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Unsupervised, Ensnared, Relational, and Private: A Typology of Illinois' Corrupt Women

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The Simon Review

**Unsupervised, Ensnared, Relational, and Private:
A Typology of Illinois' Corrupt Women**

By Ryan Ceresola

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Scholars, pundits, and citizens know Illinois is at the forefront of corruption, as reported in the popular fact that four out of the last eight governors of Illinois have spent time in federal prison.

We chalk up corruption to officials misusing their public role for their own private good.

However, when we talk about corruption, even when we use inclusive language, we see the actor as a man, as corruption occurring in “old-boys networks,” and in dark and hidden backrooms of Springfield and Chicago, full of kickbacks and cigar smoke.

What is missing from that analysis is an examination of the types of corruption that occur when we look at women in public positions and the corrupt acts they engage in. Illinois also ranks highly on several factors that measure the number of women in political positions of power (Center for American Women and Politics 2015), and so the question is raised: what is the role of women when it comes to corruption?

While some argue that female public officials have a deterrent effect on corruption, news stories, anecdotal evidence, and current research show that women do indeed engage in corrupt acts, which harms public opinion of our government, and wastes taxpayer money. However, to date, scholars have not looked at how the political system itself constrains or encourages certain types of corruption for women, especially in terms of qualitative studies that examine the life circumstances and contexts behind corrupt actions. To fill this gap, I analyze twenty-nine cases of women in public positions in Illinois convicted of corruption. Using FBI press releases, newspaper accounts, opinion pieces and online articles, I compare similarities and differences between these cases, using a multi-faceted, in-depth case study technique.

Specifically, I find four major themes that affect female corruption, including the corrupt female official:

- 1) Accesses public resources with little to no supervision
- 2) Collaborates with others in some misdeed
- 3) Commits corrupt acts with family members, specifically spouses or boyfriends
- 4) Uses corrupt gains for personal, rather than career-advancing, reasons.

With this analysis, I suggest that simply changing the gendered composition of a political body will not prevent corruption, and in fact, may encourage different types of corruption such as nepotism or embezzlement used for personal reasons. Instead, I argue that:

- 1) Greater representations of women in political bodies will have little to no effect on reducing overall systemic corruption, without a change to the system itself.
- 2) Political bodies in Illinois and elsewhere should ensure that their government officials are supervised, and are independently audited by outside investigative agencies.
- 3) A series of checks and balances should be put into place to discover corruption earlier and more often, especially in organizations where public money is transferred between accounts.

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Unsupervised, Ensnared, Relational, and Private: A Typology of Illinois' Corrupt Women

Corrupt government officials simultaneously steal public resources for their private gain and erode citizen trust in governance, which leads to harsh consequences for the everyday taxpayer. For these reasons, policy makers, scholars, and citizens strive to impede corruption, using any resources available (Vogl 2012). Scholars have questioned whether women in politics have a deterrent effect on corruption, either through some intrinsic sense of virtue women have (Goetz 2007), or through merely changing the structural opportunities for corruption to occur (Dollar, Fisman and Gatti 2001).

In contrast to this idealized image of femininity, scholars instead indicate that women do engage in corrupt acts, but do not commit these acts at the same rate as men (De Graaf and Huberts 2008, Gradel and Simpson 2015). Thus, women are not incorruptible, though structural factors in the political system do prevent women from engaging in certain acts of corruption as often as men (Sung 2003, 2012). Specifically, women engage in less corruption not because of some inherent morality (Goetz 2007), but instead because they don't have the opportunity to perform corrupt actions, which are more freely open to men who are a part of an "old-boys network" (Moore 1987). Furthermore, organizational constraints on women keep them away from positions where they have access to as much power as men who have been in organizations for a comparable amount of time (Kanter 1977).

Thus, women are seen as corruption-reducers, though the public corruption of women still occurs (Gradel and Simpson 2015), and as more women enter the political sphere and become integrated into the body politic, their ability to commit corrupt acts will only continue. For instance, the state of Illinois has a well-known history of corruption (Gradel and Simpson 2015), but is currently relatively more gender egalitarian than other states (Center for American

Women and Politics 2015). This implies that women may not be *de facto* less corrupt than men, but instead execute different types of corruption, contributing to an overall corrupt system but in ways that differ from men, and in ways that are only becoming apparent as more women enter into positions of power. A first step to understanding women's corruption is to analyze case studies of female public officials who have been convicted of corruption to see the subtle ways gender influences women's experiences, at the individual and structural level (Williams 1991).

Therefore, in this paper, I analyze twenty-nine cases of women in public positions in Illinois convicted of corruption, which includes crimes as diverse as bribery, embezzlement, tax fraud, or computer tampering, to name but a few. Using FBI press releases, newspaper accounts obtained through Lexis-Nexis searches, and opinion pieces and online articles about these cases as data sources, I compare similarities and differences between these cases, using a multi-faceted, in-depth case study technique in line with other exploratory qualitative studies of corruption in Western countries (De Graaf and Huberts 2008). I find four major themes that affect female corruption, including the corrupt official 1) accessing public resources with little to no supervision, 2) collaborating with others in some misdeed, 3) engaging in corruption with family members, specifically spouses or boyfriends, and 4) using corrupt gains for personal, rather than political, reasons. With this typology, I advance the theory on political corruption by pointing out that our current understanding of political corruption is limited because it ignores the gendered context in which such corruption occurs, specifically at the structural level.

1. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

I first present two interrelated but distinct spheres of thought in the sociological literature on gender, corruption, and work. First, I present the current literature on political corruption,

including a section on women in positions of political power today. Second, I describe how the structure of organizations and workplaces, such as the public offices the women I investigate hold, can impede or foster corruption. I also present literature on gender socialization and how individuals act in a way that reinforces or challenges gendered ideals (West and Zimmerman 1987) to emphasize how, even given the same “objective” circumstances, men and women accomplish very different acts.

A. Research on Political Corruption

To begin, “[c]orruption is usually understood to mean the ‘misuse of public office for private gain,’ where the ‘private gain’ may accrue either to the individual official or to groups or parties to which he [or she] belongs” (Treisman 2007:211), and usually consists of an individual committing illegal acts through his or her station as a political actor (Maxwell and Winters 2005). In other words, public corruption occurs when officials, ostensibly in a position to serve the greater community, operate in ways that benefit themselves, their family or friends, or a narrow special interest group, at the cost of what is good for their citizens they are charged with representing.

Years of corruption research has presented some notable findings on the causes or correlates of corruption. First, governments and governing bodies that have historically been corrupt are more likely to continue to be corrupt than to change (Heywood and Rose 2014). Second, more transparent governments are seen by experts as less corruptible, and closed-off governments seen as more endemic to corruption (Green and Ward 2004). Third, current research suggests that corruption does not occur in a vacuum, and that an uninformed and disconnected civil society is associated with higher levels of corruption (Rose-Ackerman 1978);

conversely, a factor in deterring politically corrupt practices is when the public is knowledgeable about their government (Ginley 2012). Relatedly, states that are more ethnically diverse are more corrupt, because an elected official can “perceive his or her act of malfeasance as largely affecting a population that is unlike the self” (Winters 2012:12). Fourth, corruption is associated with the economic well-being of an area, i.e. states and nations that have more of a solid income base are less corrupt (Andvig et al. 2000; Treisman 2000), though some argue relative wealth influences U.S. states more than it impacts nations internationally (Glaeser and Saks 2004). Finally, the relative amount of social support in a country or state is associated with corruption; that is, countries that spend more on healthcare, for instance, help insulate themselves from the growth of corruption (Zhang, Cao, and Vaughan 2009:212).

In previous research, scholars have examined political bosses, machine politics, and public corruption in terms of their relationships with big cities and urban environments, and these findings have primarily been generated through quantitative, macro-level investigations (Maxwell and Winters 2005; Treisman 2000, 2007). One notable exception is the qualitative work of De Graaf and Huberts (2008), who investigated ten cases of public corruption in the Netherlands. They found that material rewards were the primary reason for individuals to act corruptly, and that individuals who had been convicted of corruption had strong and dominant personalities, were usually labeled “charming” by coworkers, and committed more than one act of corruption before they were caught (De Graaf and Huberts 2008). This finding matches the theoretical underpinnings of the literature on white-collar crime, which suggest that corporate crime comes from individuals defining such actions positively by being around people with similar definitions (Sutherland 1949/1983). Thus, the access that certain individuals have to corrupting influences greatly affects their own corruption.

i. Women and Political Corruption

In a new strain of corruption research, scholars are currently attempting to answer whether women have some sort of negative or stabilizing influence on corruption. Scholars have shown that political corruption is negatively correlated with greater numbers of women in political bodies (Dollar, Fisman, and Gatti 2001, Treisman 2007). Ten years of cross-national research, for instance, suggests that higher rates of women in politics result in lower levels of perceived corruption by experts (Treisman 2007). Furthermore, in a cross-sectional analysis of more than 100 countries, Dollar, Fisman and Gatti (2001) found that countries with higher numbers of women represented in government rank lower on corruption indices. This lack of corruption is not only reported on by experts (who are the ones compiling these indices of corruption), but also by citizens, i.e., higher numbers of women in politics leads to lower perceptions of political corruption by their citizens internationally (Watson and Moreland 2014).

While there is some evidence to suggest that women should and do have an effect on reducing corruption, there are also critics of this perspective who argue that a political system will not be affected by gender differences in its representatives, because, empirically, there is concern that previous studies that found correlations between corruption and female governance misidentify a true cause of corruption that explains away the effect of women when adequately controlled for: whether the country under investigation is a liberal democracy (Sung 2003, 2012). While finding similar results to Dollar, Fisman and Gatti (2001) when analyzing the effect of women in government internationally, Sung (2003) added measures of liberal democracy such as whether a country has a free press or whether laws and judicial activity are enacted relatively free of outside business or relationship influence. When controlling for these factors, Sung (2003) found no effect of women in government. Furthermore, Sung (2012) reported that this

lack of an effect holds over time by comparing corruption indices from 1998 to 2004. Once again, there was no effect of women when controlling for liberal democracy factors.

Beyond this debate, there has been little research examining how women have differential opportunities or different actions when it comes to corruption, ostensibly because women are still primarily thought of as a corruption inhibiting influence, and thus further investigations are seen as unnecessary. Perhaps a misstep in such previous literature is the focus on macro-level features of political bodies, which misses the way meso-level organizational structures affect women's ability to engage in corrupt acts and the type of corruption women undertake.

B. Politics as a Gendered Organization

Thus, moving past the "forest" of macro-level interactions to see the "trees" of individual corruption, investigating individual cases of corruption allows us to focus on the meso- and micro-level interactions that influence the individual's decision-making (Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg 1991). The literature on gender and work guides us toward understanding the structural constraints on women in positions of political power or public office that foster this image of women as incorruptible.

First, workplaces socialize individuals, and because so many Americans spend so much time at their workplaces, these sites impart meaningful knowledge and skill sets to workers. Furthermore, workplaces are "gendered," meaning they provide different points of access and opportunities to men and women. The gendered organization is a constraining influence on an individual's decision to engage in certain actions, because the way organizations and worksites are structured both allow and limit opportunity for success and growth (Hochschild 1983, Kanter

1977). For our purposes, there are two primary ways to focus on the workplace as it constrains and encourages corruption for women. First, the organization constrains opportunities for corruption, because women are seldom offered the same opportunities for corruption as men are. However, the socialization process of women might actually encourage certain types of corruption.

Workplaces constrain women's ability to "succeed" in being corrupt, as employers that are male-dominated or arranged in a hierarchical way that benefits men over women relegate women to positions that hold no real ability to accomplish meaningful goals, illicit or otherwise (Kanter 1977). Simply put, current organizational structures benefit men at the cost of women, because men are typified as the "ideal worker" – free of family, domestic chores, or other obligations (Acker 1990). Put more concretely:

In organizational logic, both jobs and hierarchies are abstract categories that have no occupants, no human bodies, no gender. However, an abstract job can exist, can be transformed into a concrete instance, only if there is a worker. In organizational logic, filling the abstract job is a disembodied worker who exists only for the work. (Acker 1990:149)

Because of these ideals that stratify and reproduce gender inequality in the workplace, women are relegated to positions of lesser power, even when they adopt gendered strategies to counteract this such as aligning with ideals of hegemonic masculinity to appear success-driven, or aligning with stereotypical femininity to seem less intimidating to men in power (Bird and Rhoton 2011). In male-dominated organizations, specifically, women are much less likely to be found in relatively more powerful positions (Cotter et al. 2001). Today, while individuals are less tied to corporations or life-long businesses to work, there are still structural impediments to women's success that benefit the old, predominantly white and male, guard such as the

importance of networking with male colleagues or gaining support of primarily male supervisors (Williams, Muller, and Kilanski 2012).

Thus, workplaces constrain women's abilities to commit corrupt acts, but they simultaneously counteract women's potential anti-corrupting influences (Dollar, Fisman and Gatti 2001). More practically, even when women enter into more powerful jobs, women will not have institutional power to enact change. Women in politics are instead relegated to "the velvet ghetto" (Ghiloni 1987) where their positions have the same prestigious names, but actual power to make lasting change is lessened. In this velvet ghetto, when women have the same job title as men, they have very different roles in practice in terms of accessibility to meaningful work or the ability to make change. This is because, "When men see the work women do as different from their own, they are not likely to move women into positions involving discretion or uncertainty" (Ghiloni 1987:34).

Because women workers are seen as "tokens" (Kanter 1977) in industries that have historically been male-dominated, and because current employment practices reinforce the idea that men are ideal workers over women (Acker 1990), women have less opportunity to act corruptly because they do not have access to backroom deals, and have little opportunity to challenge corrupt practices in others because they wield little real power. In addition to women being physically isolated from key positions of power, women may find institutional inertia difficult to challenge, despite any anti-corruption ideals. This primarily occurs because managers themselves do not know how to deal with the new guard of women employees: "Conformity pressures and the development of exclusive management circles closed to 'outsiders' stem from the degree of uncertainty surrounding managerial positions" (Kanter 1977:48). Therefore, women entering workplaces would have little ability to 1) challenge workplace norms due to

their limited power or 2) avoid engaging in workplace norms, because of their desire to be successful (Bird and Rhoton 2011).

i. Women's Socialization and Corruption

While the above research speaks directly to ideas of tokenization and the lack of power women have, in the public and political realm, women are indeed progressing and representing the public at higher rates than ever before (Jackson 2009), though definitely with certain constraints and not on par with men. However, as women move beyond being tokens, there are other factors that constrain, or, in some instances, encourage, corruption.

Specifically, while there are organizational constraints on a woman's ability to carry out certain actions, there are also systemic and culturally-reinforced constraints that would lend credence to the idea that women are less corrupt than men, or at least engage in corruption in a much different manner. While those who study gender have long moved past the idea that there are innate differences between men and women that explain differential rates of success or criminality, they now focus on the influence of socialization (Stacey and Thorne 1985), structural factors that reinforce gender differentiation (Ridgeway and Correll 2004), or on the idea that gender is constantly performed in individual interactions (West and Zimmerman 1987, 2009). While gender is somewhat fluid and established on a case-by-case basis, it is important to understand that many American women (specifically, white, middle-to-upper-class women who are the ones we see in positions of political power) are raised in a milieu that advocates for women's docility and for women to focus on others and their families, at the cost of personal growth and achievement.

The major sociological argument behind why women are less corrupt is that women are socialized into systems where they are taught to be other-oriented, service-focused, nurturing,

and selfless (Chafetz 1997, Stacey and Thorne 1985). These ideals are constantly taught to women, and are reinforced through social interactions (West and Zimmerman 1987). This plays a specific role when politicians consider who they are accountable to; Alt and Lassen (2003) argue that a major factor that determines whether or not an individual will act corruptly is whether they believe it will affect their ability to be reelected. Therefore, individuals with closer ties to their communities are more worried about engaging in acts that show their connections to their constituents, as is shown when considering racial or ethnic homogeneity as a potential deterrent of corruption (Winters 2012). If women are socialized to be more caring, nurturing, and other-oriented, then they have more of a vested interest in refraining from acts that the public views as negative. Men, on the other hand, are socialized to “govern from above” and care less about others’, including citizens’, concerns (Alt and Lassen 2003).

However, instead of just stating that this other-orientation will inextricably limit corruption because women care more about others, the social attributes that are taught early and often to women might actually encourage certain types of corruption. For instance, using qualitative methods, De Graaf and Huberts’ (2008) study points out the differential attributes of women who engage in corruption: notably, the two women they investigated did not commit corrupt acts for financial rewards, but instead out of friendship or love, with one, in the words of a detective who investigated the case, having done so: “because of love for her boyfriend and perhaps a bit out of humanitarian motives. She just fell for the wrong guy who promised her a lot, like a marriage that never came. She never received money for the corrupt acts. Her reward was love, if you can call it that” (De Graaf and Huberts 2008:643). For this woman at least, this other-orientation *led* to corruption, as she focused on benefitting a loved one over the public they were elected to serve. While it is irresponsible to claim that cross-culturally women are

socialized in the same way that would lead to less corruption (Goetz 2007), ignoring the socialization process of women reifies the idea that women are somehow naturally more moral than men (Lopata and Thorne 1978), and ignores the fact that socialization is a double-edged sword concerning public corruption.

In sum, while women could pull off fewer corrupt acts because of their socialized “other-orientation,” that same orientation might *encourage* corruption if women actually engage in corrupt acts to better the positions and the lives of those that they care about who are family members or otherwise connected to them through close, personal bonds.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Previous research has focused on women and political corruption at the macro-level, leaving little room for nuanced understandings of the lived experiences of those engaging in corrupt activities. However, certain workplace structures, including public offices, provide the ability for women to engage in particularly gender-based modes of corruption. Thus, the questions are raised: At what rates do women commit politically corrupt acts? Are there any common themes to the ways women complete these acts? Do structural and organizational factors influence the way that women succeed in illicit activities? Finally, how do these themes challenge our ideas of women as reducing influences on corruption?

3. DATA AND METHODS

Using Illinois as a research site has major advantages to studying both gender and corruption, especially considering the relatively high numbers of women in positions of political power in the state (Center for American Women and Politics). In fact, women are currently more

represented in the political sphere in Illinois than ever before, with over thirty percent of the state's legislature composed of women in 2015 and with women currently holding the positions of State Comptroller, Lieutenant Governor, and Attorney General (Center for American Women and Politics 2015). Furthermore, Illinois ranks in the top ten of states for the proportion of women as state legislators (Center for American Women and Politics 2015).

While studying Illinois provides notable opportunities to examine public officials within the context of gender, another attribute of Illinois salient for this research is that Illinois has a much remarked upon history of political corruption as a well-known factor to its public (Gradel and Simpson 2015). Pundits, scholars, and cold, hard facts show that Illinois is currently and historically very corrupt compared to other states (Simpson 2010), and the fact that four out of the last eight governors of the state have served time in prison certainly makes Illinois' corruption somewhat notable (Winters 2012). Of course, a factor that weighs into both the opportunity for more officials to be corrupt and for more opportunity for women to engage in corruption is that Illinois has over 40,000 elected officials – the highest number of elected officials out of any state in the union (Winters 2012). In fact, when measuring corruption as convictions per 1,000 individuals elected, Illinois ranks right in the middle in a ranking of the states (Winters 2012).

At any rate, Illinois ranks high on most rankings of political corruption available, but women have still been convicted of corruption in positions as diverse as small town treasurer, Chicago Alderman, or State Representative (Gradel and Simpson 2015). To the best of my knowledge, my sample is made up of the entire population of women convicted of public corruption from 1989 – 2014 in Illinois. I compiled this list using a number of resources available on the University of Illinois at Chicago's (UIC) "Chicago Politics" database

(Department of Political Science 2014) as well as the recent text on corruption in Illinois entitled *Corrupt Illinois* (Gradel and Simpson 2015). With much overlap, these two sources provided names, tables, and stories of public officials, as well as private citizens, involved with corruption. While there were several women convicted of corruption from the private sector, for the purposes of this paper I only examine convictions of women who represented the government in some official capacity. Finally, while I discovered cases of women who were accused of corruption but not ultimately convicted, I chose to focus on convicted women to 1) find enough data on the case, 2) not give credibility to accusations of corruption without substance, and 3) understand corruption in the context of that which is found to be most egregious through our official court system.

To ensure the representativeness of this sample, I conducted Lexis-Nexis searches with key words such as “Illinois,” “Corruption,” “Women,” “Female,” and many other permutations to access newspaper accounts or press releases of female public officials convicted of corruption missed by the UIC dataset, but this only returned search results for names that I already had found using the primary sources above. I obtained similar results through a search of the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), which includes every press release they have offered (<http://www.fbi.gov/>), as well as Illinois Policy, an independent watchdog group that compiles and writes about stories that have to do with corruption in Illinois (<https://www.illinoispolicy.org/>). The table below provides a brief overview of the cases investigated herein.

Table 1

Female Public Officials in Illinois Convicted of Corruption Crimes, 1989—2014

	Name	Title	Location	Crime
1989	Marian	Precinct Captain,	Chicago	Bribery

	Humes	City Council, Alderman		
1990	Jeri Sullivan	Mayor	Glendale Heights	Income Tax Evasion
1994	Christine Boyar	Investigator, Traffic Committee,	Chicago	Receiving Payment for "Ghost Job"
1994	Marie D'Amico	Ghost in three different offices	Chicago	Receiving Payment for "Ghost Job"
1994	Bonnie Laurino	Wife of Alderman	Chicago	Receiving Payment for "Ghost Job"
1995	Barbara Bringle	Executive Director Cicero Mental Health Center	Cicero	Fraud
1996	Louise Marshall	City Council Commissioner	Chicago Heights	Racketeering, Extortion, Bribery
1997	Florence Sampaolesi	Traffic Committee	Chicago	Receiving Payment for "Ghost Job"
1998	Bonita Wright	Park District Board President	Dixmoor	Theft and Conspiracy
2000	Miriam Santos	Treasurer	Chicago	Mail Fraud, Extortion; (Conviction was overturned, and she pleaded to one count of mail fraud for time served)
2000	Kim Paetschow	Lisle Park District Director	Lisle	Misdemeanor Theft
2002	Betty Loren-Maltese	Town President	Cicero	Racketeering, Wire Fraud, and Mail Fraud
2004	Ellen Shadwick	Executive Director of Batavia Main Street	Batavia	Theft
2004	Janet Thomas	School District President	Harvey	Falsifying Documents
2005	Patricia Bailey	State Representative	Cook, DuPage, Lake, Kane and McHenry Counties	Perjury and Forgery
2006	Louise Morales	School Board President	Sauk Village	Fraud
2006	Sharon Latiker	Clerk to City Treasurer	Chicago	Cashing Bad Checks
2006	Louise Brown	Administrative Assistant to Santos	Chicago	Cashing Bad Checks
2007	Sallyanne Bennes	Parent-Teacher Organizations Treasurer	Lake Villa	Theft
2008	Arenda Troutman	Alderman	Chicago	Bribery

2008	Linda Hudson	Park District Administrator	Chicago	Wire Fraud and Theft
2011	Sharon Hyde	Director of Village-run Creative Playtime Preschool	Island lake	Falsifying Documents
2012	Rita Crundwell	Treasurer	Dixon	Embezzlement
2012	Sara Glashagel	Teacher	Antioch	Computer Tampering
2013	Sandi Jackson	City Council Member	Chicago	Filing False Tax Returns
2013	Constance Howard	State Representative	Winnebago County	Mail Fraud
2013	Gwendolyn Robinson	Executive Director of the Maywood Housing Authority	Chicago	Theft and Official Misconduct
2014	Nancy Dobrowski	Village Clerk	Burnham	Embezzlement, Wire Fraud, and Filing a False Tax Return
2014	Antoinette Chenier	City Clerk	Chicago Department of Transportation	Embezzlement

Because relatively little is known about women’s corruption, I use an exploratory, inductive research strategy using multiple case studies which allow me to focus “on understanding the dynamics present within single settings in order to generate theory in the shape of propositions” (De Graaf and Huberts 2008:641). Case studies are in-depth, multi-faceted investigations of social phenomenon obtained through qualitative research methods (Feagin et al. 1991). They allow us to understand the in-depth nuances of certain situations, which is especially important in studies that examine gendered realities, as gender has been insufficiently analyzed in certain fields, and a from-the-ground-up analysis is appropriate (Williams 1991).

More specifically, I entered these women’s names in a spreadsheet, and coded the names for location, official title, year of conviction, and other variables to conduct systematic comparative analyses of the individual case studies. For every name, I compiled articles, press

releases, blog postings, and historical records to provide as clear a description of the events as they unfolded as possible. Essentially, I compiled information on these cases through five sources: 1) Lexis-Nexis search results; 2) www.fbi.gov; 3) Southern Illinois University's database of newspaper articles; 4) www.news.google.com; and 5) a simple google search of "name", "Illinois" and "conviction." While a limitation of this research is that in the use of these secondary data sources certain facts are colored by the focus of the authors, the themes I list below permeated across newspaper articles, FBI press releases, essays, op-eds, and other sources of information to present a picture of the case and surrounding circumstances as clearly as possible. While I utilize the above resources to compile all of the documents available for each case, for the limits of space and readability, I only cite below the press releases, newspaper articles, and other documents that I directly quote in my analysis.

After initially reading the articles, press releases, and other documents surrounding each of these cases, I began to find common themes, and coded those that recurred. Thus, I did not come to these articles with a theoretical underpinning to prove or invalidate, but instead used grounded theory to develop themes that emerged from the information before me. However, once my initial themes were developed, I then returned to the literature on white-collar crime, political corruption, and gender and work to help guide my grounded themes in ways that would align with current thought. I then re-read the documents on these women to find items that bolstered these themes, or, in some cases, proved exceptions to the common themes.

4. FINDINGS

A simple count of public officials convicted of corruption in Illinois shows that women do indeed perform corrupt acts, contrary to ideas that women are inherently incorruptible. While

it is beyond the purview of this paper to compare women to men directly, I am able to construct an ideal type (Weber 1946) of corrupt female politician: a woman who had unsupervised access to resources, who participated in a scandal that involved many people, including family members (most commonly including her husband), and who used the earnings from her corruption for personal, rather than political or career-motivated gain.

I divide these four primary themes in two camps: two that speak directly to corruption as a systemic issue, and two themes that speak to the way corruption is gendered. The first two themes are the themes of *Absolute Power* and *Scandal*. *Absolute Power* states that women were given total control over whatever governing board in which they acted corruptly. *Scandal* states that women were found guilty of corruption as part of a larger-scale corruption, often pulled in by others and not the instigating force. While this type of corruption seems to be genderless, meaning that the literature speaks to these factors affecting men's corruption as well, I still find subtle influences of gender on women's actions here, and I report those as well.

On the other hand, two themes emerge that are particularly gendered, in that the corruption falls in line with ideas of socialized femininity (Goetz 2007, Stacey and Thorne 1985), and the inability to move upward in male dominated workplaces (Cotter et al. 2001, Kanter 1977, Moore 1987). First, women engaged in corruption alongside members of their families, which I discuss in the section entitled *A Family Affair*. Secondly, women focused primarily on using their corruption to benefit their personal lives, rather than political careers, which I detail in the section entitled *The Personal over the Political*.

A. Absolute Power

To begin, almost a quarter of the sample, seven out of the twenty-nine, committed politically corrupt acts while in total control of the political office that they abused. This finding reflects the common phrase, “absolute power corrupts absolutely” and falls in line with recommendations by scholars to guard political figures against total and absolute power (Vogl 2012) while simultaneously showing that when given unsupervised access to the positions available to them, women also are able to commit corrupt acts. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the most common crime in this case was that of embezzlement, the somewhat simple taking of funds from accounts to which one had access.

Recently, one larger-than-life scandal was the case of Rita Crundwell, the treasurer of the small town of Dixon, who had spent over twenty years embezzling funds from Dixon and was found out in 2012. Through many years of embezzlement, Crundwell accumulated as much as 53.7 million dollars by setting up a bank account ostensibly for the city that she was the only signatory on, then creating false state invoices that she would sign and deposit into that account. Residents reported trusting her, assuming her largesse came from wealthy family members, and the small town of Dixon had no oversight of their treasurer. As Gary S. Shapiro, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, said “Unfortunately, this case serves as a painful lesson that trust, without verification, can lead to betrayal” (U.S. Attorney’s Office, 2013b). Scholars point out that unverified trust leads to opaque government practices (Ginley 2012); and this particular trust, as suggested by newspaper accounts, was conditioned on the precept that Crundwell was a longstanding member of the community, which led *Forbes* writer Walter Pavlo (2013:2) to declare, “Rita Crundwell had to be one of the most trusted people on Dixon, IL’s payroll.” This trust turned into Crundwell’s ability to have absolute power over the city’s

finances, and, as thanks to the popular adage, we all know what happens when individuals have absolute power.

Undue trust in public officials, and a lack of supervision, similarly led the way for Constance Howard, a State Representative, to embezzle money from a college scholarship fund she had established from 2003 – 2007, as well as provided the opportunity for Antoinette Chenier, a City Clerk in Chicago, to deposit funds intended for Chicago’s moving van and dumpster permit fees into a private account from 2008 – 2014. Little oversight, combined with easy access to large, lumped sums of money, provided the opportunity and ability for these women to embezzle. This facet of corruption is one that is well known in Illinois, and one that still seems to be difficult to stamp out (Gradel and Simpson 2015).

Even though men and women can both be corrupted through absolute power, comments from newspaper accounts and press releases show that some of the trust that others had in these individuals was due to the fact that the public official was a woman. For instance, accounts of Crundwell’s crime reported her being a “local girl” who was such an integral part of serving the community that these crimes were unbelievable. According to one reporter, “It is too late now, but the City of Dixon has learned a difficult lesson that perhaps many other cities and businesses can learn from ... that nice lady you trust so much may not be so nice” (Pavlo 2013:2). The image of the “nice lady” committing such an egregious theft challenges the idea that all women are socialized into following less deviant paths. Even when caught and convicted, newspaper accounts point to a feminized response to the crime. In the case of Antoinette Chenier, for example, a *Chicago Tribune* article reported she “appeared distraught, dropping her head into her hands, sobbing and saying, ‘Oh God.’ She later buckled as a prosecutor told a judge that Chenier faced up 10 years in prison” (Schmadeke 2014). In short, popular accounts of these crimes

emphasize the official's femininity as a reason for trust: in this way, even the theme of absolute power is gendered: women achieve their powerful roles because of a shared cultural understanding sense that the woman would do no wrong.

B. Scandal!

A second notable theme is that women often acted with others when engaging in corrupt practices. Over half the sample, fifteen women in total, were part of a larger web of corruption. Many times, these women were arrested as part of a larger FBI operation, and shown to have been both pulled in to these corrupt practices by others. Specifically, five women were convicted as part of the FBI's "Haunted Halls" investigation, for receiving payments for public positions that they never held; three women were arrested as part of a phony check cashing scheme, and the other seven were "minor players" caught up in a variety of schemes that were under investigation by US attorneys.

The "Haunted Halls" scandal ensnared over one-sixth of my sample and was a case of classic corruption, showing the ability of women to enter into a profession and be absorbed into the standard practices of such an organization (Bird and Rhoton 2011). This scandal, which occurred from 1993 – 1999, primarily consisted of several male Chicago Aldermen hiring friends and family members to "work" in positions with little to no responsibility, and paying these individuals with taxpayer money. Of the 35 total convictions in this case, this led to the arrest and conviction of 5 women: Marie D'Amico, a sister of an Alderman and wife of another person who pled guilty for receiving pay for no work; Bonnie Laurino, the second wife of that same Chicago Alderman; and Christine Boyar, Bonnie's daughter; as well as two others. These women were not the primary instigators of the corrupt practice, but were brought in by those who

wielded more power, signifying another method of corruptibility of public officials in line with Sutherland's (1949/1983) analysis of white-collar crime as something learned by those in the same organization.

Investigators discovered another Chicago scandal in 1990, where ten employees of the clerk's office were cashing checks drawn on business accounts for personal gain. While only two women were ultimately convicted of fraud, another was involved, as well as seven men. A *Chicago Sun Times* article in 2002 (1) referred to these three women as "swept up in a check-writing scam," further conveying the idea that these women were part of a much larger practice of corruption. Newspaper and FBI accounts offered little insight as to the ringleader of this scheme, invoking an idea of some deep-rooted bureaucracy as a factor in the continuation of corrupt practices (Heywood and Rose 2014). This provides support to the idea that institutional factors, rather than women's agency, play a greater role in the determination of whether corruption will occur (Sung 2003, 2012). Somewhat ironically, Miriam Santos, when she became treasurer in this department, turned over these employees to the authorities, which provides an example of a woman as an anti-corrupting force (Dollar, Fisman and Gatti 2001). However, as will be detailed below, Santos herself was later in her career the primary operator in an election scandal.

While about half of this sample were part of a larger, far-reaching type of corruption, the rest were more closely aligned with ideas of the single "bad apple." Crundwell, as mentioned above, used her lack of supervision as a way to embezzle about \$5 million dollars a year from the city of Dixon, for example. She was only discovered once a temporary employee assumed her duties during a vacation and saw irregularities. Similarly, Sallyanne Bennes, a treasurer of a parent-teacher organization, plead guilty to embezzling \$16,000 of funds from that organization,

only to be found out when a new officer took over her position and noted irregularities. As mentioned above, these women had a great deal of trust in their positions and some of them had unsupervised access to resources. For those that did not have trust or access, their corruption occurred when they were part of a bureaucratic system that allowed for corruption to occur.

In sum, women were also convicted of corruption when they were part of a larger system, in line with ideas that the structure of an organization, rather than individual decision-making, plays a bigger part in determining overall corruption (Sung 2003, 2012). In total, twenty-two of the twenty-nine cases investigated herein can be explained by 1) women in positions of power where they were unsupervised, or 2) women being caught up in a larger scandal where they were either used by others, or were along for the free ride.

C. A Family Affair

Almost one third of the individuals presented here committed their acts of corruption alongside, or with the support of, family members. Four women were arrested and convicted of corruption with family members and five women were arrested and convicted of corruption that occurred with the partnership of their spouse, or boyfriend. Relatedly, Sara Glashagel, a teacher in Antioch, used an administrative password to inflate grades for 64 students, with 41 of them being football players, and with her husband as the football coach, though he claimed ignorance of the event, and was not formally charged with any wrongdoing. Thus, nine, or ten including Glashagel, of the twenty-nine women convicted of corruption were women benefitting, in one way or another, their family members. This focus on the family reflects a type of corruption that is potentially novel to women as opposed to men.

Family-affair corruption took many forms. For instance, a mother and daughter, Sharon Latiker and Louise Brown, were convicted in the same scandal in the Chicago's city clerk's office scandal mentioned above, because both cashed bad checks from closed personal and business accounts stemming from that office. On the other hand, some public officials were dishonest and fraudulent for the express purpose of benefitting a family member instead of themselves. For instance, Janet Thomas, who was Harvey's School District President, falsified her income on a tax statement to assist her son in receiving a better financial aid package when he applied for college. Finally, others benefitted from those family members in power: as mentioned above, Christine Boyar received a ghost job from her stepfather, Anthony Laurino. These four cases differ in terms of type, length of crime, and impact to the taxpayer, though the common denominator of doing something alongside, or for, a family member remains, which is in line with earlier research on women and corruption (De Graaf and Huberts 2008).

Four out of the five women who were connected to their husbands were in situations where the husband seemed to be the major corrupting influence. As mentioned above, Bonnie Laurino benefitted from her husband, an Alderman, as did Sharon Hyde, who was given a position as the director of a village-run preschool by her husband and town mayor, which also amounted to a do-nothing position. In the same scandal as Laurino, Barbara Bringle secured a ghost payroll position because her boyfriend was a Cicero politician, who used his political resources to secure Bringle a position. Finally, Jeri Sullivan, a Glendale Heights village president, was convicted of income tax evasion, for going along with her husband's not filing tax returns from 1984 to 1987. In contrast to De Graaf and Huberts (2008), then, these women were not major players, but instead received benefits because of their association with their spouse who had a position in politics. In this way, married women actually have an "in" that men would

not have: if their husbands were in politics, women could undertake corrupt activities in a way that bypasses the “old-boys network” (Moore 1987), with their husbands as the primary socializers into this white collar crime (Sutherland 1949/1983).

In fact, the only couple in this sample that seemed to commit corruption as a unit was the recent case of the Jacksons. Sandra Jackson, a Chicago Alderman, and her husband Congressman Jesse Jackson, Jr. were both convicted of various crimes associated with using campaign donations for personal expenses: “Rather than using funds donated to the campaign as they were intended, they used a substantial portion for personal expenditures” (FBI Washington Field Office 2013:1). According to Assistant Director Parlave, who ran the investigation exposing the two: “Mr. Jackson and his wife selfishly supported themselves with campaign funds and went to great lengths to hide their illegal activity, but they can hide no more as they pay the price with today’s sentences” (U.S. Attorney’s Office 2013a:1). Both Jacksons used campaign resources illegitimately, with neither receiving the lion’s share of the blame. Instead, official documents present an image of the two as inextricably tied together. Notably, this was the only case in this sample where spouses were described as equally sharing the blame.

In sum, the methods and modes of engaging in corrupt acts as a family unit are varied and heterogeneous, but they do align with the historical role women have been aligned with in families in terms of having an other-orientation, as many of the cases consisted of women doing something for the family members in their lives (Chafetz 1997). While De Graaf and Huberts (2008) found that women use their power to help their spouses, in this sample, spouses instead encourage corruption in female public officials.

D. The Personal Over Political

Finally, a common image of the corrupt politician is when the politician attempts to further his or her political goals by engaging in vote-buying, illegal campaign financing, or accepting bribes to help his or her campaign, perhaps by nefariously demanding campaign contributions, for example (Simpson and Gradel 2015). As detailed below, only three women – Constance Howard, Miriam Santos, and Patricia Bailey – acted illegally with the express purposes of benefitting their political career. The other twenty-six in the sample focused primarily on using the goods they received for personal, over political, reasons.

This sample only included two State Representatives, and both were convicted of actions that were undertaken to specifically benefit their campaign. From 2003 to 2007, Constance Howard used her role as a state legislator to ask for and receive over \$75,000 for a scholarship fund, but awarded no more than \$12,500, pocketing the rest to bolster a reelection war chest. In a much different case, Patricia Bailey was convicted of perjury and fraud for lying about living in the district she represented: the very act is for the ability to gain professional advantage. Finally, during her run for Attorney General, then current Chicago Treasurer Miriam Santos committed mail fraud and extortion by requiring firms to give large contributions to the state's Democratic Party, and cutting off city business with that firm when they refused to. Furthermore, she used several of her city workers to aid her in campaigning, while they were being paid for city duties.

However, these cases were the three exceptions. Much more common were cases where individuals used their ill-gotten gains to support private hobbies and lavish lifestyles. For instance, Linda Hudson, the Assistant Director of Harvey's park district, was convicted of having park district employees drive her on personal errands, including to malls, salons and restaurants during business hours, and using the park district's credit card to make personal purchases. In

this way, Hudson operated in much the same way as Santos – using civil servants for private gain – but in this instance for reasons that were more common for this sample. Others, such as Louise Marshall, who was a Chicago area City Council Commissioner, used their positions to receive kickbacks and bribes, but for personal reasons. Relatedly, all of the women convicted of corruption for occupying public positions but not doing any work for that pay held no ambitions toward a life in politics.

Newspapers, DOJ reports, and FBI press releases spent time detailing exactly where misappropriated money went, often focusing on how taxpayer money was spent on trivial and unimportant goods. For instance, the Jacksons, as mentioned above, used campaign contributions to pay for personal goods, “including high-end electronic items; a washer, a dryer, a range, and refrigerator; collector’s items; clothing, food, and supplies; movie tickets; health club dues; personal travel, including a holistic retreat; and personal dining expenses. Campaign funds were used to pay \$582,772 of personal purchases” (U.S. Attorney’s Office 2013a:2). Other articles pointed out that illicit funds procured by other women went to nail salons, grocery stores, elaborate parties, and, in the case of Rita Crundwell, towards horse-ranch expenses.

In conclusion, women mostly undertook corrupt acts for personal reasons, rather than to bolster their ability to further campaign, seek employment, or achieve political advantage. While Glaser and Simpson (2015) detail several cases of corruption by men wherein they use their positions of power to leverage more political power, my sample shows only three cases of such motivation for women. Instead, material gain unencumbered by political goals was more common, and was made explicit by newspaper and government documents.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

While it is beyond the purview of this paper to compare women's rates of corruption with men's rates, suffice it to say that more men commit corrupt acts than women, even accounting for the lower numbers of women in positions of power (De Graaf and Huberts 2008; Gradel and Simpson 2015). However, as this research shows, women do commit corrupt acts, and the themes I present show that they do so in ways that are specific to gendered opportunities in workplaces. To reiterate, I find that women committed crimes in positions when there was little or no supervision; women were caught up as part of larger scandals; women were accompanied by their husbands or other family members in their corruption; and women used their unfair gains for personal, rather than career, goods.

These results suggest that women, when given the opportunity, are clearly able to act corruptly. When unsupervised and with access to large amounts of money, quite a few women in this sample stole from taxpayers. This conforms to popular recommendations that there should be more oversight of political bodies, especially in terms of open and honest transparency over finances (Green and Ward 2004). As a society, we see women as more trustworthy than men (Goetz 2007), but that assessment hides the need for honest and open governance (Ginley 2012). Perhaps this is because, as Bird and Rhoton (2011) suggest, to succeed in male-dominated workplaces, women must fall in line with the culture of the organization, eschewing any sense of socialized anti-corruption force they may have otherwise brought to such an organization. Clearly, as this paper points out, the context of the workplace, that is, the idea that "if everyone else is corrupt, why can't I be?" helps explain why such large-scale scandals have occurred, specifically, when people are paid for no work or when whole departments participate in bad check-cashing schemes.

Next, the fact that so many women were found guilty of corruption in association with other family members is particularly noteworthy. Illinois, and Chicago specifically, are commonly associated with nepotism and unfair job placements – in fact, over a sixth of this sample was arrested in one case of ghost pay-rolling. Personal ties could trump the bureaucratic stopgaps put into place to reduce corruptibility, as was seen to be true in a number of these cases. Thus, there must be oversight whenever familial relations are employed, to ensure there are no future ghost payrolls or large scale “family-size” embezzling scandals. As this research shows, simply adding women to public offices (Dollar, Fisman and Gatti 2001) will likely do nothing to challenge political corruption in terms of nepotism, and in fact might only make things worse.

Finally, we see how the structure of an organization makes it more likely that, if a woman were to act in a corrupt way, she would do so for personal rather than political advantage. Santos, Howard, and Bailey were the exceptions who, for one reason or another, saw political opportunity on the horizon, and took an illicit path to achieve success. Much more common, women may have seen the “glass ceiling” (Cotter et al. 2001) and realized that stealing from the taxpayers would only benefit their personal lives, not political careers. While this is of course speculative, the fact that women are still underrepresented in public offices (Jackson 2009), helps us understand why corrupt women spend their illicit gains on personal goods, rather towards a political career. With a much more difficult time for advancement in the political world, even to this day, women could rationally choose to spend ill-gotten gains on building a personal fortune, as opposed to hoping their wealth would help in some future election.

In our daily lives, we find corruption difficult to talk about in terms of systemic problems, instead pointing out the individual “rotten apples” who sully and disparage an idealized version of the American governing system. While this paper points to systemic

problems for political life in Illinois, it is important to realize that some will still try to steal from a relatively transparent and open system, anyway. For instance, the Antioch school district did not expect Sara Glashagel to change the grades of students, and the State of Illinois did not expect Patricia Bailey to lie about her location of residence in order to gain political positioning. Even when rules are in place with the respect of the average employee, some people will still try to break these rules. However, a “silver lining” of discovering corruption is that it gives us the knowledge that something is wrong, and then a governing board can make institutional changes, sometimes with something as simple as securing passwords, to stop these isolated incidents.

However, what this analysis dramatically points to is the fact that corruption is systemic. Furthermore, the organizational constraints currently do not go far enough in reducing corruption, and in some ways even fosters different types of corruption for women public officials. Essentially, a common policy implication of much political corruption that this research also supports is for governments to be fully transparent to their citizenry and to the media. Whenever the government is involved in doling out funds, either to businesses, employees, or contractors, this information should be publicly available and updated in real-time. Essentially, structural transparency, not just putting “better people” into an opaque government, is necessary, not only to secure money but to encourage public trust. With the understanding that not all citizens have the time or inclination to dive into issues of public policy, governments should also be routinely audited by outside independent agencies: if a temporary employee covering for Rita Crundwell could help discover a \$57 million dollar embezzlement scheme, there’s no reason trained auditors wouldn’t be able to uncover similar abuses of power or misuses of funds.

In conclusion, women do commit corrupt acts, in ways that reflect their structural opportunities available through their workplaces. This suggests that the simple employment of

more female public officials will not fix the systemic problems that pervade our body politic to this day, in contrast to some previous thought (Dollar, Fisman and Gatti 2001). In fact, introducing more women into the public sphere might simply encourage nepotism, or illicit gains to be holed away in personal accounts rather than be used for political purposes. Once again, a systemic problem needs a systemic solution – the “barrel” itself needs changing, not merely the “bad apples” of a political body.

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