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The Behavior of Corruption: An Empirical Typology of Public Corruption by Objective & Method

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ABSTRACT AND ARTICLE INFORMATION

The United States Supreme Court has ruled that corruption requires misconduct beyond favors received for actions typical of a public official's position, such as favors like hosting an event or contacting an official on behalf of another. This holding makes it unclear the degree to which the use of an official office for personal advantage, or that of another, can be considered corruption. It reflects vagueness in defining specific prohibited behaviors that constitute public corruption. Understanding the underlying behaviors of public corruption activities is an important step for effective detection and prevention. Thus, the question becomes which types of exchanges, favors, acts, or omissions constitute corruption, and which do not? An analysis of more than 300 public corruption convictions occurring over a three-year period was conducted to develop a typology of categories of corruption behaviors. It is discovered that eight distinct types of corrupt conduct exist, pursuing two broad illicit objectives. Therefore, despite the multiplicity of charges brought in corruption cases, there exist a limited number of behaviors that underlie this conduct. These findings are compared with the previous literature on corruption. The utility of the typology for understanding the underlying behavioral aspects of corruption and its context are explained with implications for reducing its occurrence.

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Corruption is a popular term that often carries an uncertain legal meaning. The United Nations Convention against Corruption, the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument, does not include an explicit meaning of the term (United Nations General Assembly, 2003). There exist a number of broad, general definitions to connote the conduct, most notably the definition of Transparency International (2017), which defined corruption as "the use of public office for private gain". This definition was expanded in 2000 to include corporate or business corruption with the wording change "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain" (Rose-Ackerman & Palikfa, 2016; White, 2013; World Bank, 2017).

These broad definitions have value, but they do not specify the precise conduct that constitutes corruption in practice. The US Supreme Court has further complicated the issue by focusing exclusively on quid pro quo in the conduct of official acts as defining public corruption (*McDonnell v. United States*, 2016). Thus, the question becomes which types of exchanges, favors, acts, or omissions constitute corruption, and which do not? Without this kind of specificity, it is difficult to identify which particular behaviors are seen as most serious (and therefore criminalized and prosecuted) and to determine how to design prevention efforts around specific kinds of conduct and misconduct. Therefore, many have debated the boundaries of corrupt conduct (see Ball, 2009; Gregory, 2002; Hellman, 2013; Rose, 2018; Teachout, 2014; Ulman, 2015). Put in another way, as Rothstein (2014) has suggested, without specific knowledge of the types of corruption to address, individuals cannot know what the opposite (i.e., non-corrupt) behaviors are that should be promoted.

State-level prosecutions of corruption cases are not tracked, but an extensive search of all newspaper and newswire coverage of corruption-related cases over 30 years uncovered a total of only 910 convictions involving public corruption outside federal courts. Three-fourths of these cases involved local government employees (most frequently including thefts by public school teachers, administrators, local police officers, and firefighters). The remaining 25% involved state employees (such as motor vehicle bureau employees who sold licenses and thefts by university employees, state police, and prison guards) (Cordis & Milyo, 2016).

Over the same 30-year period that these 910 non-federal cases occurred (1986-2014), 16,452 convictions occurred in federal court (Cordis & Milyo, 2016). Therefore, approximately 94% of all public corruption convictions in the U.S. occur at the federal level in federal court (although a substantial number of the total defendants convicted were state and local officials convicted of federal crimes). Reasons for the federal domination of prosecutions for public corruption include the fact that federal investigators and prosecutors have greater capability to operate at arms-length because they are further removed from the political process, party politics, and local pressures from influential people that exist at the state and local levels. The 94 U.S. Attorneys Offices, distributed across the United States, conduct all federal prosecutions. These prosecutions are overseen by the U.S. Department of Justice Public Integrity Section, which was created in 1976 to consolidate responsibilities for the prosecution of cases involving criminal abuse of public trust by government officials at all levels of government. In this study, prosecutions of public corruption are examined to determine what behaviors are likely to result in a prosecution and whether such behaviors can be organized into a systematic typology of corrupt conduct.

Literature Review

Corruption takes place in two different manifestations: public and private. Public and private sector corruption differ greatly at a conceptual level. If a person or business is exploited or victimized by a private company, the victim can choose to work with other companies in the future that engage in fair treatment of suppliers, customers, and competitors. On the other hand, when doing business with the state, the government has a monopoly over the goods and services that one requires (e.g., licenses, business permits, public contracts), so there is no place else to go to obtain these services (Bauhr, 2017). Similarly, if you do not trust the police enough to call them for assistance about a crime, there is no other agency to call. Instead, people may take protection into their own private hands, leading to further violence. Therefore, much of what is considered corruption in the private sector is a form of white collar or corporate crime, usually involving frauds of some kind, that entail mistreatment of suppliers, customers, or competitors (Campbell & Lord, 2018; Johannsen, Pedersen, Vadi, & Reino, 2016; Piquero & Albanese, 2012).

Public corruption is a more serious public threat because it undermines confidence in government, the legitimacy of government institutions, and the ability of citizens to be treated fairly in their interactions with government entities. When operating appropriately, government entities perform an arbitration role to resolve conflicts or decide among bidders (e.g., police

arrest decisions, prosecution decisions, judicial rulings, government procurement decisions). Private businesses do not have a similar function in that they entail private transactions. As a result, public corruption has far-reaching societal implications beyond that of corruption in the private sector, because private sector corruption affects *some* people, whereas public corruption affects *all* people. It can also be said that controlling public sector corruption is a prerequisite for controlling private sector corruption because without government operations characterized by non-corrupt transactions, it is impossible to regulate the private sector effectively (see Andvig, Fjldstad, Amundsen, Sissener,& Soreide, 2001; Shekshina, Ledeneva, & Denisova-Schmodt, 2017).

There have been a number of efforts to develop typologies of corruption from the general to the very specific. At the general level, the distinction is often made between "petty" and "grand" corruption. Grand corruption involves smaller numbers of powerful players with illicit deal-making involving large sums of money. It occurs in higher-level corrupt environments that permit government officials to accept or solicit money for contracts for major development and road projects, building schools, and related government actions. Petty corruption involves average citizens in lower-level exchanges involving payment (bribery or solicitation) to avoid speeding tickets or access to government services (MacWilliam & Rafferty, 2017; Nystrand, 2014; Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016, pp. 11–14).

This distinction between more serious and less serious corruption was pointed out in the Knapp Commission Report on police corruption in the New York City Police Department. "Grass-eaters" was the term used to describe those who accepted a bribe when offered, reacting to the opportunity. "Meat-eaters" were more predatory in soliciting bribes, thereby proactively creating opportunities for corruption (Knapp Commission, 1972). Corruption is also part of the literature of "state crime," which includes crimes committed by those holding governmental positions on behalf of the government ("governmental crime"), or crimes committed for personal advantage ("political white collar crime") (Friedrichs, 2000). The current study includes corrupt acts by public officials regardless of their motive.

The World Bank uses the terms "administrative" or "bureaucratic" corruption to indicate a form of grand corruption, or petty corruption that has been organized systematically. When this kind of corruption becomes common across government agencies, it is referred to as "state capture," where the formulation of laws and regulations are influenced by private payments to public officials (Fazekas & Toth, 2016; Hellman & Kaufman, 2001; Lord, 2016; World Bank, 1997; Yanguas & Bukenya, 2016). In an analogous way, distinctions have been made between "soft" and "hard" corruption, connoting self-serving unethical behavior by public officials that does not violate the criminal law versus clearly illegal conduct (Lachman & Polner, 2017; Schluter, 2017).

At the more specific level, other analyses use corruption as an umbrella term under which particular types of public sector misconduct are grouped, such as clientelism, patronage, state capture, patrimonalism, and particularism (Rothstein & Varraich, 2017). These analyses break down corruption into its underlying crimes, such as embezzlement, fraud, nepotism, bribery, extortion, and influence peddling (Albanese, 2011; Klitgaard, 1991).

Most typologies of corruption, however, are not the result of empirical studies. Instead, they take a macro approach in looking at corruption as a global or local phenomenon and attempt to characterize the nature of the problem using categories of some kind (Roman, 2014; Vargas-Hernández, 2012). Sometimes studies look at corruption of specific kinds, and in particular agencies or transactions, to examine causes and correlates (Bussell, 2015; Gottschalk & Stanislas, 2017; Roebuck & Barker, 1974).

Macro-level approaches can have utility in clarifying corruption and developing types, to counter the argument that it is a diffuse problem that is difficult to pin down. For example, Roebuck and Barker's (1974) classic article on police corruption developed a typology that outlined for the first time a clear set of behaviors that characterize police corruption. The utility of such a typology helps develop clear intervention and prevention strategies that are targeted to specific behaviors, rather than a problem that is not clearly specified. Another study of 129 countries found that higher levels of income equality were related to higher levels of corruption (Jong-Sung & Khagram, 2005). Still another of 24 countries found bribe payments higher under a more decentralized bureaucratic structure (Diaby & Sylwester, 2014). These kinds of studies have utility in identifying potential variables of importance, but they do not address the specifics of the underlying corrupt conduct.

Existing typologies are diverse in that some focus on the type of actors involved (e.g., public, private, extent of power or control), others focus only on specific kinds of corruption (e.g., police, corrections, politics, public contracts), and while still others examine differences in corruption perceptions across nations or levels of government (Baboš, 2015 Bussell, 2015; Linde & Erlingsson, 2013; Johannsen, Pedersen, Vadi & Reino, 2016; Punch, 2000; Roebuck & Barker, 1974; Rose-Ackerman & Palifka, 2016; Schluter, 2017; Treisman, 2000; Vargas-Hernandez, 2012). The

typology developed here differs from previous efforts in its empirically-based focus on the nature of the underlying behaviors engaged in, regardless of the type of actor or agency involved.

Method

Data

Research was carried out to specify the precise behaviors in practice that constitute corruption. Three questions lie at the heart of this effort:

- What specific types of conduct are considered serious corruption to warrant prosecution?
- Is there an underlying typology of corrupt behaviors that lies beneath these prosecutions?
- Does understanding the nature of these corrupt behaviors offer assistance for detection and prevention efforts?

In this study, only prosecuted cases were used to identify those behaviors considered the most serious forms of corrupt conduct, those that lead to criminal prosecution. We used two different sources of data. We obtained government data from the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), a nonprofit organization at Syracuse University (http://tracfed.syr.edu). TRAC obtains federal data using freedom of information requests (FOIA). These data (from which case identifiers are stripped) are reviewed for statistical consistency and have been found to have greater accuracy in capturing the federal effort than agency reports themselves (Cordis & Milyo, 2016).

Cases prosecuted as part of the federal public corruption program were analyzed (using SPSS with the TRAC data) to ascertain the patterns of prosecution over the last 30 years. Lead charges in these cases were examined to determine the usage and trends in the types of defendants and the specific statutes under which cases were prosecuted over the same time period. These data are useful for trend analysis, but they contain a limited number of case descriptors needed to examine case characteristics and context in more detail. In addition, the DOJ public integrity prosecution program includes frauds committed against the government, or involving government funds, even when the acts do not include a public official (e.g., Medicaid fraud by medical providers). Cases that did not involve public officials were excluded from this analysis because they involved schemes involving federal government funds, rather than public officials using their positions for personal gain or advantage.

In an effort to capture and categorize the contextual behaviors that occurred in these prosecuted cases of corruption, an examination was undertaken of the prosecution and conviction announcements in every case of public corruption covering a period of three years. We gathered press release announcements (N= 2,419) from each of the US Attorneys' offices (n=94) using key word searches for corruption, public corruption, and corrupt acts during 2013-2015. Because public corruption cases engender a great deal of public interest, they are invariably announced through press releases, and sometimes the indictments themselves are also released to highlight and disseminate the prosecution effort against public corruption. Once the press releases were collected, they were reviewed using a pragmatic inductive approach to be grouped by type of conduct --- as defined by public officials using their position or power for personal gain or agency advantage (e.g., examining case details to determine the nature of the corruption, such as bribery, embezzlement, procurement fraud, extortion, and so on) (Savin, Baden & Major, 2013). A sample of 313 cases was selected for secondary coding, representing distinct kinds of corrupt behavior found in the higher-level analysis of 2,419 cases. The secondary coding of corruption cases was based on specific fact patterns that existed, behaviors of those involved, agencies, parties involved, and the extent of corruption. An initial descriptive coding (n=313 cases) was completed, and a second analytical coding created factual patterns (n=28), which identified eight distinct types of behaviors among the cases.

To summarize, the TRAC data were used to gather high-level information on the statutes used and the broad types of corruption at different levels of government prosecuted over 30 years. In order to gain greater context for these cases, a sample of all cases over three years was obtained from U.S. Attorney's Offices. This procedure provided case names and greater case content to guide the pulling of 313 cases for more in-depth analysis of the facts of each case.

Results

The data report on cases prosecuted by US Attorney's offices in federal court only. There are many reasons why these state and local cases are not prosecuted by the individual states, but the lack of local prosecutions does not mean that corrupt conduct is not occurring there. It simply means that the federal government is assuming the burden of prosecuting state and local corruption cases, as well as federal cases. The bar graph in Figure 1 illustrates that a great

deal of federal public corruption prosecutions involve misconduct at the state and local level. The last three columns in the figure represent cases involving state, local, and other non-federal defendants, which comprise a total of 24,077 (42%) of the total 56,703 cases over 30 years (1986-2015).

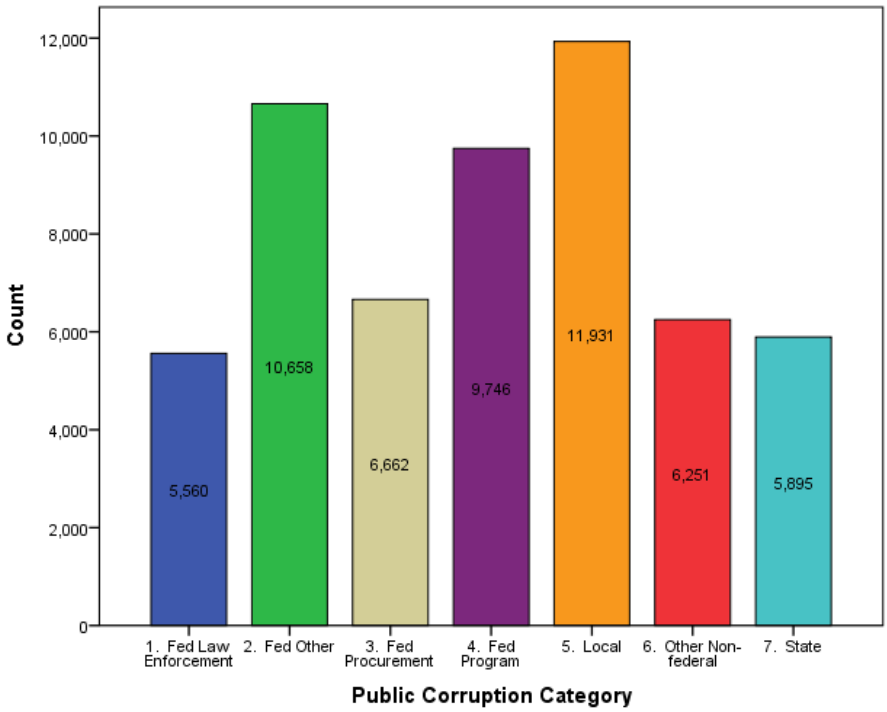

***Figure 1*: Public Corruption Prosecution by Type of Defendant**

A review of all federal cases over 30 years found that 10 offenses accounted for 60% of all corruption prosecutions, illustrating that a small number of offenses operationally define corruption in practice (Albanese, Artello, & Nguyen, 2019).

18 USC 201 - Bribery of public officials and witnesses
18 USC 666 - Theft or bribery in programs receiving Fed funds
18 USC 1951 - Hobbs Act (extortion)
18 USC 1001 - Fraud/false statements or entries generally
18 USC 641 - Public money, property, or records
18 USC 1341 - Mail Fraud - Frauds and swindles
18 USC 371 - Conspiracy to commit offense or to defraud US
18 USC 287 - False, fictitious, or fraudulent claims
18 USC 1343 - Fraud by wire, radio, or television
18 USC 1962 - RICO - prohibited activities

It can be seen from these 10 offenses that variations of bribery, theft, fraud, and extortion comprise most of the corruption charges prosecuted in court over the last 30 years.

Developing an Empirical Typology

The unit of analysis in this study is criminal cases that reveal the behaviors underlying public corruption cases. By drilling down into prosecuted cases beyond merely the statutes used, the underlying patterns of behavior were identified and examined using content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019; Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 2006).

Analysis of the use of statutes in corruption cases shows that the majority of cases are prosecuted using 10 offense categories. However, the statutes are broad in scope and do not clearly define the precise behaviors underlying the corruption convictions. Fact patterns within these cases were identified, using our sample strategy explained above, in order to describe the conduct that justified the prosecution. It is important to ascertain the specific types of acts that the

offender engaged in, and the circumstances involved, in order to fall subject to these particular statutes.

The review of the fact patterns of a sample of these cases, covering three years of prosecutions, revealed a relatively small number of behaviors that constitute corrupt conduct in practice that resulted in prosecutions. It was found that two features distinguish corruption cases: the *objective* of the offense and the *method* by which the object was pursued. The objective in all the cases reviewed was either some form of theft or a misuse of official authority. Money or personal enrichment of some kind characterized one large group of cases, and misuse of official authority for some kind of personal or political advantage, or escaping detection, was the object of another large group of cases. In our case coding, the methods used to carry out the corrupt behavior, given these different objects of corruption, were categorized into the different and distinct types.

From the coding of the cases (*n*=313), eight distinct types of underlying corrupt behaviors were identified within the two larger objectives (i.e., theft or misuse of authority). These different forms of corrupt conduct and sample fact patterns discovered in actual cases are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Types of Corrupt Conduct and Sample Fact Patterns

Conduct	Fact Pattern Based on Prosecuted Cases
Receipt of bribe	A public official took a benefit to influence an official act.
Solicitation of bribe	A public official solicited an unauthorized benefit for an official act.
Extortion	A public official obtained property, via threats of future harm.
Contract fraud	A public official or private contractor received payment through deception, misstatements, or false representations.
Embezzle-ment	A government employee or private contractor used their access to government funds without authorization for personal benefit.
Official misconduct	A public official performed an unauthorized act or omission, in order to receive a benefit or harm another.
Obstruction of justice	A private or public official intentionally compromised a lawful procedure (e.g., an audit or investigation).
Violation of regulatory laws	A private or public official did not abide by legal or administrative rules designed to insure fairness in and safety in the conduct of business or politics (e.g., environmental, labor, manufacturing violations).

At least one of these eight forms of conduct lay at the foundation of every one of the more than 2,400 corruption prosecutions occurring over three years. That is to say, at least one of eight distinct types of behavior characterized every prosecution, whether the object of the corruption was theft or misuse of official authority.

Table 2 illustrates how the eight distinct forms of conduct corresponded with the statutes used to charge these cases in court. It is shown there that some of the same statutes were used to prosecute different types of corrupt behaviors. This wide scope of statute usage is possible because some of the statutes are broadly written and permit application in different kinds of cases. It also indicates that statutes are not a good indicator of types of corrupt conduct in themselves, because different forms of corruption can be prosecuted under the same statute.

The Empirical Typology

The review of 2,419 cases, followed by closer analysis of 313 cases selected to represent each identified corruption type, resulted in the corruption typology presented in Figure 2. The Figure illustrates that all corruption was found to have one of two objects (i.e., motivations or goals): money or personal enrichment (representing some form of theft), or misuse of official authority for personal or political advantage or escaping detection.

Each of the eight behaviors were assigned shorter names for coding and summary purposes:

Receivers – receiving bribes
Solicitors – solicitation of bribes
Extorters – demands or threats for official action in exchange for payments
Schemers – contracting and procurement fraud
Opportunists – embezzlement
Abusers – official misconduct
Liars – obstruction of justice
Insiders – violators of regulatory laws

Table 2: Comparing the Behavior Typology with Lead Charges in Prosecutions

Typology	Comparing Underlying Behavior with Lead Charges in Prosecution	
	Underlying Behavior	*Statutes Used for Lead Charge*
1	Receipt of bribery	18 USC 201 - Bribery of public officials and witnesses 18 USC 666 - Theft or bribery in programs receiving Fed funds
2	Solicitation	18 USC 201 - Bribery of public officials and witnesses 18 USC 666 -Theft or bribery in programs receiving Fed funds 41 USC 53 -Public Contracts - Prohibited conduct (kickbacks)
2.5	Extortion	18 USC 1951 - Hobbs Act
3	Contract fraud	18 USC 666 -Theft or bribery in programs receiving Fed funds 18 USC 1341 - Mail Fraud - Frauds and swindles 18 USC 287 - False, fictitious or fraudulent claims 18 USC 1343 - Fraud by wire, radio, or television 18 USC 286 - Conspiracy to defraud the Government claims 42 USC 408 - Fed Old Age, Survivors & Disab Insur Penalties
4	Embezzlement	18 USC 641 - Public money, property, or records
5	Official Misconduct	18 USC 1709 - Theft of mail matter by officer or employee 18 USC 1791 - Providing or possessing contraband in prison 21 USC 841-Drug Abuse Prevention & Control-Prohibited acts
6	Obstruction of Justice	18 USC 1001 - Fraud/false statements or entries generally 18 USC 1503 - Influencing or injuring officer or juror generally
7	Violation of Gov't Regulations	18 USC 201 - Bribery of public officials and witnesses 18 USC 1952 -Racketeering -interstate/foreign travel/transport
8	Cross all categories	18 USC 371 - Conspiracy to commit offense or to defraud US 18 USC 1962 - RICO - prohibited activities

The code names are used as a quick identifier of the nature of the corrupt behavior and to distinguish the methods used from other types of corrupt conduct. It is noted that bribe solicitors and extorters express the thin demarcation that exists between soliciting a bribe and extorting a payment ("rent-seeking"), and that these two types of conduct run along a continuum from a request for a bribe to threatening adverse actions in order to receive a bribe. The differentiation also reflects the nature of intent from *opportunistic intent* when offered a bribe to *predatory intent* to demand a bribe.

Applying the Typology

The typology was developed and applied to the sample of 313 cases, most of which involved multiple charges and multiple corrupt behaviors. As summarized in Table 3, the 313 cases in the sample involved a total of 419 separate charges. These are presented in the table as primary, secondary, and tertiary charges. Given the eight-part typology of corruption behaviors, the results show that receipt of bribery was the most common behavior in our three-year sample of cases, occurring in 23.1% of the cases as a primary, secondary, or tertiary behavior. Second most common was embezzlement, which occurred in 19.1% of the cases, followed by official misconduct, procurement fraud, regulatory law violations, bribery solicitation, obstruction of justice, and extortion.

Table 3 illustrates how prosecuted corruption cases covering a period of three years applied to the eight types of corrupt behavior.

Bribery-related offenses are the most common form, followed by frauds (embezzlement and procurement fraud) and behavior that covers-up corrupt conduct (obstruction of justice and official misconduct).

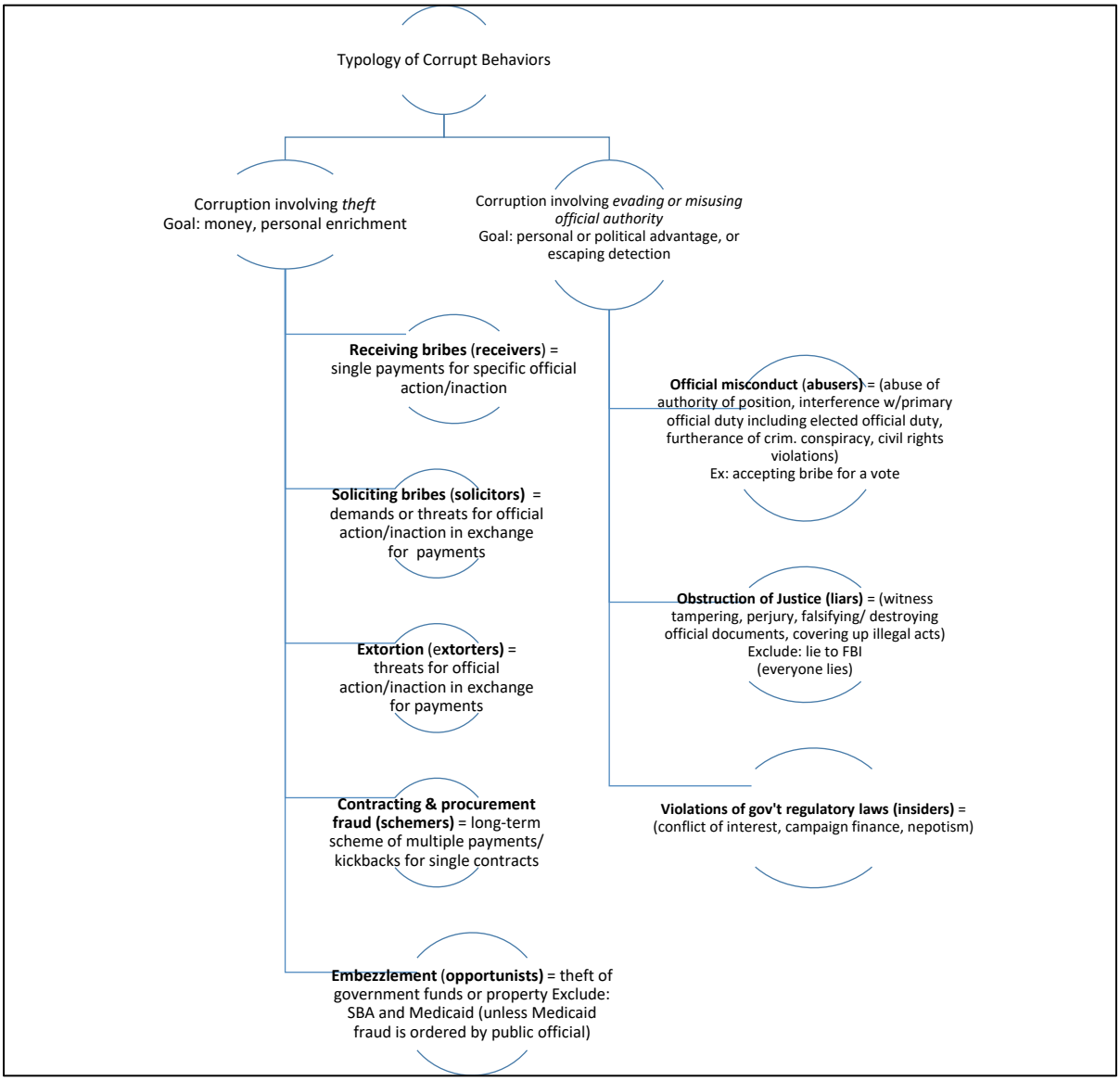

***Figure 2*: Empirical Typology of Corruption**

Table 3: Typology Application and Sample Cases

Typology	Charges				
	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary	Total	Totals Percentage
1.0 Receipt of bribery	80	12	5	97	23.1 %
2.0 Solicitation of bribery	35	4	1	40	9.5 %
2.5 Extortion	13	5	1	19	4.5 %
3.0 Contract/procurement fraud	40	6	1	47	11.2 %
4.0 Embezzlement	67	11	2	80	19.1 %
5.0 Official misconduct	48	7	0	55	13.1 %
6.0 Obstruction of justice	8	23	7	38	9.1 %
7.0 Violation of regulatory laws	22	17	4	43	10.3 %
Total cases	313	85	21	419	100 %

Discussion

The finding of eight distinct corruption behavior types provides unique insight as a new, empirically-derived typology of corruption behaviors in cases found serious enough to warrant criminal prosecution. These prosecutions involved a wide variety of cases occurring over three years, such as law enforcement corruption, prison corruption, election corruption, government procurement frauds, thefts and frauds against government agencies, and efforts to cover-up wrongdoing of various kinds. Regardless of the circumstances of these cases, one or more of the eight types of corrupt behavior was found to occur as summarized in Figure 2.

This development of an empirical typology of corruption behaviors is important for theory and practice. A clear typology helps to identify the specific behaviors that underlie prosecutions for serious corruption offenses. Identification of specific corrupt behaviors enables investigators to train and focus on particular kinds of conduct as they work to build cases. Focusing first on specific forms of conduct, rather than on statutes, also enhances the development of cases by prosecutors. Identifying underlying corruption behaviors will help to support prevention efforts aimed at reducing their incidence over the long term by understanding the types of serious conduct that pose the highest risk of prosecution.

There is good reason to believe that many known cases are not prosecuted based on resources and likelihood of prosecution success. In some cases, less serious corrupt conduct is ignored or handled outside the criminal process through demotions, firings, or civil compensation of illicit gains (Lord, 2013; Masters & Graycar, 2016). Therefore, this study focuses only on the most serious cases, found worthy of criminal prosecution, knowing that many other instances of corruption occur that are not selected for prosecution.

The policy and enforcement choices made in response to corruption will differ depending on the type of corruption most prevalent in a jurisdiction, agency, or business interaction and the seriousness of the corruption discovered (Bussell, 2012). The different types of corruption identified in this analysis of several hundred cases might be revised or expanded upon based on empirical analysis of additional corruption cases and the context in which they occur. For example, different types of corruption behaviors might be generated by different types of government structures and the opportunities and incentives present (Gupta, Sultan, & Washbrook, 2017; Heywood, 1997; Rose-Ackerman & Palikfa, 2016; Vargas-Hernandez, 2012), so the typology presented here is a starting point for empirical validation and for explanatory studies on new samples that characterize the structural opportunities that lead to different kinds of corrupt actions.

Limitations and Strengths

The typology created in this study is limited by the data upon which it was created. Several years of discovered and prosecuted corruption cases were used as a basis to develop the typology. A large sample of additional cases over time could be used to evaluate the ability of this model to account for variations in the nature of corruption cases. Indeed, it has been suggested that multiple typologies may exist when

analyzing corruption of different kinds and subtypes (Bussell, 2015; Heywood, 1997), but this remains an empirical question to be addressed by additional rich empirical data beyond the anecdotal level.

Of course, there are an unknown number of undiscovered corruption cases, which have unknown characteristics, but this is a limitation of all research for which there are not alternative sources of measurement. The use of cases that were criminally prosecuted in the current study serves as a marker of corruption cases seen as serious enough to prosecute and, therefore, are more serious cases. Less serious cases might have differences from the typology developed here.

A strength of the study is that a large number of cases were identified through our methodology covering a multi-year period, which could not otherwise have been located for inclusion in the study. In addition, careful analysis of the facts and circumstances of several hundred cases, beyond the statutory violations, enabled development of a unique and empirically-based typology.

In assessing the nature of corruption, there is a large body of work that addresses its causes, correlates, and structural contexts (Bussell, 2011; Lyrio, Lunkes, & Taliani, 2018; Rose-Ackerman & Palikfa, 2016; Sadiku, 2010). It remains for future studies to examine further the extent to which a typology of corruption can be useful in anticipating and responding to corrupt conduct in different circumstances.

Conclusion

This examination of several hundred public corruption cases over a multi-year period shows that they all have one of two objects (theft or misuse of authority) and that in pursuing these objects, eight types of corrupt behaviors were empirically identified and organized into a typology of the different methods by which corrupt behavior is carried out. The contribution of this manuscript lies in the development of an empirically-based typology of corruption behaviors and identifying their object and methods, which underlie hundreds of prosecutions over multiple years.

This analysis also shows which types of corrupt behavior are most common among these many cases, allowing for better targeting of limited resources to those behaviors that form the basis for corruption prosecutions. It remains for future work to apply this typology to larger samples of cases over time and among countries to determine its more general applicability and utility in targeting the serious behaviors that constitute criminal cases involving corruption.

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