Ethic of Care versus Ethic of Justice? The Gender-Corruption Nexus: Testing the New Conventional Wisdom

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RÉSUMÉ

Ce papier utilise des données empiriques sur le Ghana afin d'examiner comment, le genre, en tant que système social, génère des dilemmes moraux dans le secteur public. Les hommes et les femmes se sentent obligées de choisir des conditions privées de moralité dans le secteur de l'éthique publique. Ce papier démontre que les références qui délimitent les personnalités comportementales sexuées et qui sont utilisées pour justifier le plus haut degré de standard éthique des femmes peut aussi être potentiellement source de corruption, si les femmes essaient de respecter les attentes en matière de genre dans la conduite des obligations publiques. Fondamentalement, le papier argumente que l'éthique sexuée-supposant la division entre éthique de la compassion et éthique de la justice- pourrait perpétuer des comportements qui nient l'éthique du secteur public, mais se conforme à l'éthique sociale. En utilisant les travaux de Carol Gilligan (1982) sur la théorie du développement moral, il conclut, inter alia, que le recrutement des femmes dans le secteur public devrait être promu en tant que droit plutôt qu'à partir de leur probité morale présumée supérieure. Promouvoir les femmes dans le services publics sur la base de leur éthique supérieure pourrait s'avérer contre-productif si les espoirs étaient déçus.

ABSTRACT

This paper employs empirical data from Ghana to examine how gender, as a social system, generates moral dilemmas in the public sector. Female and male officials feel forced to choose private (family/social) requirements of morality over public sector ethics. The paper demonstrates that the very same gender which delineates behavioural personalities and is used to justify women's higher ethical standards could potentially be a source of corruption, as women attempt to fulfil expectations of femaleness in the conduct of public duties. Fundamentally, the paper argues that gendered ethics -which require women and men to exude an ethic of care and an ethic of justice respectively- could perpetuate behaviours that negate public sector ethics (corrupt behaviours), but conform well to social ethics. Employing as its theoretical base, Carol Gilligan's (1982) moral development theory, it concludes, *inter alia*, that injecting women into the public sector should be promoted as a right, rather than on grounds of women's presumed superior probity. Premising women's inclusion in the public realm on assumptions of their higher ethical standards risks being counterproductive in achieving equal representation, if such assumptions are later disconfirmed.

Key words: Corruption- Gender- Ethic of Care – Ethic of Justice – Ghana

JEL classification: O20, D73, L29

INTRODUCTION

There is an emerging consensus amongst donors and their development partners that unethical and corrupt practices within the public sector not only result in 'a crisis of confidence' and erode the rule of law, but also undermine development (UNDP, 2001). Sound public management and good governance have, by extension, been highlighted as prerequisites for sustainable development (UNDP, 2001). As a result, donor commitment to tackle public sector corruption has become evident, as witnessed by a proliferation of anti-corruption initiatives in the public sector of most sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries. These include market, socio-political and legal initiatives aimed at ensuring ethics, accountability and transparency in the public sector. Despite these efforts, corruption remains entrenched in much of SSA, as indicated by for example Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index of 2004.

Failure of past anti-corruption initiatives has paved the way for a new conventional wisdom in anti-corruption discourse: that integrating women into the public sector is a possible counter to corruption. That the World Bank, in particular, is currently advising the integration of women into the public sector underscores this shift in anti-corruption scholarship. Incorporating gender analysis into governance initiatives is being acknowledged as critical for good governance, which implies that attempts at addressing corruption should pay attention to the role of women in the public sector (World Bank, 2001).

Two influential studies, which associate women with less corrupt behaviour in the public sector, are at the core of the new gender-corruption debate (Dollar *et al*, 1999 and Swamy *et al*, 2001). In the first study, sponsored by the World Bank, Dollar *et al* (1999) use existing behavioural studies to examine the hypothesis that women are more effective in promoting honest governments, and conclude that higher rates of participation of women in government are associated with lower levels of corruption, with in particular greater levels of participation of women in parliament corresponding to lower levels of corruption. In the other study, Swamy *et al* (2001) used World Values Surveys to measure the relationship between women in government and corruption. They conclude that countries with larger numbers of women in parliament have lower levels of corruption. Attributable to women being trustworthier than men, the proposed policy implication of their findings is that "increasing women's presence in public life can reduce levels of corruption" (Swamy *et al*, 2001: 31).

Though the aforementioned studies fall short of empirically exploring why gender impacts corruption, explanations generally offered for female probity presuppose an imagery of female integrity. These influential studies employ the female gender as an explanatory variable to posit that women are more likely to behave with integrity in the public realm. The fundamental presumption is that females are associated with womanly virtues, either acquired from their socialization or inherent in their femininity, which translate into less corrupt behaviour in the sector. In essence, imagery of female virtuousness or higher moral

values brings an expectation of higher ethical standards, and, ultimately, less corrupt behaviour in the public domain.

This new conventional wisdom is gradually gaining currency among the donor community and their development partners. The World Bank, for instance, argues that "… A commonly held belief is that increasing women's representation might reduce corruption in an organization and its environment… if raising the percentage of women is associated with reduced levels of corruption, then actively promoting women's employment could be part of the World Bank's strategy to improve governance" (World Bank, http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/anticorrupt/pscg.htm, accessed 18/01/06). A similar quote is highlighted on the Development Gateway website (http://topics.developmentgateway.org/special/transparency/template32.do, accessed 21/01/07).

In a 2001 policy document, *Engendering Development,* the World Bank draws on the relationship between gender and corruption, established by the aforementioned studies, and concludes that the findings of these studies lends "additional support for having more women in politics and in the labor force– since they could be an effective force for good government and business trust" (World Bank, 2001: 96).

For their part, many development partners are not only embracing the notion that women exhibit higher ethical standards, and thus less corrupt behaviours, but are also employing this argument to justify women's inclusion in the public sector. In so doing, concerted efforts are made to incorporate women into the sector, through quotas, reserved seats and other affirmative action measures, as a probable tool in fighting corruption. In Ghana, for instance, attempts to achieve transparent and accountable governance have led to the issuance of a directive by the Government, to increase the quota of female appointed representatives in key areas of the public sector, such as Cabinet, local government and the security services (MWCA, 2004:34-35). In Uganda, Ahikire (2003) reports that key treasury positions in the new local government system are apportioned to women, in anticipation that women will transfer their feminine experiences of controlling the domestic purse-strings into local public office to curb misappropriation of public funds. According to Simmons and Wright (LA Times 23/02/2000), President Museveni of Uganda - widely celebrated for his pro-women policies, including a new national gender policy- is on record as having said that "women have irrevocably changed local politics. [They] have stabilised politics in a way because they tend not to be opportunistic… they tend to go after the interests of stability… they are not so reckless like men".

As this gender-sensitive approach to corruption is gradually endorsed on the basis of presumed higher ethical standards of women, fundamental questions arise pertaining to the efficacy of women in serving as public sector watchdogs. Could gender, as a social construct, possibly inform ethical behaviours of men and women in the public realm? In much of SSA where the collectivist nature of the cultures imposes certain obligations on public officials, would women uphold public sector ethics at the expense of social ethics?

This paper discusses the gender-corruption nexus vis-à-vis the afore-raised questions. Relying primarily on empirical data from Ghana[1], the paper examines how gender, as a social system, generates moral dilemmas in the public sector, which in turn, force female and male officials to choose private (family/social) requirements of morality over public sector ethics. Employing as its theoretical base Carol Gilligan's (1982) moral development theory, the paper also demonstrates that the very same gender, which delineates behavioural personalities and is used to justify women's higher ethical standards, could potentially be the source of corruption, as women attempt to fulfil expectations of femaleness in the conduct of public duties. In essence, the paper shows that gendered ethics - which require women and men to exhibit an ethic of care and an ethic of justice respectively - could perpetuate corrupt behaviours that negate public sector ethics but conform well to social ethics.

Following this introduction the paper has three sections. First is a presentation of Gilligan's moral development theory, to provide theoretical underpinnings for the male/female responses in the empirical data presented. This is followed by an account of my data collection and my findings. The paper concludes with the implications of the findings for policies to integrate women into the public sector on the basis of their supposedly higher ethical standards.

1. GILLIGAN'S MORAL DEVELOPMENT THEORY

Gilligan's (1982) theory of moral development advances that women tend to think and speak in a different voice than men when confronted with ethical dilemmas. She argues that these gender differences in moral perspectives are attributable to contrasting images of the "self". Contrasting a feminine ethic of care with a masculine ethic of justice, Gilligan finds that for men moral behaviour is that which is fair play or lawful, whereas for women moral behaviour is behaviour which prevents others from feeling hurt. Under an ethic of justice, men judge themselves guilty if they do something wrong (unfair / unlawful), while under an ethic of care, women feel guilty when they allow others to feel pain when they can do something to prevent or alleviate the pain. According to Gilligan, the distinctive feature differentiating an ethic of justice from an ethic of care is the quality and quantity of relationships, in that individual rights, equality before the law, fair play and square deal all reflect ethical goals that can be pursued without personal ties to others (i.e., justice is impersonal). Conversely, sensitivity to others, loyalty, responsibility, self-sacrifice and peacemaking are all reflective of interpersonal involvement, which implies that care evolves from connection with others. Contrary to popular biological explanations offered for the development of a given moral voice, Gilligan argues that the greater need for relationships, by women, is due to a distinct feminine identity formed early in life, which leads women to an ethic of care.

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[1] This paper is derived from my PhD thesis which examined the gender dynamics of corruption in two public sector institutions in Ghana.

Gilligan argues that gender differences in identity are grounded in early childhood experiences with the person who provides primary physical and emotional nurture, usually the infant's mother. Early in life, girls discover that they are like their mothers. For girls, growing up means relinquishing freedom of self-expression in order to protect others and preserve relationships, while for boys, their first psychic task is to understand that they are not (and never will be) like their mothers. Maturity, for boys, therefore means renouncing relationships in order to protect freedom and self-expression. The result is an adult population of men who see themselves as separate from others, and of women who think in terms of connectedness. Since distinctions of identity shape the selection of moral perspectives, the link between gender and moral judgment is particularly strong in teenage years when young men and women are highly self-conscious. For the adolescent male therefore, justice is the ultimate moral maturity, as he perceives himself as autonomous, while for the adolescent female care is the ultimate responsibility, as she sees herself linked to others.

This paper uses Gilligan's theory to provide a framework under which gender is theoretically deconstructed to become a significant explanatory factor in male-female attitudes towards corruption. Specifically, the relevance of Gilligan's theory for the paper is how it explains the moral imperatives of men and women by contrasting a feminine ethic of care with a masculine ethic of justice. My research findings on attitudes towards corrupt behaviour reveal patterns whereby women and men do justify their proclivity to corrupt behaviour on the basis of an ethic of care and an ethic of justice, respectively.

2. A STUDY OF MALE AND FEMALE ATTITUDES TO PUBLIC SECTOR CORRUPTION IN GHANA

2.1. Research Methodology

The study from which this paper is drawn was designed as a sample survey to gather data on public officials' attitudes towards corruption in public environments in Ghana that are rife with opportunities and networks of corruption. As a sample survey, the study adopted primarily quantitative approaches to discern male and female attitudes towards corruption. Using vignette-styled scenarios, the sampled officials were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with hypothetical public servants engaged in diverse forms of corruption. The survey relied on questionnaires as its principal data collection instrument. A total of 140 questionnaires were administered to randomly selected public officials of the Ghana Police Service (GPS) and Ghana Education Service (GES). In all, 136 questionnaires were returned and 132 of these were usable. However, owing to the fact that questionnaires are limited in their ability to deconstruct gender in a corruption study, follow-up interviews were conducted to appreciate male-female attitudes towards corruption from a gender perspective.

2.2. Key Findings

This section presents findings from the study on three specific hypothetical scenarios: (a) Underassessment of taxes in return for kickbacks? This question teases out the underlying justifications for male and female officials condoning corruption, and highlights how gendered ethics could explain corrupt attitudes. (b) Using public funds for private gain? This question elucidates how gender, as a social construct, could possibly inform officials' attitudes in a particular corrupt situation. (c) Public versus private requirements of morality: are there gender differentials in attitudes towards corruption? This question demonstrates how conflicting codes of ethics could lead male and female officials towards corrupt behaviour.

2.3. Underassessing Taxes In Return For Kickbacks: Gendered Ethics?

'Gendered ethics' in this paper primarily refers to societal or communal expectations of the ethical behaviours of males and females. For women, their gendered ethics encompass the exhibition of personality traits that define femininity, such as emotion, compassion and care in the exercise of judgements, while for men, their gendered ethics manifest in expectations that males should conform to idealized notions of exercising logic and being factual and practical in their judgements. These expectations, and their consequent manifestations in male and female moral orientations, fall respectively under Gilligan's ethics of justice and care. Under ethics of justice, men are identified with concepts such as equal treatment to all, fair-play and square deal, whereas under ethics of care, women are associated with concepts such as caring about everyone's suffering, and sympathy and responsibility towards others.

This paper argues that these gendered ethics could underpin *both* male and female officials' attitudes towards, and engagements in, public sector corruption in much of Sub-Saharan Africa. In support of this argument, let us examine male and female officials' attitudes toward a hypothetically corrupt scenario where a Tax Officer under-estimated taxes for female traders, as he felt their tax code was too high, in return for which he received kickbacks -in the form of gifts- from the traders. Corrupt conduct is here manifest in the receipt of kickbacks (gifts) in the conduct of public duty. This practice is criminalised under Section 2 of the Corrupt Practices and Prevention Act (Act 230) in the 1992 Constitution of Ghana (Gyimah-Boadi and Asamoah, 2001). When the sampled public officials were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with under-estimating taxes in return for kickbacks, the questionnaire data recorded that about 67% of female officials and 71% of male officials supported this conduct. These proportional differences between the sexes are not significant when statistically calibrated, and the focus of this paper is rather on the

justifications given in support of the corrupt conduct. These justifications are uncovered from the follow-up interview data presented below.

Interrogating the interview data reveals a discernible difference in the justifications provided by male and female officials for underwriting taxes in return for kickbacks. While the majority of male officials supported the hypothetical Tax Officer's corrupt conduct on the basis of a perceived mutually beneficial act, female officials justified their support on the basis of the Tax Officer's assistance to the women traders. To the majority of male officials, through the Tax Officer's action, the government, at least, receives a fraction of the taxes, which would otherwise have gone unpaid. The traders are able to pay what they can afford without risking bankruptcy and the Tax Officer himself departs with handsome rewards from the traders. Some male officials believed that since the Constitution, which is the only institutional framework currently addressing public corruption in Ghana, fails to stipulate whether or not hospitality is lawful, the Tax Officer's action could be subsumed under the general rubric of hospitality, which is constitutionally neutral.

Conversely, the majority of female officials based their argument on the Tax Officer's sympathy for the traders. Some argued that the gender dynamics and socio-economic realities in Ghana are harsher for female traders than their male counterparts. To many, the dual roles of women -as domestic caretakers and traders simultaneously- conspire against women's ability to effectively generate profits in the trading sector, relative to men. The explanation offered was that roles identified as female[2] -which define women as mothers and therefore consign them to the domestic sphere- generate women's marginalization in the trading sector. As mothers and traders, especially within the Ghanaian context, females are doubly disadvantaged. First, by fulfilling their domestic obligations of managing the home in addition to trading, these traders are overburdened. Second, as these traders are mandated by their gender to execute household production functions, such as cooking, fetching water and other time-bound domestic chores, they are often last to open their shops/stalls and first to return home. Not only do these female traders lose important customers in the process, but they also make lesser profits relative to their male counterparts. Hence, the majority of female public officials, interviewed, pledged their support for what they termed as the Tax Officer's "positive use of his position". After all, "*no one would like to do business and lose, so if payment of high taxes will leave the women traders bankrupt… then it [the Tax Officer's action] is the best alternative*" (Ms. DR). [3] In contrast, I disagree with the feminization of motherhood roles and the domestification of women as these are used to legitimize and perpetuate female subjugation and oppression in both the private and the public spheres.

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[2] Roles identified as male assign them domestic positions as breadwinners, which offer them greater social rewards than women.

[3] For purposes of anonymity, pseudonyms are attached to direct quotations and institutional affiliations of respondents are deliberately omitted.

Women's justification of the corrupt conduct on the basis of sympathy and men's justification on the basis of a perceived mutually beneficial act, tends to support Gilligan's theory that men and women speak in different voices when confronted with ethical dilemmas (corrupt situations in this case). The contrasting reasons given by both sexes fall under Gilligan's classification of men and women under masculine ethics of justice and feminine ethics of care, respectively. For male officials, this was a calculated decision to benefit all parties involved: the traders pay what they can afford, the government receives a fraction of the taxes that are due and which would otherwise have been defaulted, and the Tax Officer receives some handsome rewards. This perception of male officials depicts a fair-play or square deal for all parties involved, which matches Gilligan's masculine ethic of justice. Conversely, the expression of sympathy from female officials, as a basis for supporting the Tax Officer's corrupt conduct, mathces Gilligan's feminized ethic of care, whereby women feel guilty if they fail to help, including in this case sympathize with, others when they can. It should be highlighted that these masculinized and feminized behavioural traits could both be a source of corruption, as both sexes justify their corrupt actions along genderized lines.

That most female officials justified their support for the Tax Officer on the basis of sympathy does not entirely come as a surprise, as sympathy is feminized in Ghana (i.e. perceived as a feminine trait). Feminization of sympathy within the Ghanaian context implies that females should explicitly express sympathy and compassion for people, and more so in desperate situations. Transgressing this gender trait risks that one becomes stigmatized and stereotyped as a "male in female body", implying abnormal or deviant gender behaviour. Perhaps female officials subconsciously justified their argument from this feminine trait without realizing the gendered implications of their response. However, whether this is a deliberate or inadvertent reflection of this feminized trait, the question remains, shouldn't women rise above the gender system rather than, apparently, contribute to its perpetuation? The evidence here suggests that rather than radically challenging the male-centric existing order, many Ghanaian women have not only accepted the status-quo, but have also provided a support system for the furtherance of the gender system. It is not surprising that recent Marxist feminists more or less criticize women for contributing to their own subjugation by supporting their roles as housewives and providing a "reserve army" of cheap labour to be exploited in needy times, thus contributing to the maintenance of an exploitative socio-economic order (Steans, 1998:19, Abbot and Wallace, 1990:147). Some Existentialist feminists to some extent blame women for contributing to their "otherness" in relation to men. This group of feminists argue that women are the "other" in all male-centred cultures, not only to men but also to themselves, as they willingly accept their objectification by playing out roles defined for them by men (De Beauvoir, 1953: 19-34).

2.4. Using Public Funds For Private Gain: Gendered Dialectics?

This question was intended to highlight how gender, as a social system, could explain male and female officials' attitudes towards utilizing public funds for private gain. To answer the question above, responses of officials to a hypothetically corrupt scenario are utilized. In this

scenario, the sampled public servants were asked to register their agreement or disagreement to the conduct of a hypothetical Chief Director who hired a cheap contractor for a state building project in order to use the difference in cost to pay for his son's medical treatment. While the questionnaire data revealed a total of 37% of female officials and 55% of male officials supporting the use of public funds for private gain, this paper is less concerned with the statistical differences in male and female responses, and interested rather in the justifications advanced by the two sexes.

From the interview data, the majority of male officials justified their support based on the argument that by engaging the service of a low cost contractor to save cost, the hypothetical Chief Director was, more or less, at liberty to use the difference in cost for other purposes. Summed up by a male respondent, *"Why cry foul when the building was effectively executed? Once the building was well constructed, there is no cause for alarm. After all, auditors are not checking him and he is able to save some money"* (Mr. DD). Conversely, the majority of female officials, interviewed, argued that saving life is the most important human endeavour and therefore, the hypothetical Chief Director was right to have used public funds to save his son's life. To some female officials, so long as there is a life at stake, any means could be employed to secure funds for treatment, even if such means deviate from conventional methods, as *"human life is more valuable than a project. Nobody will sit and watch their son die when they have [the] means to save them"* (Ms. BE).

The fact that the women concerned justified their support for the Chief Director on the basis of his ability to save a life, while the men concerned justified their support on the basis of his ability to save cost, resonates with Gilligan's (1982) distinction of men's and women's moral imperatives. Gilligan argues that while women would assist others to save them from pain, as a moral obligation, men, on the other hand, would engage in fair play or fair deal, as a moral duty. Given this, it can be deduced that female officials demonstrated an ethic of care, as they pledged their support for the Chief Director's action on the basis of his ability to save a life, thus preventing pain. Male officials, on the other hand, exhibited an ethic of justice, as they supported the Chief Director on the basis of his having fulfilled all of his commitments, thanks to the cost he saved by hiring a cheap contractor for the state building project.

The larger implication of this finding is that, while male officials might be influenced by an ethic of justice in their attitudes towards using public funds for private gain, female officials are more likely to be influenced by an ethic of care. It should, however, be noted that the binary distinction in justifications provided by male and female officials underscores a masculinized and feminized construction of behaviour. The notion of gendered personalities, presenting women as compassionate, sensitive and emotional, while men, by contrast, are logical and objective (Steans, 1998:11), is clearly depicted in these justifications, as male officials tended to be "(i)logical" by stressing the cost factor, while female officials tended to be sensitive and compassionate by emphasizing the life factor. This researcher's attempts to find reasons behind the meanings ascribed to these gender behavioural differences have unearthed polarized theoretical views. While the majority of discourses of psychosexual development tend to posit these behavioural differences as innate (Freud, 1961), feminist social theorists opine that behavioural differences are culturally influenced by societal factors rather than by biology (Chodorow, 1978:43-45).

2.5. Public Versus Private Requirement Of Morality: Are There Gender Differences In Male-Female Attitudes Towards Corruption?

In many sub-Saharan African countries, the collectivist nature of societies often imposes certain additional roles on public officials to fulfil as a moral obligation. As such, behaviours of public officials are usually determined by societal expectations. Price (1975: 15) argues that "for a variety of reasons -the need for social validation of personal belief, a desire to obtain tangible resources controlled by the group, as well as a concern for the intangible rewards of group membership, such as affection, affiliation, security, esteem and identity- the individual [public servant] will tend to mold his behaviour to the norms of [the social group to which s/he belongs]" even if such behaviours negate public sector ethics. Owing to the communal nature of many SSA societies, public officials are often faced with competing codes of ethics, as to whether to act in congruence with public sector ethics or conform to social ethics in moral dilemma situations. In most instances, social pressures exerted on officials by their 'significant others' -i.e. people with whom they identify- often force them to fulfil private requirements of morality (social ethics) at the expense of formal ethics when faced with conflicting codes of ethics.

In my empirical study, the sampled public officials were asked to express their level of agreement or disagreement to a scenario where a hypothetical Chief Director was pressurized by kinship networks to use her position within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to influence decisions on visas for them to travel abroad. This scenario was used because there is currently tremendous pressure exerted in Ghana on public officials, from the general public, to obtain travel visas for their kinship groups. In Ghana, where society's yardstick for measuring successful bureaucrats is the extent to which a bureaucrat uses his/her position to extend favours to kinship networks, this scenario was designed to capture the attitudes of male and female officials towards societal pressure to use public positions unlawfully. When asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the Chief Director's use of her position to secure visas for her kin, a total of 48% of female officials and 51% of male officials supported this action.

Reasons behind male and female officials supporting the use of public positions to grant favours to kinship groups are exposed in the interview data. While the majority of male officials generally focused their reasons on visa problems to Western countries, the majority of female officials generally supported this scenario on the basis of gendered kinship and the repercussions of defying the gender system.

To the majority of male officials, recent tightening of controls to Western countries has led to denials of visas for many Ghanaians, regardless of whether or not they meet the visa requirements. As a result, they were willing to use their positions to influence visa decisions when called upon by kinship networks. This is succinctly captured in the statement, "*I would*

do the same if I were in her position, even if it seems wrong. For me, the reasons given for refusing visas to most Western countries are frivolous and therefore I will see it as a way of getting back at them... (Mr. TJ).

On the other hand, the majority of female officials generally situated their responses within the wider social problems faced by public servants. To many, a public servant cannot disconnect from societal pressures and society's collectivist concept of "help-thy-neighbour". The concept of "help-thy-neighbour" (as I have chosen to call it) is a social responsibility bestowed on public servants by virtue of their position and ability to influence decisions. This is concisely captured in the statement, "*[the Chief Director] is fulfilling her social responsibility to her community. This could have been in any other area, so if her people need visas, so be it*" (Ms. SS).

Some female officials asserted that though the concept of "help-thy-neighbour" is a social requirement for both male and female public servants, the impact on women who defy it is generally more profound than for men, due to the stigma associated with women who transgress familial or societal expectations. Women who refuse to compromise their positions for societal or familial obligations are often stereotyped as wicked, evil, cold-hearted iron ladies. As these "unfeminine" attributes are perpetuated over time, some women tend to internalize the fear of defying social systems, and as such, will fulfil their societal obligations, even if they deviate from public sector ethics.

However, unlike for women, "wickedness" and "iron-heartedness" are judged as masculine traits, and as such, expected of the male gender. In fact, these traits are sometimes celebrated as attributes of a "proper" man. As a result, men may not feel the impact of defying the obligation to their kin as much as women would. To a particular female, "*even though there is some element of abuse of public office… the socio-cultural environment of the Ghanaian is such that a woman must be helpful to her relatives both close and extended. If she [the Chief Director] failed to help her people, she will be deemed as wicked, and no woman wants to be called wicked, at least in the Ghanaian sense*" (Ms. KL).

These assertions underscore the importance of societal obligations and expectations that weigh on public servants, and which further may influence attitudes towards corruption. The fact that defying the gender system carries profound ramifications, especially for women, could lead many female officials to break public sector ethics in order to fulfill societal and familial ethics. Questions this provokes are: should female officials conform to public requirements of morality, by limiting their actions in accordance with the law, or should they conform to private requirements of morality - i.e. transgressing public sector ethics in favour of kith and kin? These are fundamental questions that ought to be considered before one could know whether mainstreaming women into the public sector of Ghana, and for that matter SSA, is likely to reduce public sector corruption.

Some African theorists corroborate this finding that societal or familial expectations and pressures could impel public officials to engage in actions that negate public sector ethics. Many emphasize that traditional African socio-cultural systems undermine the effective

functioning of public servants in accordance with bureaucratic or formal roles. In African cultures, and within the social environments in which bureaucrats and politicians attempt to function, the corporate nature of the cultures creates a situation in which pressures are exerted on public officials by members of their kin groups, geared towards helping members at the expense of public sector principles. Price (1975:30), for instance, argues that:

"Social pressure in such societies, rather than permitting the separation of personal roles from official roles, demands that… personal criteria enter into the performance of official roles. Pressures of this kind come not only from the individual bureaucrat's extended kinship group, but also from other members of his [or her] society, whose interaction with him [or her] is shaped by generalized personalistic expectations founded in [the] corporate nature of their society and culture".

Relatedly, Werlin (1972: 247-266) argues that certain acts of corruption, such as nepotism, are widely expected and respected in society, even when illegal. These expectations could compel female officials to use public positions in favour of societal networks. As nepotism is socially compulsory and binding on African public servants, women, in the performance of public duties, could be deluged with "a proliferation of duties and obligations owed to relatives known and unknown who may spring up and demand attention" (Quansah, 1966: 47).

In essence, within the African context, particularistic[4] behaviour by a public servant is regarded as highly rational, at least from the individual's personal point of view, "since to violate social expectations in a society where social relations are centrally valued and in which individual existence outside of group membership is practically unthinkable, would be to court social, psychological, and even material disaster" (Price, 1975: 30). Hence, institutionalising a policy to mainstream women into the public realm as a potential anti-corruption remedy without addressing the collectivist cultures is likely to prove futile, as women may succumb to these social ethics at the expense of the public sector ethos.

3. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Given the findings above, it is essential to return to the questions raised at the introduction of this paper: Could gender, as a social system, possibly inform corrupt behaviour of women and men in the public realm? Could societal expectations of femaleness and maleness explain public officials' attitudes towards corruption? This paper concludes that the gender system -which demarcates certain behavioural traits such as compassion and sympathy for females, and traits such as objectiveness and aggressiveness for males- could inform men's and women's attitudes towards corruption. These traits are motivators of corrupt behaviour in both sexes, as men and women attempt to conform to their genderized behavioural

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[4] Particularistic behaviours are actions based on standards of personal relationships between a public official and various actors, as opposed to actions that conform to public sector ethics (Price, 1975).

expectations in the conduct of public duties. These genderized behavioural expectations might, in fact, suggest that women are more prone to corruption -for the sake of others, not themselves- than are men. This could be due in part to the fact that they are held tightly to the gendered norms, while men who do not give priority to their community are less condemned.

Since women's and men's experiences are mediated by ideologies of masculinity and femininity, rather than them being left free to shape their own behaviours (Abbot and Wallace, 1990), both sexes find themselves in socio-cultural environments that dictate their gender stereotypic behaviours, roles and responsibilities. These behaviours, roles and responsibilities could translate into corrupt conduct, as evidenced by the gendered response patterns that emerged from the interviews. For instance, the fact that women are, or fear to be, socially "ostracized" and called stereotypic names when they defy their gender expectations, could inform women's attitudes towards public sector corruption. Fears of social ostracism, associated with defying gendered social ethics, create moral dilemmas in the public realm where officials on the one hand are expected to pursue public sector codes of conduct and on the other hand, are expected to fulfil certain social contracts that negate these codes of conduct.

The policy implication of these findings is that mainstreaming women into the public sector, as a potential anti-corruption strategy, in and of itself, does not suffice to sustainably reduce public sector corruption. Clearly, the gender and social systems, which define behaviours and expectations of men and women, need reforming. Such reforms ought to ensure that both the general public and public officials are sensitized on the need to demarcate boundaries between public and private spaces. In Ghana, and in many other SSA countries, where societal obligations and familial expectations require female and male officials to engage in certain acts of corruption, such as nepotism, paternalism and cronyism, it is fundamental for anti-corruption initiatives to include socio-cultural reforms, lest both female and male officials engage in various corrupt conducts.

Also, as the social cost of defying the gender system is more profound for women than men, anti-corruption interventions must aim to lower the social cost. If this is not done, most women may succumb to societal and familial pressures in the conduct of public duties, and compromise public sector ethics in their attempts to fulfil their gender/societal expectations. Hence, without addressing and reforming socio-cultural institutions that perpetuate and nurture the gender and social system, any policy to mainstream women as a potential anti-corruption remedy could prove unsuccessful. For gendered social ethics are often in conflict with bureaucratic ethos in the collectivist cultures found in much of SSA. This in turn provokes role conflicts and implies competing codes of ethics for public officials, be they men or women. Thus, regardless of sex or gender, public servants are likely to face conflicts emerging from whether to pursue either private or public (bureaucratic) requirements of morality. Unless mechanisms are institutionalized to address these competing codes of ethics, women may not necessarily fit the idealized notion of exuding higher public sector ethics at the expense of familial and community ethics.

It is not the aim of this paper to challenge the policy of integrating women into the public realm. Indeed, the author strongly supports mainstreaming women into the public sector of SSA countries, as it provides unique opportunities for women to influence governance structures. Integrating women into all levels of public sector institutions renders development processes more complete and inclusive; which, in the long run, translates into more vibrant and dynamic societies. Since women from the African region have been under-represented in the male-dominated wage sector, affirmative action to incorporate women is a possible remedy to deconstruct the male-biased sector. However, if gender mainstreaming is to be premised on women's high ethical standards, then a lot more needs to be done to reform socio-cultural institutions.

It should also be cautioned that justifying women's inclusion into the public sector on the basis of their higher ethical standards risks being counterproductive to achieving equality, especially if such a policy backfires. If the justification for women's inclusion rests on an imagery of higher integrity, what happens if women's expected superior morality fails to appear? If the presence of women fails to reduce public sector corruption in collectivist cultures, as the findings in this paper would suggest, this carries the danger of thwarting overall efforts at integrating women on the basis of equality. Integrating women into the public realm can and should be championed and institutionalised as a right, and for other good reasons, not as an anti-corruption and good governance imperative.

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