CAUSES OF CORRUPTION: TOWARDS A CONTEXTUAL THEORY OF CORRUPTION

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ABSTRACT

The more we know about the causes of corruption, the better we can decide which policy instruments to use to combat corruption. The primary question of this article is: how can the causes of corruption in Western countries be studied? Here, an overview is presented of the causes of corruption mentioned in the literature using the kind of causality of explanations of corruption as an organizing principle. Six groups of theories are distinguished concerning causes of corruption, paying attention to the discourse on corruption control these groups of theories lead to. A primary conclusion is that there are not many studies on actual, individual corruption cases. It seems, therefore, that we need more contextual corruption research; many current studies lack contingency. The overview also makes clear that the theoretical model chosen determines, for a large part, the direction of the proposed solutions. Different causal chains lead to different discourses on corruption prevention and corruption control.

INTRODUCTION

In October 1994, Piet Neus, former alderman of the Dutch city of Maastricht, received a one-month suspended prison sentence and was fined 10,000 Dutch guilders (about 5,000 US dollars) for accepting gifts valued at 42,000 Dutch guilders (about 21,000 US dollars) from three local companies in the form of household renovations (Dohmen 1996: 237). Just after his conviction, Neus commented, "I still believe I did nothing wrong. Society apparently disagrees. The judge considered the postponed payment for the renovation of a kitchen a gift. I have to respect that verdict" (Dohmen 1996: 218).

With that incident in mind, the primary question of this article is: how can the causes of corruption in Western countries be studied? The more we know about them, the better we can decide which policy instruments to use to combat corruption. But what are causes? Let's look at the example of Piet Neus again: *why* did it occur*?* This question seems straightforward for students of Public Administration. On closer inspection, it is not. To answer it, we first have to ask ourselves: what do we really want to know? After all, the 'why' question can be interpreted in many different ways.

Maybe we mean to ask: why did this corruption case start? In that case, we seek out the immediate causes and circumstances of the corrupt transactions and decisions. We look directly at the corrupt acts themselves.

Or do we want to know why the corruption case continued over a period of time, possibly in connection with other cases? (This is in fact what happened; see Dohmen 1996.) If so, we are less interested in the exact conditions by which the corruption case occurred than we are in the readiness of Piet Neus to become corrupt.

Perhaps we want to know why this particular corruption case occurred rather than not. Were there alternatives for Piet Neus, or was he 'forced' to do what he did? Was corruption, given the causes and conditions, his only course of action? This raises questions concerning the 'determinism vs. freedom' debate, which here will be left aside.

Maybe we are looking for the causes of this particular case of corruption, which gets most attention in corruption research (and in this article). In this context, are we interested in the causes of corruption that are external to the corrupt act itself? Or are we interested in the actual process of Piet Neus's corruption? The first interpretation is the most popular in the literature – not surprisingly, since social sciences usually deal with concepts rather than

processes and thus 'freeze' reality (Schinkel 2004: 8). Corruption is then studied in an abstract sense, looking for the governing laws of corruption at a meso or macro level. As we shall see later in this article, in individual corruption cases, it is quite tricky to identify causal links.

Another possible interpretation of the 'why' question is: are we interested in the reasons and motives for Piet Neus to become corrupt? In Neus's statement, he expressed amazement about his conviction. He claims that he did not know he was corrupt, but that "society apparently disagrees." This brings us to an issue often raised in philosophy, that is, whether reasons for action can or should be seen as causes of action and, if so, in what sense can they be treated (Schinkel 2004: 8). This debate, too, will be left aside here.

As we shall soon discover, there is a tension in corruption research (as in other social research) between actors being regarded as autonomous agents making (bounded) rational means-end calculations, and explaining corrupt behavior by *causes* beyond individual control. In the latter case, the corrupt agent 'disappears' along with the corruption that is being studied: even though the corrupt agent is the source of the corruption, he or she is reduced to background characteristics, translated into variables. This leads to certain factors that can be relevant to understanding the motives for corruption, but it draws attention away from the corrupt practices and the corrupt agent. The central argument of this article is therefore that we need more contextual corruption research; many current studies lack contingency.

However we interpret the question of what the causes of Neus's corruption were, it implies *a kind of causality*. In this article, I give an overview of the causes of corruption mentioned in the literature using the *kind of causality* of explanations of corruption as an organizing principle. I distinguish six groups of theories concerning

causes of corruption, paying attention to the discourse on corruption control these groups of theories lead to. The overview leads to a call for more contextually-based research on corruption, for which we need a theoretical model. In constructing one, a synthesis of the six groups of theories on the causes of corruption would be interesting, but two problems arise: the theory groups employ different levels of variables, and they have different implicit or explicit causal models. We will later discuss these problems and possible solutions.

Instead of synthesizing the theory groups, one could look for an alternative causal theory. One such possibility, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social action, will be briefly discussed in this article. Bourdieu's theory is suitable to study the case of Piet Neus and similar cases. By combining macro and micro factors and everything in between, it would be well suited as a theoretical model for corruption case studies.

Before discussing the causes of corruption, we should heed the words of Caiden (2001: 21): "Just as there are many varieties of corrupt behavior, so there are multitudinous factors contributing to corruption … So many explanations are offered that it is difficult to classify them in any systematic manner." Adds Heywood (1997: 426): "The complexity of the phenomenon makes it impossible to provide a comprehensive account of the causes of political corruption." Caiden (2001: 21-26) mentions the following 'sources' of corruption: psychological, ideological, external, economic, political, socio-cultural and technological. Factors that contribute to corruption, however, are of course not the same as *causes* of corruption. "In sum, corruption can be attributed to almost anything … But while the opportunities exist everywhere, the degree of corruption varies widely among individuals, public agencies, administrative cultures, and geographic regions." (Caiden 2001: 26). Fijnaut and

Huberts remark: "Research shows that a conglomerate of social, economic, political, organizational and individual causal factors are important to explain cases of public corruption" (2002: 8).

Six Kinds of Causes of Corruption

In much literature (e.g., Fijnaut and Huberts 2002), a distinction is made between the causes of corruption in lower income countries and the causes in higher income countries; low salaries and poor working conditions greatly improve the chances of corrupt instances occuring. In this article I concentrate on the causes of corruption in Western (i.e., high income) countries, where corruption is much the exception (Caiden 2001: 27).

Great attention has been paid to the question of what corruption is (e.g. see Rose-Ackerman 1999: ch. 6). It seems that every article on corruption starts with an overview of the many definitions. Here, I choose the following definition: "behavior of public officials which deviates from accepted norms in order to serve private ends" (Huntington 1989: 377).[1] What is noticeable about this much-used definition is its emphasis on social constructivism: corrupt is that which is considered corrupt at a certain place and at a certain time. After all, 'accepted norms' change over time. Remember also that Neus disagrees with his conviction. Yes, in his eyes, 'corruption' (in general) is wrong, but he claims that what he did was not corrupt. Being corrupt is not always a matter of black and white. The norms at a certain place and at a certain time are not shared by everyone. Officials can also be 'more' or 'less' corrupt. A public official illicitly receiving 5000 euro is 'more' corrupt than one receiving 500 euro. And, research shows, people regard a police officer who *asks* for 20 euro from a speeding driver so he can 'forget' a ticket as being more corrupt than a police officer who accepts 20 euro when it is *offered* to him. A comparison of

research on public attitudes towards corruption concludes that: "Over and over, the research found that respondents judged elected officials more severely than they judged appointed officials; judges more severely than police officers; bribery and extortion more harshly than conflict of interest, campaign contribution, and patronage; and harmful behavior more harshly than petty behavior" (Malec 1993: 16). What is consistent in all discussions about corruption, however, is that corruption is wrong; it is always a deviation from right moral conduct. People disagree about the norms that determine whether someone is corrupt, not about the reprehensiveness of 'corruption'. So as soon as someone is labeled 'corrupt,' he or she is morally judged in a negative way. Corruption is a morally loaded term. Just like 'integrity' is a (morally) positive label and everyone seeks it, corruption is a negative label. Since our views about morality differ in many respects, corruption is also a contested label. Neus does not state that he was corrupt, but that his acts of corruption were permissible (morally and legally); he disagrees that he was corrupt.

When looking at the literature on corruption we notice a difference between studies that put forward propositions about the causes of corruption (in other words, studies that theorize about the causes of corruption) and those that empirically try to establish the causes of corruption. The latter sort of studies is by far outnumbered by the former.

Before I give an overview of the kinds of literature on the kinds of causality of corruption, I would like to stress that every classification has its blind spots. Of course there is overlap, and maybe some theories resist the classification given here, but the overview should make clear that the concept of causality differs in the wide literature on corruption.

Table 1

	Causal chain	Level of analysis of causes (independent variables)	Level of analysis of corruption (dependent variables)	The context	Most common research methods
1. Public choice theory	A 'free' official making a (bounded) rational decision that leads to a more or less predetermined outcome.	Individual	Micro and macro	Situational aspects mostly ignored; they cannot account for triggering causes. Starts from the moment the actor makes a calculation.	Mostly theoretical
2. Bad apple theories	A causal chain from bad character to corrupt acts.	Individual	Individual	Attention to individual background.	Theoretical
3. Organizational culture theories	A causal path from a certain culture – a certain group culture – leads to a mental state, which leads to corrupt behavior. Facilitating factors are described which, in some cases, strengthen a causal chain.	Organizational	Organizational	Organizational structure and culture; correlates to number of corruption cases. Situational aspects and contingencies mostly ignored.	Mostly theoretical

4. Clashing moral values theories	The causal chain starts with certain values and norms of society, which directly influence the values and norms of individuals. These values and norms influence the behavior of individual officials, making them corrupt.	Societal	Societal	Situational aspects reduced to moral conflicts of individuals.	Mostly theoretical; some case studies
5. The ethos of public administration theories	A causal path from societal pressure – often though the level of organizations on officials to perform and lack of attention to integrity issues – leads to a focus of the official on effectiveness, making him or her corrupt.	Societal and organizational	Societal and organizational	Situational aspects mostly ignored; no explanation of why some officials become corrupt and others do not.	Theoretical
6. Correlation 'theories'	No causal model, only correlations.	All levels	All levels	Situational aspects and contingencies ignored; focus is on variables.	Surveys, expert-panels

Public Choice Theory

First, there is rational choice theory: public choice theory. For the independent variables to explain corruption, it primarily looks at the level of the individual.

The causal chain is that of an individual making a (bounded) rational decision that leads to a predetermined outcome. Central to the public choice literature is the individual corrupt official who tries to maximize his or her utility. The individual (usually male) is portrayed as a rationally calculating person who decides to become

corrupt when its expected advantages outweigh its expected disadvantages (a combination of possible penalty and the chance of being caught). This group of causal theories is made popular by Rose-Ackerman (1978), who claims that public officials are corrupt for a simple reason: they perceive that the potential benefits of corruption exceed the potential costs. Or as Klitgaard (1988: 70) states, if the benefits of corruption minus the probability of being caught times its penalties are greater than the benefits of not being caught, then an individual will rationally choose to be corrupt. Of course, the theory can be expanded when conditions that influence the cost-benefit calculations are taken into account. For example, trust can play an important role. When the state cannot be trusted to manage private property transfers, corruption might become more appealing (Gambetta 1993). Also, trust within close personal relationships increases the chance of getting the benefits from the delivered corrupt 'services' or reduces the chance of getting caught. In this kind of theory, actions of corrupt officials are caused by a rational, conscious and deliberate weighing process of an individual. In its purest form, autonomous agents are assumed to make more or less rational means-end calculations. This contrasts with most of the other theories we will consider, where behavior is explained by causes beyond individual control. In organization sciences, this is closely related to decision theories. The reason is that just how 'choices' (which have the character of volition) cause actions (of a physical nature) must be made clear. In some theories, rational choice is combined with game theory and ideas that agent choice is bound by both the decision-making capacities of individual agents and a surrounding structure of political, economic and cultural rules (institutions), leading to a so-called institutional choice framework (Collier 2002).

When we try to picture the causal chain in the case of Piet Neus, we would see him weighing the advantages of

the promised gifts against the chances of being caught and the possible negative impact that would have for him. Apparently, Piet Neus made the conscious decision that the benefits were worth the risk.

The advantage of public choice theory is that it has relatively close focus (Schinkel 2004: 11). Instead of looking for general determining factors, it concentrates on a specific situation of an agent (a corrupt official) who calculates pros and cons. In that sense however, it is insensitive to the larger social context (which is something public choice in general has often been criticized for). It cannot account for triggering causes within the situation. The theory starts from the moment an official calculates whether to become corrupt or not. The question then becomes: why are some officials corrupt in many Western countries while most are not? If some calculate that corruption is a good deal, are the others, by not becoming corrupt, making 'bad' calculations? In other words, what have we explained with rational choice theories alone?

Public choice theories lead to a discourse on corruption control that maximizes the costs of corruption and minimizes the benefits.[2] Since the benefits of corruption are much harder to influence, most of the focus is on the costs of corruption. These costs can be made higher by improving the chances of getting caught and imposing steeper penalties. This can easily lead to a discourse asking for a comprehensive system of control based on surveillance, massive information gathering, auditing, and aggressive enforcement of a wide array of criminal and administrative sanctions (Anechiarico and Jacobs 1996).

Bad Apple Theories

Second, bad apple theories, like public choice theories, primarily look at the level of the individual corrupt agent for the causes of corruption.

These studies seek the cause of corruption in the existence of people with faulty (moral) character, the so-called 'bad apples'. There is a causal chain from bad character to corrupt acts; the root cause of corruption is found in defective human character and predisposition toward criminal activity. Causes are rooted in human weaknesses such as greed. When the focus is on the faulty character of an official, morality is assumed to determine behavior (like in the forthcoming clashing moral values theories): people are assumed to act on the basis of moral values. 'Wrong' values are therefore the cause of corruption. Of course, one can question whether people act on the basis of moral values (see de Graaf 2003). But the focus on individual corrupt officials and their motives can also be of a different nature.

When we think of the case of Piet Neus, the causal chain in his case would start with moral vices on Neus's part. His 'wrong' moral values directly influenced his behavior toward corruption. Of course, if we believe in such a causal chain, new and interesting questions surface: how did Piet Neus acquire these moral vices? Did he have a bad childhood, or does he have a genetic propensity toward corruption?

'Bad apple' theories are less popular than they used to be. Punch (2000: 317) writes on police corruption: "In the past there was a tendency to think of corruption as a temporary, exceptional 'problem' to be removed by 'surgical' treatment, as if it was a malignant cancer, to restore an otherwise healthy agency (the 'bad apple' metaphor). Conventional wisdom has shifted recently to see corruption as near universal and as forming a permanent concern." We see the assumption of the 'bad apple' often

made explicitly or implicitly in the literature, but hardly ever based on empirical claims: the assumption is most often theorized.

What is clear from research using criminological theories (which are somewhat related to the bad apple theories – more on this later) is that stating that the corrupt official is merely after material gain (public choice theories) is too much of a simplification. The official could also be seeking a higher social standing, excitement, work pleasure or a cure for frustration (Nelen and Nieuwendijk 2003: 43/44). For example, Cusson (1983) distinguishes thirteen goals of perpetrators of crime. Literature shows that the agent rationalizes and legitimizes the corrupt behavior and does not regard the behavior as corrupt. Recall, for example, the statement of Piet Neus.

In contrast to the following theories, these (criminological) theories do not lead to an emphasis on ethics management. The particular discourse on corruption controls they lead to is determined by the particular (criminological) theory that is used. Social control theory (seeing in the delinquent a person relatively free of intimate attachments, aspirations, and the moral beliefs that hold most people to a life within the law (Hirschi 1969)), focuses on factors that should *keep* people from criminal activities. One could imagine corruption control based on such a theory. However, I know of no study combining criminological theories on individual motives for corruption with public administration and concrete suggestions for corruption control. When the root cause of corruption is sought in human weaknesses, 'strong moral values' are named as an antidote (Naim 1995: 285), but designing a policy to combat corruption with this medicine seems improbable.

Organizational Culture Theories

Third, some literature is not so much interested in the background or motives of the corrupt official, but in the culture and structure of the organization within which the agent is working. For the first time, we are looking not the micro level of individual corrupt agents, but the meso level of their respective organizations.

The underlying assumption seems to be that a causal path from a certain culture – a certain group culture – leads to a certain mental state. And that mental state leads to corrupt behavior. Failure in the "proper machinery" of government, not faulty character, leads public officials to act corruptly. Therefore, it accounts for the context corrupt acts occur in. For example, Punch claims (2000: 304) (when talking about corruption within police departments around the world): "If we scan these activities then it is plain that we are no longer dealing with *individuals* seeking solely *personal gain* but with group behavior rooted in established arrangements and/or extreme practices that have to be located within the structures and culture of police work and the police organization." Punch concludes (2000: 317): "The implication is that in tackling corruption and other forms of police deviance, it is vital to focus on group dynamics, the escalation from minor to serious deviance, and on the negative elements in the police culture." Piet Neus's case would be explained by a culture within his municipality (Maastricht) in which everyone is corrupt. This influences Piet Neus in such a way that he 'cannot help' but become corrupt himself.

Once again, in these theories there is a causal path from a certain culture, a certain group culture, that leads to a mental state. And that mental state leads to corrupt behavior. But we could question whether this is a causal link at all, since not all people in the described organizations become corrupt. At best, we could say that these theories describe certain conditions under which

corruption occurs. But that, too, is probably saying too much. It is more a matter of describing 'facilitating factors' which, in some cases (not all people in the organization become corrupt), strengthen a causal chain. These types of theory are not so much interested in the corrupt official, but in the contextual features that make for the setting of corruption. In that sense, these theories are not really about the causes of corruption. Implicit in most of these theories is the contention that people in organizations act on the particular dynamics of the organization. Of course, many good arguments involving economic, natural or social forces, for instance, show that institutions (not in the sense of organizations or buildings, more in a sense of collective ways of thinking, feeling and doing) determine, in large part, the decisions and behavior of people. There are dynamics that transcend individuals. In that sense this group of research distances itself from methodological individualism.

This brings us to a related group of theories of corruption that should be grouped here, those that see corruption as 'contagious' (e.g. Klitgaard 1988; Caiden and Dwivedi 2001; Hulten 2002). These theories state that once an organizational culture (or country) is corrupt, every person who comes in contact with it also runs a big risk of becoming corrupt. Therefore (and interestingly enough) corruption itself seems to be the 'cause' of corruption (even though the specific causal relationship is hard to define). These theories sometimes use the metaphor of the 'slippery slope' (Punch 2000). Not becoming corrupt in certain organizational cultures means betraying the group (Jackall 1988, Punch 2000).

These theories lead to a discourse on corruption control in which the emphasis is on influencing the culture of an organization, the so-called 'cultural instruments' by, for example, altering the organization's leadership

(Trevino, Weaver et al. 1999; Trevino, Hartman et al. 2000; Huberts, Kaptein et al. 2004).

Clashing Moral Values Theories
        A fourth branch of literature makes a distinction between the public role and private obligations of corrupt officials. As distinguished from the previous theories, corruption is considered on a macro level, more precisely, the level of society. Since the culture of an organization is also influenced by society at large, there is an overlap between this group and organizational culture theories.
        The causal chain in these theories starts with certain values and norms of society that directly influence the values and norms of individuals. These values and norms influence the behavior of individual officials, making them corrupt.
        In many societies no clear distinction exists between one's private and one's public roles. Rose-Ackerman: (1999: 91): "In the private sector, gift giving is pervasive and highly valued, and it seems natural to provide jobs and contracts to one's friends and relations. No one sees any reason not to carry over such practices into the public realm. In fact, the very idea of a sharp distinction between private and public life seems alien to many people." Private appropriation of the spoils of office is not regarded as morally reprehensible or illegitimate. Here, as in the second group of theories, morality has an opportunity to cause behavior and thereby cause corruption. In many of these theories, values are assumed to determine behavior. Because of a clash of values connected to one's private and one's public role, choices have to be made. And certain values lead to corruption. Out of obligations to friends or family (which can be very important in certain cultures), officials take bribes. Thus it is not so much selfish personal gain the corrupt official is after, but rather the agent feels a need to be corrupt to fulfill important personal (moral)

duties, like ensuring loyalty to friends and family. As some say in Latin American countries, *a los amigos todo, a los enemigos nada, al extraña la ley*– for my friends everything, for my enemies nothing, and for strangers the law.

In the case of Piet Neus, his personal ties with the contractors was such that he felt obliged to help them with commissions, just as they felt obliged to help their friend with the renovations. And friends do not charge each other for such things. So the consience of Piet Neus was the direct cause of his corrupt behavior.

In this group of theories, the antagonism between two value systems is central, like in the theories of Weber (1921) and Habermas (1984). Hoffling (2002: 71) speaks of micro morality and macro morality. Micro morality has to do with connections to people in our social circles (family, friends). It is about values, norms and moral obligations in our daily personal and social lives. Even though obligations from the micro morality are based on informal norms, they are very strong – much stronger than our moral obligations towards strangers. Moral obligations in our personal lives are characterized by reciprocity: we help friends and family just as we expect them to help us. The macro morality, by contrast, emphasizes the universal. It is the product of the process, as described by Nelson (1949), of universalizing morality and claims the legitimacy of its norms on institutions of the law, a universal system of formal norms. The macro morality is characterized by the complementarity of rights and duties as the primal modus of social ties. For its existence, it depends on societal trust in the compensating mechanisms of social institutions. A problem of the macro morality is its higher level of abstraction, which limits the chances of internalizing its norms. Conflicts in society arise when persons see themselves in two social roles with opposing moral obligations: the macro morality of public officials requires

them to treat different persons equally, where the micro morality requires them to favor friends wherever possible. Especially in the vast literature on Third World countries (Williams and Theobald 2000), a popular theme is patrimonialism, leading to patrimonial administration in which the private-public boundary (micro versus macro morality), central to the (Western) concept of public administration (Weber), is blurred. Corruption is often seen (ethnocentrically) as a phase developing countries have to through before reaching maturity. Despite widespread agreement in the literature (Theobald 1999) that neo-patrimonial character is the root cause of corruption in the Third World, Theobald issues a warning (1999: 473): "There is a danger that we are simply describing symptoms rather than identifying underlying causes. There is after all a certain lack of specificity in the concept in the sense that it has been employed in such a range of empirical contexts – from Brazil to Zaire, from Paraguay to the Philippines – which raises serious questions about its analytical utility." Since instances of this group of theories for explaining corruption are most common in studies of lower income countries, I leave it aside here. We do know, however, that even though the obligations from macro morality might be stronger in Western countries, micro morality is also very strong (Jackall 1988, Bauman 1993). We can also think of hypothetical cases, say, a sick child, in which large sums of money are needed for a public official, leading him or her to become corrupt. Also, certain patronage ties can be identified in Western countries that are sometimes connected to the causes of individual corruption cases (e.g., Dohmen 1996). Think of 'old-boy networks', alumni networks, Rotary clubs, fraternities and the like (see Perkin 1996).

        These theories lead to a discourse on corruption control in which codes of conduct and their enforcement play an important role. 'Ethical training' also is popular. In

general, attention is paid to ethics in these models (Kaptein 1998; Kaptein and Wempe 2002) rather than rules, threats, surveillance or coercion. In the Third World literature, the discourse is on the elimination of patronage and cronyism, and calls for merit-based principles in administration. Of course, when underdevelopment of a country is seen as the cause of corruption, development is the cure. However, it is clear that economic development is by no means a guarantee for eliminating corruption. In current literature, corruption is often seen as deep-rooted, common and permanent; it is in all social systems, organizations, age and gender groups (Alatas 1990; Williams 2000: x).

The Ethos of Public Administration Theories
        The fifth group of literature is closely related to the third group (organizational culture), but varies in that the major concern is the culture within public management and society in general. Like the previous (fourth) group, we are mainly looking at corruption from a societal level. Like the third group, the organizational level plays an important role: the macro factors (unlike the previous group) work through the level of organizations instead of the individual.
        In these theories, political and economic structures are studied. Officials' performance has a causal path from societal pressure through the level of organizations. This, combined with a lack of attention to integrity issues, leads to a focus of the official on 'effectiveness,' making him or her corrupt. It is feared, for example, that public sector reforms, under the influence of New Public Management (NPM), change the culture within public management (the meso level) in such a way that standards of ethical probity within public services are affected negatively, leading to more instances of corruption. Thus the impact of NPM is on the organizational level, which influences the officials; from this point, the causal path of the third group of theories is followed. Economist approaches that do not

address the ethical dimension of public service or support virtues like public interest, guardianship, integrity, merit, accountability, responsibility and truth, have, according to some, subverted the ethos of public organizations (e.g. by undermining public trust) , thus leading to more corruption. What Heywood calls 'the structural approach' (1997: 427) to political corruption, in which the emphasis is on the nature of state development (with administrative organization and efficiency as key variables), would also fall into this group of theories. Also, arguments are put forward that developments like NPM, deregulation and privatization (Doig and Wilson 1997) have created significant structures for influence-peddling (Heywood 1997: 429) and have removed agencies that provide for public accountability.

Let us say that Piet Neus's constituency and political superiors stressed to him that what mattered most was achieving his policy objectives; his responsibility was to build roads and preferably at a fast pace. This led Neus to focus on result which, in turn, led to frequent consults with building contractors (over dinner, at the golf course, or even on the French Riviera) on how practical problems could be solved as quickly as possible. This in turn led to good contacts with certain contractors and roads being built quickly, but also to Piet Neus paying less attention to personal integrity, accountability and legitimacy of his decisions. In fact, the causal chain used in Dohmen's 1996 book describing the case of Piet Neus is similar. Factors at the macro level – huge sums of money funneled from central government into Neus's province of Limburg, a feeling of 'being different' in the province, a political culture in which one political party (CDA) was always in power, small social circles – led to a culture and structure in public organizations that nurtured corrupt practices.

Literature from a subgroup of this fifth type focuses on the morality of a society that can be 'wrong', leading to

corruption. We see this causal model most often in (older) literature on corruption in the Third World (e.g. Wraith and Simpkins 1963). "Why does the public morality of African states not conform to that of the British? Their answer seems to boil down to one simple cause: avarice!" (Theobald 1999: 471). In other (economic) literature on corruption in underdeveloped countries, social and political characteristics of nation states are part of the 'explanation of corruption' (Leys 1965).

Empirical research in this group seems non-existent, probably because the causal link, like in the previous group of theories, is so indirect that the claim, *as true as it may be*, is hard to support empirically. To discuss corruption in this way is of course complex and multifaceted. Theoretically the claim is powerfully supported by many; see, for example, Frederickson (1993, 1997) and Gregory (1999). Gregory claims (1999: 63): "Especially where such reforms have been largely underpinned by the new institutional economics and public choice theory, they may tend to counter more piecemeal efforts to maintain standards of ethical integrity in the bureaucracy. These efforts may need to be reinforced by new approaches to the rebuilding of institutionalized public service, based on a fuller understanding of the important distinctions between public and corporate management."[3]

When talking about the structure of the organization and the machinery of government, we quickly refer to the discourse of Scientific Administration (Taylorism). The goals of scientific administration are 'effectiveness' and 'efficiency', but the theory also holds that administrative integrity could be achieved through administrative control. However, scientific administration is out of fashion. Like empirical research, corruption control based on these theories is quite hard. After all, the culture of a society is difficult to influence. It is clear however, that those who argue that New Public Management leads to more

corruption (Gregory 1999) use a discourse advocating the abandonment of (some) methods and techniques of NPM. A more concrete example of success in trying to control corruption at the societal level is influencing the culture of emerging democracies. Seligson (2001) shows that a public awareness campaign in Nicaragua was a success; it helped raise concern about the negative consequences of corruption and had a measurable impact in reducing its incidence.

Correlation 'Theories'
         The sixth (and last) group of literature puts forth not so much a theory on the causes of corruption as it does a collection of (very popular) research with certain common characteristics. The analysis of the causes of corruption is at all levels.
         Correlation theories do not start from an implicit or explicit theoretical explanation model (like the previous five groups), but from specific factors. The research has in common that certain social, political, organizational or individual factors are highlighted. The variables considered are on all possible levels: individual, organizational and societal. For example, campaign finance practices in the United States (Williams 1995), or longevity in power by elected officials (Heywood 1997: 431), or economic development and 'being a former British colony' (Treisman 2000). Then it is often claimed that these factors are somehow 'causes' of corruption. Usually this is done on the basis of percentages or explained variance. If we were to add up all the claimed variance of these factors in all the research that can be grouped here, it would not be surprising if we found a causal construction in which well over 100 percent of variance would be explained (Schinkel 2004: 11). This can be explained of course by the varying circumstances between and within countries. Once again,

we are warned about making strong general claims on the causes of corruption.

This group of theories does not study (the contingencies of) individual cases and would therefore have a hard time providing a causal chain for Neus's corruption. Based on these theories, however, one could say that it is not surprising that Piet Neus became corrupt, considering, as hypothetical examples, the fact that his party was in power over a long period, voter turnout was low, his job was long-held, control structures in his organization were weak, his personality dominating, etcetera, etcetera.

These kinds of studies are usually not explicit on the causality of corruption. How exactly the causal link between macro-variables and the act of corruption should be seen often remains unclear. In social science, the causal path generally remains in the dark. Often, statistical significance is used to signify active causality without actual evidence. Noticeable in this regard is the frequent correlation between 'income' and 'corruption'. It seems that the lower the income of a country, the higher the occurrence of corruption. But as Huberts (1998b: 213) notices: "it is not clear whether this relationship is of a causal nature. The income of a country is for example directly related with political system characteristics, e.g., with the score on political democracy. Further research is necessary to find out how democracy, wealth and corruption are related." In general, of course, we must be careful when concluding causality from correlations.

An example of research of this sixth group is Holbrook and Meier (1993). Based on a quantitative comparison of registered cases of corruption in the fifty American states (conducted by the United States Department of Justice's (1988) Public Officials Integrity Section), the level of corruption is correlated with several factors. Four categories of explanations are offered. Among

the historical and cultural variables, urbanization and education are concluded as important influences on corruption. Among the political explanations, voter turnout and, to a lesser degree, party competition stand out as relevant influences. The size of the public sector and gambling arrests are considered important bureaucratic explanations of corruption.

Some research of Huberts (1995, 1996, 1998a, 1998b) is based on an international expert panel survey. Questions about public corruption and fraud were answered by 257 respondents from 49 countries. Within research on corruption, methodologies that use expert panels are very popular. The research done by Transparency International and its corruption perception-indices are famous in this regard. In this type of research, causality is not explicitly assumed on the basis of percentages of explained variance, yet the reasoning is similar. Experts are asked which social, economic, political, organizational and individual factors are, in their opinion, important for the explanation of cases of corruption which occur in their country (Huberts 1996: 46). Experts are thus asked which factors correlate, in their opinion, with corruption. In that sense, not so much the real *causes* of corruption are discussed. Huberts concludes (1998) that the three most important causes of corruption are identical for higher and lower income countries. Corruption is associated with the values and norms of individual politicians and civil servants, the lack of commitment to public integrity of leadership, organizational problems and failures, the relationship between the public sector and business, and the strength of organized crime.

This type of theories leads to a discourse on corruption control related to the respective correlations. These variables often do not offer much to go by. If research shows that urbanization and education of the general public are always important influences on

corruption, how does it then lead to policy recommendations?

The context of corruption.

The clearest *theory* on the *causes* of corruption of the six groups seems to be public-choice related theories, but in exchange for this clarity, the theory offers contextuality. But what is exactly a 'cause' in social theory? A (very) short reflection is warranted in this article.

In the philosophy of causality, an epistemological and an ontological tradition can be distinguished (Schinkel 2004). In the first tradition, a cause is the coinciding of phenomena where, because the 'cause' always precedes the 'consequence,' a belief exists that there is a cause (Hume, 1990). In the six theory groups that were discussed above, this kind of causality was not found because no cause was identified that *always* coincided with the consequence 'corruption'. Causes identified in corruption research are never assumed to always lead to corruption. (The so called 'necessity' criterion, often named as a criterion for causation – in which if A is the cause of B, B must occur when A occurs – is such a strong one that it is not used in the corruption theories considered here.)

In the ontological tradition, causality is seen as something that 'actually' happened. Since in social science this is often hard to identify, this is also unhelpful in corruption research. In what way does 'GNP' or 'leadership' exist, and how can that 'cause' a particular corruption case? Bourdieu is an example of someone who warned against ascribing intrinsic aspects to social phenomena since it would amount to naturalization of what is socially constructed (Schinkel 2004: 14). A general problem for corruption research, as noted before, is that rarely are individual corruption cases studied. Therefore, the identified causes are not the triggering causes in a

particular situation, but most often the predisposing causes. This makes it difficult to explain corruption.

My aim is not to criticize all theoretical models on causation in corruption research for not having a hard causal criterion from the philosophy of causation. I merely wish to reflect on the claims made when we talk about the causes of corruption; general problems with causality and explanation cannot be ignored. In some cases it is perhaps better to speak of studies trying to 'understand' corruption rather than 'explaining' it (compare Weber 1921). The theories discussed thus far have given us valuable insights. Poverty probably has something to do with corruption. Such a macro variable has its influence on an individual level. We should nonetheless be careful with the assumed causality of poverty on corruption. And, more importantly, there seems to be a need for close analyses and studies of actual corruption cases along with the many existing studies on macro variables.

A substantial amount of literature states the conditions of culture and structure of organizations under which corruption is more likely to occur (the sixth group of theories). But since these studies are based on panel surveys or regression analyses, they are not really about the *causes* of corruption. They are helpful because they can help us design organizations and influence their culture in such a way that lessens corruption. The problem is, however, that the literature suggests many such devices and it is not clear under what circumstances which device is best used. What works under what conditions at what costs? When is what kind of leadership important? How do we make sure public ethos continues to support traditional public values? Since these theories do not offer a theory about the cause of corruption, and are based on general research and broad correlations, they do not say much about contingency, which is so important for social research – especially corruption research because of the

aforementioned complexity of the phenomenon. This point is an important one Anechiarico and Jacobs (1996) make in their comprehensive classic study of New York City. It is rich in detail and insights; the authors document and analyze the manifold liabilities of a vast range of corruption control projects. They show how corruption control mechanisms, which might make sense when based on general research, might not work in a specific context. "You name the anticorruption reform, the authors point out its severe organizational liabilities" (Silverman 1998: 182).

The conclusion is that to say more about the causes of corruption in Western countries, more research is needed in actual corruption cases,[4] research with special attention to the necessary and sufficient conditions of corruption in a particular case. Based on a multiple case study research design, theory can be built on the causes of corruption (Herriott and Firestone 1983; Eisenhardt 1989; Yin 1989). The focus should be on understanding the dynamics present within single cases. Case studies offer the advantage of richer details of actual cases and their contextuality. Anechiarico and Jacobs (1996: 198): "Using focus groups and case studies would generate a mass of data that, when analyzed and organized, will probably provide a way to move forward with policy experiments." In case studies, attention can be paid to the individuals within their culture and organization. What are the rationalizations and justifications of those who are labeled 'corrupt'? We already know that the lack of a concrete victim in most corruption cases is often mentioned as mitigating circumstances (by the corrupt officials), just as 'economical necessity' is often mentioned to develop a tight network of relations in which a 'necessity' exists for 'wheeling and dealing' (Nelen and Nieuwendijk 2003: 44/45). Dohmen (1996: 218) noticed in his book on corruption in a Netherlands province that none of those convicted by law showed any kind of regret. Statements like "Everyone was

doing it" or "It was a favor for a friend" or "I still think I did nothing wrong" were echoed. Also, among the befriended elite who were not convicted, there was not much understanding for "the hanging of someone for a small foreign trip." Here, again, we see that corruption can only be established based on norms, which are by definition local and contextual. Therefore, studies on the causes of corruption in Western countries should study the specific context of corruption cases. Since I am speaking of qualitative research, the concentration should be on the validity as a trust in the results of the study rather than looking for absolute certainty. It should pay attention to both the process of data collection and of story telling. By conducting such a study, the contextuality of ethics is taken seriously. What many ethnographers have revealed is that moral decision-making is situational. Understanding it means understanding the particular circumstances (possibilities, etc.) of a certain situation. The most important contribution of detailed case studies is that they would give content to the vague notion of 'putting moral problems into context' (Hoffmaster 1992: 1427).

Why does Piet Neus think that what he did should not be labeled as 'corruption'? What justifications does he give? How did he get in contact with those he took bribes from? What was his relationship with them (for example, in terms of 'trust' and 'reputation')? What did the rest of the city officials know about it? And so on.

Since corruption literature on high income countries is often divided in different categories –USA, northern Europe (which includes Scandinavia, the Netherlands and Britain), southern Europe (which includes Italy, Spain, Greece), Australia/New Zealand, and Japan – it would be interesting to repeat such a study in these different countries to see whether the causes of corruption differ.

When we have a richer theory on the causes of corruption, the hope is that we know better what medicine

to prescribe for a particular patient. In that sense it could help fill the gap noticed by Van Hulten (2002: 182): almost no empirical studies offer conclusions about which anti-corruption methods work under what circumstances. Currently there is much confusion in the literature. "The right mix of corruption controls will undoubtedly differ from governmental unit and from agency to agency within the same governmental unit. Moreover, the optimal mix changes over time" (Anechiarico and Jacobs 1996: 198). It is safe to say we know next to nothing about which corruption controls are most efficient under different circumstances. Take as an example the installment of something like 'integrity systems'. Would it have stopped Piet Neus from becoming corrupt? Perhaps. Gilman (2000) and Huberts (2000) seem to think so. Others, however (Anechiarico and Jacobs 1996; Cooper 1998; Brown 1999), certainly disagree and would probably maintain that these programs would be ineffective at best. The call for rich case studies is in accordance with the conclusion of Menzel (2003: 35) after reviewing the body of empirical research conducted on ethics and integrity in governance: "The research strategies for ethics scholars should include greater methodological rigor with perhaps less reliance on survey research methods. Such rigor, of course, could include contextually rich case studies as well as trend or longitudinal analyses that were largely absent from the studies examined in this paper."

> *Pierre Bourdieu's theory of action:*
> *disposition analyses.*

Menzel (2003) concludes in the aforementioned research on the state of the art of empirical research on ethics and integrity in governance that most of the research on ethics and governance is not sturdily grounded on philosophical/theoretical foundations. Much of the research is survey-based with conclusions about correlations

between variables. The same can now be concluded about the research on corruption. For contextually based research on corruption, we thus need a theoretical model.

Since the six groups of theories described in this article all had interesting insights into the background of corruption, a synthesis of them would be interesting. But doing so involves two problems:

1.   The different theories deal with different levels of variables.

2.   The different theories have different implicit or explicit causal models.

Huberts (1998a) offers an interesting way out of the first problem. When discussing fraud and corruption in the police force, he states that three levels of factors are at play. At the micro level are those that deal with individuals and their work. At the meso level are characteristics of the organization, which are distributed among leadership, organization structure, personal policy and organization culture. Third, there is a whole range of factors on the macro level, including changes in criminality, rules and laws, and so on. Table 2 illustrates Huberts's model.

In this model we see many factors from the overview of the six groups of theories, bringing together, in a sense, the different levels. Of course, on all three levels, factors can be added from other theories. With Huberts's model, however, the second problem remains: how do the variables at the different levels lead to corrupt behavior? Causality is always based on a theory and its concepts. How do the variables determine actions of public officials? How do the variables at the different levels influence each other and how do they influence officials? How, exactly, did the political-administrative system make Piet Neus a corrupt official?

If it turns out that a synthesis between the six groups of theories is not possible because their different implicit or

explicit causal models are too dissimilar, a choice needs to be made. Current and future case studies on corruption could be used to answer the question: which of the six models helps us best explain corruption in these cases?

Table 2:
Types of Causes of Corruption and Fraud

> Individual and work
> 1. individual: character and private circumstances
> 2. work: type, colleagues, contacts
> Organization
> 1. leadership
> 2. organization structure
> - size, complexity
> - control, auditing
> - separation of responsibilities
> 3. organization culture
> - goals/mission
> - values and norms
> - operational code
> 4. personal (policy)
> - training and selection
> - rewarding
> Environment
> 1. juridical/law
> 2. political-administrative
> 3. societal (e.g. criminality)

Source: Huberts 1998a: 35

Which causal chain makes most sense, and leads to the most interesting insights? Of course, we could also look for an alternative contextually based causal theory on corruption. One such possibility is Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social action (1977; 1990; 1992; 1998). By combining macro and micro factors and everything in between, it

would be well suited as a theoretical model for corruption case studies (Table 3).

   With the mental schemata of Bourdieu, causality is easier to understand. I cannot do justice to the rich work of the anthropologist and sociologist Bourdieu in this article, and limit myself to why I think Bourdieu's theory of action is helpful for corruption research as outlined in the previous section. (For a prolegomena to Bourdieu's work, see Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992. For an account in the field of organizations, see, for example, Oakes, Townley et al., 1998; Everett, 2002.)

Bourdieu was not happy with the dualistic nature of much of sociological thinking with a choice of focus on either structure or agency,[5] micro or macro (Everett 2002: 57); here lies the attractiveness of his theory for our purposes. Bourdieu dismisses both methodological individualism (like much of the rational actor theories in corruption research[6]) and holism; micro and macro is to Bourdieu a false antimony. Instead he uses a relational perspective. *Bourdieu's theory of action provides a means of linking the otherwise isolated factors of the micro, meso and macro level.* Bourdieu's theory of action establishes an *incorporation* of macro and micro levels: mental schemata are the embodiment of social divisions. An analysis of objective structures logically carries over into an analysis of objective dispositions (Everett 2002: 58). With the concept of 'habitus', Bourdieu links the global with the local. Habitus is the mediating link between social structure (macro) and individual action (micro). Individual cases of corruption can very well be analyzed with Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of 'habitus', 'symbolic capital', 'practice' and 'disposition'.

   A *disposition* is a concept that Bourdieu uses to analyze the immediate, lived experience of agents to explain the categories of perception and appreciation that structure their action from inside (Wacquant 1992: 11).

Dispositions are carried by 'natural persons' or human agents (Bourdieu 1977: 80). Human agents use perceptional and evaluative schemata (definitions of their situations) in their everyday lives. To Bourdieu there exists a correspondence between social structures and mental structures, the schemata; between objective divisions of the social world, and the vision and division that agents apply

Table 3

	Causal chain	Level of analysis of the causes (the independent variables)	Level of analysis of corruption (the dependent variable)	Context	Most common research methods
Bourdieu-research	A person within a certain habitus, and having certain dispositions and predispositions is triggered into corruption.	All levels	Individual	Contingencies of individual cases is central	Case studies

to it. In social research it is important to escape from the realism of structures (Bourdieu 1990: 52): we often see in research that objective social (macro) relations are constructed and treated as realities in themselves, outside of the history of the group. Yet we should also watch out for subjectivism, with which it is impossible to give an account of the necessity of the social world (Bourdieu 1990: 52):

Bourdieu proposes that social divisions and mental schemata are structurally homologous because they are *generally linked:* the latter are nothing other than the embodiment of the former. Cumulative exposure to certain social conditions instills in individuals an ensemble of durable and transposable dispositions that internalize the necessities of the extant social environment, inscribing inside the organism the patterned inertia and constraints of external reality. If the structures of the objectivity of the second order (habitus) are the embodied version of the objectivity of the first order, then "the analysis of objective regularities logically carries over into the analysis of subjective dispositions, thereby destroying the false antinomy ordinarily established between sociology and social psychology" (Wacquant 1992: 13)

For corruption research, this means that we should study not only regularities of corruption, but also the process of internalization of these regularities, or how the mental schemata of officials are constituted.

Human beings operate from 'mental schemata', for example, definitions of the situation, typifications and interpretive procedures. A primary assumption of Bourdieu's sociology is: "There exists a correspondence between social structures and mental structures, between the objective divisions of the social world – particularly into dominant and dominated in the various fields – and the principles of vision and division that agents apply to it" (cited in Wacquant 1992: 12). In Bourdieu's theory, the level at which a factor manifests itself is unimportant, so long as it leaves a trace in an individual. With all the

factors at all three different levels, it was often unclear how exactly they worked, how they could lead to corruption. But with 'mental schemata' this is clearer; we understand how that works. A specific trigger in the presence of certain dispositions will lead to corrupt behavior. To Bourdieu (1990: 53), stimuli do not exist for practice in their objective truth, as conditional, conventional triggers, acting only on condition that they encounter agents conditioned to recognize them. Whether an official becomes corrupt depends on his or her disposition to become corrupt. This is not to say that (societal or cultural) regularities are absent in the behavior of officials: there are social factors that work through the individual.

Dispositions then are a reformulation of we earlier called 'factors of corruption', which allow more fine-tuning. One can distinguish several levels of predispositions. Contextual research can establish dispositions that *can* lead to corruption. Since these dispositions do not always lead to corruption, they cannot be called causes in the strictest sense of the word. What is important is the receptiveness of an individual to corruption, and whether that receptiveness is triggered.

Now we can also 'explain' something about corrupt cultures. For example, Piet Neus was an official who saw himself surrounded by corrupt officials (Dohmen 1996). Dispositions can be so strongly determined by the social context that it is hard to escape the behavior of that context. When consistently reinforced in certain ideas and acts, it is difficult for an agent to step outside that culture. This can be compared to subcultural delinquency theory: once individuals live in a group culture where violence is the norm, it is hard for them to not become violent themselves.

The research on corruption using Bourdieu's theory of action should focus on the categories of perception, appreciation and the lived experience (Wacquant 1992: 7-9) of corrupt officials. This can be called a disposition

analysis, in which the habitus of the corrupt official is analyzed. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 105):

One must analyze the habitus of agents, the different systems of dispositions they have acquired by internalizing a determinate type of social and economic condition, and which find in a definite trajectory within the field under construction a more or less favorable opportunity to become actualized.

Adds Everett (2002: 71):
One might also suggest that habitus can be investigated by examining its structuring components, that is, by examining the language and discourse of social agents, and the struggles over these components.

Everett mentions that discourse (de Graaf 2003) and other textual analyses can be used as insightful research techniques for analyzing the habitus. Drummond (1998) suggests that the habitus can be seen as a collection of stories. This makes narrative analyses (de Graaf 2003: chapter 6) a technique that can be used for disposition analysis. Everett (2002: 71) states:

For organizational researchers, this suggestion provides not only an opening for an investigation of "organizational habitus" (through an investigation of organizational narratives) but also a more general link between Bourdieu's theory and the concepts of organizational culture, leadership, conflict and change. These, Drummond says, can be usefully rewritten as organizational habitus (culture), enacted habitus (leadership), the imposition and resistance of habitus (conflict) and the destruction and replacement of habitus (change).

Were we to make a dispositional analysis of Piet Neus, we would first of all listen to his stories. His reasons,

habitus, and dispositions would become clearer from the way he thinks. We would then study his dossier to see what mental schemata of dispositions towards corruption were present. In other words, what field of considerations was present in this case? We would also look for the more or less favorable opportunities that actualized the corruption on this case. What triggered it? By studying more of such cases we will come to an understanding of what dispositions, under what specific circumstances, lead to corruption. How was the susceptibility towards corruption and under what circumstances was it triggered? A predisposing factor could be a cup of coffee. Out of multiple (dispositional) case analyses will come regularities about and understandings of the causes of corruption. A view will present itself of predispositional factors, a scheme of dispositions. Causality will then be of such a nature that certain determining factors will not *always* leads to corruption. In that sense, we cannot speak of causality in the strictest sense of the word.

Criminology
        Recall from the discussion of the 'bad apple' theories that criminological theories can be used to study corruption (see Nelen and Nieuwendijk 2003: 43-48). Many different criminological theories exist on the causes of delinquency, like strain theories (Merton 1967) and social deviance theories (Cohen 1967). In these theories, the cause of criminal (corrupt) behavior is not so much about values as it is about various individual backgrounds and motives. The strong points of criminological theories in general, and especially for students of corruption, is that they offer models to explain (1) behavior; and (2) 'criminalizing', or why something is called a criminal (corrupt) act. As interesting as this last aspect is for corruption research, because of the many different definitions and interpretations of 'corruption,' it is beyond

the scope of this article. When explaining behavior, criminological theories mostly focus on (1) the motive of the official; and (2) opportunity. The latter aspect falls beyond the scope of 'bad apple' theories. Of course, in order to research 'opportunity' in corruption research, models from organization science are required to describe (1) the characteristics of an organization; and (2) the surroundings of an organization. All criminological theories that are used in corruption research need adaptation and some sort of 'translation.' Interestingly enough for students of corruption, lack of attention given to so-called 'white collar' criminality is a criticism. It is not surprising that many elements of criminological theories can be found in the six kinds of literature distinguished here, since criminology also contains many different causal models. It is a so-called 'object-science': the only thing that unites the many different criminological theories is the research object. Therefore, many different portrayals of the agent can be found in different theories. Homo economicus is currently popular in criminological theories, a view of the corrupt agent also present in rational choice theories. In all six groups of literature described here, some traces of criminological theories were found and some sort of criminological variant existed. Most traces however, were found in the 'bad apple' theories. Especially in the older criminological theories, criminality is seen as deviating behavior that needs to be explained: bad apple theories. The current trend (roughly from the 1980s) within criminology, however, is not to view criminal acts as deviating behavior. Social control theory for example, explains why people *do* abide by the law (Korn and McCorkle 1959; Hirschi 1969).

CONCLUSION

Interesting to students of public administration is that, as it turns out, much confusion exists in the literature

on which anti-corruption methods work best under which circumstances. The overview made clear that the theoretical model chosen determines, for a large part, the direction of the proposed solutions. Different causal chains lead to different discourses on corruption prevention and corruption control. We know little of what corruption control works best and most efficiently. More corruption case studies should help us with prescription and give us more information on what the right mix of corruption control is under specific circumstances. After all, proposed corruption control mechanisms should not be based on the logic of the theory of empirical research, but on what works best under what conditions.

The main question of this article was: how can the causes of corruption in Western countries be studied? Six groups of theories, each with an implicit or explicit theoretical model on the causation of corruption, were distinguished. A primary conclusion was that there are not many studies on actual, individual corruption cases. It seems, therefore, that we need more contextual corruption research; many current studies lack contingency. As a possible theoretical model on the causation of corruption, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social action seems promising; it is suitable, for instance, to study the case of Piet Neus. The study of several of these cases in their context should lead to additional theories on the causes of corruption. Alternative explanations and understanding of corruption in particular countries can help us reconsider the effectiveness of existing policy instruments to combat corruption.

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NOTES

1. Public officials are corrupt when they act (or fail to act) as a result of receiving personal rewards from interested outside private partners.

2. Interestingly enough, those public choice theorists in the field of Public Administration in favor of NPM also often use rational choice as its theoretical base, but argue for *less* regulation. This can be explained by the fact that NPM usually ignores integrity violations in its analysis, something NPM has been oft criticized for (e.g. Lane 1999; Frederickson 1993, 1997.)

3. Incidentally, there are also those who stress that common values between public and private sector organizations are important too. For example, "the major actors on the world stage are gradually realizing that there cannot be two different codes of ethics or standards of conduct – one in the private realm and the other in the public realm. One cannot have a public sector free of corruption when the private sector actually tolerates if not rewards corrupt practices. Nor can there be a moral business sector when the public sector, the government, and the political system condone, not condemn, corruption." (Caiden, and Dwivedi 2001: 245-255

4. What is and is not corrupt is already heavily under debate. To understand the social construction of corruption, the context in which the label is used is important. Only

that can teach us under what conditions in specific cases the label 'corruption' is used.

5. Bourdieu sees objectivism and subjectivism, structural necessity and individual agency as false antinomies (Wacquant 1998). Bourdieu transcends these dualities with a social praxeology which weaves together structuralist and constructivist positions.

6. "Bourdieu does not deny that agents face options, exert initiative, and make decisions. What he disputes is that they do so in the conscious, systematic (in short: *intellectualist)* and intentional manner expostulated by rational-choice theorists. He insists to the contrary that deliberate decision making or rule following "is never but a makeshift aimed at covering up misfirings of habitus" (Wacquant 1998: 24)