

Restoring trust in the police: Why female officers reduce suspicions of corruption

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Recent studies show a clear link between women in government and reduced concerns about corruption. Until now, it remains unclear which underlying attitudes about women explain the perception that they will reduce corruption. Using a survey question about adding women to a police force, with an embedded experimental treatment, we examine three distinct stereotypes that might explain the power of women to reduce concerns about corruption: gender stereotypes of women as more ethical and honest, the perception of women as political outsiders, and beliefs that women are generally more risk averse. We find that people do perceive women as more effective at combating corruption, and these perceptions are greatly enhanced when information about women's outsider status and risk aversion is provided.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Perceptions of police forces as corrupt challenge the legitimacy of policing authorities (Tankebe, 2010). When citizens do not trust the police, compliance with the law declines (Tankebe, 2013), the police prove less effective at fighting crime (Tyler, 2004), and people are less likely to seek assistance when victimized (particularly women who have been the victims of domestic or sexual violence; UN Women, 2011). Some countries have begun increasing the number of women police to reduce corruption and restore the image of police as legitimate. Examples of such policies are found in Brazil, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, and Nicaragua, (Chêne, 2010; Karim, 2011; UN Women, 2011),¹ but why would increasing the number of women in the police reduce concerns about corruption?

We argue that there are three potential factors that might account for people's perceptions that women are more effective at combating corruption: gender stereotypes that women are more ethical and honest, perceptions of women officers as outsiders, and perceptions of women as more risk averse than men (Barnes & Beaulieu, 2014, 2016). Following recent research on stereotype activation (e.g., Bauer, 2015), we employ an experiment embedded in an Internet survey of over 1,000 individuals to see which gender stereotype, when activated, leads people to believe that adding women to a police force is an effective means of combating corruption. Although this article focuses on policies aimed at restoring trust in the police, our research has broader implications as well, both for the role of women

in public service and for understanding various means by which governments can work to improve trust in their institutions.

2 | TRUST IN THE POLICE AND PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION

Police in many countries today face an image problem. Although recent media attention in the United States has focused on excessive use of police force, examples of police corruption also abound. In a recent high-profile case, three New York City police commanders were arrested for trading police services for lavish gifts (Rashbaum & Goldstein, 2016). Although they were acquitted, six Philadelphia police officers were charged by federal prosecutors for stealing nearly \$400,000 during illegal drug raids from 2006 to 2012 (Associated Press, 2015). In 2013, a Mississippi sheriff was charged with 31 counts including fraud, embezzlement, extortion, and witness tampering (Associated Press, 2013).

Corruption is an important country-level predictor of trust in the police (Kääriäinen, 2007), and a recent study of policing in Ghana shows that vicarious experiences with police corruption (e.g., witnessing bribes to police) are some of the strongest predictors of reduced trust in police (Tankebe, 2010). In a recent study, only 30% of those surveyed responded that police forces across the United States are doing an excellent or good job of holding officers accountable for misconduct (Pew Research, 2014). Similar trends also appear in Latin America. In the 2014 wave of the Latin American Public Opinion Project's (LAPOP) AmericasBarometer survey, only 28% of Mexican and 25% of Peruvian respondents indicated that they trust the police.² In this same survey, 19% of Mexicans and 16% of Peruvians responded that a police officer had asked them for a bribe in the last 12 months. Transparency International (2016) also reports that police corruption remains a major problem in Africa: "Nearly 75 million people were estimated to have paid a bribe in 2015."³

U.S. police departments began using body cameras as a means to increase public trust and perceptions of police accountability. The Justice Department launched an initiative known as community policing, which focuses on measuring police performance in terms of community satisfaction, rather than traditional metrics such as the number of arrests and tickets issued (Hampton, 2014). Some countries implemented policies to increase female police officers in their forces in an effort to reduce corruption and restore the image of police. Indeed, experimental research on representative bureaucracy shows that citizens perceive the police as more trustworthy when more women are represented on the police force (Ricucci, Van Ryzin, & Lavena, 2014). When deciding to staff roadblocks with all-women enforcement teams, officials in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia, explained that women officers appear less aggressive and easier for motorists to work with, thus improving the public image of the police force (Asia News Network, 2014). During Alberto Fujimori's presidency in the early 2000s, the National Police of Peru enlisted more female police officers in an effort to reduce illicit behavior within the police force (Goetz, 2007). In another effort to improve perceptions of the police and curb corruption and extortion, officials in Mexico State, Mexico, mandated that only female traffic officers were permitted to issue traffic citations (McGirk, 1999).⁴

Political officials' apparent assumptions that they can curb corruption—or at least project an image of good government—by appointing more women to security and bureaucratic positions are consistent with findings in the literature. Research demonstrates a negative cross-national relationship between female descriptive representation and corruption in bureaucracies (Swamy, Knack, Lee, & Azfar, 2001), and government more generally (Dollar, Fisman, & Gatti, 2001). More recent studies continue to show that women are less corrupt than men (Rivas, 2013; Wängnerud, 2012), however others suggest that the link between gender and corruption in government is spurious (Sung, 2003), or that corruption may actually explain women's access to office (Sundström & Wängnerud, 2016). Finally, the relationship between gender and corruption may be context specific. For example, scholars find that

democracy activates the relationship between gender and corruption (Esarey & Chirillo, 2013), and gender differences in corruption are unique to wealthy, industrialized countries (Alatas, Lisa, Ananish, Nisvan, & Lata, 2009).

Although this large and growing body of literature is interested in whether women in government actually reduce overall levels of corruption, in this article, we are interested in the impact of these policies on public *perceptions*. There is mounting evidence that female politicians, public officials, and bureaucrats reduce extreme suspicions of corruption and engender trust in government (Barnes & Beaulieu, 2014; Barnes & Jones, in press; Goetz, 2007, p. 91; Tripp, 2001, pp. 116–117; Watson & Moreland, 2007, p. 404).⁵ Yet, it remains unclear *why* women reduce perceptions of government corruption.

3 | GENDER STEREOTYPES AND PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

We investigate three potential factors that might contribute to women being perceived as less corrupt than men (Barnes & Beaulieu, 2014, 2016). First, if women are believed to be more ethical and honest, then people may perceive them as less likely to engage in corruption. Second, if women are seen as bureaucratic outsiders, people may perceive that they will lack the opportunities to engage in corrupt behavior. Third, if women are generally understood to be more risk averse, people may think they are less likely to accept the risks associated with corruption. In the following section, we discuss each of these factors in more detail.

3.1 | Honesty

Previous research demonstrates a clear correlation between an individual's moral development and the probability of cheating (Rest, 1979), and more recent studies show that in the classroom, honest and moral students are less likely to cheat (Bernardi et al., 2004). Natural experiments on cheating in the college classroom also show that students who cheat the most are also the least likely to be honest about having engaged in such an activity (West, Pickard Ravenscroft, & Shrader, 2004). These findings all suggest honest people should be perceived as less likely to engage in corrupt or illicit behaviors, such as soliciting bribes.

Gender stereotypes typically characterize women as more ethical, honest, compassionate, and generally concerned with people's welfare (Alexander & Anderson, 1993; Burrell, 2008; Huddy & Terkilsen, 1993; Kahn, 1996; Paul & Smith, 2008).⁶ As one development expert explains, "On the basis of women's presumed higher ethical standards, many African governments are currently being encouraged, by their development partners, to integrate women into the public sector as a potential anti-corruption remedy" (Alhassan-Alolo, 2007, p. 228). Even so, women may not *actually* be more honest than men. Indeed, recent experimental studies in economics offer conflicting conclusions regarding women's actual honesty propensities (Dreber & Johannesson, 2008; Fosgaard, Gaam Hansen, & Piovesan, 2013). Other studies suggest women politicians are not perceived as more honest than men (Koch, 1999; Schneider & Bos, 2013).

Although research may be moving away from the idea that women are actually more ethical and honest, the honest stereotype may still persist. When asked why women are better suited for traffic duty than men, Mexican police chief Carlos Ortega Carpinteyro responded, "Women are more trustworthy and take their oath of office more seriously. They don't ask for or take bribes" (Kahn, 2013). If people believe female public officials are more honest, then explicitly mentioning honesty should make survey participants more likely to believe that hiring female police officers will be a successful policy for reducing corruption.

Hypothesis 1: Individuals will perceive female police officers as more successful at combating corruption when stereotypes about women's honesty are activated.

3.2 | Outsider status

Female public servants may be perceived as less corrupt because the public believes that they lack access to the kinds of networks that would facilitate bribery and corruption. Criminal networks are important for success in criminal activities (Calvó-Armengol & Zenou, 2004), and crime often operates through “networks of collusion” (Barlow, 1993). Since women are relative newcomers to the police bureaucracy, they should also have less access to networks for illicit activity (Goetz, 2007). For instance, a case study of public servants in Mumbai reveals that women enter politics and the bureaucracy with fewer links to businessmen and commercial interests, and thus are seen as less vulnerable to corruption (Honour, Barry, & Palnitkar, 1998).

When women enter traditionally male-dominated political institutions, the expectation is that as outsiders they will bring about change and alter the status quo (Brown, Diekman, & Schneider, 2011; O'Brien, 2015). In Uganda, for example, women's appointments are appealing to the public because “women leaders are seen as generally being outside mainstream patronage networks and therefore capable of cleaning up excessively corrupt institutions” (Tripp, 2001, p. 117). This is not to say, however, that female public servants will always prove immune to corruption. Female microfinance fieldworkers in Bangladesh are found to “bend the rules to their clients' advantage” when opportunities for illicit earnings arise (Goetz, 2007, p. 101). Evidence from Ghana also demonstrates that integrating women into the public sector will not serve to reduce corruption if corrupt opportunities and networks remain in place (Alhassan-Alolo, 2007).

Some women, given the chance, may engage in illicit activities like bribery, yet the aforementioned research suggests that women who are new to public service are perceived to lack such opportunities. As such, adding female public servants to traditionally male-dominated institutions, such as police departments, may be perceived as effective at combating corruption. If women are seen as less likely to have access to the networks needed to facilitate corruption, then explicitly mentioning women's outsider status may lead people to believe that hiring more female public servants will be especially successful for reducing corruption.

Hypothesis 2: Individuals will perceive female police officers as more successful at combating corruption when stereotypes about women's outsider status are activated.

3.3 | Risk aversion

People perceived as having a lower tolerance for risk may also be seen as less likely to engage in corrupt behavior. Economists argue that in order to commit crimes, utility-maximizing individuals must have a preference for risk (Neilson & Winter, 1997). Smugglers of illicit agricultural products are found to have a higher tolerance for risk (Ferrier, 2008), and evidence from South African fishing communities shows those with lower risk tolerance are less likely to fish illegally (Brick, Visser, & Burns, 2012). Similarly, students with a higher risk tolerance tend to be more accepting of cheating, regardless of their need to cheat (Perry & Ulbig, 2014).

If people perceive women as more effective at combating corruption due to beliefs about risk aversion, we have to assume that women are viewed differently than the men who traditionally occupy public service institutions like the police department. Some research has shown that women tend to be more risk averse than men (Eckel & Grossman, 2008; Jianakoplos & Bernasek, 1998; Watson &

McNaughton, 2007). In more recent critiques of the “fairer sex” hypotheses, research suggests that contextual factors like democracy or societal expectations activate the relationship between gender and corruption. With respect to democracy, where accountability is higher, there is a greater chance that corrupt practices will be uncovered, and because of this, female officials are less likely to engage in illicit behavior for fear of being caught (Esarey & Chirillo, 2013; Esarey & Schwindt-Bayer in press).

More importantly for this study, other research has shown that women are perceived as more risk averse. Research on voting and gender stereotypes has shown that people perceive women as more cautious (Huddy & Terkilsen, 1993). Recent experimental work shows people overestimate men’s preferences for risk (Siegrist, Cvetkovich, & Gutscher, 2002), and a recent observational study of financial advisors demonstrates advisors perceive women as more risk averse and men as more risk tolerant on average than they actually are (Roszkowski & Grable, 2005).

Given the pervasive belief that women are less inclined to engage in risky behavior, this gender stereotype may explain the link between female public officials and decreased suspicions of corruption. If individuals believe that women in public service are less likely to engage in corruption because they believe that women are more risk averse, then explicitly providing information about women’s risk aversion should lead people to believe that hiring more women in the public sector will be effective at combating corruption.

Hypothesis 3: Individuals will perceive female police officers as more successful at combating corruption when gender stereotypes about women’s risk aversion are activated.

4 | THE SURVEY EXPERIMENT

In December 2014, we surveyed 1,105 individuals using Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform and asked survey participants’ opinions on a series of questions with embedded experimental treatments. MTurk survey experiments are increasingly popular in the social sciences (Charnysh, Lucas, & Singh, 2015; Krupnikov & Bauer, 2014; Mitchell, 2014). MTurk samples are shown to be more representative than student-based samples and are at least, if not more representative of noncollege populations than other Internet-based or traditional samples (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). Additionally, researchers have used MTurk samples to replicate a number of well-known experiments and find results consistent with originally published findings (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012).

For the particular survey experiment used here, individuals randomly received one of three treatments, or were assigned to the control category, creating a 1×4 design.⁷ All individuals were told that the police department in Mexico City recently hired a number of women in traffic enforcement to try to combat corruption in the department. Then participants received an additional piece of information meant to activate one of the three stereotypes (described above) or no additional information in the case of the control category. Honesty—*Because women are believed to be more honest, the police department hopes this will reduce bribes*; Outsider Status—*Because women aren’t part of male officers’ established personal and professional networks, the police department hopes this will reduce bribes*; Risk Aversion—*Because women are believed to be more risk averse, the police department hopes this will reduce bribes*.⁸ Finally, individuals are asked how successful they expect this strategy to be. Four options are available: very successful, somewhat successful, not too successful, not at all successful.⁹

With this stereotype activation experiment we expect to be able to test the hypotheses outlined above and learn about the factors driving peoples’ perceptions of women as less corrupt. People often rely on stereotypes to make judgments about different groups, but sometimes these stereotypes have to be activated—or made accessible in a person’s mind—before they can be applied (Kunda & Spencer,

2003). Bauer (2015), for example, uses an experimental design to show that people do not automatically apply gender stereotypes to women candidates, but references to women candidates as “nurturing” or “compassionate” activate gender stereotypes, and consequently, affect people’s evaluations of women candidates.

Following McDermott’s (2002) recommendation that experiments focus on “experimental” rather than “mundane” realism (333), we designed the experiment around a real policy reform in a foreign country. We see this choice as having two distinct advantages. First, by basing the experiment on actual events in the news, we make the experiment more realistic and therefore can have more confidence that the inferences we draw could be generalized to policy attitudes outside the experiment. Furthermore, if individuals hold any particular ideas about Mexico, Mexican police, or corruption in Mexico City, the random assignment of the experimental treatments alleviates any potential for these attitudes (whether uniform or idiosyncratic) to confound the impact of the stereotype activation. Second, at the same time that we want to elicit reactions that are reflective of real-world reasoning, we do not want the experiment to be affected by individuals’ personal experiences with police, which may differ systematically across different subgroups in our sample. Although an experiment situated in the U.S. context might have enhanced the “mundane” realism of the experiment, systematic differences in individual experiences may have threatened the internal validity of the study (McDermott, 2002, p. 334). By focusing participants on Mexico City, we enhance experimental realism and encourage participants to engage with the key causal mechanisms we are manipulating with our treatments, while effectively controlling for factors that might otherwise confound any effect of stereotype activation. Thus, if we see individuals responding to any of the three stereotypes we have presented, we can reasonably infer that differences we observe in their responses are because these traits resonate with the beliefs individuals hold.

4.1 | Randomization

To assess the randomization of the experiment, we present sample characteristics for the four groups compared to the full sample, across a number of participant characteristics. Table 1 reports the mean

TABLE 1 Sample characteristics

	Control	Honesty	Outsider	Risk averse	Full sample
Female	0.447	0.447	0.476	0.433	0.452
Education	3.092	3.092	3.260 [†]	3.140	3.147
Age	53.816	53.816	54.561	53.043	53.757
Income	6.860	6.860	7.226	7.147	7.077
Work full-time	0.509	0.509	0.520	0.523	0.517
Work part-time	0.154	0.154	0.166	0.187	0.171
Student	0.110	0.110	0.111	0.077 [†]	0.102
Ideology	2.711	2.717	2.641	2.709	2.693
Observations	280	228	296	300	1104

Note. Thirty-nine participants indicated they did not know their ideology and are thus, not included in the means reported for ideology: 10 in the control group, 9 in the honesty treatment, 9 in the outsider treatment, and 11 in the risk averse treatment. Two-sample *t* test with equal variances were used to compare the average for each group to the rest of the sample.

[†] $p < .10$.

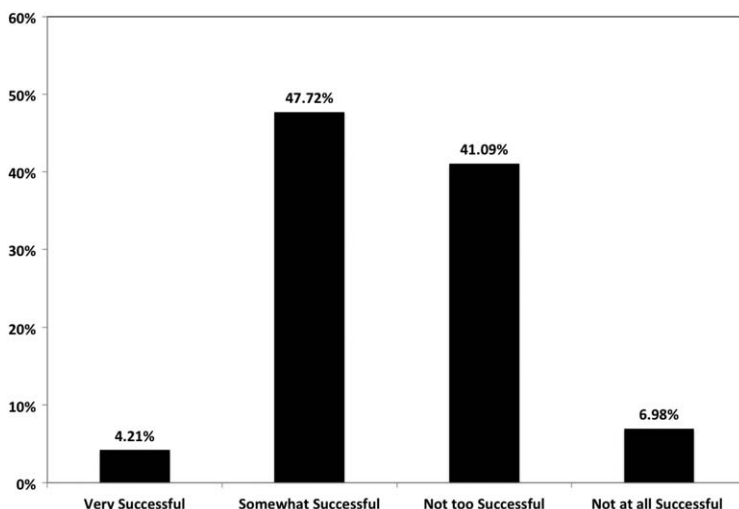


FIGURE 1 Distribution of responses

response for participants' sex, education, age, income, work status, and ideology. Education is measured on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 (no high school education) to 6 (postgraduate degree). The sample mean is 3.14, indicating that the mean response is some college and the mode is 4 (2-year college degree). Household annual income is assessed on a 15-point scale from (1) less than \$10,000 to (15) more than \$250,00 per year. The average response is about a 7: \$40,000 to \$49,000. Using a series of dummy variables we account for whether the participant is employed full time, part time, a student, or not working (e.g., retired, homemaker, disabled, unemployed). About half of the sample works full time, 17% work part time, 10% are students, and 22% are not employed. We measure self-reported ideology on a 5-point scale from very liberal (1) to very conservative (5). The average participant is left of center, as the sample mean is 2.69. The mean age is 53.76 years.

Using a two-sample *t* test with equal variances we compare the average for each group to the rest of the sample. With only two exceptions (i.e., participants in the outsider treatment group have a slightly higher level of education, and there are fewer students in the risk averse treatment group) the sample characteristics do not vary substantially across treatment and control groups. Given the modest differences observed in Table 1, we estimate a multinomial logit model to predict treatment assignment. Table A1 in the Appendix reports the results from this analysis. None of these sample characteristics (i.e., sex, education, age, income, work status, and ideology) predict treatment assignment. Importantly, we do not find that education predicts assignment to the outsider treatment, nor do we find that students are more likely to be assigned to the risk averse treatment. In sum, we conclude that the sample characteristics are balanced across conditions.

5 | RESULTS

Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses across all participants. The majority of people believe that hiring women police officers in traffic enforcement will be effective at combating corruption. Nearly 52% of those surveyed indicated that the policy would be “very” or “somewhat” successful, compared to 48% who indicated otherwise. Even among those individuals who did not think the policy would be successful, only 7% thought the policy would be “not at all successful.” Most individuals selected one of the middle categories—either successful or unsuccessful—rather than taking an extreme position. In

TABLE 2 Treatment effects based on one-way *T* test

Honesty treatment (<i>N</i> = 234)	Outsider treatment (<i>N</i> = 297)	Risk averse treatment (<i>N</i> = 302)
2.508	2.481	2.464
<i>p</i> = .0105	<i>p</i> = .010	<i>p</i> = .003

Note. Control group = 2.58 (*N* = 284). Two-tailed *p* value. Outcome variable ranges from 1 (very successful) to 4 (not at all successful).

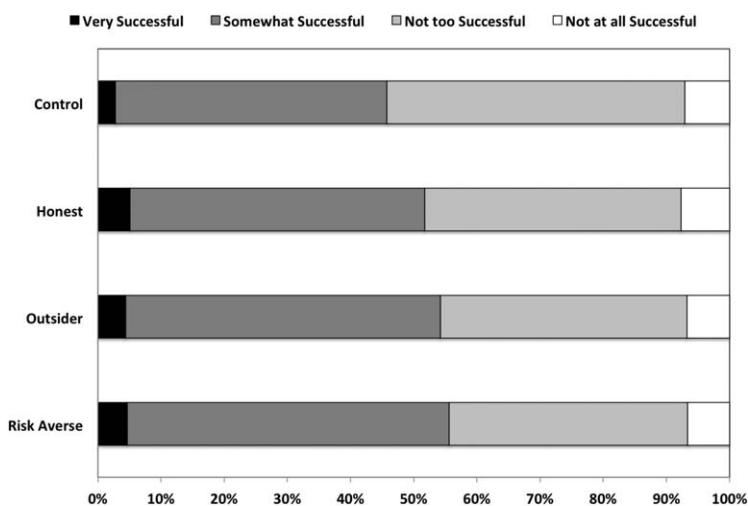
fact the 7% with no confidence in this policy's success is still larger than the percent of participants who thought the policy would be "very successful," which is just under 5%.

Table 2 shows a series of one-sample *t* tests, comparing average expectations of success in combating corruption among those in the control group, to those who received each of the three treatment treatments. Recall that response options ranged from 1 (very successful at combating corruption) to 4 (not at all successful at combating corruption). Thus, larger mean values correspond to lower expectations that the initiative will be successful at combating corruption in the police department.

Participants receiving all three treatments are more likely to say that hiring women police officers will be "very successful" or "somewhat successful" at combating corruption, compared to the control condition, and all differences achieve conventional levels of statistical significance. Activating stereotypes about risk aversion shows the largest increase in expectations of success (an increase of .116; *p* = .003). Because the control condition also mentions introducing women to reduce corruption, we can be confident that any statistically significant differences we find are being driven by the additional information provided, not simply the inclusion of women.

Although this initial analysis compares mean response rates, it does not allow us to see whether the differences are the result of movement at the extremes or movement between "successful" and "not successful." Figure 2 displays the participants who selected a given answer for each of the treatments, ordered from top to bottom by the treatment that generates the lowest expectation of success at combating corruption.

This figure shows that, compared to the control group, all three treatments generate a majority indicating that the hiring of more women police officers will be successful at reducing corruption and that

**FIGURE 2** Distribution of responses by treatment group

the risk aversion treatment is the most effective at increasing confidence in reduced corruption. These results show that movement between “not successful” and “successful,” rather than movement at the extremes, is driving the observed differences in mean values. Thus, we have preliminary evidence that our treatments increase the perception that hiring more women police officers will be a successful policy for reducing corruption.

To evaluate whether these differences are statistically significant after controlling for a series of individual-level characteristics, we turn to logistic regression. Since the observed differences result from movement between “not successful” and “successful,” rather than at the extremes, our dependent variable is a dummy where 1 indicates that the individual says hiring more women will be “very” or “somewhat” successful (hereafter “successful”), and 0 otherwise. We also include a number of individual-level variables in the model that have been shown to influence perceptions of corruption: participant gender, education, age, income, and employment status (Anduiza, Gallego, & Muñoz, 2013; Barnes & Beaulieu, 2014; Gatti, Pasternostro, & Rigolini, 2003). Further, as MTurk participants tend to be more liberal, we include a measure of political ideology (Clifford, Jewell, & Waggoner, 2015). (For details, see the subsection on *Randomization* and Table 1.)

Table 3 reports the coefficients from the baseline logit model, with each coefficient indicating the effect of a given variable on the probability that an individual selects “successful” for their response. To begin with, the participant’s gender is a statistically significant predictor of indicating that the policy will be effective. Compared to men, women who took the survey are more likely to say that hiring more women police officers will be successful at reducing corruption in the police department ($p < .01$). Ideology is also significant and is associated with reduced confidence in the success of the policy among more conservative participants. However, even with these significant relationships identified by our control variables, the risk averse and outsider treatments still retain their statistical significance at $p < .05$, and the coefficients are in the hypothesized directions. The coefficient for the honesty treatment is still in the expected direction, but not statistically significant.

To facilitate the interpretation of our logit coefficients, we simulate the predicted probabilities of a participant selecting “successful” using 1,000 sets of simulated coefficients for each treatment/control group while all other variables are held constant at their mean or mode (King, Tomz, & Wittenberg, 2000). Then, to examine if the changes in predicted probabilities between the control condition and each of the treatment groups are statistically different at the 95% level, we plot the difference in the probability of responding “successful” between each of the treatments and the control group in Figure 3. Specifically we simulate the first difference (i.e., the difference between two predicted probabilities) between the control and each treatment groups holding all other values at their mean/mode (King et al., 2000).

In Figure 3, when the 95% confidence intervals cross zero, the probability of responding “successful” is not statistically different from the control group, as is the case with the honesty treatment. When the confidence intervals do not cross zero (outsider and risk averse treatments), the increase in the probability of responding “successful” is statistically different from the control. Substantively, the outsider treatment results in about an 8% increase in beliefs about policy effectiveness. The results from the risk averse treatment are even more impressive; we see an 11% increase in the perception that hiring more female police officers will prove successful at combating corruption.

Based on these results, we do not find support for Hypothesis 1. We do, however, find support for Hypothesis 2. When people perceive women as public service outsiders, they are more confident that women police officers will be less likely to engage in corruption. Furthermore, we find support for Hypothesis 3—the perception that women are more risk averse causes the largest increase in that sentiment.

TABLE 3 Probability of saying the policy is “successful” or “very successful”: logit estimates

	(1) Baseline	(2) Baseline	(3) Participant sex	(4) Participant sex
Honesty treatment	0.208 (0.183)	0.211 (0.185)	0.145 (0.248)	0.112 (0.251)
Risk averse treatment	0.419* (0.171)	0.430* (0.173)	0.382 [†] (0.228)	0.366 (0.231)
Outsider treatment	0.313 [†] (0.171)	0.320 [†] (0.173)	0.572* (0.235)	0.568* (0.238)
Female participant	0.384** (0.124)	0.354** (0.127)	0.477 [†] (0.247)	0.406 (0.251)
Female × Honesty			0.144 (0.370)	0.224 (0.375)
Female × Risk Averse			0.098 (0.347)	0.162 (0.351)
Female × Outsider			−0.540 (0.342)	−0.518 (0.347)
Education		−0.083 (0.054)		−0.081 (0.054)
Age		−0.003 (0.005)		−0.002 (0.005)
Income		0.006 (0.019)		0.008 (0.019)
Work full-time		−0.180 (0.174)		−0.183 (0.174)
Work part-time		−0.166 (0.206)		−0.179 (0.206)
Student		−0.028 (0.264)		−0.018 (0.265)
Ideology		−0.215*** (0.059)		−0.222*** (0.060)
Constant	−0.352** (0.135)	0.731 [†] (0.417)	−0.394* (0.167)	0.683 (0.434)
Observations	1065	1065	1065	1065
Log likelihood	−729.66595	−719.89153	−727.1347	−717.11236

Note. Standard errors in parentheses.

[†] $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

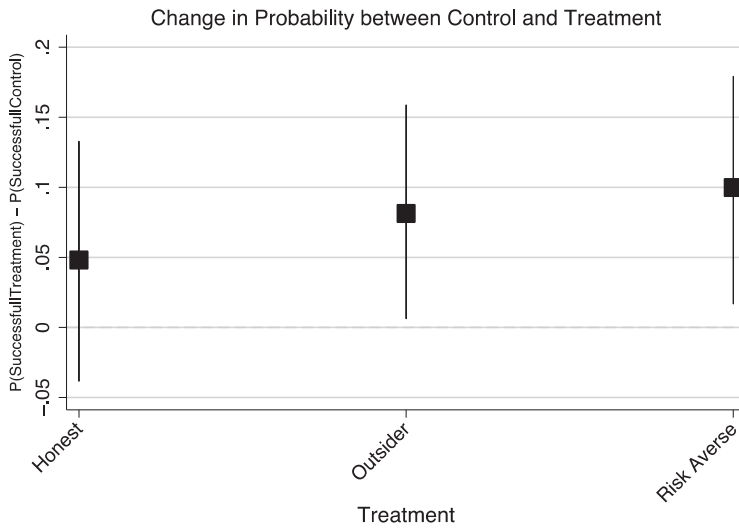


FIGURE 3 Difference in probability between control and treatment

Note. Differences between control and treatment groups are significant for the outsider and risk averse treatments, with risk aversion being the most effective. Results based on Table 3, Model 4

Building on Bauer's (2015) work, we infer that the relationships here between our treatment and outcome variables are being driven by stereotype activation. Research has documented the prevalence of these stereotypes; as such, given a significant relationship between specific treatments and a belief about the efficacy of the anticorruption policy, it is logical to infer that the associated stereotype has been activated. Another possibility to consider, however, is that our experimental treatments are simply supplying individuals with new information and it is the information that is shaping their subsequent assessments. This alternative explanation strikes us as implausible for several reasons. First, the notion that individuals do not have preexisting beliefs about women seems implausible on its face. Furthermore, research on information processing in other political contexts shows us that individuals have an easier time evaluating information that is consistent with their existing beliefs (Krupnikov, 2012, p. 392). Thus, even if our treatments provided some information, we would not expect that information to inform participants' decisions unless it corresponds to beliefs they already hold.

Given the statistical significance of gender in the baseline model, we should also consider the possibility that men and women participating in our survey responded differently to the treatments we present. Barnes and Beaulieu (2014), for example, find that the reduced fraud suspicions caused by women candidates are driven by men's perceptions. Here, we find women are generally more optimistic about the corruption-reducing potential of women on the police force, but are the same treatments equally effective at boosting that perception for both men and women? The participant sex models in Table 3 investigate the heterogeneous effects of our stereotype activation experiment across men and women who took our survey.

Figure 4 shows the predicted probabilities associated with each treatment and the control condition, by the gender of the survey participant, based on Model 4. Neither men nor women who received the honesty treatment are significantly more likely to believe more women on the police force will reduce corruption compared to their counterparts who received the control condition, reinforcing the fact that we find no significant effect of the honesty stereotype. Women participants who received the honesty treatment, however, are more likely than men who received the

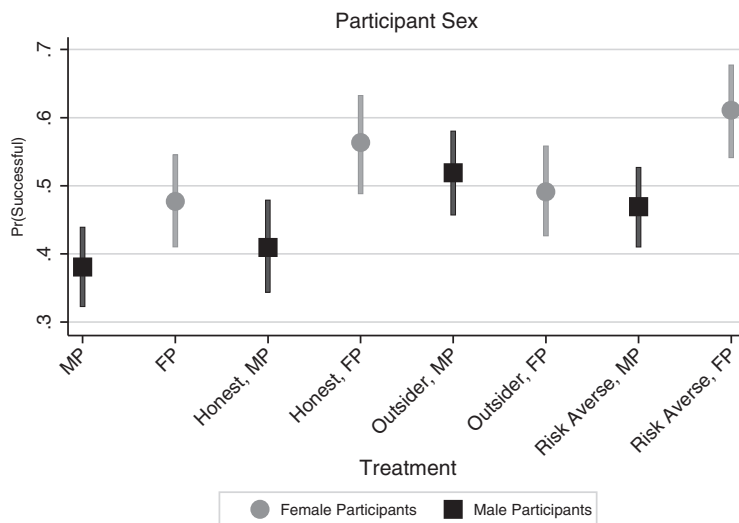


FIGURE 4 Probability of responding very/somewhat successful displayed by participant gender and treatment
Note. The outsider treatment has the largest effect on men, whereas the risk averse treatment has the greatest impact for women.
 Results based on Table 3, Model 4

treatment to believe adding women will be successful, and the difference between these two groups is statistically significant. Thus, our results indicate that women who received the honest treatment are more persuaded of the capacity for other women to reduce corruption than men who receive that treatment.

The picture grows more complex when we turn our attention to the outsider treatment. Here we see the predicted probabilities for men and women are not statistically different from one another. Furthermore, the predicted probabilities for women receiving the outsider treatment and women in the control condition are not statistically different. Yet, men who received the outsider treatment are significantly more likely to believe the policy will be significant than men in the control group. Thus, we conclude that the reactions of men who participated in the survey are driving the perception of women as outsiders as a successful means of combating corruption.

Finally, with risk aversion we see increased optimism for the policy, relative to control men and women. This is the treatment category where women display the largest increase in the probability of thinking the policy will be successful, relative to the control category. Furthermore, the predicted probability associated with women receiving the risk aversion treatment is significantly higher than for men receiving the same treatment.

We can only offer some modest speculation for why particular stereotypes may resonate more with one gender or the other. Clearly, for men, the outsider treatment is the most persuasive. One possibility is that men like this argument because it does not make claims about features inherent to women (such as their honesty or attitudes toward risk), although men also find the risk aversion treatment to be persuasive. Another possibility is that men are simply more likely to perceive women as outsiders. It is difficult to know why the risk aversion treatment is the most persuasive for women, although it is worth noting this stereotype is also persuasive to men, to a lesser degree. Perhaps the most important finding uncovered by the disaggregation of treatment effects is that even though women are more receptive to an argument that attributes corruption reduction to women's honesty than are men, this is still the least persuasive stereotype for both genders.

6 | CONCLUSION

Police departments around the world need to improve their image to regain the public's trust. In this article, we considered one policy that might be effective at restoring trust in the police: adding women to the force. In our study, survey participants did believe that this particular policy would prove successful. When it comes to understanding why policies such as hiring more women would be viewed as effective at combating corruption, the experimental design presented in this article allows us to adjudicate between competing explanations, without concern for potential confounding factors such as participants' own experiences with police in the United States, or their general attitudes toward corruption in Mexico.

Based on the results from our stereotype activation experiment, we find evidence that both perceptions of outsider status and risk aversion lead people to believe that hiring more female police officers will be successful at reducing police corruption. Regardless of whether or not some women may be just as likely as men to engage in corruption, the fact remains that women are viewed differently than the men who have traditionally occupied public service institutions like police departments. This research suggests that women's perceived outsider status may be one of the reasons why. Because people believe that women lack access to the networks necessary for engaging in corruption, thinking about women as bureaucratic outsiders enhances the perception that women are less corrupt. However, once women become more common in these positions and entrenched in the system, this perception may change and the effect of women on perceptions of corruption may prove fleeting.

Our findings also show that beliefs about risk aversion have a strong effect on the relationship between gender and perceptions of corruption. Although there is ample evidence to suggest that women are less tolerant of risk (Jianakoplos & Bernasek, 1998; Watson & McNaughton, 2007), it is not as well established that women are *perceived* as more risk averse. This research contributes to our understanding of perceptions of risk aversion and shows how such perceptions might strengthen the relationship between gender and perceptions of corruption. This finding is especially promising because, unlike outsider status, the perception that women are more risk averse is unlikely to go away as women become more common on the police force. That said, if women take these posts and then engage in corruption, it could work to erode the stereotypes that women are more cautious and risk averse.

Learning more about the specific stereotypes that underlie perceptions of women is important for thinking about the role of women in public service and government. Clearly, in circumstances where trust in government is low, women stand to benefit from perceptions that they are outsiders, uniquely positioned to improve things. However, if the presence of women in public service is normalized, as many promoting women's representation might hope, this outsider stereotype may shift over time, as it appears the stereotype of women as more honest has. The stereotype of risk aversion, however, may endure. Where corruption remains a concern, women might expect to see benefit from this stereotype. But risk aversion might also be seen as a negative, particularly in contexts where political leaders need to take risks. Thus, this is a stereotype that might ultimately constrain women's advancement in public service.

Our findings also have broader implications for trust in government. Citizens who perceive their government as corrupt are less likely to trust the police in particular (Kääriäinen, 2007). They are less likely to trust their political institutions more broadly, and are more likely to distance themselves from traditional modes of political participation (Stockemer, LaMontagne, & Scruggs, 2013). Although this study pertains directly to the police, we have reason to believe that our findings should hold elsewhere in government. Recent research demonstrates that in less formalized bureaucratic organizations, where actors have more autonomy, women bureaucrats are associated with lower levels of corruption (Stensöta, Wängnerug, & Svensson, 2015). If women are perceived as more risk averse than men, then hiring more women should be especially effective at improving perceptions of corruption in government agencies where actors have the power and discretion to influence policy outcomes.

It appears as though some policymakers are already recognizing these potential advantages. In the municipality of Valledupor, Colombia, the mayor reported appointing women to 70% of his cabinet positions as a means to increase transparency in management and serve as a check on corruption (Ferreria et al., 2014). In Uganda, women are frequently appointed to head up corruption investigations in the police force and are often selected to serve as treasurers in local governments with the expectation that they will reduce misspending (Goetz, 2007; Tripp, 2001).

In conclusion, the findings from this research indicate that when policymakers are trying to restore trust in political institutions, hiring more women will prove especially effective at reducing suspicions of corruption, particularly when the public is reminded that women are bureaucratic outsiders and that they are more risk averse and cautious. It is worth noting, however, that the results of our interactive analysis show that responses to these messages are not uniform across both genders—messages about outsider status resonate more with men, whereas risk aversion is more persuasive to women. Furthermore, although such policies are likely to increase trust and restore the public's image of political institutions in the short term, more work is needed to see whether the effects of outsider status and risk aversion hold in the long run. Although we suspect that the influence of women's outsider status will diminish with time, we are more optimistic that women's perceived risk aversion will continue to enhance the perception that women are less likely to engage in illicit practices or corrupt behavior.

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NOTES

- ¹ See also: "Peru's Women Cleaning Up Traffic Chaos, Corruption" CNN (<http://www.latinamericanstudies.org/peru/policewomen.htm>); "Mexican State's Anti-Corruption Plan: Hire Female Traffic Cops" National Public Radio (<http://www.npr.org/2013/09/28/226903227/mexican-state-s-anti-corruption-plan-hire-women-traffic-cops>).
- ² The LAPOP question asks respondents to indicate their trust in the national police on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 represents no trust and 7 represents a lot of trust. Here, respondents who indicated that their level of trust was a 5, 6, or 7 are considered to trust the police.
- ³ As stated on its website at http://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_of_police_in_africa_must_end_now (accessed July 7, 2016).
- ⁴ Beyond decreasing corruption, several countries across Latin America have established women's police units to improve reporting of crimes against women, offer support to female victims, and to raise awareness around women's security issues (UN Women, 2011). If laws are passed to protect underrepresented groups such as women or minorities, this may engender citizen trust in the government (Swamy et al., 2001; Stensöta et al., 2015; Watson & Moreland, 2014). Thus, to the extent that women are recruited into police forces to protect the rights of women, the representation of women's interests may serve as a fourth possible mechanism through which increases in female police officers improve perceptions of corruption.
- ⁵ Similarly, Schwindt-Bayer (2010, pp. 173–194) finds "citizens in countries with a gender quota view government corruption as less common than citizens in countries without quotas." Nonetheless, she does not find evidence that increases in women's numeric representation in national legislatures is associated with corruption perceptions.

- ⁶ To support the notion that women really are the “fairer sex,” Dollar, Fisman, and Gatti (2001, p. 424) point out that women will be less likely to sacrifice the common good for personal (material) gain.
- ⁷ Treatments were assigned using the Randomizer function in Qualtrics.
- ⁸ A review of the descriptive statistics across treatment and control groups reveals balance on relevant covariates (see Table 1 and Table A1 in the Appendix).
- ⁹ An example of the question as it appeared to participants is included in the Appendix.

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APPENDIX: EXAMPLE OF SURVEY EXPERIMENT AS IT APPEARED TO SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

The police department in Mexico City hired a large number of women in traffic enforcement to try to combat corruption in that department. Because women are believed to be more honest, the police department hopes this will reduce bribes. How successful do you expect this strategy to be?

1. Very Successful
2. Somewhat Successful
3. Not too Successful
4. Not at all Successful

Note: This question is as it would have appeared to an individual receiving the honesty treatment.

TABLE A1 Multinomial logit for predicting treatment group

	(1) Honesty	(2) Outsider	(3) Risk averse
Female participant	-0.014 (0.185)	0.138 (0.173)	-0.080 (0.173)
Education	0.026 (0.078)	0.114 (0.074)	0.035 (0.073)
Age	0.001 (0.008)	0.007 (0.007)	-0.007 (0.008)
Income	-0.008 (0.028)	0.014 (0.026)	0.014 (0.026)
Work full-time	-0.209 (0.250)	-0.077 (0.241)	-0.167 (0.238)
Work part-time	-0.428 (0.304)	-0.085 (0.282)	-0.083 (0.277)
Student	-0.263 (0.378)	0.104 (0.354)	-0.481 (0.364)
Ideology	0.014 (0.086)	-0.057 (0.080)	0.000 (0.080)
Constant	-0.095 (0.583)	-0.647 (0.554)	0.414 (0.547)
Observations	1065		
Log likelihood	-1462.7176		

Note. Standard errors in parentheses.