2

Defining Corruption

John Gardiner

Introduction

There are several major problems in attempting to define "corruption." First, there are in fact several distinct but related problems. Second, there are important differences among "corruption" as it is defined in the official laws of nations, "corruption" as it affects the public, and "corruption" as it is defined by public opinion, by the people who are both the ultimate authorities in democratic nations and the ones who by their complacency and their collusion may contribute to corruption taking place or who by their vigilance and integrity may assist authorities in monitoring public officials. Finally, there are important differences among nations in how these problems are defined.

1. Corruption and Related Public Problems

A series of problems are often linked in public discussions of corruption. Government investigation and prosecution agencies may have the responsibility to deal with all of them together, and they may occur together, but they have different causes and may have different solutions.

Source: John Gardiner, "Defining Corruption." Ch. 3 (pp. 21–38) in Maurice Punch, Emile Kolthoff, Kees van der Vijver, and Bram van Vliet, eds., *Coping with Corruption in a Borderless World: Proceedings of the Fifth International Anti-Corruption Conference*. Deventer and Boston: Kluwer Law and Taxation Publishers, 1993. Reprinted by permission.

1.1. Corruption by Public Officials

The first problem is "Corruption by Public Officials." The definition of corruption most often used by social scientists has been provided by Harvard political scientist Joseph S. Nye. Nye says corruption is "behaviour which deviates from the normal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (family, close private clique), pecuniary or status gains; or violates rules against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influence. This includes such behaviour as bribery (use of rewards to pervert the judgment of a person in a position of trust); nepotism (bestowal of patronage by reason of ascriptive relationship rather than merit); and misappropriation (illegal appropriation of public resources for private-regarding uses)" (Nye, 1967: 966).

Several parts of Nye's definition are particularly important. All probably would agree with Nye's emphasis on public roles. If an official fights with a lover or abuses a child, that may be assault but it is not corruption: corruption only involves the behaviour of an official in his or her public role. But what about Nye's requirement of personal gain—his focus on abuses for "private-regarding (family, close private clique) pecuniary or status gains"? This definition certainly covers situations where money winds up in the pockets of the official or a relative, but it does not cover situations where the goal of the abuse is to benefit the official's political party, ethnic group, etc., rather than the official or the official's family. The Watergate abuses in the United States, for example, certainly involved extensive illegality, but most of the illegal acts were intended to benefit the President's party—to insure that the Republicans would win in the 1972 presidential election, and later to prevent the embarrassing disclosure of the Nixon Administration's role in arranging the cover-up of the original burglary. While Richard Nixon frequently did abuse his office for personal gain (for example, by remodeling his California mansion at government expense, and by padding his tax returns), the basic Watergate episode itself was not intended to enrich the President or his advisors.

A second very important limitation comes from Nye's requirement that the behaviour deviate from normal duties or violate rules. As will be seen later, this part of the definition leads to major variations in what different nations see as corruption: some governments do not have formal rules about official conduct, and in some nations it may be taken for granted that elected officials and bureaucrats will mix their official duties and their private business affairs. In other words, the "normal duties" of an official in one country may include accepting "gifts" or making a decision even if it involves a conflict of interest.

For example, the answers to "Is it acceptable for a contractor to take the government purchasing officer and his family on a two-week vacation on the

Riviera?" or "Can the Minister for Highways award a construction contract to a company of which he is part owner?" often depend on where the events take place. In some nations, the government may not have rules forbidding these acts; or public expectations may be that they are 'normal' in that society. If that is true, then the acts would fall outside Nye's formal definition of corruption in those nations even though the acts would be labeled corrupt in other nations.

1.2. Abuse of Office by Public Officials

A second major category is abuse of office by public officials. Here, a precise definition is impossible: the dictionary says only that "to abuse" means "to misuse" or "to do something improper," and misuse and improper are as vague as abuse. Canadian political scientist Kenneth Gibbons suggests a number of actions which some people may label "abuse of office" (adapted from Gibbons, 1985: 778):

- A civil servant gives a position in his office to a relative rather than to a better-qualified applicant. *(Nepotism)*
- A political party wins an election and then removes all office-holders who supported the opposition party. *(Patronage)*
- A legislator owns stock in a mining company, and votes for a bill which will give tax concessions to the company. *(Legislative conflict of interest)*
- Government bureaucrats use their knowledge and contacts to establish a part-time consulting firm which gives advice to private clients. *(Bureaucratic conflict of interest)*

To Gibbons' list might be added the *awarding of government contracts* to favoured friends or political supporters, *lying* to the media and the public, and many forms of *campaign finance;* all raise similar problems of abuse of office.

Before leaving this category of abuse of office, the definitional ambiguity which is present here should be stressed: some forms of these abuses may be prohibited by statutes in some nations. Where this is true, they might be equated with other forms of "corruption" if Nye's second requirement is met, that the official is deriving a personal gain from the act. Even where they are not illegal, however, all of these actions are at least unethical—offensive to widely shared views as to how an official should act and how democratic governments should operate.

1.3. Business Corruption, Fraud, Theft, Abuse, Error and Waste

These improprieties differ from official corruption and abuse of office primarily because they are committed by someone who is not an office-holder. Probably the most frequent activity under this category concerns business corruption or "kickbacks." For example, a sales representative may offer a prospective buyer an extra payment if his or her product is selected, or a buyer may offer a manufacturer a payment if the shipment is "expedited" (delivered faster) or if it contains more or better goods than are required under the contract, etc. In both cases, whether the payment is proper or improper depends on whether a law specifies some other procedure, and who receives the extra payment. If the corporation has a policy of offering discounts or of charging extra for fast service, then the payments are probably not improper. If the money is kept by the individual salesman or buyer, however, it can be assumed that the company—the employer—is being cheated, and thus that ordinary principles of agency law (that everything earned by an agent belongs to the principal) are being violated.

A second form of private misconduct is fraud. A government official who takes unauthorized funds from the treasury, is committing "embezzlement" or "corruption." Private citizens or corporations, however, which intentionally use deception to take excessive or unauthorized government benefits or contracts from the treasury, are committing fraud. Examples of fraud might involve a welfare recipient providing incorrect facts (saying "I have three children" when in fact the recipient only has one child) or failing to provide correct facts (for example, correctly stating that she has lost her job but falling to state that she receives child support). A contractor might overstate the costs of materials or the number of items delivered to the purchaser, or submit a bill for quality materials when substandard or defective materials have been used. All of these deceptive acts are fraudulent.

Several other forms of misconduct by corporations or private citizens should be noted here. If there is no deception when unauthorized benefits are intentionally taken, it should probably be called simple theft. As was true with misconduct by public officials, there are also forms of misconduct by private citizens which are not illegal. Abuse occurs [when] "benefits are obtained or used in ways which are not intended by those who design or administer programs, but which are not specifically prohibited by law or regulation" (Lange and Bowers, 1979: 15). For example, it might be legal for a student—depending on the rules of a program—to use funds from a government education loan program to buy a car rather than to pay her tuition. If it is not illegal, there could not be prosecution, but since it is not consistent with the intended use of the program, it would be an abuse.

The terms error and waste often arise in discussions of some government programs. "Errors involve program decisions which violate relevant rules,

and may be intentional or unintentional, substantial or technical, and may be caused by the official (e.g., not knowing the rules, or incorrectly applying the rules to the facts) or the client. Waste is a concept even more vague than abuse. In general it refers either to ineffective expenditures (expenditures which do not accomplish programmatic goals) or to inefficiencies, things which cost more than is necessary" (Gardiner and Lyman, 1984: 3).

1.4. Organized Crime and Racketeering

The final public problem which should be mentioned is "Organized Crime and Racketeering." Crime syndicates and racketeers can and do corrupt public officials to nullify law enforcement. However, while corruption is a tool of crime syndicates and racketeers, it is not the same thing. Many forms of official corruption are unrelated to crime syndicates and racketeering, and crime syndicates are sometimes able to operate even where officials are completely honest.

2. Definitions of Corruption: Legal, Public Interest, and Public Opinion Criteria

The discussion thus far has separated corruption from the related problems of abuse, fraud, and organized crime. Fraud and organized crime are clearly different from corruption, since they are not themselves the acts of public officials. Official corruption and official abuse, however, have many similarities.

In turning to the different sources which can be used in forming a definition of corruption, there is a much more serious problem. Yale University political scientist James C. Scott has stated this problem very clearly: "Corruption, we would all agree, involves a deviation from certain standards of behaviour. The first question which arises is, what criteria shall we use to establish those standards?" (Scott, 1972: 3).

2.1. Legal Definitions of Corruption

To answer Professor Scott's question, one thought would naturally be to use the criteria set forth in official statutes. These criteria are very straightforward: if an official's act is prohibited by laws established by the government, it is corrupt; if it is not prohibited, it is not corrupt even if it is abusive or unethical. Lawyers will appreciate the virtues of this formal or positivist definition: it is clear, and officials, government employees, and ordinary citizens can be expected to know the requirements and prohibitions spelled out in statutes. These conditions justify punishing violators. In public education as well as enforcement efforts, the fact that something is illegal as well as

unethical provides something firm—something tangible—to focus on. Even if the corruption laws are not perfect, the legislature can amend the laws to deal with new problems.

While the legal or statutory definition of corruption may be convenient and unambiguous, Professor Scott stresses a major problem with this type of definition:

> Our conception of corruption does not cover political systems that are, in Aristotelian terms, "corrupt" in that they systematically serve the interests of special groups or sectors. A given regime may be biased or repressive; it may consistently favour the interests, say, of the aristocracy, big business, a single ethnic group, or a single region while it represses other demands, but it is not ipso facto corrupt unless these ends are accomplished by breaching the formal norms of office. (Scott, 1972: 5)

Professor Scott concludes his analysis of the legalistic definition of corruption by warning us of three problems:

1. The danger of implicitly giving normative value to whatever standards of official conduct happen to prevail and thereby failing to treat corruption as an integral part of politics. Here, in other words, Professor Scott warns us of the danger of assuming that everything legal is always ethical.
2. Professor Scott next warns us of "the difficulty of comparing nations (or a single nation at two points in time) when their formal norms of office are quite divergent." In other words, Professor Scott points to the danger that an identical action in two nations will be labeled differently because of differences in laws.
3. Finally, Professor Scott notes "the distortion introduced when we compare a nation with a small public sector with one with a large public sector." A nation where almost everyone is a government employee, he tells us, can't easily be compared with one where most people work for private corporations (Scott, 1972: 5).

2.2. *Public Interest Definitions of Corruption*

The problems involved in comparing corruption in different nations—the last two issues raised by Professor Scott—will be discussed later. With regard to the issue of legal definitions, however, two examples will illustrate the problem:

- In Nazi Germany during World War II, Jews were forbidden by law to emigrate. If a passport inspector took 1000 DM from a Jewish family and approved its departure, could his act be called "corruption"? Certainly the inspector took money to "pervert his judgment," in Nye's

terminology, but should it be called corruption or does the evil of the Anti-Jewish laws justify the inspector's action? In this situation, most people would probably say that the legal act (enforcing the Jewish laws) would be evil and that evading the laws (letting the family escape) would be the ethical thing to do.

- If the first example shows that an illegal act may not be corrupt, a second example may show the opposite situation, one in which a legal action may be corrupt. This example occurred often in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. To combat widespread decay in its central cities, the United States Congress created a program called urban renewal. In this program, government agencies condemned land in "blighted" areas, cleared buildings on the land, and resold the land to developers. Much of the land which was condemned under the urban renewal program, in cities throughout the United States, was occupied by poor people; often the occupants were racial minorities. After land was condemned and cleared, many urban renewal projects produced luxury apartment complexes and office buildings. Now consider the action of an official who destroys an old apartment building housing poor black families, and then constructs a new building with luxury housing for white executives. Assume that the official follows required procedures in every step of the process, that the old buildings met all statutory requirements for demolition, and that the luxury housing was an eligible development under the urban renewal statute. In this situation, the official's actions were legal, but weren't they also corrupt? In Scott's language, the urban renewal program "systematically served the interests" of America's middle and upper-middle classes at the expense of the poor and minorities. Whether or not America's urban renewal program was an appropriate way to deal with cities' economic problems (the costs and benefits of the program were very complex and the net effects may have been very good), it is clear that people who are suspicious of programs in which poor people suffer and rich people become richer will argue that a program like urban renewal epitomizes the "corruption" of the American political process. On the other hand, others probably feel uncomfortable using the term corruption in all situations where the political process produces policies which do not benefit everyone equally. In comparison with the example of the Nazi immigration inspector, where most probably agree on the issues of ethics, people probably have mixed views of the "corruptness" of the urban renewal example.

What do these examples say about definitions of corruption? The limitations built into the statutory or legalistic definition have led some scholars to focus on the effects of an act rather than on its legal status. Simply stated, this

definition says: if an act is harmful to the public interest, it is corrupt even if it is legal; if it is beneficial to the public, it is not corrupt even if it violates the law. Returning to the two examples offered earlier—the inspector who allows Jews to escape Nazi Germany and the urban renewal officer who destroys low-income housing—the effects of the two officials' acts could be analyzed both at the level of the individuals involved (for example, the families trying to emigrate, the residents of the housing which was destroyed and of the new housing built) and at the level of the broader society.

The differences of opinion which will arise here are obvious. Trying to analyze a concept as broad as "the public interest" involves both very serious measurement problems and conflicts over the values which should be considered in the analysis. Supporters of the Nazi movement would say that the effort to "purify the Aryan race" justified the Jewish laws, and therefore that the inspector hurt the public interest; supporters of the urban renewal program would say that the harm suffered by individual residents of old buildings was outweighed by improvements in the total supply of housing, in the economy of the city, etc. In short, the effects of corruption on the public interest cannot be analyzed without considering the many, many views people have about public goals.

Finally, thinking about corruption requires thinking about the political process. A belief that anything the legislature decides is good, requires condemnation as corruption of any actions which nullify the legislature's intent. Acceptance of the possibility that the legislature can create a bad policy, however—especially if the legislative process in a nation systematically excludes the views of some parts of the society—creates the possibility that some corruption may be necessary or even good. This leads to a mixed assessment of the public interest approach to defining corruption: it is inevitably broad and ambiguous, and will rarely give one answer that everyone accepts. However, it may raise important questions to consider in judging some situations.

Public Opinion Definitions of Corruption

A third source of criteria to define standards of official integrity, in addition to official statutes and the public interest, is public opinion—how the people in a nation define corruption. Why should public opinion be used to define corruption? If there are significant differences between what a nation's laws say and how most citizens define corruption, it is likely that officials and government employees will be guided more by local culture than by the words of a law, and thus will be more likely to violate the law. In addition, effective action against corruption will be difficult or impossible if public opinion does not correspond to the statute's definitions. Investigators and prosecutors know that if citizens are concerned about corruption—if they

demand the strictest honesty—they will be more likely to report crimes, to assist in investigations, and to vote for convictions when they serve as jurors. As voters, citizens sensitive to corruption may be more likely to elect officials with similar views and to throw out the rascals. Finally, citizens' values about corruption are likely to affect how they behave themselves—whether they will offer bribes or will abide by the requirements of the law. For all of these reasons, understanding public opinion about corruption will provide a basis for effective law enforcement efforts.

Illustrating how public opinion may vary, American political scientist Arnold Heidenheimer advises us to focus our attention on differences between "black," "grey," and "white" corruption. The evaluation "black corruption," Heidenheimer says, "indicates that in that setting that particular action is one which a majority consensus of both elite and mass opinion would condemn and would want to see punished as a matter of principle." "Grey corruption" indicates that some elements, usually elites, may want to see the action punished, others not, and the majority may well be ambivalent. "White corruption" signifies that the majority of both elite and mass opinion probably would not vigorously support an attempt to punish a form of corruption that they regard as tolerable. This implies that they attach less value to the maintenance of the values involved than they do to the costs that might be generated as the result of a change in rule enforcement (Heidenheimer, 1989:161).

What is known about these variations? Colgate University Professor Michael Johnston warns us of a number of problems involved in trying to measure these differences in public opinion. First, public opinion polls taken over a period of time show that attitudes can and do fluctuate—about corruption as about other issues (Erskine,1973). During and after Watergate, for example, public opinion polls in the U.S. showed a much stronger concern about official integrity than was seen in earlier polls, and the level of concern fell off several years after President Nixon resigned. This fluctuation raises the question: which time provides the best measure of the public's sentiments: is the higher percent expressing anger during a scandal more accurate than the lower figures at other times? The higher figure may suggest how many people can become angry, but the lower figures show that other issues are usually more important to them.

Johnston also points to an even more troublesome problem, "the problem of deciding who 'the public' is." Johnston asks, "is it everyone, or just adults, or just registered voters? Is it only those who are knowledgeable about issues and events, or only those with a direct interest in a given area of politics and decision-making? Or do we regard 'the public' as those who respond to surveys? There are, after all, many 'publics', and they rarely agree on anything of importance" (Johnston, 1982: 7).

Two examples will show the importance of Johnston's point that there are

many publics with different opinions. Chicago is just reaching the end of a ten-year federal investigation of its court system. "Operation Greylord" has led to the conviction of more than 100 judges, attorneys, and courtroom staff for various forms of corruption. In the state of Maryland in the 1970s, a federal investigation of the awarding of state construction contracts documented a system where all contractors kicked back about 5 percent of the contract amount to elected officials. The investigation led to the conviction of contractors, state officials, and the Vice President of the United States! Whose "public opinion" should be looked at in Chicago and Maryland? There is no data on how the general public felt about corruption, but in both cases, the system of corruption was well-known and accepted by insiders—by lawyers and workers in the court system in Chicago, and by construction firms, politicians, and bureaucrats in Maryland. There were no complaints from the insiders, and the voters did not throw out the rascals; in both cases, reform came about only because federal investigators and prosecutors invested enormous resources to destroy the system.

Accepting Johnston's warnings that public attitudes will change over time and that different groups will have different attitudes, what is known about public opinion about corruption? Over the last twenty years, several research projects have developed very important scientific insights into the question "how does the public define corruption?"

In 1966, I studied a city in the United States which had been the home of a crime syndicate for over forty years, a city whose elected officials and senior police officials had been personally picked by the syndicate. I was particularly interested in the politics of corruption—in whether the citizens wanted corrupt officials. A survey of city residents did not show that they wanted corruption per se, or that they opposed law enforcement efforts, but the survey clearly showed a widespread tolerance of gambling (the chief source of the syndicate's revenues), and it showed that substantial numbers of respondents were tolerant of minor forms of corruption such as conflicts of interest and accepting gifts from companies doing business with the city (these might correspond with Professor Heidenheimer's "white corruption"). I concluded the report by saying, "the survey clearly shows that the residents did not tolerate corruption per se. Whenever symbols of law enforcement and official morality were brought into survey questions, most respondents chose public norms of morality. While some of the survey respondents were slow to perceive that corruption might arise from relationships between officials and persons doing business with the city, they clearly chose honesty and law enforcement when they recognized the nature of the relationship" (Gardiner, 1970: 55–56).

The second opinion survey was conducted by American political scientists John Peters and Susan Welch. They asked over 400 American state legislators to judge ten hypothetical situations. In each case, they asked whether the

respondent would consider it corrupt, whether "most public officials" would consider it corrupt, and whether "most of the public" would consider it corrupt. Analyzing variances in responses about corruptness, Peters and Welch concluded that variations related to four components of the situation: the public official, the donor, the favor rendered by the public official, and the payoff involved. An act was likely to be judged as more corrupt, they concluded, if the official who took the money held a nonpolitical position (for example, if the official was a judge rather than a politician) and if the official was acting in his or her public role when the act occurred (i.e., if the act was part of his job rather than if he was acting as a private citizen).

With regard to the donor in each of their hypothetical situations, Peters and Welch found that the act was viewed as less corrupt if a legislator received funds from a constituent (someone from the legislator's district) than if the donor was a nonconstituent or if the donor was the official himself.

Several characteristics of the favor rendered affected how the situation was judged. The situation was more corrupt if the benefits were private rather than public, if the recipient was a nonconstituent rather than a constituent, and if the act was nonroutine rather than routine (in other words, if the official departed from normal routines to provide the favor). Finally, several characteristics of the payoff in each situation affected whether it was judged to be more or less corrupt. Respondents were more likely to see the situation as corrupt if the payoff was large, if its benefits were short-range (immediate rather than in the distant future), if it was specific rather than general, and if it was unrelated to an election campaign rather than a campaign contribution (Peters and Welch, 1978: 976). The conclusions reached by Peters and Welch based on the opinions of American state legislators are almost identical with the findings of Michael Atkinson and Maureen Mancuso after interviewing members of the Canadian Parliament (Atkinson and Mancuso, 1985: 468–469).

A final set of surveys seeking to identify public definitions of corruption was conducted by Michael Johnston. He also used hypothetical situations to identity what makes acts more or less corrupt in the eyes of the general public. Johnston's respondents were more likely to label as corrupt acts involving larger sums of money, involving public officials rather than private citizens, involving direct rather than indirect taking, involving the official keeping the money rather than passing it on (for example to a political party), and situations in which the rule-breaker is prominent rather than an average citizen (Johnston, 1986a).

What do these public opinion surveys say about the problem of defining corruption? Certainly they confirm Arnold Heidenheimer's distinction between "black" and "white" corruption: small-scale payments to low-level officials to alter routine decisions are viewed as being less serious than large payments to major officials. Similarly, while the survey respondents con-

demn non-political officials such as judges who act improperly, they seem to expect that "political" officials will do favors for campaign contributors and constituents. In short, the public is making distinctions based on which official is involved, what decisions were involved, and what payoffs were involved.

These studies clearly show that there are wide variations in how citizens define corruption, but there is also evidence that public opinion changes over time. Scandals by definition increase public awareness of corruption issues, and at least for a short time increase public outrage at violations of their expectations. What is especially important is that public awareness and concern can be increased by public education programs, so it is possible to change the ways citizens define corruption.

The most extensive anti-corruption public education program in the world is being conducted by Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption. ICAC uses a wide variety of techniques to increase public awareness and change attitudes: liaison with community organizations, public education in the schools, and television public service announcements. Summarizing the first ten years of ICAC's public education activities, Professor David Clark concluded that the Hong Kong public has become more aware of corruption problems and of ICAC's mission, is aware of the Prevention of Bribery Statute and (in general) its provisions, and thinks positively of corruption control (Clark, 1987. See also Clark, 1989, and Gardiner and Malec, 1989).

3. Variations among Nations

Variations in definitions among nations guarantee that no definition of corruption will be equally accepted in every nation. These variations can be found whether definitions are based on statutory criteria, on the impact of corruption on the public interest, or on public opinion.

First, different nations have different legal definitions of corruption. As already discussed, it is difficult to compare socialist and capitalist nations: many activities which are performed by government employees in socialist nations are performed by employees of private corporations in capitalist societies, and different standards often apply in the two situations. A second variation can be seen in the scope of corruption laws. In some nations, laws deal only with the most blatant bribery; other nations however have added laws to regulate nepotism, conflicts of interest, election campaign contributions, etc. Some nations feel that "gift-giving" or "dash" payments are acceptable while other nations have very detailed codes of conduct regulating both legislators and bureaucrats. In some nations, prosecutors must be able to prove that the official intended to violate the laws; other prosecutors only are

required to prove that a prohibited act has occurred, or that an official has wealth which cannot be explained by the income reported on past tax returns.

The second criterion presented earlier defined corruption by its effects on the public interest. Once again, looking at different nations can show a different conclusion about the effects of similar acts. Corruption often has very dangerous effects, but there are some nations where corruption is relatively harmless or even healthy. Several examples may show how this can happen.

Students of socialist, planned economies have often noted that bribes or illegal side-payments are essential to making the system work—to getting anything done despite the inefficiencies and disincentives of the legal, official system. Russian social scientist Aron Katsenelinbogen noted in 1983, "in the USSR, where bureaucracy has permeated all aspects of life, there is a wide spectrum that characterizes the extent of illegality. There one encounters a wide variety of semi-legal activities because on the one hand the government does not want to legalize them (since they contradict the predominant ideological principles of the system) but on the other hand finds itself compelled to take account of its own best interests" (Katsenelinbogen, 1983: 236).

In a different setting, analysts of rapidly developing third world nations have reached a variety of conclusions about the effects of corruption. David H. Bayley suggests that corruption diverts scarce national resources, frustrates the implementation of national policies, and erodes the status of elites. However, he also notes that in some nations corruption also can attract to public service able administrators who would not accept low official salaries, and it opens a door to groups excluded from the official political process (Bayley, 1966). In a parallel vein, a study of political corruption in West Africa concluded that it simply reflected maladministration of government in general—that corruption was simply a way to get around the incompetence of inefficient government bureaucracies (Riley, 1987).

Michael Johnston, reviewing the literature on the consequences of corruption, concludes that its effects in a particular nation will depend on the scale of corruption relative to the overall economy, and on alternative opportunities to get ahead. Corruption will be more harmful, Johnston concludes, if it pervades the entire society and if the "boundaries of a disintegrative form of corruption correspond with existing class, racial, ethnic and factional cleavages in society"(Johnston, 1986b: 1003). By comparison, corruption would be less harmful in a nation if it is limited in scope or if it gives a fringe group a unique chance to get ahead.

There are no simple answers to the issue of effects. British scholar Michael Clarke, summarizing a series of studies of corruption in capitalist and socialist, industrialized and developing nations, explicitly cautions against such generalizations. Prof. Clarke points out that there are "constantly changing opportunities for and pressures towards corruption even within the same po-

litical economies. However, none of this should, I think, make us unduly pessimistic about understanding corruption, and thereby understanding its consequences and the means necessary to control it" (Clarke, 1983: xviii-xix).

One final indication of differences among nations in their definitions of corruption comes from variations in public opinion about corruption issues. There are nations where official corruption has been widespread for many years with no visible signs of public outrage. However, there are also nations where the smallest violation leads to scandals, investigations, and swift punishment. Similarly, conflicting attitudes exist within nations. Sometimes, these internal variations are primarily geographical. Daniel J. Elazar, for example, has argued that the United States contains at least three political cultures. "Moralistic," "individualistic" and "traditionalistic" attitudes about official integrity, Elazar believes, have been dominant in different states depending on patterns of immigration as the U.S. grew in the nineteenth century (Elazar, 1972).

Similar variations in attitudes appear in former colonies where a European legal system was superimposed on the traditional codes and values of the native population: official practices accepted by everyone in pre-colonial days only became "improper" when colonial values were introduced. As a senior official of a Pacific nation said at the Third International Anti-Corruption Conference in Hong Kong, "we did not have corruption in my nation until the British legal system was brought in. The British introduced us to the concept of corruption!"

This does not necessarily mean that there is no consistency in attitudes about corruption among nations. As already mentioned, Michael Atkinson and Maureen Mancuso (1985) found that Canadian members of parliament ranked hypothetical corruption incidents in about the same order of corruptness that John Peters and Susan Welch (1978) found in their survey of American state legislators. Michael Johnston has adapted the questions be has asked in the United States to situations common in Britain, and has found substantial similarities in the outcomes of opinion surveys: law-breaking such as petty bribery is condemned more than simply unethical practices, and government officials are judged more strictly than ordinary citizens. However, the British survey respondents showed greater consistency in their comments, while the Americans were slightly more individualistic, tending to treat officials and citizens equally. The Americans emphasize formal laws and codes to deal with corruption problems, but "Britain relies more upon culture and the 'etiquette' associated with important roles" (Johnston, 1989: 428). As a result, Johnston argues, the British are more likely to settle problems informally while the Americans have more public scandals and extended lawsuits.

4. Implications of the Definitions for the Attack on Corruption

Corruption has many definitions, and these variations affect the work of enforcement agencies. Many legal systems are very limited, and do not address important problems. Their laws may include definitions of corruption or procedures which make prosecution and conviction very difficult. The discussion about the public interest suggests that under certain circumstances, citizens may reasonably feel that an act which is legally defined as corruption is nevertheless a necessary tool to survive. This is especially likely to occur in nations with extreme poverty, discriminatory access to advancement, or repressive laws. Finally, public opinion surveys remind us that citizens are not equally concerned about all actions which violate the law.

References

Atkinson, M. and M. Mancuso (1985) "Do We Need a Code of Conduct for Politicians? The Search for an Elite Political Corruption in Canada" *Canadian Journal of Political Science* XVIII (September): 459–479.

Bayley, D. H. (1966) "The Effects of Corruption in a Developing Nation" *Western Political Quarterly* XIX (December): 719–732.

Clark, D. (1987) "A Community Relations Approach to Corruption: the Case of Hong Kong" *Corruption and Reform* 2 (3): 235–257.

Clark, D. (1989) "Mobilizing Public Opinion against Corruption: A Commentary" *Corruption and Reform* 4 (2): 123–129.

Clarke, M. (1983) (ed.) *Corruption: Causes, Consequences, and Control.* New York: St. Martin's.

Elazar, D. (1972) *American Federalism: A View from the States.* New York: Crowell.

Erskine, H. (1973) "The Polls: Corruption in Government" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 37. Winter, 1973–1974: 628–644.

Gardiner, J. A. (1970) *The Politics of Corruption: Organized Crime in an American City.* New York: Russell Sage.

Gardiner, J. A. and T. R. Lyman (1984) *The Fraud Control Game: State Responses to Fraud and Abuse in AFDC and Medicaid.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Gardiner, J. A, and K. L. Malec (1989) "Mobilizing Public Opinion against Corruption: A Report to the Chicago Ethics Project" *Corruption and Reform* 4 (2): 107–121.

Gibbons, K. M. (1985) "Variations in Attitudes toward Corruption in Canada" in A. J. Heidenheimer, M. Johnston, and V. T. LeVine, eds., *Political Corruption: A Handbook.* New Brunswick: Transaction, 1989, pp. 763–788.

Heidenheimer, A. J. (1989) "Perspectives on the Perception of Corruption," in A. J. Heidenheimer, M. Johnston, and V. T. LeVine, eds., *Political Corruption: A Handbook.* New Brunswick: Transaction, 1989, pp. 149–163.

Johnston, M. (1982) *Political Corruption and Public Policy in America.* Monterey: Brooks/Cole.

Johnston, M. (1986a) "Right and Wrong in American Politics: Popular Conceptions of Corruption" *Polity* 18 (Spring): 367–391.

Johnston, M. (1986b) "The Political Consequences of Corruption: A Reassessment" in

A. J. Heidenheimer, M. Johnston, and V. T. Levine, eds., *Political Corruption: A Handbook.* New Brunswick: Transaction, 1989, pp.985–1006.

Johnston,M. (1989) "Corruption and Political Culture in Britain and the United States" *Innovation* 2: 417–436.

Katsenelinbogen, A. (1983) "Corruption in the USSR: Some Methodological Notes," in M. Clarke, ed., *Corruption: Causes, Consequences, and Control.* New York: St. Martin's, pp. 220–238.

Lange, A., and R. Bowers (1979) *Fraud and Abuse in Government Benefit Programs.* Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office.

Nye, J.S. (1967) "Corruption and Political Development: A Cost Benefit Analysis" in A. J. Heidenheimer, M. Johnston, and V. T. Levine, eds., *Political Corruption: A Handbook.* New Brunswick: Transaction, 1989, pp. 963–983.

Peters, J., and S. Welch (1978) "Political Corruption in America: A Search for Definitions and a Theory" *American Political Science Review* 72 (September): 974–984

Riley, S. (1987) "Public-Office Corruption in West Africa: Political Culture, Context, and Control" (unpublished).

Scott, J.C. (1972) *Comparative Political Corruption.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.