

# Women Politicians, Institutions, and Perceptions of Corruption

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## Abstract

Why do people assume female politicians are less likely than men to engage in the illegal use of public positions for private gain? We argue that voters may perceive women as marginalized within political institutions, or as more risk averse and consequently more constrained by institutional oversight, which could lead to perceptions of women as less likely to engage in corruption. Using an original survey experiment, we test these mechanisms against conventional wisdom that women are seen as more honest. We find strong support for the risk aversion explanation, as well as heterogeneous effects by respondent sex for both the marginalization and honesty mechanisms. These findings suggest that the institutional contexts in which women are operating can help explain why people perceive them as less likely to engage in corruption. Identifying these mechanisms is critical to understanding the role of women in politics and for improving trust in government.

## Keywords

corruption, gender, institutions, risk aversion, marginalization, survey experiment, mediation

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Why do people assume female politicians are less likely than male politicians to engage in the illegal use of public positions for private gain? Recently, a number of studies have shown a correlation between women in politics and reduced suspicions of corruption (Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Ulbig, 2007; Watson & Moreland, 2014), and survey experiments have shown a causal link between female politicians and reduced suspicions of corruption (Barnes & Beaulieu, 2014). Yet the mechanisms that explain this gender gap in corruption perceptions remain unclear (Alexander & Bågenholm, 2018). Colloquial explanations for this relationship have typically hinged on perceptions of women as more honest, yet these explanations are not empirically grounded. Furthermore, the relevance of the institutional context within which political actors operate has been underappreciated to date.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, to use one's public positions for private gain effectively, politicians must be able to navigate political networks within institutions and must be willing to incur the risk of institutional sanction inherent in corrupt activities. Recent experimental research has found that characterizations of women as political outsiders and as more risk averse work to enhance perceptions that they will reduce corruption (Barnes, Beaulieu, & Saxton, 2018a). These recent findings regarding perceptions of female public officials considered in light of the institutional logic of corruption may provide further insights into why citizens perceive women as less corrupt.

We provide the first study to explain how institutional context can structure perceptions of politicians' likelihood of engaging in corruption. Drawing on insights from extant research on cheating and crime, comparative political institutions, and gender and politics, we develop two arguments to explain why citizens may perceive women as less corrupt. First, women are marginalized in politics and consequently lack access to important networks and circles of power (Barnes, 2016; Bjarnegård, 2013; Heath, Schwindt-Bayer, & Taylor-Robinson, 2005; O'Brien, 2015; Schwindt-Bayer, 2010). Politicians wanting to engage in corruption must rely on networks within formal and informal political institutions to operate effectively. To the extent that women are seen as political outsiders, they will be viewed as having fewer opportunities, and thus less likely, to engage in corruption. Second, women are more cautious and less likely to incur risks (Eckel & Grossman, 2002). Institutions are designed to punish deviation from expected behaviors such as corruption. To the extent that women are considered less likely to assume the risks associated with institutional sanctions, they will be perceived as less likely to engage in corruption.

To evaluate our expectations, we design a novel survey experiment that allows us to test our hypotheses relative to the conventional wisdom that

women are perceived as less likely to engage in corruption because they are more honest. Our empirical strategy draws extensively on insights from mediation analysis. Essentially, we seek to uncover underlying mechanisms that mediate, or explain, the observed relationship between women politicians and reduced corruption suspicions. Mediation analysis is an attractive empirical strategy because it offers the opportunity to uncover causal mechanisms that explain the relationship between observed phenomena. Scholars using mediation analysis, however, frequently face specific methodological challenges. As we explain below, an experimental design can be particularly helpful in overcoming these limitations.

In addition to our general expectations about the mechanisms that may explain perceptions of women as less corrupt, on average, we also expect that the explanatory power of particular mechanisms may vary according to the gender of the research subject. Cutting edge methodological work on mediation analysis cautions that researchers must take seriously the possibility of heterogeneous effects—that is, the possibility that certain factors explain observed relationships for only some subset of a broader population (Bullock & Ha, 2011; Imai, Tingley, & Yamamoto, 2013). Furthermore, previous research on gender and corruption has uncovered important variation by respondent gender (Barnes & Beaulieu, 2014). In this article, we argue that whereas men are less likely to appreciate the extent to which women are informally marginalized as political outsiders, they are more likely to perceive women as risk averse, and more likely to see them as honest. Women, by contrast, display the opposite tendencies—They are more likely to be aware of the extent to which women are informally marginalized and less likely to hold sexist attitudes that characterize women as more risk averse and/or honest.

Our study of how women and men are seen as operating differently in the same institutional context provides greater insights into the underlying drivers of differences in gendered perceptions of corruption. Furthermore, our findings offer implications for how female politicians can craft their image to navigate careers in public service more effectively and how governments can design policies and institutions that will enhance citizens' trust in government. In environments where corruption is a salient issue, women politicians will be well-served to emphasize a cautious approach to political engagement and may be able to target messages of honesty or outsider status to those voters likely to be most receptive to such messages. More generally, however, our findings suggest that policies that encourage less risk-taking among politicians—male or female—will work consistently to reduce corruption concerns and enhance trust in government.

## Understanding Corruption Perceptions

Several important works have investigated the relationship between women's political representation and actual levels of corruption in government, seeking to understand whether including more women in the political process actually reduces government corruption (Alexander & Bågenholm, 2018; Dollar, Fisman, & Gatti, 2001; Esarey & Chirillo, 2013; Esarey & Schwindt-Bayer, in press; Goetz, 2007; Stensöta, Wängnerud, & Svensson, 2015; Swamy, Knack, Lee, & Azfar, 2011; Wängnerud, 2012). Our focus, however, is on the extent to which citizens perceive corruption to be occurring in government. We believe understanding citizens' perceptions is important for questions of democratic politics and women in politics. First, the anecdotal record abounds with stories of women being placed in government positions with the aim of reducing corruption—suggesting that political leaders clearly perceive women to reduce corruption, or understand that this will affect popular perceptions. Furthermore, and relevant to democratic politics more generally, we know that citizens' perceptions of corruption affect their trust in government and support for the political system (Alvarez, Hall, & Llewellyn, 2008). Thus, gaining a greater understanding of the factors that shape citizens' perceptions of corruption in government is critical to understanding a key link between policy and trust in government.

Scholarship has demonstrated that corruption scandals erode voters' trust in government (Kumlin & Esaiasson, 2012). Yet even with information about corruption in hand, a number of different contextual factors and individual-level characteristics influence citizens' confidence in the fairness of politicians, government, and political processes (Alvarez et al., 2008; Anduiza, Gallego, & Muñoz, 2013; Beaulieu, 2016; Holman & Lay, in press). Partisanship, for example, is often associated with voters' confidence in politics (Alvarez et al., 2008; Atkeson & Saunders, 2007; Claassen, Magleby, Monson, & Patterson, 2013) and influences the likelihood that voters believe candidates would engage in certain types of corruption (Beaulieu, 2014). Furthermore—and of particular interest here—the sex of political elites shapes individuals' confidence in election integrity (Barnes & Beaulieu, 2014) and also their trust in government (Barnes & Jones, 2018; Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Tripp, 2001; Watson & Moreland, 2014).

The perception that women are less corrupt has gained traction among political elites. Fueled by the belief that women are more difficult to bribe, for example, Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori and the National Police of Peru began enlisting more female police officers in an effort to reduce illicit behavior in the police force (Goetz, 2007). Also in an effort to curb corruption and extortion, Eruviel Ávila, the governor of Mexico State, Mexico,

mandated that only female traffic officers were permitted to issue traffic citations. In Uganda, women are frequently appointed to head up corruption investigations in the police force and often selected to serve as treasurers in local governments with the expectation they will ease misspending (Goetz, 2007; Tripp, 2001). Political officials' apparent assumptions that they can curb corruption by appointing more women to political and bureaucratic positions—or at least project an image of trustworthiness and transparency—are corroborated by popular perceptions.

Indeed, mounting empirical evidence shows that the presence of female politicians is correlated with reduced suspicions of corruption and higher levels of confidence in government (Barnes & Beaulieu, 2014; Barnes & Jones, 2018; Schwindt-Bayer, 2010; Tripp, 2001; Ulbig, 2007; Watson & Moreland, 2014). Cross-national research from Latin America, for example, finds that the adoption of gender quotas to increase women's numeric representation in parliament is associated with more trust in government and reduced perceptions of corruption (Schwindt-Bayer, 2010). A subnational analysis leveraging data from 70 province-years in Argentina shows that increases in women's presence in provincial legislatures are associated with higher levels of trust in subnational government (Barnes & Jones, 2018). Similarly, a study using survey data from 140 countries over a 13-year period found that women's descriptive representation is negatively correlated with perceived corruption (Watson & Moreland, 2014).

Perhaps even more convincing, work using survey experiments has uncovered a clear relationship between the presence of a female candidate and reduced perceptions of fraud (Barnes & Beaulieu, 2014). Specifically, a survey experiment in which individuals are presented with a suspicious election scenario and the pronoun used to reference the candidate in question is randomized (she, he, and the candidate [gender neutral]), shows that the presence of a female candidate systematically decreases the likelihood that individuals display strong suspicion of election fraud. Yet it remains unclear what the underlying mechanism is that causes people to associate female candidates with reduced fraud perceptions.

## **An Institutional Theory of Corruption Perceptions**

Whereas previous research has relied extensively on explanations of women as morally superior to men to explain the connection between women politicians and reduced corruption concerns, we argue that institutional contexts may also help explain why women are perceived as less corrupt than their male counterparts. In this section, we elaborate on two aspects of institutional context that could be shaping perceptions of women as less corrupt: that they

are marginalized within institutions and thus have less opportunity to access institutional networks to engage in corruption, and that they may be differentially constrained by institutional oversight and thus less likely to risk the potential for institutional sanction associated with corruption. These potential mechanisms are discussed in turn and we then revisit the conventional wisdom regarding women as more honest.

### *Institutional Marginalization*

In general, women's informal marginalization within institutions may be one reason why they are perceived as less corrupt. To begin with, women are marginalized across a wide range of formal and informal political institutions (Barnes, 2016; Bjarnegård, 2013; Heath et al., 2005; Schwindt-Bayer, 2010). When women enter into politics, they typically lack ties to established political networks (Escobar-Lemmon & Taylor-Robinson, 2009; Sundström & Wängnerud, 2016) and instead come to power through alternative pathways (Goetz, 2007; Holman, 2017). As such, women are often associated with bringing about change (Brown, Diekman, & Schneider, 2011) and represent a break from the status quo (O'Brien, 2015; Shames, 2003). For example, in 2017 the Labor Party of New Zealand came into government after an election campaign that emphasized "outsider" status, underscored by its young female leadership—Jacinda Ardern.<sup>2</sup> Previously, following the U.S. House banking scandal in 1992, a record number of women were elected to office. Several scholars have argued that female candidates' outsider status played a role in this surge of women representatives (Carpini & Fuchs, 1993; Dolan, 1998; Shames, 2003). Given their marginalized status, when women enter political institutions, citizens and other political elites may perceive them as lacking access to the kind of informal networks within the institution that male politicians enjoy.<sup>3</sup>

Politicians wanting to engage in corruption must rely on networks within formal and informal political institutions to operate effectively. As a matter of fact, economists recognize the importance of criminal networks for success in crime (Calvo-Armengol & Zenou, 2004), and sociological studies have documented the ways that crime operates through "networks of collusion" (Barlow, 1993). And while some sociologists have argued that dense social networks are important for neighborhood crime prevention (Bellair, 1997), others have found that such strong networks can also help to facilitate criminal activity (Browning, Dietz, & Feinberg, 2004). By the same token, because political outsiders do not come to power through established political party networks (Barr, 2009; Morgan, 2011), they are less likely to be incorporated

into the networks that are necessary for engaging in corrupt political processes (Hochschild, Chattopadhyay, Gay, & Jones-Correa, 2013). Given that insider status facilitates corruption opportunities, political outsiders often run on the idea that they will disrupt business as usual in politics. These promises may be perceived as credible, in part, because true political outsiders will lack access to the kinds of informal institutions or networks that would facilitate political corruption.

To the extent that women are seen as political outsiders, they will be viewed as having fewer opportunities, and thus less likely, to engage in corruption. An example from Japanese politics highlights the ways that women's marginalization might reduce corruption suspicions. Japan has the lowest level of female representation in its parliament of any industrialized democracy, yet elected a woman governor of Tokyo in 2016. Yoriko Koike won an election where corruption was at the forefront of voters' minds after corruption scandals brought down the previous two gubernatorial administrations.<sup>4</sup> Voters perceived Koike and at least one of her male competitors as interested in fighting corruption, but Koike was the clearest political outsider. She ran not only as a woman, but also against the wishes of her former party, the governing Liberal Democrats, which left some voters concerned about a potential lack of connections to get legislation passed. Koike won in the end, and quickly established a reputation for fighting corruption.<sup>5</sup> Beyond Tokyo, examples abound where women's status as the "ultimate political outsiders" (Carpini & Fuchs, 1993, p. 34) has positioned them to "clean the House", as was the case in the 1992 U.S. House elections (Dolan, 1998, p. 281).

If women are viewed as less corrupt because they are understood to be marginalized within institutions, then an experiment that disentangles gender from institutional marginalization should help us identify the extent to which institutional marginalization drives perceptions of women as less corrupt. We will be able to evaluate this effect by observing whether differences in corruption perceptions persist between men and women politicians when individuals are prompted to think about marginalization. If people are less likely to view women as engaging in corruption because they are marginalized within institutions, then when men are characterized as similarly marginalized, they too should be viewed as less likely to engage in corruption. Said differently, if the gender gap between perceptions of corruption for male and female politicians closes when both are characterized as marginalized, such that there is no statistically significant difference by gender, we can say that marginalization explains the gender gap in corruption perceptions. To test this, we evaluate the following hypothesis.

**Institutional Marginalization Hypothesis:** The gender gap in corruption perceptions should be smaller when both women and men are in positions of institutional marginalization.

### *Institutional Constraints and Risk Aversion*

Women's reluctance to incur institutional sanction may be another reason why they are perceived as less corrupt. Women are seen as more risk averse than men. That is, research on gender stereotypes indicates that women are generally perceived to be more cautious (Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993). Laboratory research from economics, for example, asked participants to choose among five different gambles with substantial financial stakes and then to guess which gamble choice they believed other participants made. Participants consistently misjudged women's risk acceptance—assuming they selected more conservative outcomes than they actually did (Eckel & Grossman, 2002). Similarly, research on financial risk shows that, independent of their actual tolerance for risk, financial advisors systematically overestimated men's willingness to assume financial risk and underestimated women's risk tolerance (Roszkowski & Grable, 2005). These gendered perceptions reflect deep socialization whereby “boys are often pushed to take risks” and “girls are often encouraged to remain cautious” (Booth & Nolen, 2009, p. 1). Similarly, female politicians are often characterized as excessively cautious. For example, an op-ed in the *Washington Post* explained that 2016 U.S. Democratic presidential candidate, and former U.S. Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton is habitually “too cautious for her own good.”<sup>6</sup> Likewise, during her tenure as chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel was routinely characterized as “A Cautious Chancellor”<sup>7</sup> with a “cautious leadership style”<sup>8</sup> on issues ranging from reforms of the European Union<sup>9</sup> to interacting with Trump.<sup>10</sup>

Institutions—such as elections, ethics and oversight committees, and independent investigation boards—are in place to hold politicians accountable and constrain their engagement in corruption. One excellent scholarly example of the ability of institutions to sanction corruption is found in the study of payment of parking tickets among UN diplomats in New York City. The study found a law threatening to revoke diplomatic license plates led to a dramatic increase in ticket payment (Fisman & Miguel, 2007). Laws that impose fines or penalties represent one way that institutions can sanction undesired behaviors. Other institutions can impose more costly sanctions that may end careers or result in incarceration. Elections, for example, provide an institutional sanctioning device wherein voters can punish politicians who violate expected behaviors and effectively end their careers in elected office. Oversight bodies, ranging from independent investigations undertaken by



government agencies to investigative committee hearings within legislatures, can ultimately produce sanctions that remove individuals from office or result in criminal charges.

To the extent that women are viewed as less likely to assume the risks associated with institutional sanctions, they will be perceived as less likely to engage in corruption and scandals that may jeopardize their political career. After the Anthony D. Weiner sex scandal unfolded in the U.S. House of Representatives, for example, elites speculated that women are less likely than men to become embroiled in scandal because they fear potential sanctions. Consider Representative Candice Miller's remarks about the Weiner scandal: "I'm telling you, every time one of these sex scandals goes, we [women] just look at each other, like, 'What is it with these guys? Don't they think they're going to get caught?'"<sup>11</sup> Similarly, when asked to speculate about why men are more likely to get caught in scandals, Dee Dee Myers (a press secretary to President Bill Clinton) postulated that male politicians are more likely than women to see themselves as invincible. "There are certain men that the more visible they get, the more bulletproof they feel," she explained. "You just don't see women doing that; they don't get reckless when they're empowered."<sup>12</sup> Her comments illustrate that regardless of whether women are actually more risk averse than men, people perceive women as less likely to throw caution to the wind and engage in behavior that may endanger their political careers.

An experiment that disentangles gender from risk aversion should help us identify the extent to which perceptions about institutions' abilities to constrain risk averse actors drives perceptions of women as less corrupt, as well as the extent to which perceptions of risk aversion operate independently of gender. That is, if people are less likely to view women as engaging in corruption because they are viewed as risk averse, then when men face similar risk of institutional sanction, they too should be viewed as less likely to engage in corruption. As with marginalization, we test the effect of the risk aversion mechanism by evaluating changes in the gender gap in corruption perceptions when both men and women are characterized as risking institutional sanction.

**Risk Aversion Hypothesis:** The gender gap in corruption perceptions should be smaller when both women and men face institutional sanction.

### *Conventional Wisdom: Women as More Honest*

Finally, we benchmark these institutional arguments against the conventional wisdom that women are viewed as less corrupt based on the stereotype that they are more honest. Public officials who are perceived as being more honest

should be thought of as less likely to commit corruption. Research in business and education has demonstrated correlations between probabilities of cheating and individuals' moral development (Rest, 1989) and attitudes toward honesty (Bernardi et al., 2004), with honest and moral individuals being less likely to cheat. In another study of cheating, West, Ravenscroft, and Shrader (2004) found that the extent of measured cheating behavior was inversely correlated with honesty about having engaged in such behavior. All of which suggests that the association of honesty with a lower propensity for engaging in unethical or corrupt behaviors seems completely reasonable.

Gender stereotypes typically characterize women as more ethical, honest, compassionate, and generally concerned with people's welfare (Alexander & Andersen, 1993, 2008; Huddy & Terkildsen, 1993; Rosenwasser & Dean, 1989). However, politicians are stereotyped as being dishonest (Schneider & Bos, 2011), and when it comes to female politicians, there is mixed evidence as to whether women enjoy the benefit of the honest stereotypes assigned to women. There is some evidence to suggest that individuals assign gender stereotypes to politicians, with female politicians being viewed as more honest than male politicians (King & Matland, 2003; Leeper, 1991), and that these stereotypes inform individuals' evaluations of politicians (McDermott, 1998). For example, Dolan argues that in the wake of scandals and corruption, women are viewed as being able to restore honesty and integrity to government (Dolan, 2005). Similarly, evidence from a quasi-experiment of telephone interviews in California shows that those respondents who felt "ethics in government" was one of the most important problems were more likely to prefer the hypothetical woman candidate for governor (McDermott, 1998). By contrast, others show that female politicians are not associated with stereotypes typically assigned to women—for example, honest and ethical (Koch, 1999; Schneider & Bos, 2014). In an analysis of individuals' assessments of candidates for the U.S. Senate, Koch (1999) finds that neither male nor female politicians are advantaged with respect to ethics. Similarly, although the presence of female bureaucrats has been shown to reduce suspicions of corruption in bureaucracies such as police forces, Barnes, Beaulieu, and Saxton (2018a) show that honesty stereotypes do not affect perceptions that women police officers will successfully reduce corruption.

If perceptions of honesty explain the impact of gender on suspicions of corruption propensity, with gender essentially standing in for the concept of an honest politician in the absence of any additional information, then explicit indications of politician honesty should limit the power of gender to reduce suspicions of corruption. Thus, if people are less likely to view women as

engaging in corruption because they see them as more honest, then when men are viewed as equally honest, they too should be perceived as less likely to engage in corruption. To evaluate whether the gender gap can be explained by perceptions of women as more honest, we test the following hypothesis.

**Honesty Hypothesis:** The gender gap in corruption perceptions should be smaller when both women and men are characterized as honest.

## **Heterogeneous Effects by Respondent Gender**

Although we expect that each of these mechanisms could affect perceptions of women's propensity to engage in corruption, on average, we also have reason to believe that the effects may operate differently for certain subsets of individuals. Based on research finding that female representation has a differential impact on women's and men's perceptions of women's ability to govern (Alexander, 2012, 2015; Morgan & Buice, 2013; Schwindt-Bayer & Reyes-Housholder, 2017; but see Clayton, 2014), and more importantly, women's proclivity to engage in corruption (Barnes & Beaulieu, 2014), the primary individual-level factor that should be relevant in this case is respondent gender. In particular, we argue that whereas men responding to our survey may be less persuaded by women's marginalization, they may be more persuaded by their risk aversion and honesty. The opposite may be true for women.

First, because men may be less likely to view women as marginalized, we expect the marginalization treatment to be less effective in closing the gap between perceptions of women and men as corrupt for men who took our survey. Women's objective marginalization in politics means that men represent the dominant majority. Those in the dominant majority often have difficulty recognizing their privileged status and, by extension, the marginalized status of others. Research has found, for instance, that nearly one half of White Americans believe the gap between White and Black socioeconomic status is due to Blacks not trying hard enough, whereas less than one third of Whites attribute the gap to discrimination (Schuman & Krysan, 1999). Furthermore, those in a dominant position seem to dislike when that position is challenged. Experimental research has found, for example, that women are perceived as less likable by men when they challenge sexist comments (Dodd, Giuliano, Boutell, & Moran, 2001). As such, we do not expect that men are focusing on women's marginalization when considering their propensity for corruption, whereas women are more likely to be aware of the fact that they are marginalized, and more cognizant of the role that

marginalization may play in diminishing opportunities for politicians to commit corruption.

**Heterogeneous Marginalization Hypothesis:** Marginalized Representatives reduce the gender gap in corruption perceptions for women surveyed but not for men.

Although women's marginalization may not be the underlying factor that causes men to see women politicians as less corrupt, perceptions of women as more cautious may lead men to view women as less likely to engage in corruption. With respect to risk aversion, because men may be more likely to assume women are risk averse, we posit the risk aversion treatment may be more effective at closing the gender gap between perceptions of women and men as corrupt for men who took our survey. Whereas experimental research demonstrates that both men and women systematically underestimate women's tolerance for risk (Eckel & Grossman, 2002; Siegrist, Cvetkovich, & Gutscher, 2002), men were even more likely than women to underestimate women's risk acceptance (Eckel & Grossman, 2002). Given this, we anticipate that men may be more likely to assume women are not willing to take the risk of incurring the institutional sanctions associated with getting caught in corruption.

**Heterogeneous Risk Aversion Hypothesis:** Risk Averse Representatives reduce the gender gap in corruption perceptions for men surveyed but not for women.

Finally, we also have reason to believe that men may still feel strongly that women are more honest, due to men's greater propensity to hold benevolent sexist attitudes (e.g., a type of sexism that puts women on a pedestal as being pure and morally superior; Glick & Fiske, 1996). Research has shown the relevance of benevolent sexism in shaping attitudes about politicians involved in scandals (Barnes, Beaulieu, & Saxton, 2018b). Furthermore, men are more likely than women to hold sexist attitudes (Cassese, Barnes, & Branton, 2015). As such, we expect that men are more likely than women to consider stereotypes of women's honesty when thinking about their propensity to commit corruption.

**Heterogeneous Honesty Hypothesis:** Honest Representatives reduce the difference in the gender gap in corruption perceptions for men surveyed but not for women.

## Research Design and the Survey Experiment

To adjudicate between these potential institutional mechanisms and conventional stereotypes, we design an experiment where we vary two factors: (a) gender of the politician and (b) a reflection on the part of the politician, representing one of our potential mechanisms. This experimental approach borrows heavily from the logic of mediation analysis—whereby researchers attempt to uncover mechanisms that mediate, or explain, a relationship between two variables ( $X$  and  $Y$ ). In observational research designs, mediation analysis is typically accomplished by respecifying regression models to include variables representing the hypothesized mediators. If the inclusion of such variables results in the elimination of statistical significance for the original estimated relationship between  $X$  and  $Y$ , a mediation effect from the included variables is inferred and the magnitude of this effect can be calculated (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Although this method offers an appealing, intuitive logic, it is not without important limitations that can hinder opportunities to draw causal inferences. By using an experimental research design, which draws on a similar logic, we can improve on observational mediation analysis in two important respects.

One challenge of observational mediation analysis, a problem inherent in much observational research, is the possibility that the relationship between the hypothesized mediator and key dependent and independent variables is correlational but not necessarily causal. Mediation analysis will only allow for causal inference when the underlying mechanisms, dependent, and independent variables are all reasonably independent of one another (Bullock, Green, & Ha, 2010, p. 551). If, for example, all key variables are measured in a public opinion survey, we will ultimately have to make the claim that the mediator measure caused the relationship between  $X$  and the outcome measure  $Y$ , when there may be some unobserved influence that caused some of our measures merely to covary. Random assignment of treatments is one essential element of experimental research designs (Rubin, 1974). With random assignment of both gender and mechanisms in this particular design, we can be confident that our primary independent variable (gender) and dependent variable (corruption perceptions) are both independent of each other, and independent of the potential mediating mechanisms. A survey experiment design thus enhances our ability to make causal claims about the extent to which any of our manipulated mechanisms explain the relationship between gender and corruption perceptions.

Another concern for mediation analysis, which can be an issue both with experimental and observational work, is the extent to which the candidate mediator can actually be directly observed or manipulated, as often

psychological or emotional states are proposed mediators (Imai et al., 2013, p. 6). To the extent that valid observational measures of such dispositions can be obtained, they are likely to run into the very limitation outlined in the preceding paragraph. For example, if anger were hypothesized to explain the impact of exposure to Black Lives Matter protests on White attitudes toward African Americans, even an experimental design that randomly exposed some subjects to information about the protests, and then measured both anger and racial attitudes would ultimately need to make causal claims based on the covariance of measures of emotion and attitude.

Our specific experimental design uses framing as a way to manipulate directly our hypothesized mediating mechanisms. Framing refers to the presentation of the same material in different ways, to guide a reader's thought process. Experimental work has found framing to be particularly powerful in its effects on individual decision-making (e.g., Kahneman & Tversky, 1984; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). Essentially, frames help individuals to interpret information in a context of cognitive complexity (Goffman, 1974). Where a story might cause individuals to think about many things, a specific frame can help to guide that thought process. Furthermore, scholars have argued that framing is most effective when frames resonate with ideas individuals have about the world (Krupnikov & Bauer, 2014). Thus, a framing experiment, with random assignment to frames emphasizing different potential causal mechanisms, is a valid means of directly manipulating our hypothesized mechanisms.

### *The Survey Experiment*

In December 2014, 1,105 individuals in the United States were asked to provide their opinions on a series of questions that had experimental treatments embedded in them, using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform. MTurk survey experiments are gaining popularity in social science research (Holman, Schneider, & Pondel, 2015; Krupnikov & Bauer, 2014; Mitchell, 2014), as the samples drawn from MTurk are more representative than student-based samples, and perform on par with other Internet-based or traditional samples (Buhrmester et al., 2011). Furthermore, MTurk samples have been shown to replicate results from social science research based on representative samples (Berinsky et al., 2012). Table A1 in the Online Appendix reports the sample characteristics for this study.

In the question discussed here, individuals received one gender treatment and one mechanism treatment in the vignette that they read, creating a  $2 \times 3$  factorial design. To begin, all individuals were told of a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, who has recently learned that other representatives

have found ways to accept money and favors from lobbyists beyond what is legally permitted. Then respondents were randomly assigned to learn that *he* or *she* is considering adopting these practices, introducing a gender treatment into the vignette. Next, the reader received one piece of additional information, selected at random and designed to frame the information in terms of one of the three theoretical mechanisms described above.<sup>13</sup> Marginalization—*She or he recognizes that to pull this off she or he would need to be connected to the right people*; Risk Aversion—*If caught, this would mean an end to her or his political career*; Honesty—*She or he has always prided herself/himself on her or his honesty*. All three frames suggest some additional reflection on the part of the politician in question. The first two frames encourage readers to consider institutional context. The frame stressing the politician would need connections to accept illegal contributions implies a lack of political ties, suggesting she or he is informally marginalized within the institution. The frame stressing the politician acknowledges that they would jeopardize their career if they are caught accepting illegal contributions implies she or he is averse to the risks of institutional sanction, and inclined to exercise caution. The third frame, rather than portraying the politician as sensitive to institutional context, indicates the politician's self-reflection as honest. After the randomly assigned reflection, all readers were told that the representative is facing a tough reelection campaign and the opportunity seems too good to pass up. Finally, all were asked, "How likely do you think it is that she or he will decide to accept these illegal contributions?" Four response options were available: very likely, likely, unlikely, and very unlikely.

The vignette was designed to maximize external validity both in terms of the opportunity for corruption, which should seem realistic to most individuals given the emphasis on campaign finance in U.S. elections in recent years, and in terms of the purported mechanisms that might reduce an individual's corruption propensity.<sup>14</sup> By surveying individuals in the United States and situating the vignette in the U.S. House of Representatives, we have increased the external validity but have not varied the institutional context to which survey participants were exposed. This choice helps to isolate the causal impact of our candidate mechanisms within this specific institutional setting, but will also raise questions about how our results might be affected by greater institutional variation. We will return to this point in the conclusion.

We deliberately designed this experiment with no partisan cues, because previous research has found partisanship (both of politicians and individuals) to have an important effect on corruption perceptions (Alvarez et al., 2008; Anduiza et al., 2013; Barnes & Beaulieu, 2014; Schwandt-Bayer, Esarey & Schumacher, 2018). Thus, our experiment allows us to say something about

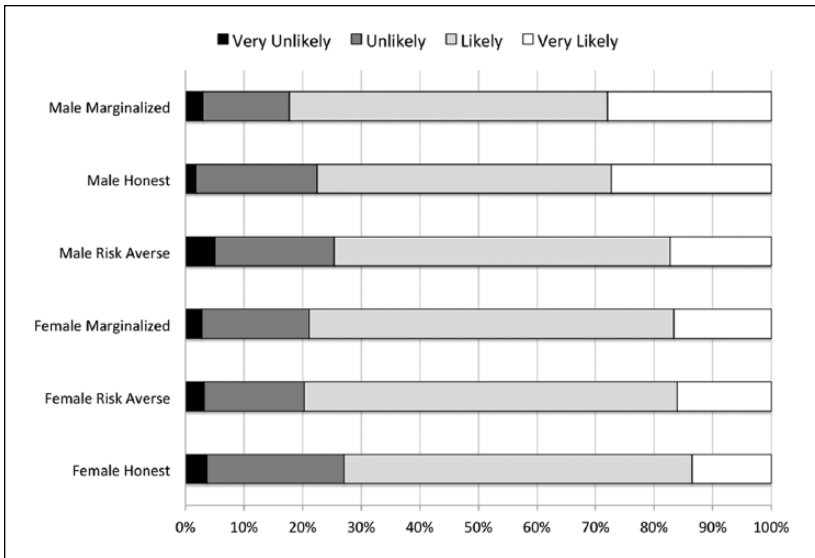
the impact of gender cues and these respective mechanisms in the absence of any information about partisanship. Furthermore, extant research shows individuals associate politicians and men with the same characteristics (Schneider & Bos, 2014) and that when individuals are given a scenario about politicians absent any gender cues they tend to assume the candidate is a man (Barnes & Beaulieu, 2014). In light of this finding, we did not include a gender-neutral frame.

No clean control groups were included in this study because the relevant comparisons are of men versus women within each frame (marginalized, risk averse, honest). The gender gap showing that women are viewed as less corrupt than men is well established. In this study, our aim was thus to understand the mechanisms that explain why women are viewed as less corrupt. Furthermore, excluding a control group allowed us to enhance the statistical power of what would otherwise be considered a relatively small sample size.<sup>15</sup> Recalling the basic logic of observational mediation analysis: If the systematic effect of a given frame, assigned at random, is to eliminate the statistical significance of the gap in corruption expectations between those who received a male representative treatment and a female representative treatment, this is equivalent to having reduced the statistical significance of the coefficient associated with gender in a regression analysis. Furthermore, because both the frame and gender of representative were randomly assigned, we can consider any frame that reduces the explanatory power of gender to be mediating (or explaining) the relationship between gender and corruption perceptions.

## Results

We begin by showing the variation in response rates across the six different treatment categories. Specifically, Figure 1 displays the proportion of respondents who selected a given answer, for each of the  $2 \times 3$  treatment combinations, ordered from the top by the treatment combinations that generate the highest level of extreme corruption suspicion (very likely). What this figure allows us to see is that marginalized males and honest males generate the highest levels of extreme corruption suspicion (indicated by the white bars), while all females and risk averse males generate lower levels of extreme corruption suspicion, with honest females being perceived as having the lowest corruption propensity (smallest proportion of “very likely” responses). These comparisons suggest some preliminary support for the ability of the risk aversion mechanism to explain the link between women and reduced corruption perceptions, as risk aversion seems to work to reduce fraud suspicions regardless of the gender to which that quality is assigned.





**Figure 1.** Distribution of corruption perceptions, by experimental treatment. The bar chart represents the percentage of respondents who said fraud was very unlikely, unlikely, likely, and very likely for each treatment condition.

To specify more precisely the statistical significance of these differences, and to account for a series of individual-level characteristics thought to affect corruption perceptions, we turn to a multinomial logit regression. Although the response options have a coherent order—they proceed from lowest to highest chance of corruption—our omission of a middle category means that the space between the response options is not equitable (i.e., it violates the proportional odds assumption necessary for an ordered logit analysis). As such, we use a multinomial logit regression, which predicts the probability that an individual selected any available category, relative to some baseline category.

The model includes dummy variables to indicate which of the six treatment combinations individuals received (honest male is the excluded reference category). Also included are a number of individual-level variables thought to affect corruption perceptions: respondent gender, education, age, income, and employment status (Anduiza et al., 2103). Table 1 reports three columns of coefficients, with each estimated coefficient indicating the effect of a given variable on the probability that an individual selects that column's response option, rather than the "likely" response option.

The first important feature of the model to observe is that the only significant effects of the treatment variables occur with respect to the “very likely” category, consistent with what we observe in Figure 1. Also consistent with the pattern in Figure 1, the negative estimated coefficients associated with all the female treatments and the risk averse male treatment indicate that individuals who received these treatments were less likely to consider corruption “very likely” than they were to consider it “likely,” compared with those individuals who received the honest male treatment. All four of these estimates obtain conventional levels of statistical significance. Furthermore, the only treatment combination that does not have a statistically significant effect on the probability of selecting “very likely” is the male marginalization treatment. Recall from Figure 1 that this was the treatment that generated the highest level of extreme corruption suspicion along with the honest male treatment. Table 1 also includes a number of individual-level control variables. Females in our study are associated with a lower probability of finding corruption “very likely” compared with males. Individuals at higher levels of income are also associated with a lower probability of finding corruption “very likely.” Finally, older individuals are associated with an increased probability of finding corruption “very unlikely” relative to their probability of finding it “likely.”

Recognizing that the coefficients reported in Table 1 are relative to the baseline category (honest male), we plot predicted probabilities based on this regression table to facilitate more general interpretation. We calculate the predicted probabilities for each treatment group, thus allowing for all possible comparisons of treatments—producing estimates no longer dependent on the single baseline category. We use simulated coefficients to calculate the predicted probability of respondents selecting the “very likely” response option, for all six of the different treatments while all other variables are held constant at their mean/mode (King, Tomz, & Wittenberg, 2000). The predicted probabilities, based on the results presented in Table 1, are potted in Figure 2. The points represent probabilities, while the tails represent confidence intervals (thin tails represent 95% confidence intervals around each predicted probability, whereas the thicker tails indicate whether a difference between probabilities is statistically significant at the 95% level).<sup>16</sup> Here we can see that both honest females and marginalized females generate a significantly lower probability of finding corruption “very likely” compared with their male counterparts. Risk Aversion, on the contrary, shows no statistically significant difference in probability across the two gender treatments, with risk averse males generating a lower suspicion of corruption that is statistically comparable to risk averse females.

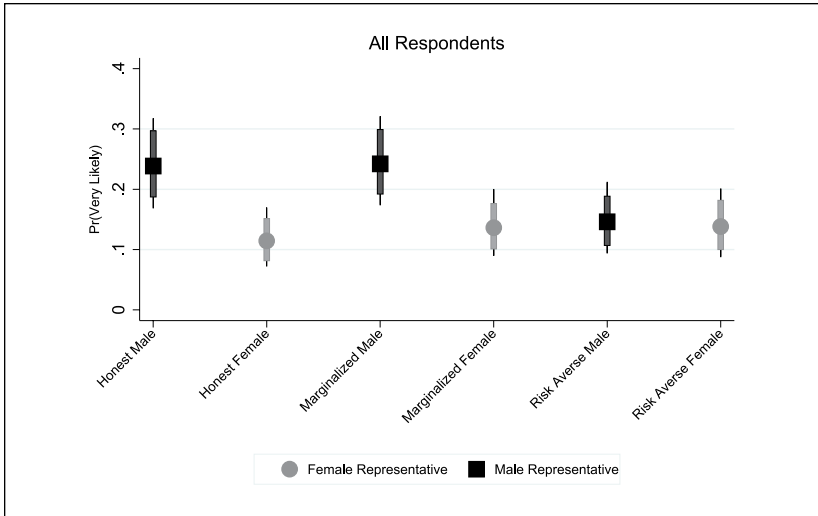
**Table 1.** Explaining Corruption Perceptions: Multinomial Logit.

	(1)	(2)	(4)
	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Very likely
Honest female	0.561 (0.713)	0.010 (0.274)	-0.867** (0.289)
Marginalized male	0.249 (0.751)	-0.349 (0.296)	-0.039 (0.253)
Marginalized female	0.134 (0.752)	-0.305 (0.288)	-0.758** (0.281)
Risk averse male	0.960 (0.683)	-0.064 (0.279)	-0.582* (0.273)
Risk averse female	0.287 (0.752)	-0.404 (0.291)	-0.764** (0.280)
Female respondent	-0.029 (0.357)	-0.233 (0.164)	-0.351* (0.163)
Education	0.005 (0.150)	-0.082 (0.069)	-0.026 (0.068)
Age	0.041** (0.014)	0.008 (0.007)	0.007 (0.007)
Income	0.041 (0.055)	-0.013 (0.025)	-0.072** (0.025)
Work full-time	0.071 (0.447)	0.144 (0.222)	-0.058 (0.220)
Work part-time	-0.886 (0.680)	-0.172 (0.272)	-0.031 (0.251)
Student	-0.931 (1.118)	-0.182 (0.337)	-0.241 (0.329)
Constant	-5.866*** (1.254)	-0.934† (0.533)	-0.201 (0.510)
Observations		1,105	
Log likelihood		-1140.3976	

Baseline: honest male, category: likely. Multinomial logit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

† $p < .1$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

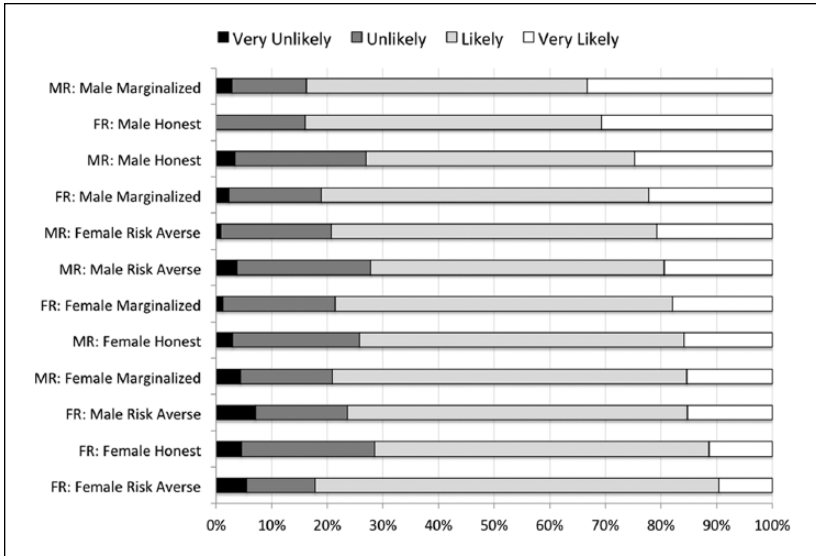
As such, the results presented in Figure 2 offer support for the Risk Aversion Hypothesis and the idea that women may be perceived as less corrupt because they are perceived as more risk averse. When risk aversion is cued explicitly for male politicians, the gender gap in corruption perceptions, where women are typically viewed as less corrupt, disappears. The regression



**Figure 2.** Predicted probability of responding “very likely,” by experimental treatment. Thin lines represent 95% confidence intervals; thick lines 84% confidence intervals. Where thick lines do not overlap indicates differences in predicted probabilities statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

results also show that characterizations of women as marginalized by institutions, or generally more honest, result in lower corruption suspicions (on par with risk averse men and women). The inclusion of such characteristics for men, however, does not have the same effect of closing the gender gap that we see with the risk averse treatment. Thus, we do not find support for the Institutional Marginalization or Honesty Hypotheses. To summarize, these results suggest that, on average, perceptions of risk aversion, not of marginalization or honesty explain perceptions of women as less corrupt.

Turning our attention to the possibility of heterogeneous treatment effects by research subject sex, Figure 3 displays the response proportions of male respondents and female respondents across all six of the treatment combinations—for a total of 12 bars. The bars are ordered from the largest proportion of respondents selecting the “very likely” option to the smallest. Here again, we see that marginalized males and honest males still generate the highest suspicions of corruption, across both male and female respondents. After those top four bars, the pattern is somewhat more difficult to discern. As such, we use a multinomial logit regression, including interaction terms for the various treatment combinations and respondents’ gender.



**Figure 3.** Distribution of corruption perceptions, by respondent sex & experimental treatment.

The bar chart represents the percentage of respondents who said fraud was very unlikely, unlikely, likely, and very likely for each treatment condition by respondent sex. FR = female respondent; MR = male respondent.

Table 2 shows the results of this multinomial logit regression with interaction terms included. As with Table 1, the honest male is the excluded treatment category, and all three columns display coefficient estimates denoting the choice of that particular option, relative to the choice of finding corruption “likely.” Given the introduction of interaction terms into this model, the values of coefficients and their statistical significance is more difficult to interpret directly, and so we turn directly to a comparison of predicted probabilities for male and female respondents.

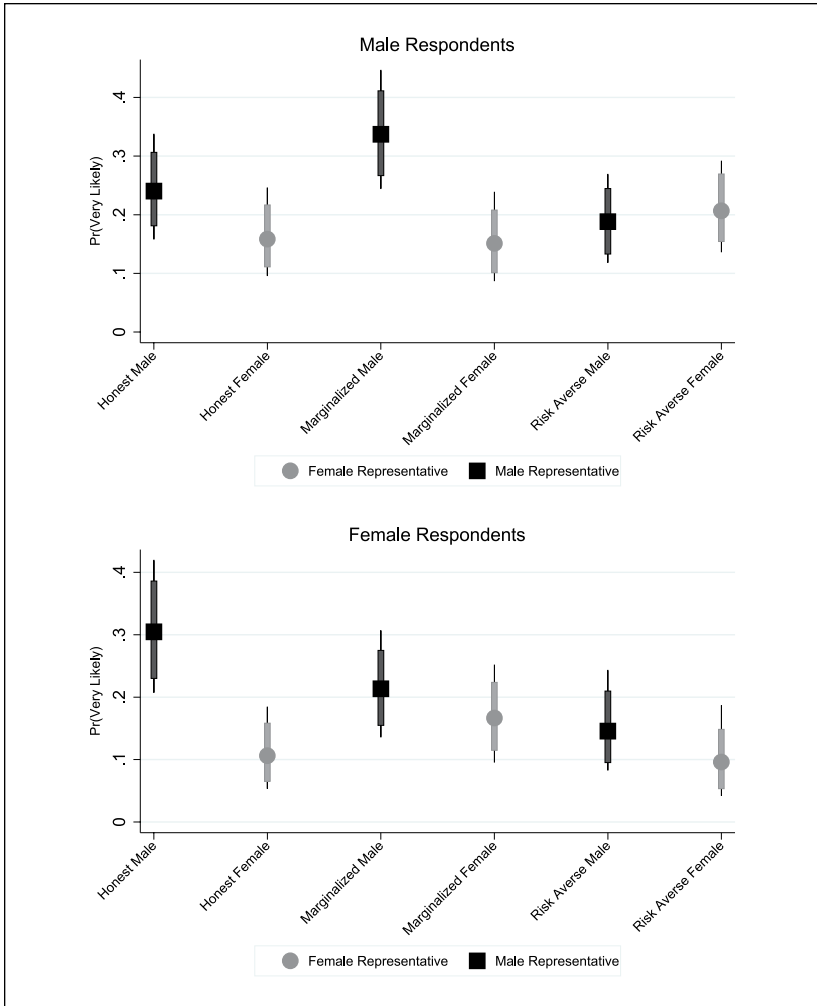
The top panel in Figure 4 shows the predicted probabilities that a male respondent selects the “very likely” option across the six treatment possibilities, and the bottom panel plots the predicted probabilities for female respondents. As with Figure 2, the associated tails indicate confidence intervals. First, looking at male respondents, we see clearly that risk aversion closes the gender gap in the predicted probabilities, demonstrating that risk averse men and women reduce fraud suspicions at statistically equivalent rates. The results therefore provide evidence that risk aversion mediates the relationship between female politicians and reduced corruption perceptions. We observe

**Table 2.** Explaining Corruption Perceptions by Respondent Sex: Multinomial Logit.

	(1)	(2)	(4)
	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Very likely
Honest female	-0.344 (0.849)	-0.213 (0.364)	-0.605 (0.388)
Marginalized male	-0.175 (0.858)	-0.551 (0.404)	0.319 (0.346)
Marginalized female	-0.093 (0.802)	-0.618 (0.395)	-0.767 <sup>†</sup> (0.400)
Risk averse male	-0.018 (0.805)	-0.039 (0.358)	-0.324 (0.370)
Risk averse female	-1.439 (1.178)	-0.345 (0.365)	-0.339 (0.361)
Female respondent	-15.468 (1,280.320)	-0.481 (0.426)	0.144 (0.375)
Honest Female × Female	15.830 (1,280.321)	0.529 (0.558)	-0.592 (0.585)
Marginalized × Female	14.837 (1,280.321)	0.473 (0.599)	-0.802 (0.510)
Marginalized × Female	14.025 (1,280.321)	0.689 (0.583)	-0.017 (0.559)
Risk averse Male × Female	15.939 (1,280.320)	-0.052 (0.573)	-0.561 (0.551)
Risk averse Female × Female	17.081 (1,280.321)	-0.187 (0.610)	-1.129 <sup>†</sup> (0.603)
Education	-0.019 (0.153)	-0.080 (0.069)	-0.022 (0.068)
Age	0.043** (0.014)	0.007 (0.007)	0.007 (0.007)
Income	0.044 (0.055)	-0.011 (0.025)	-0.075** (0.025)
Work full-time	0.065 (0.454)	0.161 (0.224)	-0.035 (0.221)
Work part-time	-0.857 (0.685)	-0.155 (0.273)	-0.029 (0.252)
Student	-0.973 (1.120)	-0.160 (0.337)	-0.218 (0.331)
Constant	-5.203*** (1.237)	-0.841 (0.555)	-0.428 (0.539)
Observations		1,105	
Log likelihood		-1129.5585	

Baseline: honest male, category: likely. Multinomial logit coefficients with standard errors in parentheses.

<sup>†</sup>*p* < .1. \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.



**Figure 4.** Predicted probability of responding “very likely,” by respondent sex, and experimental treatment.

Thin lines represent 95% confidence intervals; thick lines 84% confidence intervals. Where thick lines do not overlap indicates differences in predicted probabilities statistically significant at the 95% confidence level.

similar results with respect to the honesty mechanism. That is, the gender gap in corruption perceptions also closes when male and female representatives are characterized as honest, suggesting that male respondents’ perceptions of

women as more honest further explain why men view women as less corrupt. The marginalization mechanism, by contrast, does not close the gender gap between male and female politicians. As such, there is no evidence to suggest that perceptions of women as marginalized within politics explain men's perception that women are less corrupt.

Next, turning to female respondents, the bottom panel in Figure 4 shows that risk aversion has the same effect for female respondents as for male respondents. That is, counter to our expectations, risk averse men and women reduce fraud suspicions at statistically equivalent rates for both male and female respondents. Nonetheless, two key differences emerge for female respondents. First, whereas the honesty mechanism closed the gender gap for male respondents, the gender gap persists among female respondents who received the honesty treatment. Thus, even when men are characterized as honest, female respondents still believe they are more likely than women to engage in corruption. Put differently, honesty does not explain the gender gap in perceptions of corruption for female respondents. The second key difference is that the marginalization mechanism does close the gender gap for female respondents—indicating that unlike male respondents, they view women as less likely to engage in corruption because they perceive them to be marginalized within politics.

In sum, comparing the top and bottom panel in Figure 4, there are no heterogeneous mediation effects associated with risk aversion, at least where research subject gender is concerned. We therefore do not find support for the Heterogeneous Risk Aversion Hypothesis. That said, Figure 4 provides strong support for the Heterogeneous Institutional Marginalization Hypothesis and the Heterogeneous Honesty Hypothesis. For male respondents, honest individuals reduce corruption suspicions, whereas for female respondents, it is the idea of institutional marginalization. These results demonstrate that whereas all citizens might see women as more risk averse, men may also see women as more honest, and women may focus more on women's institutional marginalization as the reason why they view women as less prone to corruption.

## Conclusion

In this article, we have tested two mechanisms related to institutional context to explain the link between women politicians and improved perceptions of political corruption, against the conventional wisdom that women are perceived to be the more honest, "fairer," sex. The survey experiment presented here shows that perceptions of institutional constraint have a consistent effect of closing the gender gap in corruption perceptions. By contrast, perceptions



of women as marginalized within institutions or as just generally more honest only appear to exert some influence over corruption perceptions among women and men respondents, respectively.

This research has important implications for female politicians' political careers and improving trust in government. To begin with, we find strong evidence to suggest that perceptions of risk aversion help to explain why female politicians reduce suspicions of corruption. The evidence that honesty and marginalization do not have similar effects is consistent with recent research showing that female politicians may not enjoy the same benefits of gender stereotypes as women in society and women in other leadership posts (Brown et al., 2015; Schneider & Bos, 2014). Instead, female politicians may increasingly be viewed as politicians first and as women second when it comes to perceptions of access to networks, honesty, and ethics. That said, we do find some evidence of heterogeneous effects for women's marginalized status and honesty characteristics. Among female participants in our study, our results demonstrate that perceptions of women as politically marginalized further explain lower levels of corruption suspicions for female politicians. Male participants, by contrast, respond to the honesty treatment—indicating that they view women as more honest and thus less likely to become embroiled in corruption.

Our research has several implications for women in politics more generally. If women are viewed as risk averse, this may be seen as influencing their ability to negotiate to achieve favorable policy positions whether within a context of domestic legislation or foreign policy. If perceived as risk averse, women may be viewed as less likely to engage in brinkmanship. As a result, women should be viewed as more likely to concede their position but less likely to allow negotiations to collapse. When faced with legislative gridlock, for example, women may be more willing to concede their positions in favor of compromise, as was the case in the 2013 budget crisis in the United States where women senators crossed the political aisle to develop a budget and avoid government shutdown. This perceived risk avoidance, however, may mean women's threats are not seen as credible. In the context of international relations, for example, states could be less likely to fear promises of extreme actions from women leaders.

With respect to marginalization, if female voters view women politicians as lacking political connections, they may have more reservations about female politicians' abilities to maneuver within institutions to get things done. Recall that Yoriko Koike was perceived not only as able to fight corruption but also as potentially limited in her efficacy by her outsider status.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, if female politicians view themselves as marginalized within institutions, they may work harder to knit together coalitions to

advance their agenda. Indeed, previous work argues that women's marginalization within legislatures explains why they are more likely than men to collaborate (Barnes, 2016).

In a climate of concerns about corruption, our findings have multiple implications for how women can craft an effective political image. In general, women politicians may be well-served by emphasizing the priority they place on careful, calculated, and cautious decisions. Furthermore, where women have opportunity to target male and female audiences separately, our research suggests that emphasizing their outsider status may do more to attract female voters. Male voters, by contrast, will be more persuaded by messages of honesty.

With respect to improving trust in government more broadly, our research demonstrates that in general people are less skeptical of politicians when there is risk of institutional sanction. That is, our results demonstrate a direct link between the potential for institutional sanction and citizens' perceptions of corruption. This finding suggests that well-functioning institutions with effective sanctioning devices may do as much as female politicians to allay citizens' concerns about corruption. Thus, governments seeking to improve citizens' trust and reduce concerns about corruption will be well-served to evaluate the state of current institutions with an eye toward improving sanctioning capabilities, ensuring adequate enforcement resources, and reinforcing the legitimacy of those institutions. Furthermore, one logical extension of this finding is that if governments undermine existing institutions, they risk increasing concerns about corruption.

In considering these implications and the generalizability of our findings, it is important to take into account two specific aspects of our study: (a) our sample is drawn from a developed democracy, and (b) we hold the institutional context constant. First, the mechanisms that explain the gender gap in perceived corruption may be different in less developed and/or less democratic settings. With respect to women's marginalization, which is arguably greater in developing countries, outsider status may prove a more persuasive general explanation for the gender gap in corruption perceptions. With respect to risk aversion, where corruption is more likely to be viewed as business as usual and hence less risky, fear of institutional sanction should be a less persuasive explanation for women's reduced corruption perceptions. Finally, with respect to honesty, traditional gender stereotypes may be stronger in more conservative or less developed states. As such, citizens may be more likely to view women as more honest and thus less likely to engage in corruption.

This article investigates how particular mechanisms related to institutional context may influence the perception that female politicians reduce corruption, while holding constant institutional context. In practice, however, institutions vary dramatically in the extent to which women are marginalized (e.g., Barnes, 2014; Kerevel & Atkeson, 2013; O'Brien, 2012) and with respect to the mechanisms in place to provide institutional oversight and hold politicians accountable. Future research should consider the explanatory power of these mechanisms under different institutional contexts as, for example, Klačnja and Tucker (2013) do with their comparison of corruption perceptions in Sweden and Moldova. Where women have more access to formal and informal political networks, for example, this may further diminish the perception of women as political outsiders and reduce the extent to which they are perceived as having a lower propensity to engage in corruption. Similarly, where oversight is pervasive and well-institutionalized, reduced suspicions of corruption may extend to both male and female politicians—thereby improving overall levels of trust and confidence in government.

Beyond its implications for research on corruption and gender, our study offers an example of the benefits of experimental research for investigating complex causal mechanisms, which, when paired with careful contextual interpretation, can be helpful in informing public policy. In this specific case, the research design helps us understand more about how citizens view women in politics, and ways that concerns about corruption can be reduced. In a political context of corruption, women may have some advantage. In other settings, however, the mechanisms that fuel that advantage may actually work against them—to wit, see the characterization of Hilary Clinton as “overly cautious” during her term as Secretary of State and her election campaign, both of which were free from corruption scandals. Finally, while we certainly have no quarrel with the notion that broader inclusion of women in government is good policy, by isolating the mechanisms that cause women to reduce corruption perceptions, this study offers greater insights into the kinds of more general institutional factors that states can support and strengthen to enhance trust in government.

### **Authors' Note**

Earlier versions of this work were presented at the European Conference on Politics and Gender at Uppsala University, June 15, 2015, and the Gender and Corruption Workshop hosted by The Quality of Government Institute in the Department of Political science at the University of Gothenburg on May 24, 2016.

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## Supplemental Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online at the *CPS* website <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/suppl/10.1177/0010414018774355>

## Notes

1. For research examining how institutional context conditions the link between female politicians and observed levels of corruption, see Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer (2017, in press).
2. <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41226232>
3. Recent work has proposed that this marginalization may stem from beliefs that women are less competent (Simmons, 2016).
4. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2016/07/31/national/politics-diplomacy/corruption-recurring-theme-tokyoites-picks-governor/#.WgMh4BiZP-Y>
5. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/japan-politics-women-tokyo-governor-yuriko-koike-renho-murata/>
6. [http://wapo.st/1H7arWE?tid=ss\\_tw&utm\\_term=.c6bd5ec8163b](http://wapo.st/1H7arWE?tid=ss_tw&utm_term=.c6bd5ec8163b)
7. <https://www.voanews.com/a/merkel-cautious-chancellor-for-cautious-germany/4038230.html>
8. <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2017/08/26/2003677183>
9. <http://www.afr.com/news/politics/world/germanys-angela-merkel-cautious-on-calls-for-radical-revamp-of-european-union-20170928-gyr0gm>
10. <https://www.ft.com/content/ba2bfe46-8813-11e7-bf50-e1c239b45787>
11. Quoted in <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/12/weekinreview/12women.html>
12. Quoted in <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/12/weekinreview/12women.html>
13. Treatments were assigned using the Randomizer function in Qualtrics. Table A2 in the Online Appendix shows the results from a multinomial logit model used to predict treatment assignment, to assess balance among treatment groups.

14. Thus, while the language varies slightly across the three mechanisms treatments, each was designed to reflect a sort of natural thought process, such that it strikes the reader as realistic. Granted, this variation raises the prospect that some difference in language may affect the strength of the treatments. Weaker treatments, however, would bias our results against finding significant effects. Given that our results show at least some effect of every treatment, it is likely that stronger treatments would strengthen the magnitude of the results.
15. Lack of a clean control group does, however, preclude our ability to discuss the magnitude of mediating effects.
16. An overlap of 84% confidence intervals indicates that we cannot reject the null hypothesis of no difference at the 95% confidence level. When the confidence intervals do not overlap, we can reject the null hypothesis and conclude that the difference between two predicted probabilities is statistically different at the 95% confidence level (Julious, 2004).
17. <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/japan-politics-women-tokyo-governor-yuriko-koike-renho-murata/>

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