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# TOWARDS AN UNDERSTANDING OF GENDERED NETWORKS AND CORRUPTION

The distinction between processes during recruitment and representation

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Towards an understanding of gendered networks and corruption: The distinction between processes during recruitment and representation

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## ABSTRACT

This paper aims to proceed theoretically from the impasse of current research on the relationship between representation of elected women and national levels of corruption. A contradiction is identified in the literature, where two views with opposing causal explanations both claim that old boys' networks are the key to their thinking. The argument developed here contends that there is an important distinction to make between two processes of gendered networks: one that functions during candidate recruitment and one that functions during the representation on elected seats. These two processes, named here as "hindered by networks" and "clean from networks", illustrates how clientelism and corruption can affect the recruitment process by hampering the nomination of aspiring female politicians, but also that elected women could be less prone to corrupt behaviour due to their exclusion from existing corrupt networks. These processes are significantly different and can coexist. This insight suggests that the description in the literature of mutually excluding explanations of the gender-corruption relationship may need to be revised.

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## Introduction

This paper will begin with an anecdote from the real world about female politicians and corruption. Let us imagine the situation of the newly elected Indian village-politician Punam Devi.<sup>1</sup> According to Ms. Devi, a low caste woman from Bihar, one of India's most corrupt states, politics in her village had always been centred on securing favours for the families of the people elected in the village councils, the Panchayats. When the time for elections were approaching only the people who agreed to continue with business as usual were nominated as candidates by the ruling political parties. These nominated persons were for the most part male. Ms. Devi however was fed up and had decided to run for election. Yet no party would nominate her since one of her top priorities was to try to end a disputed road building project funded by public money which would secure a tarmac road to the house of the richest man in the village. Therefore Punam Devi on several occasions tried to get nominated as a candidate by her party, but received no support. However, after the state of Bihar had implemented a law of reservation of 50 per cent of the seats in these councils to women, Ms. Devi got the opportunity she so desperately was looking for and eventually was nominated and elected. When interviewed two years after her election she described herself as happy over having become a member of the council, but also expressed frustration. She felt marginalised during meetings by the other elected members and in the decision-making processes. This, she thought, was due to the fact that few other politicians wanted to be associated with someone who opposed powerful interests in the village. Though frustrated she still thought of herself as a politician with more honest intentions than the other elected members in the village. This story of Punam Devi can serve as an illustration of the theoretical argument proposed in this paper.

For over a decade scholarly attempts have been ventured to explain why a high representation of elected women in parliaments correlates with low national levels of corruption. A number of explanations have been proposed, arguing for different causal directions of the relationship; that high levels of clientelism and political corruption produces a low share of female parliamentary representation (Bjarnegård 2009), that low levels of female representation results in high levels of corruption (Dollar et al. 2001; Swamy et al. 2001; Rivas 2008; Wängnerud 2010), but also that degrees of corruption and representation are both spurious effects of a “fair system” (Sung 2003). These contributions all have in common that they have treated the different causal explanations as mutually excluding. A number of contributions in this literature have proposed *old boys' networks* as the causal

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<sup>1</sup> Interview was performed in April 2008 by this author.

mechanism producing the correlation between representation of women and corruption (Swamy et al. 2001; Rivas 2008; Wängnerud 2008; Bjarnegård 2009). Interestingly here is a paradox as these authors propose explanations that run in opposite causal directions. While one explanation argues that representation leads to corruption (Wängnerud 2008; Rivas 2008; Swamy et al. 2001), another one believes that it is clientelism and political corruption which determines levels of female representation (Bjarnegård 2009). Yet both these views credit gendered networks as the causal mechanism. This is a contradiction previously neither recognized nor discussed in the literature.

This paper addresses this paradox on a theoretical level and suggests that these authors to some extent have not fully recognized the complexity of gendered networks and corruption. The argument developed here contends that there is an important distinction to make between two processes of gendered networks: one that functions during candidate recruitment and one that functions during the representation on elected seats. These two processes, named here as “hindered by networks” and “clean from networks”, illustrates how clientelism and political corruption can affect the selection process by hampering the nomination of aspiring female politicians, but also that elected women could be less prone to corrupt behaviour due to their exclusion from existing corrupt networks among their elected colleagues. This argument implies that these two processes are significantly different and hence, that they can coexist without being mutually excluding.

With reference to the story of Punam Devi, her witness can illustrate this argument. When she first tried to get elected in the corrupt setting of Indian village politics she was excluded for nomination by the predominantly male party members during the recruitment, thereby “hindered by networks”. Later on, as an elected politician, her honest intentions and exclusion by elected members made her appear as “clean from networks”. Her case thus illustrate the main point of this paper, that instead of using the concept *old boys' networks* in general it is beneficial to be more precise and make the analytical distinction of gendered networks during recruitment and gendered networks during representation. While the previous literature has been debating the causal relationship between representation of women and levels of corruption with mutually excluding accounts, this paper proposes that explanations related to gendered networks are in fact describing different processes. As these processes discussed in the paper can coexist, this suggests that previous explanations that describes the two views as mutually exclusive may need to be revised. The paper will not try to verify the existence of these processes with empirical data. Rather, the aim is delimited to make the theoretical distinction of two different processes of gendered networks and their relation to corruption.

The paper is arranged by the following structure: the first section discusses pioneering contributions on gender and corruption and advance to analyze recent studies which focus on the role played by gendered networks. Secondly, the paper identifies the contradiction where two views with opposing causal explanations both claim that gendered networks are the key to their argument. The third section presents the main argument of the paper. Implications from this theoretical contribution are scrutinized. The paper concludes by discussing a number of remaining controversies in the debate related to gendered networks and corruption for future research.

## **Earlier findings and competing views**

Throughout history there have been numerous attempts to ascribe female leaders more honest values. But there has also been abundant instances of disappointment when these women turned out to be “just politicians” (see e.g. Kramarae & Spender 2000). The systematic studies of the relationship between elected women and corruption have provided more interesting findings. Two points will structure this section of the paper; firstly, that it has been established empirically that there is a correlation between the representation of women and levels of corruption and secondly, that the causal direction of this relationship has been contested in the literature.

Following the evolving discourse on government free from corruption a scholarly discussion on the importance of understanding the role of gender has been ongoing for over a decade. In a seminal article Dollar and colleagues (2001) aims to evaluate whether female participation produce a more honest government. Through a large cross-national study they identify that higher rates of female participation in government are associated with lower national levels of corruption. The authors claim to have included a range of variables in their regression analysis to control for various underlying institutional characteristics that would most likely be responsible for such a spurious correlation (p. 427). Corruption is in this study measured with data from the International Country Risk Guide corruption index. This correlation between the presence of women and levels of corruption have since then in many ways been reproduced, as the study by Treisman (2007) that finds evidence for this relationship, though Treisman is careful not to take a stand in the issue of causality.

This identified correlation has in turn produced an underlying assumption among some policy-makers that the presence of women can be a quick fix to reduce corruption. This is partly evident in an influential report, “Engendering Development” published by the World Bank (2001), which

state that: “these findings [on the relationship between gender and corruption across countries] lend additional support for having more women in the labor force and in politics - since women can be an effective force for rule of law and good government” (p. 96). This is a claim that, as will be evident, has been met by both agreeing and disagreeing opinions in this field of research. Another study following this notion, by Swamy and others (2001), has further spurred the debate. Evidence is claimed to have been found for the proposed relationship that the countries which have greater representation of women also have lower levels of corruption (p. 26). In this study perceived corruption is the dependent variable, measured with Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index. The authors also find that, controlling for a vast range of variables, women can be said to be less prone to take part in corrupt behaviours. From these inferences the conclusion is made that increased presence of women in public life will reduce levels of corruption. When discussing this conclusion these authors state that it is unlikely that the different datasets used in their article all are biased in the same direction: “Our conclusion, that there is indeed a gender differential in tolerance for corruption, is more plausible” (p. 51).

Nonetheless critique has been raised against the paper by Swamy and colleagues. However, the attention in these dissenting opinions has focused on a different issue than the observed correlation, namely the causality from which this pattern actually is produced. In reaction to the above mentioned articles Sung (2003) instead launches a rivalling explanation, the “fairer system” thesis. It is argued that “liberal democratic institutions and spirit increase female participation in government and restrain systemic corruption, but the latter two factors are not causally related” (p. 708). Data from Freedom House and Fraser Institute is used to back up the theoretical argument in the article. According to Sung the effect of female participation is lost when controlled for liberal constitutionalism, as gender equality and low corruption both are seen as effects of a fair system (p. 718). These findings have later been tested and largely supported, also with new indicators used as a proxy for gender inequality (Branisa & Ziegler 2010).

Other researchers point out the importance of gender, but also acknowledge the critique by Sung on the earlier proposed causal direction. Alhassan-Alolo (2007) investigates the issue empirically and points out that women in some ways can be shown to be as corrupt as men. Rather than an inherent trait, women's in some aspects lack of engagement in corrupt behaviour is argued to be a matter of possibilities. A similar argument has been put forward by Goetz (2007) who argues that the opportunities for corruption are shaped by gender. Following from this argument is an

assumption that women are as corrupt as men if only they are given the chance. Goetz argue that there are a number of myths surrounding women and corruption and concludes:

To expect that women's gender alone can act as a magic bullet to resolve a corruption problem that is much bigger than they are, that is systemic, is unrealistic to say the least. It reflects not just wishful but almost desperate thinking (2007:16).

Contrary to this view a "rationality perspective" has been proposed by Wängnerud (2010) as an explanation to why women could be less prone than men to take part in corrupt behaviour. An underlying postulation of this argument is that as women have a different role in society, their attitude towards corruption will also be different. Wängnerud discusses Mexican politics as a case of point to show that corruption could involve larger risks and be more costly for women with political ambitions. Therefore she discusses how women, through a calculation of costs and benefits, might make a different decision than men about corruption: "there is a dynamic that puts women and men in different positions in society, with women as the subordinate group, and it is reasonable to believe that this affects behaviour" (p. 18). This view could be described as arguing for the causal direction advocated by Dollar et al. (2001), i.e. that the presence of women has an effect on the outcomes of corruption rates.

In a reviewing article Treisman (2007) summarizes what the research has learned regarding gender from ten years of cross-national empirical research. It is pointed out that this issue is difficult to answer and in need of further studies:

In any case, politicians of either gender are likely to act in office in ways not fully consistent with their answers to abstract questions about professional ethics; and even if most female politicians preferred lower corruption, how a marginal increase in the female share in either the legislature or government could be expected to produce lower corruption at ground level is unclear (p. 238).

Have these positions then turned this theoretical debate in to an impasse? According to Wängnerud (2008a) the field of research is somewhat in a standoff. She describes that scholars agree over the fact that the degree of female participation is a useful proxy for good governance and that the correlation between gender and corruption exists, also when different measurements of corruption

or good governance is used. However, the arguments are still on a macro-perspective and without many nuances at the micro-level. Therefore Wängnerud concludes that the mechanisms at work here are simply not investigated in a totally satisfactory way (p. 13). Hence, she identifies the need for more theoretical clarity in the debate.

An attempt to move beyond this impasse is presented by Bjarnegård (2009). The argument by Bjarnegård contends that certain aspects of clientelism affect the representation of women. Criticizing assumptions in earlier research that has viewed women on elected seats as an antidote for corruption, Bjarnegård argues that, "...it seems highly unlikely that the few women working in male dominated parliaments around the world would have found both the cure for combating corruption and the power to implement it" (p. 39). She believes instead that the correlation that has been identified in previous writings in fact is misleading and that the studies by Dollar et al. and Swamy et al. actually "tap into something larger than corruption, namely clientelism and change over time" (p. 68). It is argued that clientelism generates a breeding ground for various forms of electoral and political corruption. Thus, when rates of corruption correlate with female representation it is really the level of clientelism which is the important aspect to study. The argument is grounded in the literature where recruitment processes has been identified as crucial to understand why so few women are selected for in-party advancement. Clientelism is here defined as the fairly conventional "exchange of personal favors for political support" (p. 7). The concept of *Homosocial Capital* is introduced, seen as the currency needed to buy clientelistic predictability (p. 10). This concept is used to explain why female aspiring politicians often will be overlooked in recruitment processes for political nominations in corrupt settings:

In clientelist systems, opportunities for electoral corruption are gendered in that only those with access to networks, those with connections within the local or national elite, those with resources to finance corrupt behavior, and those who are already influential in society are in positions to be considered assets in clientelist networks and are the only ones who will be trusted with the sensitive nature of the exchange (p. 38).



## **A contradiction: Gendered networks as an explanation for opposite causal explanations**

Interestingly the quote above contains a concept that will be important for the remainder of this essay, namely *gendered networks*. In the argument put forward by Bjarnegård gendered networks indeed does play a big role. The work of Bjarnegård has been portrayed by Wängnerud (2008a) as “to strengthen a network hypothesis put forward in the literature” (p. 13). Wängnerud continues to narrate that “what this hypotheses suggests is that one should divide between persons (men or women) included or not in 'old-boys-networks' where corruption is part of the game” (p. 13). This aspect of the argument is further nuanced in the dissertation by Bjarnegård:

The notion of homosocial capital differs from more generalized claims about the importance of old boy's networks in that it specifies the mechanisms that motivate and allow men to accumulate a political capital needed for electoral success but also not accessible for women (p. 212).

This perspective more or less stresses that the exclusion of women from clientelistic networks is a crucial factor to understand the relationship between gender and corruption. Therefore, the causal direction is one going from clientelism and electoral corruption to gender.

According to Goetz (2007) corruption functions through all-male networks and in forums from which women are socially excluded. This would explain why women in some cases would appear less corrupt. In this line of reasoning Goetz continues to argue that a gendered selection process of candidates limits their prospects for corrupt behaviour: “The ways women are recruited (or not) to the leadership and rank-and-file of political parties restricts their opportunities for engaging in corrupt activities. These restrictions have to do with women’s relative exclusion from male patronage networks” (p. 9). In contrast to Bjarnegård the contribution by Goetz is not to propose a causal explanation for the identified correlation, but to oppose the view which has seen women as an antidote for corruption. The important point to be made here is that gendered networks are used by both Bjarnegård and Goetz to explain why the correlation is not produced by a causal chain from gender to corruption. For this reason it is interesting to see that gendered networks also have been used to explain a causal relationship in the *reverse* direction.

In one of the first articles that established the correlation between gender and corruption (Swamy et al. 2001), the issue of gendered networks are given a possible explanatory function. The authors do not believe that women were born less corrupt per se, but that this is due to other reasons: “It could be that women are less likely to belong to bribe-sharing old boy networks, and hence, may be less prone to be asked for bribes.” (p. 26). This view believed that more women in public offices would lead to less corruption. In another study arguing that increasing women’s participation in politics would help to reduce corruption, Rivas (2008) hypothesize that the results of finding women less prone to corrupt behaviour may be “due to differences in terms of accessing networks of corruption” (p. 2). Also in a minor web-publication Wängnerud (2008b) discusses the relationship between gender and good governance. In a short attempt to answer the question “Can increased representation of women reduce corruption?”, three explanations from the literature are identified and briefly described.<sup>2</sup> One of these is interesting as it explicitly focus on gendered networks. Wängnerud names the explanation “Old boy’s networks”, and describes that according to this perspective women are less prone to corrupt behaviour since they are newcomers to politics.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, the perspective argues, they have not yet been incorporated into existing, corrupt, male dominated networks.

Focusing on these two accounts it is interesting to see that a network-hypothesis is proposed as explaining a causal relationship that runs from gender to corruption. Hence this view, described by Swamy et al. (2001), Rivas (2008) and Wängnerud (2008b), can be contrasted with the network-hypothesis that picture the relationship as a reverse one, going from corruption to gender by Bjarnegård (2009) and to some extent Goetz (2007). These two views, which are opposing each other in the sense that they propose different causal explanations for this correlation, actually both uses gendered networks as an argument for their perspective. This is a contradiction that earlier has not been identified in the literature.

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2 The first two are: 1) A view that sees *corruption as criminality*. Since women elsewhere in society is less involved in criminal behavior and bribe taking this is likely also the case when it comes to corruption. 2) A view that acknowledges *differences in experienced day to day life*. The experiences of women such as child caring can make women understand that they will be the losers in an unjust system and thus they will be less inclined to corrupt behavior (Wängnerud 2008b).

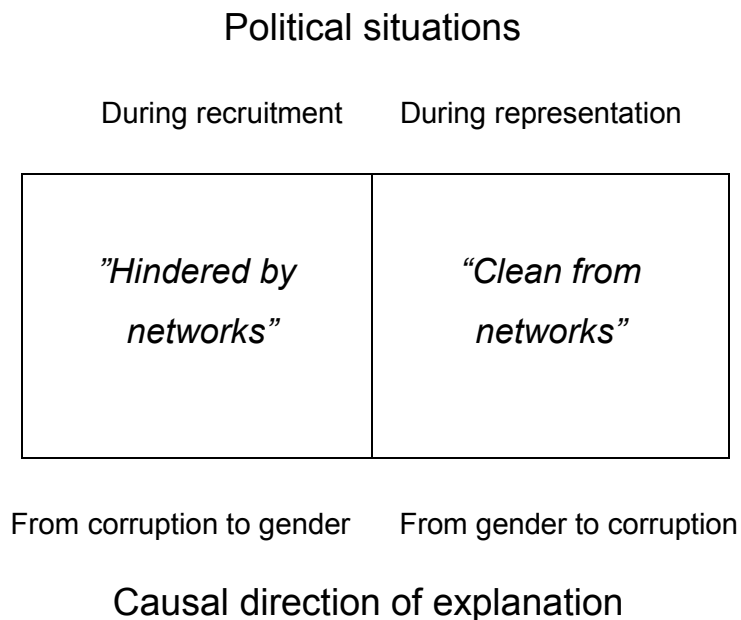
3 The concept of *Old boy’s networks* is sometimes mentioned in the public debate related to the exclusion of newcomers or outsiders, for example women, from influential positions in society. Its imprint in the academic literature however is surprisingly small and it is difficult to find articles by political scientists that critically examine the concept. I interpret the concept as describing the formation of established networks among men in a number of situations which tend to exclude newcomers or heterogeneous elements.

## The argument

The fact that gendered networks is referred to as the causal mechanism in two explanations, proposing opposing causal directions, point to the existence of theoretical inconsistencies in the literature. This suggests that there is a need for further theoretical development of how gendered networks are related to corruption. The departure for the main argument in this paper is that the authors discussing gendered networks and corruption (Swamy et al. 2001; Rivas 2008; Wängnerud 2008b; Goetz 2007; Bjarnegård 2009), have not managed to fully capture the complexity of this relationship.

Aiming to proceed theoretically from this impasse in the literature this paper argues that there is an important distinction to make between two processes of gendered networks: one that functions during candidate recruitment *vis-à-vis* one that functions during the representation on elected seats. I argue that making this distinction is an important contribution as it demonstrates that gendered networks can have significantly different functions, with regards to corruption, in different situations. This is visualized in the framework below.

FIGURE 1. TWO PROCESSES OF GENDERED NETWORKS AND CORRUPTION



The two boxes in this framework should be interpreted as the processes where female aspiring politicians or elected politicians are affected by gendered networks during recruitment and during representation. “Hindered by networks” is a process similar to the account described by Bjarnegård (2009) and Goetz (2007) in which gendered networks exclude women in candidate selection. In this sense the women are hindered by networks. As argued by Bjarnegård, the causal direction in this process is one from corruption to gender – or more specifically from clientelist systems which tend to produce political corruption, to the representation of women. “Clean from networks” is the name given to the process that is similar to the one described by Swamy et al. (2001), Rivas (2008) and Wängnerud (2008b) in which elected women as newcomers on elected seats have not been incorporated in male corrupt networks. For this reason the lack of access to existing networks means that these women are less contaminated by corrupt practices. Hence they will appear on elected seats as clean in relation to other politicians.

The argument of this paper should not be interpreted as *the* explanation for how corruption and gender is related. Rather this is a step towards both complexity and simplicity, giving rise to new questions but hopefully also important theoretical insights. This argument marries two views that on the first look seem to oppose each other. It has also further advantages. In the following section a number of implications from the argument are outlined.

The theoretical contribution of this argument has several interesting implications following upon each other; that these processes are significantly different, that they can coexist and that there are possibilities for certain other proposed explanations to exist simultaneously. The perspective which sees the relationship of corruption and gender as spurious is probably not compatible with the framework. These points are elaborated below.

Firstly, the most important contribution of the argument in this paper, visualized in the framework above, is to stress that the two processes of gendered networks are *significantly different* as they take place in different situations, during recruitment and during representation. This insight is critical as previous studies have spoken of gendered networks (or old boys’ networks) and corruption without making this distinction (Swamy et al. 2001; Rivas 2008; Goetz 2007; Wängnerud 2008b; Bjarnegård 2009).

Secondly, following the fact that these processes are significantly different is the point that there exists no contradiction between the two processes. This implies that there are possibilities for *a coexistence of these processes*. In other words the processes described in the framework above,

“Hindered by networks” and “Clean from networks”, can exist parallel to each other and the different causal mechanisms can be at work at the same time. This is an interesting finding as the previous debate among scholars over causal directions most often have assumed that they are mutually excluding and that there exist one causal direction and one only (e.g. Dollar et al. 2001; Swamy et al. 2001; Bjarnegård 2009). Hence this paper takes a different theoretical stand than previous studies. Instead of treating the gender-corruption relationship as a “chicken-or-the-egg” dilemma, it advocates a view in which proposed explanations related to networks can in fact coexist, though they have argued for opposing causal directions. As illustrated in the introduction, the story of Ms. Punam Devi is an example when these two processes can be said to affect the same person, first during recruitment and later on during representation.

Thirdly, this in turn provide theoretical possibilities of imagining *the coexistence of other proposed explanations* of the relationship between corruption and the representation of women except the ones related to gendered networks. If there can be a coexistence between two, at first sight, contradictory explanations that relates to gendered networks, then perhaps other theoretical accounts as well does not have to be mutually exclusive. The “rationality approach” (Wängnerud 2010) can indeed be another mechanism that could be seen as a complementary perspective to explain why elected women could be less prone to behave corrupt. This theoretical insight is interesting as it holds a promise of a future understanding of how the different views in this theoretical debate not necessarily have to contradict each other.

Fourthly, the framework implies that a proposed explanation which probably *is not compatible* with the two processes of gendered networks and corruption is the perspective that sees the relationship between representation of women and levels of corruption as spurious, as both these factors are said to be explained by liberal constitutionalism. The argument visualized in the framework therefore seems to be mutually exclusive with the view proposed by Sung (2003).

To conclude, these implications show that the argument in this paper provide a theoretical contribution. By making the distinction of processes during recruitment and processes during representation two perspectives are married which at first hand seem to contradict each other. Hence, instead of using the concept *old boys’ networks* in general terms only, the argument results in a more precise theoretical analysis of an aspect of the relationship between representation of women and corruption.

However, the two perspectives which have proposed the arguments of gendered networks still have important differences when juxtaposed to each other. Although these differences do not imply that the two processes cannot exist at the same time the perspectives in the literature do have a number of theoretical controversies that are remaining issues to be debated and examined. These consist mainly of two points; firstly if elected women hold attitudes less prone to corrupt behaviour and if so, whether these attitudes will transform over time or not and secondly, the issue of how a difference in attitudes towards corruption among female representatives can translate into a change on national levels of corruption. These points will be discussed in the following section.

The literature still has differing opinions towards whether attitudes of tolerance towards corruption will change or not with increased experience and networking among the elected women. As have been mentioned a number of authors believe that elected women hold attitudes less tolerant towards corruption due to their exclusion from corrupt networks (e.g. Swamy et al. 2001; Rivas 2008). However, a debated issue is how increased access to networks will affect representatives' attitudes of tolerance towards corruption. Two stands are identified in the literature; the ones that believe that elected women will become corrupted after some time in power with increased opportunities for corruption and the ones which believe that these women will be able to stay clean over time.

Authors from the perspective which doubt that the representation of women can affect levels of corruption tend to argue in terms of gendered opportunities and assume that attitudes towards corruption will change as elected women get increased access to corrupt networks. Bjarnegård for example proposes that "there is nothing to say that women, once being given the same opportunities and advantages as men, would not become just as corrupt" (2009:38). Also Goetz make a similar suggestion: "If women do exhibit preferences for less corrupt behavior, that may simply be because they have been excluded from opportunities for such behavior, and that effect is bound to change over time as greater numbers of women enter public office" (2007:16). These authors it seems, believes that if elected women were given the same opportunities as elected men, then any difference in attitudes of tolerance towards corruption would disappear. A similar view is proposed in policy-oriented writings from Transparency International: "...when women take the top leadership jobs, it cannot be taken for granted that women will be less corrupt or not form their own networks. Distorted institutions are likely to distort the individuals working in them, whatever their gender" (Transparency International 2007:2). This view is thus seemingly pessimistic of the possibilities of female politicians to remain clean from corruption in a corrupt setting.

In the current literature of this field of research it is difficult to find authors that voice optimism over the possibility of female politicians to remain honest in a corrupt environment. A contemporary view which stands out as considerably different is the “rationality approach”, proposed by Wängnerud (2010). This perspective is actually one of few which highlight that women could have an instrumental objective to not act corrupt in their role as politicians. In this sense the direct degree of opportunities for corruption is not equally important as in the former views. This view does not assume that the attitude of less tolerance towards corruption among elected women was due to exclusion from networks in the first place, but rather stem from rational gendered interests. Still, this view stands out as the one which assume that other aspects related to gender besides the opportunities for corruption is important.

The second remaining controversy in the debate is how attitudes towards corruption among elected women – if one believes that they are less tolerant – can translate into changes on the national level. The authors arguing that it is the presence of women that affects corruption, need to work on presenting a causal mechanism that show not only that women stay clean, but how their “clean attitudes” can result in change on the national level. There still exist a largely unanswered question posed by Bjarnegård (2009) and Treisman (2007). They both stresses that even if elected women where to hold “cleaner attitudes” the causal explanation remain to be presented how a relatively small group of elected women could implement changes big enough to get impact on national levels of corruption. One can imagine that the exclusion from networks among fellow politicians could lead to a smaller share of the power belonging to elected women and therefore a comparatively lesser possibility of implementing their ideas. This paper thus identifies the need for a developed argument which can explain how this causal mechanism could work.

## **Discussion and future issues for research**

A possible objection to the argument in this paper is that the two different processes of gendered networks and corruption are empirically found only in a certain setting and therefore do not hold a very high explanatory value. Though it might be the case that the two processes are mainly found under certain circumstances it is here argued that this does not constitute a weakness of the argument as such.

The two processes discussed in this paper are unlikely to be found in all countries as they are somewhat contextually dependent. Following the logic of the argument behind the process “hindered by networks” it is indicated that this process is more likely to be found in a context

where clientelism and political corruption is widespread. As Bjarnegård (2009) has argued clientelistic contexts tend to exclude women during candidate selection. This suggests that the process in which female candidates are excluded during recruitment is more likely to be found in countries where clientelism and political corruption is rampant, than in countries where these trends are far weaker. As an illustration, this reasoning would partly explain why aspiring female politicians are not excluded during recruitment for candidacy in Scandinavian countries to the same extent as they are in South Asian ones.

Although the process “clean from networks” also would be embedded by a certain context, the scarce writings on this issue make this a bit more difficult to ascertain. The process implies that once women are elected they will face exclusion due to gendered networks which are intertwined with corrupt practices. For this reason it is possible that they will appear as less corrupt in comparison to other politicians. However this is not strictly the same thing as to say that elected women *always* will be a “fairer sex”. Stretched to its far this argument will result in essentialism and in many ways be similar to the myths of women as incorruptible, a view that Goetz (2007) discusses and rejects. For example Michailova and Melnykovska (2009) assume that women will be different “psychologically” than men and thus be less prone to corrupt behavior, an argument which I believe borders to the notion of women having inherently different traits. Therefore it is crucial to state that not all elected women will be affected by the process “clean from networks” described in the framework. In fact the process is probably far from a general condition for female politicians. Here, certain institutional features could have an important role. It is possible that for example the existence of electoral quotas will result in that more women are elected which have less experience with politics and possibly could be less prone to corrupt behaviour. These thoughts are merely tentative however and need to be developed and examined in future research.

Though the perspectives underpinning these two processes builds on somewhat different assumptions they can still coexist. The unresolved matters – if elected women really hold attitudes less tolerant towards corruption, if these are changed over time, and also how “clean attitudes” can translate into lower levels of corruption, are issues for future research to scrutinize.

These issues are difficult to examine empirically. To test if elected women can remain clean in a corrupt setting empirically would most likely need to involve a complex research design. To enable conclusions over whether distorted institutions will distort all individuals working in them one would need to investigate changes in attitudes of tolerance towards corruption among elected men



and women over time. This could hypothetically be done in a panel study of newly elected female and male politicians, where their inclusion in or exclusion from networks are studied and compared to their attitudes towards tolerance of corruption. It is acknowledged that a design of this kind would be time consuming and difficult to perform. Yet it could be a viable way to move forward from the standoff where scholars disagree over what will happen to attitudes towards corruption and engagement in networks among female politicians in corrupt settings.

The direct implications on policy of empirically finding elected women that remain less corrupt (be it because of rational reasons or lack of opportunities due to exclusion from networks) are somewhat difficult to ascertain. An important assumption is that it is not desirable that elected women in a corrupt setting are marginalized, although it could possibly “keep them clean”. Rather the focus must be on how to understand and ensure that attitudes of tolerance towards corruption are kept at a low. A possible suggestion for policy makers could be to promote reforms that confront and challenge clientelism and networks which exclude female aspiring politicians during recruitment procedures.

## **Concluding remarks**

Scrutinizing the relationship between levels of corruption and representation of women this paper has identified an interesting contradiction which has not been discussed previously in the literature. Two views in this field of research claim that gendered networks are the key to understand the correlation between gender and corruption (Swamy et al. 2001; Rivas 2008; Goetz 2007; Wängnerud 2008b; Bjarnegård 2009). However, these two perspectives propose explanations with opposing causal directions. This paradox suggests that these authors do not fully account for the complexity of gendered networks and corruption as they refer to “old boy’s networks” with few theoretical nuances. The argument in this paper contends that there is an important distinction to make between two processes of gendered networks and corruption, one that functions during candidate recruitment and one during the representation on elected seats. When these two processes, named here as “hindered by networks” and “clean from networks”, are presented in a conceptual framework it is illustrated how clientelism and corruption can affect the recruitment process by hampering the nomination of aspiring female politicians, but also that elected women could be less prone to corrupt behaviour due to their exclusion from existing corrupt networks.

The main contribution of this paper is the theoretical progression to recognize that with regards to gendered networks and corruption there is an important distinction between processes during recruitment and processes during representation. Having a number of interesting implications it is argued that this understanding invokes certain theoretical insights that complement contributions made by other approaches. One of the main points is that the two processes in the framework are significantly different. This suggests that they are not mutually excluding and hence, can coexist. From this follows that there are possibilities of coexistence with certain other proposed explanations, for example the rationality perspective (Wängnerud 2010). However, the framework is probably not compatible with the view which treats the correlation of gender and corruption as a spurious relationship (Sung 2003). This study calls for other researchers to study how attitudes of tolerance towards corruption among elected women changes over time. It is also crucial that the argument is developed on how attitudes towards corruption among elected representatives can lead to a change in national levels of corruption. In this aspect there are still both theoretical and empirical pieces missing in the research on the relationship between women on elected seats and levels of corruption.

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