entitlements[12] reveals that there is progress taking place in the shadow of these extremely corrupt interactions. The thin index displays reduced levels of corruption, both in the states with a high number of women elected and a low level of corruption and in the states with a low level of women elected and a high level of corruption. But the reduction in the thin index is particularly striking for states with a high number of women elected: the number of corrupt transactions concerning entitlements is more than halved, from 5.4 to 2.6 percent, in this group between 2001 and 2005. The corresponding reduction in states with a low number of women elected is from 9.4 to 6.4 percent between 2001 and 2005.

The comparison across time highlights the importance of being cautious when turning notoriously contested concepts such as corruption into concrete indicators and indexes: is there a stable situation as indicated by the full index, or a reduction as indicated by the thin index? The answer is that it depends on which indicator you choose, but there is no reason to reject the idea that what is going on in Mexico is a multilayered development with changes in some arenas but not in others.

A RATIONALITY PERSPECTIVE

The link between gender and corruption tells us something about how societies progress, but the question is *what* does it tell us, more exactly? Ann-Marie Goetz, among others, has pointed out that electing an increased number of women is no simple shortcut to good governance (Goetz 2007; Vijayalakshimi 2008). However, the sheer fact that the finding established in cross-country comparative research is repeated at the subnational level in Mexico strengthens the relevance of the gender perspective.

The theoretical perspective currently gaining ground in research on gender and corruption is the opportunity structure perspective. This study does not close the door to this strand of research; the argument is rather that previous research is *insufficient* for understanding the interactions taking place. The suggestion that arises from this study is to supplement research on gender and corruption with a theoretical perspective that emphasizes agency aspects.

The point of departure for a rationality perspective is that the different positions women and men hold in society affect them in fundamental ways. Most contemporary societies are structured around sex, and that structure coincides with structures of power. The crucial question is whether this relationship means that there are particular reasons for women to abstain from corruption.

In her extensive study *Women in Contemporary Mexican Politics*, Victoria E. Rodríguez (2003) finds that it is common among women politicians in Mexico to have a background in social movements. It might be the case that women are not just locked out from old boys' networks, where corruption is part of the game. To reach and uphold positions of power, women might actively seek to build alternative power bases. Democratic developments open doors for women to enter the public sphere, but women's connections with the surrounding society might still differ from men's. In most societies social movements serve the role as a watchdog for abuse of public office (Grimes 2008a, 2008b). To engage in corrupt behavior would then be particularly risky for women, since it could ruin their chance of gaining support in future races.[13]

At a citizen level, one has to deal with the fact that women usually have fewer assets than men, whether in terms of cash, land or other resources. At the same time women are most often responsible for the well-being of the family. In her book, Rodríguez (2003) refers to a number of studies that highlight the difficulties women in Mexico face in trying to make ends meet. If corruption is viewed as an extra expense, leaving less money for food, schooling and clothing, it becomes quite understandable that it would be rational for women to abstain from corrupt behavior or "negotiate to pay the least they can" when confronted with bribe-paying.[14]

The mechanisms suggested here have to be tried out in future studies. Most important is that the rationality perspective implies that the perceptions and evaluations individuals have of society might impel them to act in certain ways (McNay 2008, p. 288). It will always be possible to find exceptions, the argument is not that all women abstain from illegal activities and all men are potential law-breakers, but experiences of being in a subordinated position can motivate women, both in the electoral arena and in daily life, to make different decisions from men about corruption.[15] Thus, the recommendation for future research is to consider a rationality perspective more seriously. The recommendation is also to further develop a framework where multiple perspectives are used to study the relationship between gender and corruption. In Table 12.2 previous research is supplemented with the rationality perspective.

DEVIANT CASES

One advantage of the rationality perspective is that it highlights women as actors in democratic developments. In international studies there is a much-used distinction between *incremental* and *fast-track* models towards increased gender equality (Dahlerup 2006; see also Wängnerud 2009).

Table 12.2 Main hypotheses in previous research on gender and corruption supplemented with a rationality perspective

Theoretical perspective	Effect of gender on corruption	Driving forces
Liberal democracy	Gender has no independent effect on corruption; spurious correlation	• Liberal democracy is the driving force behind a high number of women elected, as well as good governance
Gender differences/sex roles	Gender has a direct effect on corruption	• Risk behavior/lack of self-control: men dominate most criminal activities • Role as caregiver: women exhibit more social/helping behavior
Rationality perspective	Citizen level: gender has a direct effect on corruption	• Women as a subordinate group in society: fewer assets makes it rational for women to actively avoid corrupt transactions
	Decision-making arenas: gender has an indirect effect on corruption	• Women's connections with the surrounding society tend to differ from men's: the need to uphold alternative power bases makes it rational for women politicians to actively avoid corrupt transactions
Opportunity structures	Gender has an indirect effect on corruption	• Women are, due to family responsibilities, less involved in public affairs • Women, when they enter decision-making arenas, tend to be excluded from "old boys' networks"

Note: The different theoretical perspectives are presented more fully in the text.

Sweden and Rwanda can be used to illustrate two typical cases in each category. During the 1970s Sweden crossed the threshold of 20 percent women in the national parliament, and this proportion climbed above 30 percent during the 1980s and 40 percent during the 1990s. The current figure, after the election in 2010, is 45 percent women. Whereas developments in Sweden span more than four decades, the number of women in the national parliament in Rwanda has increased greatly in just a few years. Gender quotas for seats in parliament were implemented as a part

of the reconciliation process after the genocide. In 1994 women made up 17.1 percent of the national parliament. After the election in 2008, the number was 56.3 percent.

Rwanda's situation is much different from Sweden's. The latter's twentieth-century history is characterized by political stability, economic growth and peace. In contrast, Rwanda is one of the poorest countries in the world and its modern history contains disastrous wars.[16] It has been concluded that the increased number of women elected, so far, has had little effect on political output in Rwanda (Devlin and Elgie 2008). However, research on Sweden concludes that women politicians have played a substantial role in transitions towards a more gender equal society (Wängnerud 2009; Wängnerud and Sundell 2011).

There is variation at the subnational level in Mexico in terms of socioeconomic stratification. Differences are perhaps not as striking as between Rwanda and Sweden, but what could be gained from the outlook above is that a high number of women elected can be related to far-reaching processes towards modernization and equality (Sweden); it can also be related to a wish to start such processes (Rwanda). This point leads to a discussion about deviant cases in this study, that is, the states that do not fit into the pattern with either a high number of women elected and a low level of corruption or a low number of women elected and a high level of corruption.

The deviant group that is most interesting includes states with a high number of women elected and a high level of corruption.[17] What characterizes those states is a socioeconomic situation much worse than that of the states with a high number of women elected and a low level of corruption. States in Mexico with a high number of women elected and a high level of corruption could perhaps be categorized as "Mexico's Rwanda", and states with a high number of women elected and a low level of corruption as "Mexico's Sweden". The more general point is that it has to be recognized that actors who want to bring about progressive changes are sometimes faced with really severe obstacles; when inequality is pertinent and processes towards modernization slow, it might be extremely hard to pursue good governance.

NOTES

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1. Mexico is a federation of 31 states/regions plus the national capital Mexico City. I shall hereafter use the term "states" since this corresponds with official language.
2. A hypothesis advanced by Manuel Alejandro Guerrero and Eduardo Rodríguez-Oreggia, in a study about decisions among citizens in Mexico to commit corruption, is that women and men differ in their time values. Guerrero and Rodríguez-Oreggia (2005, p. 17) quote a male interviewee emphasizing that, if stopped by the police, "you save time and procedures by paying it [the bribe] there and then", and a female interviewee emphasizing that "you try to negotiate and try to pay them [the police] the least you can". The underlying assumption is that men, generally speaking, value a fast process more than women.
3. For example, it has been shown that egalitarian gender-role attitudes contribute to both women's and men's propensity to perceive unethical behavior as unethical (McCabe et al. 2006).
4. Transparency International uses a Corruption Perceptions Index that shows perceptions of corruption from businesspeople and analysts such as journalists and researchers. The World Bank indicator is Control of Corruption, which is based on a number of different datasets measuring perceptions of corruption. Both organizations use the following definition of corruption: "exercise of public power for private gain".
5. Data from QuotaProject Global Database of Quotas for Women (www.quotaproject.org). In 2011, 26.2 percent of those elected to the national lower house in Mexico, the Cámara de Diputados, were women (www.ipu.org; situation as of 30 November 2011).
6. In her seminal book on stratification by sex, *Men and Women of the Corporation*, Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977) launches the theory of a critical mass. The idea behind this theory is to seek to identify a tipping point at which the impact of women's presence in a certain organization, such as a legislature, becomes apparent; a figure of ~30 percent is often mentioned. From that perspective, the absence of a correlation at the level of state legislatures is less surprising. However, the different results for state and municipal legislatures have to be studied further.
7. See Wängnerud (2010) for a more comprehensive presentation of the empirical evidence.
8. The 12 states with a high number of women elected and a low level of corruption have, on average, 30 percent women elected to municipal legislatures and the level of corruption (thin index, see main text) is below 3.5. The nine states with a low number of women elected have, on average, less than 30 percent women elected to municipal legislatures and the level of corruption (thin index) is 3.5 or above.
9. The index on marginality comprises data on four areas of socioeconomic development: (i) education (literacy and completion of primary school), (ii) income, (iii) size of rural population and (iv) housing (water, waste water, electricity, overcrowding and dirt floors. Data collected by Mexico's National Commission on Population (CONAPO) in conjunction with the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI).
10. I shall not report on Frias's (2008) study in detail; however, I shall list the indicators included in each subindex: (i) economic gender equality indicators are labor force, employed, civil servants, managers and administrators, business owners, health benefits and households above poverty level; (ii) educational gender equality indicators are average years of education, literacy rates, college degrees, graduates, engineering, agricultural and natural sciences; (iii) political gender equality indicators are mayors, city councillors, trustees, state representatives, magistrates, state secretaries and federal civil servants; (iv) the legal sphere counts approved legislation granting women's rights or protecting already existing rights in the following areas: abortion, sexual harassment, political representation, theft of livestock punished more severely than offences against women, violence, family violence as a felony, rape within marriage, intrafamily violence as cause of divorce, abuser's household abandonment, publicly funded shelters, no age difference for marriage, no time for re-marrying, domestic work and allowance in common-consent divorce.

11. For an overview of corruption in different services included in the National Survey on Corruption and Good Governance from TI Mexico, see Morris (2009, pp. 195–6).
12. A common denominator for the items included in the thin index is actually that none of them is handled by the police.
13. It should be noted that civil society in Mexico is reasonably strong. In a study on Western democracies, Kittilson (2006) has found that it is especially important for women politicians to have ties with organizations outside the party, since they provide points of access for women. In Mexico the political system prohibits re-election to the same position; however, it is common to aspire to other political positions after a finished mandate period.
14. In some cases – however, this is very rare, according to the director Eduardo A. Bohórquez and the personnel at Transparencia Mexicana – bribes can be paid in order to lower costs of, for example, electricity bills. In most cases bribes are paid to speed up processes or to receive a requested service.
15. An alternative interpretation is that the patterns presented here are about *reciprocity*. To some extent, corruption presupposes a kind of mutual understanding between the parties, and that can reasonably be easier to create if you belong to the same clan, ethnic group or – why not – sex. Especially in countries with large differences in terms of gender equality, it might be difficult to establish mutual understanding and necessary "partnership". The reciprocity perspective is a middle course between a rationality perspective and a perspective highlighting opportunity structures. For research on reciprocity, see Gintis et al. (2005).
16. Perhaps needless to say, Sweden is among the least corrupt countries in the world, whereas Rwanda is severely corrupt. In a recent rank order, Transparency International placed Sweden as number three and Rwanda as number 89 among a total of 180 countries in the world. The same ranking from Transparency International shows that Mexico is also found in 89th place.
17. See Wängnerud (2010). There are two types of deviant cases: states with a high number of women elected and a high level of corruption, and states with a low number of women elected and a low level of corruption. The latter type consists of only three states, which differ markedly from one another.

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APPENDIX 12A THE THIN INDEX

The question used in TI Mexico's National Survey on Corruption and Good Governance reads: "Have you, or any member of your family, during the past year done any of the following (yes or no)? Did you have to pay a bribe, monetary or otherwise, to obtain this service (yes or no)?". The items included in the thin index are:

1 . . . carry out a transaction to obtain documents related to your education or degrees from public schools?
2 . . . make arrangement for the immediate attention of a patient in a clinic or hospital?
3 . . . visit a patient in the hospital outside of visiting hours?
4 . . . carry out a transaction to obtain or expedite records of birth, death, marriage, or divorce at the civil registry?
5 . . . carry out any transaction related to your vehicle: car, truck, motorcycle, or other (for example, a transfer of ownership)?
6 . . . carry out a transaction to obtain government employment?
7 . . . apply for a scholarship for some type of education?
8 . . . apply for permits related to land uses or other transaction related to the public registry of land ownership?
9 . . . carry out a transaction related to the connection or reconnection of electricity to your home?
10 . . . carry out a transaction to obtain an official school enrolment card?
11 . . . carry out a transaction related to getting a driver's license?
12 . . . pay a tax?
13 . . . carry out a transaction to obtain a telephone line?
14 . . . carry out a transaction to register your vehicle?
15 . . . obtain a hook-up to the municipal water system?
16 . . . receive mail?
17 . . . request a municipal garbage truck to pick up your garbage?
18 . . . carry out a transaction related to starting a business?