# Reducing Incentives for Corruption in the Mexico City Police Force

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# Table of Contents

# Foreword

This report is the result of a collaboration among students in the Master of International Public Affairs program in the Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin–Madison and Sigrid Arzt and Virgilio Muñoz of *Democracia, Derechos Humanos, y Seguridad*, a civil society nongovernmental organization in Mexico. This effort provides La Follette School students the opportunity to improve their analytical skills by applying them to an issue with a substantial international component and to contribute useful knowledge and recommendations to their client. To be sure, the opinions and judgments presented in this report do not represent the views, official or unofficial, of either the La Follette School or of the client organization for which the report was prepared.

The La Follette School offers a two-year graduate program leading to either a Master of Public Affairs or a Master of International Public Affairs degree. Students in both programs develop analytic tools with which to assess policy responses to macroeconomic issues, evaluate implications of policies for efficiency and equity, and interpret and present data relevant to policy considerations.

The authors of this report are enrolled in Public Affairs 869: International Workshop. It is the capstone course in the international public affairs program. The workshop provides students with practical experience applying the tools of analysis they have acquired in three semesters of coursework to examine real-world problems and (where relevant) to propose feasible solutions to clients in the public, nongovernmental, or private sector. Most of the semester is spent *doing* analysis in the form of projects that culminate in reports such as this one. While acquiring a set of analytical skills is important, it is no substitute for learning by doing.

Melanie Frances Manion
Professor of Political Science and Public Affairs
May 7, 2004

# Acknowledgments

It took a great amount of support and assistance to help our team succeed in transforming anticorruption reform from an overwhelming concept into something concrete that we were able to understand and make recommendations about. Our team would like to express our gratitude to the following people.

First and foremost, we would like to thank *Democracia, Derechos Humanos, y Seguridad* for the challenging and rewarding opportunity to work on this project. We have thoroughly enjoyed struggling through the research, analysis, and writing to present you with a fresh look at corruption in the Mexico City police force and some steps your organization can take to be part of the solution. Specifically, we would like to thank Sigrid Arzt and Virgilio Muñoz, who were readily available to spend time and effort talking with us and answering any questions we had.

Second, we would like to give a sincere thank you to Dr. Melanie Manion, who pushed us to think about this project in a truly analytical way. Thank you for your tireless hours reading and rereading numerous drafts, and thank you for motivating us to produce a piece of work of which we can honestly be proud.

# Executive Summary

Corruption—the abuse of public office for private gain—is widespread in Mexico. Ordinary citizens perceive Mexico City as the most corrupt locality in Mexico and the police force as the most corrupt public institution. This report, prepared for *Democracia, Derechos Humanos, y Seguridad* [Democracy, Human Rights, and Security], takes a fresh look at corruption in the police force in Mexico City. We evaluate the nature of corruption and its prevalent forms within the Mexico City police force, emphasize the importance of public expectations in a location with endemic corruption, and analyze recent reform attempts in Mexico City. We conclude with five recommendations that fit into a broad-based strategy designed to reduce the level of corruption and change public expectations of the Mexico City police force. Our recommendations draw on lessons from international successes in anticorruption reform and are tailored to the strengths and limitations of a civil society nongovernmental organization in Mexico City.

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## INTRODUCTION

The World Bank identifies corruption—the abuse of public office for private gain—as "the single greatest obstacle to economic and social development," an obstacle that "undermines development by distorting the rule of law and weakening the institutional foundation on which economic growth depends" (World Bank, 2003). In consolidating democracies of Latin America, fragile political institutions and weak markets provide opportunities for a variety of illicit practices. A number of studies have shown that, all else equal, high levels of corruption are closely associated with lower investment, growth, and income; less government spending on education; higher child mortality; and a weak political support system (Knack and Keefer, 1995; Mauro, 1995, 1997; Kaufmann, Kraay, and Zoido-Lobatón, 1999; Li, Xu, and Zou, 2000; Broadman and Recanatini, 2002; Anderson and Tverdova, 2003). Because of corruption, resources that could be used for infrastructure, education, and other public expenditures integral to development end up in private hands instead. Public awareness of corruption and its consequences greatly reduces public confidence and trust in public institutions. In short, corruption undermines economic development and thereby undermines democratic consolidation (Przeworski et al., 1996).

Corruption in Mexico City occurs at the intersection of the public and private spheres. The public and the police force are both key actors in corruption, even though the police force is meant to be an extension of the law and the vehicle through which the rule of law is enforced. The importance of promoting a scrupulous police force has prompted a flurry of studies that address public perceptions about corruption as well as analyses of anticorruption efforts in Mexico City.

In 1999, a group of Mexicans concerned about the problems of corruption, both globally and in Mexico, created *Transparencia Mexicana*, "a nongovernmental organization that addresses the problem of corruption from an integral perspective" (Transparencia Mexicana, 2004). In 2001, the organization surveyed heads of families about their perceptions of corruption in Mexico. The survey revealed public disillusionment similar to that expressed in 1986 (Morris, 1991). Another study, conducted in 2003, revealed that Mexicans consider Mexico City to be the most corrupt locality in the country (Transparencia Mexicana, 2003). The same survey found that citizens considered the police, unions, and political parties to be the institutions least likely to combat corruption. In short, despite reform attempts in the past 15 years, public perceptions of corruption in Mexico have not changed.

This report, prepared for *Democracia, Derechos Humanos, y Seguridad* [Democracy, Human Rights, and Security] takes a fresh look at corruption in the police force in Mexico City. We analyze the prevalent forms of corruption present in the Mexico City police force, examine anticorruption reforms proposed and attempted in Mexico City in recent years, draw on

lessons from other successful anticorruption reforms, and conclude with five specific recommendations that take into account both the limitations and the strengths of a civil society nongovernmental organization (NGO).

## PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS OF THE MEXICO CITY POLICE FORCE

Among those who are trying to address high levels of crime in Mexico City, there is a shared sentiment of hopelessness sustained by the perception that the law enforcement system is completely corrupt. For example, "there is a total lack of control over the police forces. There is no longer authority or order," said Hiram Escudero, a lawmaker in the Legislative Assembly of Mexico City (Cevallos, 2000). In a city where approximately 1.5 million crimes are committed every year, only 7 percent of reported crimes are ever resolved (Smith, 2003), and citizen trust and satisfaction with law enforcement is low (Cevallos, 2000).

According to the United States Foreign Military Studies Office, "in the Federal District some observers have asserted that 6 out of every 10 crimes involve policemen" (Turbiville, 1997). Although difficult to verify, reports from Mexican citizens, foreign travelers to Mexico City, and former police officers corroborate this observation. Transparencia Mexicana (2001) reported that an estimated 8 percent of household incomes are devoted to bribes to gain favor or access to public services. A survey by the same organization in 1999 revealed that 90 percent of those surveyed in Mexico City had "little or no trust" in the police. Fear of police involvement and retaliation discourages the public from reporting crimes and assisting in police investigations.

In 1986, 78 percent of Mexicans reported that it was normally necessary to pay bribes to resolve any issue with the government (Morris, 1991). Mexicans viewed police bribery, extortion, embezzlement, and bureaucratic bribery as the most widespread acts of corruption. By 2001, this perception had not changed. Indeed, 20 percent of Mexican households did not even consider bribery to be a form of corruption (Transparencia Mexicana, 2001). In addition, more than 50 percent of Mexican households believed government officials should use public office for personal gain, as long as the officials were doing a good job (Transparencia Mexicana, 1999).

Based on these data, we conclude that Mexico City citizens believe corruption is widespread and entrenched in both the government and the police force. Gunnar Myrdal (1968) introduced the notion of the "folklore of corruption," referring to a community's shared beliefs about the extent of corruption in public institutions. In the context of Mexico City, this folklore is rife with civilian doubt, suspicion, and mistrust of the police force. The common perception is that corruption is endemic throughout public institutions.

The data cited above clearly demonstrate both a lack of confidence in public institutions and a high threshold of acceptance of corruption among public citizens. Manion (2004) argued that when both public citizens and officials process information about social norms and values by observing the transactions and interactions around them, "what is normal (in a descriptive sense) may become acceptable (in a moral sense)." In Mexico City, when corrupt interactions between the police and ordinary civilians are ubiquitous and go unpunished, there is a generally low psychic cost for engaging in corrupt activities.

Existing literature also illustrates that common beliefs about the extent of corruption and the untrustworthiness of governmental institutions influence individual decisions to participate in corrupt activities (Myrdal, 1968; LeVine, 1975). While these perceptions may not be an accurate reflection of the reality of corruption within public institutions, they still serve as a foundation for decision making among the civilian population. Inconsistencies between public perceptions and reality may cause individuals to make choices based on incorrect assumptions, thus fueling the phenomenon of corruption (Andreski, 1968; Huntington, 1968; Ekpo, 1979). Attempts to curb corruption, therefore, must be accompanied by attempts to change public expectations. Without a change in public expectations, reform attempts may be unsuccessful and highly costly (Manion, 2004).

Many forms of corruption in Mexico City contribute to low public expectations of the police force. We identified *la mordida* [the bite]—a petty amount of money paid by an ordinary citizen to a police officer to resolve a conflict—as the most salient form of corruption in the Mexico City police force. Because of the importance of public perceptions, reforms that focus on the most visible forms of corruption may have the greatest potential to begin changing public expectations. Nevertheless, we recognize that bribery is not the only form of corruption among the police force. The next section describes the four prevalent forms of corruption within the Mexico City police force and analyzes the role of each in contributing to the folklore of corruption that defines public expectations of the police.

## PREVALENT FORMS OF CORRUPTION IN THE MEXICO CITY POLICE FORCE

Table 1 summarizes relevant information gathered by the Criminal Justice Policy Unit Center for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (Sayed and Bruce, 1998). This report identified cities around the world that face various forms of police corruption with varying degrees of prevalence. The four forms of corruption identified in Table 1 are a result of research that identified Mexico City as a locality in which these forms of corruption are most prevalent. Based on research and discussion within our group, an analysis of various media sources, and interviews with Sigrid Arzt (President, *Democracia, Derechos Humanos, y Seguridad*), we evaluated each prevalent form of corruption. We developed a set of criteria to frame our analysis of corruption in the Mexico City police force and evaluated the public visibility, frequency, economic costs (both public and private), monies involved per transaction, key participants other than the police, and level of police involvement. The results of our evaluation are presented below in Table 1, and Appendix A explains how we arrived at these conclusions. While we recognize that this analysis is not an exact science, we feel confident in the credibility of our systematic method.

### Bribery and Extortion

This form of corruption cuts across private and public spheres and takes place whenever a police officer uses his or her discretion and monopoly power to accept or extort a bribe from a civilian for personal or institutional gain. Bribery refers to police officers accepting bribes, whether solicited or unsolicited, in return for non-enforcement of an illegal activity, whereas extortion refers to police officers demanding payments from civilians whom they accuse of illegal activities for the sole purpose of collecting a monetary bribe. Such corruption is most prevalent in, but not limited to, exchanges between traffic police and the civilian population.

**Table 1**
**Characteristics of Corruption in the Mexico City Police Force**

| Prevalent forms (and key non-police participants) | Public visibility | Frequency | Economic costs | | Monies involved (per transaction) | Level of police involvement[a] |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Private | Public | | |
| Bribery and extortion (civilians) | H | H | H | H | L | H |
| Diversion of police resources (criminals; business owners) | L | M | L | L | M | M |
| Kickbacks and similar payments (none) | L | H | L | L | M | H |
| Premeditated criminal activities | | | | | | |
| • Kidnapping (wealthy civilians) | H | M | H | L | H | H |
| • Drug trafficking (criminals) | H | M | L | UK | H | H |

Key: L=low; M=medium; H=high; UK=unknown

[a]Although we recognize an important distinction between local and federal police, we were unable to clearly identify which police were involved in each of the prevalent forms because available sources rarely identified officers involved as either local or federal.

Incentives are strong for police officers to engage in corrupt practices. According to Arteaga and López (2000), police officers in Mexico City are socialized into the practices of bribery and extortion even before they begin formal training. Many young recruits choose the police profession in order to gain capital to start a business. Others have the perception that they can make "easy money" as a police officer. Such an expectation is not based on actual professional wages, however. Recruits who are genuinely interested in law enforcement are relatively rare. Overall, the most common reason people enter the police force is "for the money" (Arteaga and López, 2000).

As shown in Table 1, bribery and extortion are highly visible and highly frequent. Although the amount of money involved per transaction is low, the cost to both the government and civilians is very high. The fact that a large portion of the police force is engaged in bribery and extortion indicates that the incentives for engaging in this particular corrupt activity are high, and the cost of being discovered and punished is relatively low. Although bribery and extortion are the most frequent and salient forms of corruption, 1 out of 5 civilians does not see these practices as forms of corruption—an indication that bribery and extortion are institutionalized within the police force and accepted throughout society.

## Diversion of Police Resources

This category refers to acts in which officers sell or disproportionately provide their occupational services. This venue for corruption also refers to officers selling or providing their legitimate police services to criminals (Sayed and Bruce, 1998). As Table 1 shows, police resources are often allocated between two principal actors: (1) wealthy businessmen such as merchants, bankers, and restaurant owners and (2) criminals who are primarily drug lords, prostitutes, and drug dealers (Sayed and Bruce, 1998).

Small businesses, typically restaurants and bars, often receive favorable treatment from the police in the form of frequent patrols of the community. Payment for these specialized services most commonly takes the form of free or discounted meals and drinks (Sayed, 1997). Though it may appear harmless, the result of such exchange is the improper allocation of police time and personnel throughout and across neighborhoods and communities. Thus, communities without such commercial resources are neglected while other communities receive disproportionate police protection (Sayed, 1997). A more serious diversion of police resources occurs during work hours when police officers provide private security to businessmen, prostitutes, and drug dealers who purchase police protection (Sayed and Bruce, 1998).

Because actors involved in this form of corruption are not ordinary civilians, public visibility is low. Occurrence is also low, as is the demand for police involvement. Although the misallocation of police time and personnel does not directly result in high economic costs, it does indirectly affect ordinary civilians because its occurrence is a detriment to public safety (see Table 1). Because police patrol less frequently in some communities, ordinary citizens may be at the mercy of criminals. The resulting unreliability of the police propagates the cycle of low public confidence and high mistrust of the police force.

### Kickbacks and Similar Payments

This category refers to payments among police officers who exchange work-related opportunities for corrupt income (Sayed, 1997) and includes payments within the police force for preferential shifts, locations, or responsibilities. A kickback is characterized as a transfer of income from one party to another by illegal arrangement. As Table 1 shows, the only key players in this form of corruption are Mexico City police officers.

A relevant example of kickbacks is illustrated in the relationship between Mexico City police officers and towing companies. Police officers make illegal arrangements with colleagues in order to be assigned to drive a police tow truck because financial incentives are high, public visibility is low, and the probability of being caught is also low (Sayed and Bruce, 1998). This example illustrates a number of important basics within the police force itself. First, the corrupt act occurs within the contour of legitimate police service, in this case car towing. Second, the initiating transaction typically occurs between police officers who share similar job responsibilities. As Table 1 shows, although the frequency of exchange is high, the sums of money involved in each exchange are not large. In these types of transactions, there is no use of violence, force, or extortion to obtain compliance. Rather, both actors negotiate favorable terms that allow them to maximize their own self-interest.

Because the incentives for engaging in this type of corruption are high among police officers, these illegal arrangements are frequent, and the activity is institutionalized within the police force.[1] Although the transactions have no direct economic effects on the government or on private citizens, these illegal transactions still have a harmful effect on police perceptions of themselves as legitimate law enforcers.

[1] In other words, police officers see this kind of corrupt activity as part of their institutional responsibilities.

## Criminal Activity

This category includes police involvement in illegal activities such as drug trafficking and kidnapping.[2] One direct result is low public confidence in the police. Although identifying all the crimes committed by the police is impossible, an abundance of anecdotal evidence suggests high levels of police involvement in crime. Police officers are frequently accused of crimes such as muggings, bank robberies, kidnappings, murder, rape, auto theft, holdups of passenger buses, and hijackings of freight trucks (Jensen, 1998). Police officers at all levels appear to be involved in these criminal activities. Many federal judicial police appear to be heavily involved in the drug-trafficking trade that operates between Mexico City and many of the Mexico–U.S. border regions. In early 2004, for example, 13 police officers were arrested for involvement in drug trafficking and the murders of nearly a dozen citizens. Federal Deputy Attorney General Jose Luis Santiago Vasconcelos indicated that "some elements of the state judicial police" were also involved (Rodriguez, 2004).

Moreover, officers engage directly in criminal activities by harassing and intimidating drug dealers on behalf of other drug dealers (Sayed and Bruce, 1998). Police are regularly involved in "allowing certain individuals or groups to operate in the illegal market, while preventing other potential participants" (Sayed and Bruce, 1998). This is by far the most difficult form of corruption to identify, largely because the officers appear to be performing legitimate police service by arresting rightful offenders while actually selling their monopoly rights of arrestment to the highest bidder (Sayed and Bruce, 1998). Although the frequency and number of Mexico City police officers involved in drug trafficking are unverifiable, clearly large sums of money are involved (see Table 1), and the drug industry is likely to have a detrimental effect on the health of the city's economy. In addition, the exposure of criminal police officers is likely to be highly visible, and surely that visibility contributes to public mistrust of the police.

Kidnapping is an extremely profitable business in Mexico City: Ransom payments have been reported as high as 50 million dollars (Macko, 1997). Although there are numerous allegations that the federal judicial police are involved in criminal abductions, drug traffickers carry out a significant number of them. As a result, at present, it is extremely difficult to ascertain accurately the number of abductions that involve the police (Turbiville, 1997). Exacerbating the problem, abductions are rarely reported, ransoms are usually paid, and often there is no formal report or investigation. Though the frequency and level of police involvement in kidnapping are unknown, kidnappings are extremely costly to the victims and their families. When reported, these criminal activities become highly salient. Despite relatively low economic costs to the government, the social costs of kidnapping are extremely high. Police involvement in a kidnapping has detrimental effects on both political legitimacy and public perception of the effectiveness of the police force.

[2] Although we have identified police involvement in other premeditated criminal activities such as car hijacking, illegal weapon sales, theft and robbery, we will not address each of these specifically for lack of sufficient information.

### Discussion

In terms of public visibility, frequency, economic costs, and monies involved, there is wide variation among and within the prevalent forms of corruption in the Mexico City police force. With the exception of monies involved per transaction, however, bribery and extortion maintain a consistently high score across all criteria identified in Table 1. Although each bribery and extortion transaction involves relatively low sums, the high frequency of these transactions results in high aggregate private economic costs. Both police and civilian involvement are also high in these illegal transactions, and the high public economic costs of bribery and extortion are manifested in large sums of lost government revenues that occur as a result of informal exchanges of money.

Based on our analysis of various media sources, recent corruption literature, and interviews with Sigrid Arzt, bribery and extortion constitute the only forms of corruption that have both high public visibility and high frequency as well as high levels of civilian involvement. As a result, this form of corruption is likely to have the greatest impact on public perceptions concerning the police in Mexico City. Because of the importance of changing public expectations, we conclude that this form of corruption should be one of the key focal points of anticorruption reform in the Mexico City police force.

Due to the salience and high levels of public involvement in bribery and extortion, any anticorruption reform attempts that focused on this form of corruption would naturally be very visible to the public. Visibility could help signal clearly the government's commitment to clean up the police force. Fundamental changes to reduce this form of corruption would require cooperation of both the public and the police force. A genuine reduction in bribery and extortion has the potential to incrementally increase public confidence in the government and the police force. We must take into account, however, that in a context such as Mexico City—where corruption is widespread and takes many forms, and public mistrust of public officials is great—any reform focused on a single form of corruption is unlikely to significantly reduce corrupt activities or change public expectations.

If a single target reform were chosen to maximize limited resources, bribery and extortion might be the most prudent place to begin. In the long run, however, reforms focused solely on bribery and extortion would not fundamentally reduce corruption or change public expectations about the overall levels of corruption within the Mexico City police force. We therefore conclude that specific anticorruption reform attempts must be part of a broad-based anticorruption strategy. The strategy we propose draws lessons from several other successful anticorruption reforms in a strategic framework that combines efforts to reduce the actual level of corruption overall with efforts to educate the public about incremental successes.

## Relevant Anticorruption Reforms in Perspective

The problem of corruption in Mexico is not new, nor are efforts of past governments to fight it. The past 30 years illustrates a history of national anticorruption rhetoric. For example, Presidents Portillo (1976–1982) and Salinas de Gortari (1988–1994) promised to push for concrete legal changes in both the public and private spheres, while Presidents de la Madrid (1982–1988) and Zedillo (1994–2000) used public campaigns to focus their efforts on public

perceptions of corruption in less concrete reforms (Morris, 2000). Following the pattern of his predecessors, the current President of Mexico, Vicente Fox, is known for his anticorruption agenda, and his administration appears to be more committed than previous administrations to the implementation of policies to combat corruption. The administration's commitment and supporting actions have prompted an increase in the number of small-scale local reforms such as those attempted in the Mexico City police force in the past few years. It is too early to judge whether Fox's reforms have been (or will be) successful in reducing overall corruption in Mexico.

Our research suggests that there has been no comprehensive strategy for anticorruption reform in the Mexico City police force. While most reforms have had general goals, those that have targeted a specific form of corruption have focused on bribery and extortion between traffic police and the civilian population. Based on the analysis summarized in Table 1 and our discussion above, we conclude that such a focus is likely to be effective because bribery and extortion have high public visibility, frequency, and economic costs. The discussion below describes a few recent, representative reform attempts to reduce the overall level of corruption within the police force and reduce incentives for corrupt interactions between the traffic police and the civilian population in Mexico City.

One reform aimed at combating traffic police bribery is the *Swans,* a 950-strong, all-female traffic police patrol established in 1999. The underlying rationale was the belief that women would "exude naturally occurring feminine traits of firmness, fairness, and, most of all, incorruptibility" (Mandel-Campbell, 1999). Swans deal only with traffic tickets. Since their inception, they have issued more than three times as many traffic tickets as male traffic police officers. (Unfortunately, less than 10 percent of 1.6 million registered traffic tickets are paid, constituting an estimated $50 million per year in unpaid traffic fines.) One advantage the Swans program may exploit is gender identity and the cultural and social expectations regarding women. Given the current perception that women are incorruptible, Swans could indeed be a "pocket of clean government" within the police force.

A second anticorruption effort, a new criminal code for Mexico City, began in February 2003. This code increased penalties for drivers and police officers who commit bribery. It also prescribed prison sentences of 6 months to 3 years or fines of $400 to $2,000 for motorists who offer bribes. For police officers who accept bribes, the code established prison sentences of 1 to 4 years for bribes under $2,000 and up to 9 years for greater sums (Sanz, 2003).

In a third reform effort, Mayor López installed 172 standing cameras and mobile units at strategic points in Mexico City to catch citizens and traffic police officers engaging in bribery. In the first month of this program, all major television networks aired the footage of one motorist paying two police officers 100 pesos for a parking violation. As a result, the motorist ended up paying $1,800 in fines and received a high-profile public shaming.

Each of these reform attempts have targeted traffic police and civilians participating in bribery and extortion practices. It is too early to assess the success of these reforms, but lessons learned from other successful anticorruption reforms lead us to predict only marginal successes in reducing the overall level of corruption within the police force in Mexico City.

Specifically, these reform attempts alone are unlikely to successfully reduce corruption *and* change public expectations of the police. When corruption is widespread, as in the Mexico City police force, uncoordinated reforms targeted at only one specific form of corruption cannot adequately address the culture and public perceptions of police corruption. For this, a comprehensive anticorruption strategy is required. Below we outline key components of such a strategy, drawing on lessons from successful anticorruption reform efforts.

## A COORDINATED ANTICORRUPTION STRATEGY

The discussion above stressed two core goals for anticorruption reforms in the Mexico City police force: (1) reduce the level of corruption and (2) change public expectations of the police force. With these two objectives, a broad anticorruption strategy could serve as an effective framework within which specific reforms could be successfully created and implemented. A successful anticorruption strategy must coordinate reforms that focus on issues of enforcement, changes in institutional design, and public education and involvement. Anticorruption literature suggests that the former two components are best used to reduce levels of corruption, while the latter is focused on changing expectations. Without successful enforcement, however, public expectations about corruption in the police force are unlikely to change.

### Enforcement

Enforcement strategies effectively reduce corruption by increasing the likelihood that key participants engaging in corrupt activities will be caught and punished. In other words, enforcement strategies deter corruption by increasing the expected costs of being corrupt. These strategies are often committed to increasing funding for infrastructure necessary to improve monitoring and detection mechanisms. They also may include legal or regulatory changes that increase the punishments and penalties for corruption, as well as transformations in the structure of penalties.[3] In order to be effective, stricter consequences must be accompanied by an increased likelihood of discovery (Manion, 2004).

According to Ross Homel (2002), random integrity testing, which involves placing elected officials in predetermined situations that present an opportunity to behave corruptly, is "the only way to create a general deterrent impact in police agencies that will be substantial and permanent" (p. 160). In Mexico, where there is little confidence in the police and weak political accountability, integrity testing could play a role in enforcement by penalizing misconduct. Integrity testing could improve ethical behavior if it were a complement in a larger strategy for the prevention of corruption. Kevin Ford, Chairman of the Council for the International Anti-Corruption Conference and former Deputy Commissioner of Investigation for the City of New York, argues that "there is no question that integrity testing is a tremendous deterrent to corrupt activity," and these kinds of tests have successfully been implemented since 1994 among NYPD officers (Ford, 1999). Moreover, the current policy of

[3] For example, Susan Rose-Ackerman (1999) suggested a strategy that makes corruption illegal for both public officials and private citizens. She also proposed that penalties be equal to benefits received by one of the parties engaged in the corrupt interaction: The official would be fined the amount of the bribe received while the civilian would be fined the amount of profit or gains received by paying the bribe.

Australian police services supports integrity tests to increase the expected costs of engaging in corrupt behavior (Homel, 2002).

Stricter enforcement of the rules governing corrupt activities was an important component of a successful anticorruption effort in Singapore. The government made the definition of "corrupt behavior" clear to the public, and penalties for violating regulations against corrupt behavior were increased to include prison terms of up to 5 years and fines of up to $10,000, regardless of the position and status of the perpetrator (Quah, 1989). In an effort to achieve a change in public perceptions of corruption in public institutions, corruption convictions were highly publicized by the media in Singapore. Heavy media coverage was used to deter corrupt officials through public shame and to create awareness throughout the community of the severity of punishments for engaging in corrupt activities (Quah, 1989). Successful anticorruption reform in Singapore raised the cost of engaging in corruption by clarifying the definition of corrupt behavior and by creating severe penalties for getting caught engaging in corrupt behavior.

## Institutional Design

If enforcement is increased without changing the underlying structures that encourage corruption, the strategy is unlikely to be successful in the long run. Changes in institutional design are a result of a thorough examination of the way in which responsibilities and compensation are structured in an institution. In order to effectively reduce levels of corruption, the underlying structures that create incentives for corruption must be examined and altered. Reforms focused on institutional design re-organize the system through which corrupt transactions take place so that opportunities to engage in these activities are largely decreased. Reforms that focus on institutional design must also evaluate the laws, rules, and regulations that public officials are responsible for enforcing because many of them may be more costly (in terms of encouraging corruption) than they are beneficial (e.g., in terms of public safety and protection). In the Mexico City police force, such a new design would require ownership of a new system that creates incentives for clean officers and increases costs for the corrupt ones.

A key component of the effort to decrease the opportunities and incentives for corruption in Singapore was to increase the salaries of civil servants and political leaders, making them more competitive with the private sector (Quah, 1989). Additionally, changes in institutional design included amendments to the existing law, which increased the power and scope of the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (an independent agency responsible for investigating corruption and carrying out the provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act). As a result of the creation of this independent corruption monitoring institution, public institutions in Singapore were required to implement changes to improve the timeliness of the administrative process and improve staff monitoring and supervision mechanisms to ensure legitimate and efficient work patterns (Quah, 1989). Creation of this independent agency was a first-step attempt to create a pocket of "clean government" that could begin to improve perceptions of and increase trust in public institutions in Singapore.

The reform of the Philippine's Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) in 1975 under the Marcos regime demonstrates the possibility of pockets of clean government in a context of

widespread corruption. It also suggests that a change in the institutional design within the Mexico police force in the name of fighting corruption requires the participation of all key actors. A new attitude toward corruption—one that could be developed through training programs that stress the importance of ethical conduct—is also necessary for the success of a new institutional design. Like the successful example of the implementation of "reorientation seminars" among the Philippine's BIR employees, partnerships between police and academic institutions are a tremendous opportunity to start such programs. The partnership between Charles Sturt University and New South Wales Police department in Australia is illuminating in this regard. In fact, this affiliation is a successful project intended to teach police officers specific skills they would not have learned through the regular police training program (Newton, 2002).

We also see elements of institutional redesign in recent reform attempts in Mexico City. In 1997 Mexico City's first democratically elected Mayor Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas held "purification" of the police force as a high priority, using lie detector tests and restructured beats as a way to gain more accountability between the police and the community (Davis, 2003). Cárdenas did not assess how receptive the police would be to these reforms, however, and they led to widespread strikes within the force.

Another round of reforms, also involving institutional redesign, was initiated by the next Mayor of Mexico City, Andrés Manuel López Obrador. Mayor López developed the "Policía Communitaria" [community police], structured to work on a neighborhood basis in the hopes that this reform would lead to greater feelings of ownership and responsibility throughout the police force and would ultimately result in greater neighborhood security. Indirectly, this reform aims to decrease the overall corruption in the Mexico City police force by creating a familiar police presence in each neighborhood in order to build accountability; however, this reform does not include any incentive for police to change their previously corrupt behaviors.

Other reform attempts are aimed at reducing corruption by reducing the frequency of contact between the police and civilians. For example, in Ecatepec, Mayor Eruviel Avila has abolished traffic tickets, thereby reducing police and civilian interactions (Sullivan, 2003). This reform targets bribery and extortion but does nothing to deter police from engaging in corrupt activities, nor does it change the public perception of the police force. In effect, by eliminating one of the major job responsibilities of the police, the reform may perpetuate the perception that the Mexico City police cannot be trusted.

Without accompanying changes in enforcement, public education and involvement, and transformation of the folklore of corruption in Mexico City, we predict that these reform attempts would have little positive effect toward building public confidence and reducing corruption within the police force.

## Public Education

Information is vital to any decision about whether to engage in corruption. Providing the public with information about ongoing enforcement and institutional design efforts to curb corruption could greatly increase the success and decrease the costs. Also, information that the level of corruption has been reduced by recent reform efforts could simultaneously

increase the expected cost of engaging in corruption. If these conditions held, civilians would be more likely to act as allies in reform by resisting corrupt interactions. These reforms also have the potential to increase civilian confidence in public institutions, creating incentives for them to report any corrupt transactions they witness and take an active role in anticorruption reforms.

In Hong Kong, public education was crucial to a three-pronged strategy to reduce corruption. In the beginning efforts of the Independent Commission against Corruption (ICAC), community liaison officers highly publicized the arrest and successful prosecution of prominent police syndicate members. Community liaison officers also facilitated massive public education, using media to enhance the legitimacy of the ICAC. Public education promoted the knowledge of anticorruption laws, mobilized the public to cooperate in reporting corruption, and increased the "psychic costs" of corrupt activities through the work of the Community Relations Department (Manion, 2004).[4]

Along with public education, the Community Relations Department (CRD) began moral education programs that integrated anticorruption education into primary, secondary, and tertiary school curriculums. The CRD attempted to develop attitudes and habits to support anticorruption efforts. The moral education curriculum focused on the values of honesty and self-discipline and emphasized the importance of positive attitudes toward public officials. It also taught students about the proper functions of government, citizen rights and responsibilities, and the ills of corruption (Manion, 2004). Moral education was incorporated into early education of children to facilitate and instill "values that raise the psychic costs of participating in corruption or not reporting" them (Manion, 2004).

In sum, credible public education campaigns facilitate public expectations about clean public institutions and thus encourage civilians to make clean transactions. In addition, changing expectations about the reliability of public institutions fosters civilian reporting of corruption, which could directly reduce levels of corruption.

## Discussion

Hong Kong's ICAC changed public perceptions about corruption by enforcing anticorruption directives, educating the public about corruption, and modifying institutional design of police practices. Applying the lessons from successful anticorruption reform in Hong Kong and elsewhere, we confirm the need for a broad-based coordinated anticorruption strategy for the police in Mexico City.

Efforts to curb corruption in the Mexico City police force have appropriately targeted the most frequent, visible, and costly forms of corruption: bribery and extortion. Yet these efforts alone are unlikely to succeed in reducing levels of corruption and changing public expectations of the police. Such targeted reforms do not include essential components of

[4] The role of education in anticorruption reforms was facilitated through the Community Relations Department (CRD). The CRD educated Hong Kong citizens and new arrivals from Mainland China about the definition of corruption using leaflets, television series, and newspaper columns. The CRD also produced television announcements and posters that urged reporting. In addition, the CRD mobilized public participation in ICAC's anticorruption efforts, chiefly reporting corruption through a corruption hotline (Manion, 2004).

anticorruption reform: enforcement, institutional design, and public education and involvement. A strategy that includes all of these components of reform is likely to reduce corruption and change public expectations of the police force in Mexico City. Specific reform recommendations presented in the next section draw on the lessons of successful anticorruption reforms worldwide, focus on making these lessons applicable and transferable to the Mexico City police force, and recognize both limitations and advantages of being an NGO ally in anticorruption reform.

## RECOMMENDATIONS: THE ROLE OF A CIVIL SOCIETY NGO

Our analysis of international lessons from successful anticorruption reforms underlines the necessity of a broad-based anticorruption strategy for the Mexico City police force—one that emphasizes changes in enforcement, institutional design, and public education. We recognize that a nongovernmental organization like *Democracia, Derechos Humanos, y Seguridad* (DDHS) cannot directly impose changes on the Mexico City police force. We conclude, however, that in the current context some level of partnership between the police force and a civil society NGO could greatly enhance the probability of success in anticorruption efforts.

The unique capacity of a civil society NGO is to promote public involvement and education. When simultaneously implemented with institutional redesign and strict enforcement, public education about the consequences of corruption and about ongoing reform attempts could have a significant impact on the level of corruption among and public expectations for the Mexico City police force. Distinct from other recent recommendations, such as the long list presented in Rudy Giuliani's Report published in 2000, we pared our recommendations down to five suggestions that focus on the role of DDHS. Our recommendations specify how DDHS could promote a coordinated anticorruption strategy based on the unique strength of the organization—working with the public to achieve fundamental change. Based on the preceding analysis of the Mexico City police force, we believe the most effective role of DDHS would be to reduce the level of corruption by focusing on reform in both the police force *and* among the public.

### DDHS and the Mexico City Police Force

Creating a partnership between the Mexico City police force and DDHS is an important part of an effective anticorruption strategy. Obviously, all proposals for anticorruption reforms and initiatives must be sensitive to preserving the independence and identity of the police force. We recommend that DDHS take the following steps with the Mexico City Police Force.

- ***Offer to act as an independent advisory board for anticorruption initiatives within the Mexico City police force.***

  Anticorruption literature shows the importance of an independent agency that keeps the police accountable for their promises and legitimates their efforts to fight corruption. We believe the involvement of DDHS could assist in anticorruption measures to integrate accountability into the organizational structure of the police force. DDHS could thus fulfill the role that independent agencies have played in other successful anticorruption

reforms. The advice and suggestions of DDHS (an agency with no obvious ulterior motives beyond promoting anticorruption reform) together with a good public education program would help improve public perceptions about the trustworthiness and legitimacy of the police force.

For instance, DDHS could be instrumental in gathering information about public perceptions about the police force through research, analyses of the media, public surveys, and personal interviews. Using these data, DDHS could accurately inform the Mexico City police force of the public's perceptions and expectations, and advise them on how to prioritize and focus reform efforts. Moreover, DDHS could provide follow-up reports to interpret the progress and status of reform attempts. In this capacity, DDHS initially could help the police recognize which type of reform would have the greatest impact on public expectations. Subsequently, DDHS could monitor the comparative successes of these efforts over time to keep the police focused on the most valuable reforms.

- ***Encourage, prepare, and help establish a partnership between an academic institution and the Mexico City police force.***

  A partnership between the police and a prestigious, legitimate academic institution could have a dramatic effect on public perceptions of the police force. The participating academic institution could provide general remedial education classes in addition to ethics training programs for police officers. Police involvement in these basic educational programs would help raise the general education level of the police, alleviating the current image of uneducated police officers. Police officers' participation in this training program should be voluntary but included in an incentive structure for receiving promotions and higher salaries.

## DDHS and Mexico City Civilians

We recommend that DDHS take the following steps with Mexico City civilians.

- ***Offer anticorruption workshops in the various jurisdictions policed by the Mexico City police force.***

  A civilian population more aware of the consequences of corruption would be more likely to make educated decisions when confronted with an opportunity to engage in corrupt behaviors. Anticorruption workshops could serve as informational sessions to educate the public in the following areas: legal definitions of corruption, civil rights, penalties for corrupt behavior, social and economic costs of continuing corrupt behavior, recent police efforts in fighting corruption, and efforts the civilian population can make to help with this effort.

- ***Offer to act as a liaison between the media and the Mexico City police force.***

  Transparency in the Mexico City police force is a vital component of successful anticorruption reform. Moreover, media coverage of attempts within the police force to

pursue open information policies and anticorruption strategies could have a great impact on public perceptions of the police force. By educating the police about the positive impacts of transparency, DDHS could be instrumental in this regard. The DDHS could also take an active role in collecting information about anticorruption reform measures within the police force and could act as the reliable liaison that delivers these messages to the press. DDHS could play an important role in creating balanced media coverage of harms and penalties for corrupt behavior, as well as the positive attempts to control corruption within the police force. We believe this measure would help legitimate police initiatives designed to reduce corruption.

- ***Promote anticorruption education throughout the entire educational system in Mexico City***.

  DDHS should propose and lobby for a change promoting ethics and an anticorruption mind-set into primary and secondary school curriculum in the Mexico City education system. Incorporating ethics training into the curriculum of youth is a key part of efforts to impact children's beliefs about the nature of corruption. Teaching children the legal definitions of corruption, its costs and consequences, and the incentives for clean behavior could make a lasting impression on young minds. Age-appropriate lessons about the dangers of corruption and the benefits of behavior that is not corrupt must be consistent throughout the years. A comprehensive anticorruption curriculum would constitute a long-term change in civilian perceptions of the nature of corruption and encourage ordinary Mexican citizens to become allies in the fight against corruption in public institutions.

## Discussion

A partnership between DDHS and the police force could be mutually beneficial but would require that DDHS build credibility with both the police force and Mexico City civilians. While we believe our recommendations would be best implemented simultaneously as part of a coordinated strategy, DDHS may need to begin by working toward the implementation of one or two key strategies as a way to build their credibility. In this case, we would recommend starting with either a partnership with a prestigious academic institution or the promotion of anticorruption education throughout the educational system in Mexico City, or both. We see education as an extremely important element in anticorruption reform and believe that the strength of a civil society NGO is to educate the people, whether ordinary civilians or the police force.

While we recognize that the active involvement of DDHS with a public institution widely perceived as corrupt might be controversial, we are confident that a partnership between the police force and an independent institution such as DDHS would be an important step in fighting corruption. The institutional integrity of both organizations could be protected through mutual transparency, a relationship with balanced responsibilities, and a genuine alliance against corruption. Based on our research and lessons learned from successful anticorruption reforms, we believe that DDHS occupies a unique position in Mexico City and has the potential to be a key player in the fight against corruption in the Mexico City police force.

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## APPENDIX A
## SYSTEMATIC EVALUATION OF PREVALENT FORMS OF CORRUPTION

Evaluation criteria are defined as follows:

- *Public visibility:* Salience of corrupt transactions.
- *Frequency:* Number of times each transaction occurs from start to finish.
- *Economic cost*
  - *Public:* Lost revenues incurred by institutions such as local, state, or federal government agencies due to informal monetary transactions used to settle business traditionally handled formally by the public sector.
  - *Private:* Aggregate financial cost incurred by private citizens as a result of informal monetary transactions used to settle business traditionally handled formally by the public sector.
- *Monies involved:* Amount of money involved per transaction.
- *Key participants:* Individuals or groups of individuals that participate in each corrupt behavior, aside from police officers.
- *Level of police involvement:* Extent to which the police are a part of each type of corrupt activity (includes conspiring, planning and executing the activity).

We conducted qualitative ordinal evaluation of the prevalent forms of corruption using the following system. For the categories of frequency and public visibility, we recorded individual team member scores for each of the prevalent forms of corruption. Based on scholarly research, analysis of media sources, and conversations with *Democracia, Derechos Humanos, y Seguridad*, team members independently recorded their scores. We then calculated the team average for each prevalent form of corruption, with a low score recorded as 1, a medium score as 2, and a high score as 3. A low score indicates that team members in the course of research *rarely or seldom* encountered descriptions of this corrupt behavior; a medium score indicates they encountered descriptions of this corrupt behavior *fairly often*; and a high score indicates they *frequently* encountered descriptions of this corrupt behavior.

We evaluated the economic cost, monies involved, and level of police involvement for each category using qualitative information gathered through research. The economic cost category was derived using data collected from *Transparencia Mexicana* in addition to a comparative evaluation of economic cost as a result of the combination of frequency and monies involved. With the assistance of *Democracia, Derechos Humanos, y Seguridad*, we were able to complement with first-hand experiences our research to identify the key participants in corrupt transactions and the levels of police involvement.