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Introduction and Overview: Bribery and the Study of Decision Making

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This is a book about bribery. More precisely, it is about how people think about offering or accepting a bribe. Bribery is an iteration of corruption, and corruption shapes the modern world. Some governments exist because of it; some will collapse under its weight. Corruption mobilizes the protests and motivates the opposition of millions, while millions more suffer its inequities. Corruption distorts the flow of the world's resources and its capital and renders markets dysfunctional. It is virtually impossible to turn to a news outlet without encountering stories of corruption or popular reaction to corruption. It certainly is impossible to understand the world today without taking corruption into account.

Bribery has probably existed for as long as there have been some forms of authority to bribe, and people have been trying to control it for just as long. The earliest known legal rules seem to include proscriptions against bribery. Only fragments of the Code of Urukagina (2370 BCE) have been preserved, but the tales from ancient Lagash in Mesopotamia suggest that a substantial portion of the rules penalized the taking of bribes by Lagashian bureaucrats. The earliest of the well-preserved cuneiform codes, the Code of Hammurabi (1754 BCE), proscribes bribery. Mencius, the great interpreter of Confucian teaching (around fourth century BCE), suggests that "[a] fully righteous person would also recognize that it is just as shameful to accept a large bribe as it is to accept a small bribe, and so would refuse to accept either" (van Norden 2014). Ancient Hindu texts, whose origins are lost in time, vigorously condemn bribery and proscribe drastic punishment for bribe-taking officials (Thakur 1979: 14).

As could be expected of a phenomenon with such ancient roots, bribery has long been studied. This book offers a new way to think about bribery. Much of the previous research that has been conducted on bribery investigates the antecedent conditions of bribery in a particular country or culture, the nature and forms of bribery, and the impact of bribery on societies and economies. Very little research looks at bribery from the point of view of the individual faced with the decision to bribe or be bribed. A fundamental question in the study of bribery, however, should be why individuals offer or accept bribes. This book approaches this question from the perspective of recent scholarship in multiple disciplines, including cognitive neuroscience, behavioral ethics, and psychology.

BRIBERY

Bribery is a type of corruption. Corruption has proven difficult to define. In its most basic and common usage, corruption describes the transformation of something from a good state to a bad state, whether that means functional or moral. Thus, people speak of a computer program as "corrupted" when it works no more, or of an innocent person as corrupted when that person becomes cynical and morally coarse. The word can describe simultaneous moral and functional decay, as in the corruption and fall of Rome. Used in such a way, the term corruption is too broad for either those who study corruption or those who wish to control corruption. A transformation from good to bad iterates itself in thousands of ways and can be caused by thousands of processes, not least of all the passage of time. To speak of corruption in a meaningful way or to formulate programs that might control corruption requires somewhat more precise definitions. Those who study corruption have responded to this need with a galaxy of definitions.

Arnold Heidenheimer, often in association with Michael Johnston, has generated the most well-known attempts to define corruption (Heidenheimer & Johnston 2011; Heidenheimer, Johnston, & LeVine 1989; Johnston, LeVine, & Heidenheimer 1970). Heidenheimer suggests three broad categories of definitions: market-centered, public interest–centered, and public office–centered. Market-centered definitions of corruption posit a "rational" actor who follows a particular thought process in deciding how to act. Thus, "[a] corrupt civil servant regards his (public) office as a business, the income of which he will … seek to maximize. The office then becomes a 'maximizing unit.' The size of his income depends … upon the market situation and his talents for finding the point maximal gain on the public's demand curve" (van Klaveren 1989: 26). Public interest–centered definitions look to the effect of activities; corruption occurs when a public servant's activity, particularly when induced by "rewards not legally provided for, … does damage to the public and its interests" (Friedrich 1966: 74). Public office–centered definitions are very similar but, rather than focusing on the effects of behavior, scrutinize the relationship and responsibility of the corrupt actor with and to the public. Each of these types of definitions has been productively used in social science literature, but each has also been roundly criticized.

Ulrich von Alemann (2004) suggests a different approach. Rather than attempting to find a single definition of corruption, von Alemann suggests that corruption simply be understood. He therefore categorizes corruption literature into five tropes of understandings: corruption as social decline, corruption as logic of exchange, corruption as deviant behavior, corruption as a system of measurable perceptions, and corruption as shadow politics. von Alemann recognizes corruption as a multivalent phenomenon; each of the categories he suggests represents only a trope within the research literature on corruption and none are meant to be either exclusive or definitional.

This mass of definitions is intellectually interesting and provides a window into the complexity of corruption, but it does little to provide a reader with a workable definition of corruption. Within the social sciences, one definition has come to dominate the discussion of corruption. That definition, in its most general form, is:

> The abuse or misuse of power or trust for self-interested purposes rather than the purpose for which that power or trust was given.

This definition can be found in the early writings of political scientists, in the websites of international financial institutions, and the mission statements of anticorruption organizations. As far back as 1931, Joseph Senturia (1931: 448) defined corruption for his fellow political scientists as "the misuse of public power for one's own personal profit." The World Bank defines corruption as "the abuse of public office for private gain" (1997: 8). Transparency International, the most prominent anticorruption organization, defines corruption as "the abuse of entrusted power for private gain" (www.transparency.org/what-is-corruption/).

Corruption exists in many forms, such as embezzlement, theft, extortion, and nepotism. A government official who quietly directs funds from the public treasury to her own bank account is abusing both public trust and power over the public budget. An office manager who steals a laptop is similarly abusing both trust and power.

Of all the forms of corruption, the one most closely identified with corruption in general is bribery. Indeed, Michael Johnston laments the general confusion between the terms "corruption" and "bribery" and notes that when most scholars and policymakers use the term "corruption" they are actually referring only to bribery (2005: 20–21). Bribery is, however, a specific form of corruption.

The hallmark of bribery is its quid pro quo nature. Bribery involves exchange. It is easy to overcomplicate the definition of bribery, using phrases such as "giving something of *value*" or "*benefit* to the bribe-giver." In reality, any exchange that fits within the general definition of corruption will be considered a bribe by most people, even if ultimately the objects exchanged had little or no value or were of little or no benefit to the bribe-giver. An uncomplicated definition of bribery that captures the notion of exchange and that fits within the general definition could be:

> The abuse or misuse of power or trust in a quid pro quo exchange.

A bribe-giver offers or gives something to someone who has power or trust and in consideration of what was given the holder of power or trust abuses or misuses that power or trust in some way. Even though this definition is not complicated, it sufficiently distinguishes bribery from other transactions. For example, if a person were to go to a restaurant, be seated immediately at a nice table, and enjoy a good meal, and that person were to give the maître d' a big tip after the meal, that would be considered nothing more than a tip. It does not satisfy the definition of a bribe, because there was no exchange and the maître d' did not abuse or misuse power. If, on the other hand, a person were to go to a restaurant and, upon finding that there were several people waiting to be seated, decided to give the maître d' money in exchange for getting that person a table, that would be considered bribery. There clearly is an exchange, and in consideration of the money, the maître d' abused his or her power (people should be seated in the order in which they arrive, not out of order). Similarly, if a person wants a visa in a short period of time and gives money directly to the consul, in exchange for which the consul immediately approves the visa application, then that constitutes bribery – in exchange for money, the consul deviates from the normal procedure. If, on the other hand, the consulate posts differential processing times and fees, and an applicant pays extra money to the consulate for immediate visa approval, then that does not constitute bribery. Although there was an exchange, it did not involve abuse or misuse of power or trust.

It is important to differentiate this general definition of bribery from a legal definition. A general definition is meant to be useful to those who study corruption as a phenomenon. Bribery does violate the laws of every jurisdiction in the world, but legal definitions, by their very nature, must be far more precise and circumscribed. Legal definitions must provide guidance for the people operating under those laws with enough precision that those people can determine what kinds of acts are and are not allowed. A general definition, on the other hand, only needs to describe the phenomenon sufficiently for its study and allow people in different legal jurisdictions to speak to one another.

WHY BRIBERY IS STUDIED

Bribery distorts economies and societies. It imposes tremendous costs on them. Most importantly, bribery hurts people and pulls apart the social fabric. Bribery merits attention.

The distortions imposed by bribery are easily explained. Under normal circumstances, a decision is made on the basis of factors relevant to that decision. Decisions about purchasing goods and services, for example, are made on the basis of the quality and price of those goods or services, as well as the extent to which they satisfy the needs of the purchaser. Decisions about whom to hire are made on the basis of whether a position needs to be created and then whether an applicant is qualified to fill that position. Indeed, one of the justifications for competitive markets is that such markets institutionalize the allocation of resources based on widely dispersed decisions about the quality and appropriateness of goods and services.

In contrast, under conditions of bribery, a decision is made on the basis of the quality of a bribe rather than on the basis of factors pertinent to the decision. Thus, a purchasing agent might choose an expensive, low-quality product if the seller offered the highest quality bribe. A manager might appoint someone utterly unqualified for a position if that person offered the highest quality bribe. Making decisions this way results in shoddy and unnecessary goods and services – such as buildings that collapse because resources were used to bribe inspectors rather than meet construction codes, or "bridges to nowhere" whose construction presented opportunities for massive bribery. The first level of distortion caused by bribery is quite easy to understand – society is flooded with goods and services that serve no purpose or are not really desired by anyone.

The distortion goes further. When decisions are based on the quality of a bribe, producers are not rewarded for using resources to produce high-quality or inexpensive goods and services. Instead, they are rewarded for producing high-quality bribes. Savvy producers, therefore, will divert the resources at their disposal away from the production of quality goods and services to the creation of high-quality bribes. Therefore, not only is an economy flooded with low-quality goods and services, it also experiences a dearth of goods and services of adequate quality. This means that the goods or services made from those goods or services will also be of lower quality. If, for example, an office is staffed by people who paid bribes to obtain positions in that office rather than actually qualifying for positions, then it is unlikely that that office will provide useful services.

Goods and services chosen on the basis of bribery also represent lost opportunities. Resources are not infinite, and, in fact, many polities that experience endemic bribery have very limited resources. The resources used to build an unneeded bridge are resources that could have been used to build a school or a hospital or something else that might have contributed to the overall well-being of the people in that polity. The absence of a school or a hospital means that people will be less educated or have poor health care and in turn be less capable of contributing socially and economically. The circles of distortion engendered through bribery ripple far beyond the initial act of bribery.

Given the wide range of indirect effects that flow from bribery, it is very difficult to measure the costs imposed by bribery. The International Monetary Fund estimates that between 1.5 and 2 trillion US dollars is siphoned away from the global economy each year in the form of bribes (IMF 2016: 5). This represents a shocking two percent of the global economy. A study commissioned by the European Union found that bribery adds from two to almost sixteen percent to the contract price of goods and services in public procurement by members of the European Union (PwC 2013: 6). Within the private sector, one study estimated that bribery costs developing countries 3.7 times the amount those countries receive in development aid (Hameed & Magpile 2014: 3).

As enormous as these costs are, they are only the starting point in understanding the harms inflicted by corruption and bribery. The Foreword to the *United Nations Convention Against Corruption* clearly outlines these harms:

> Corruption is an insidious plague that has a wide range of corrosive effects on societies. It undermines democracy and the rule of law, leads to violations of human rights, distorts markets, erodes the quality of life and allows organized crime, terrorism and other threats to human security to flourish. (Annan 2004)

Corruption hurts people in a variety of ways. For example, corruption is related to higher levels of child mortality rates, lower child birth weight, and increased dropout rates of children from primary school (Gupta, Davoodi, & Tiongson 2000; Vian 2002). Indeed, a strong negative relationship exists between corruption and the performance and viability of healthcare systems, in general (Lewis 2006). Corruption also negatively affects environmental policy and the quality of the environment in which people and other living things exist (Pellegrini & Gerlagh 2006; Sundström 2013). Bribery, as a predominant form of corruption, undoubtedly plays a larger role in the infliction of all of these harms.

Most significantly, bribery tears apart the social fabric. Bribery destroys trust in business institutions (Black & Tarrassova 2003). Bribery destroys trust in government (Melgar, Rossi, & Smith 2009; Rose-Ackerman 1999). As Bruce Ackerman (2000: 694) points out, bribery "undermines the very legitimacy of democratic government. If payoffs are a routine part of life, ordinary people will despair of the very idea that they, together with their fellow citizens, can control their destinies through the democratic rule of law." People who have not endured the hardship of living with endemic bribery may think that official demands for bribery are nothing more than background noise, easily and quickly paid and forgotten. In truth, every bribe demand represents an assertion of power over those without power or adequate redress, which over time engenders deep frustration, resentment, and anger (Castañeda 2016). Perhaps, the greatest evidence of the hurt caused by bribery consists of hundreds of thousands of people who gather in streets and town squares to risk their lives protesting against its continued existence.

THE STUDY OF BRIBERY

The vast majority of current research on bribery studies the effects of bribery. Susan Rose-Ackerman (1999), in her seminal *Corruption and Government* (1999), steered the conversation toward the harms caused by bribery and other forms of corruption (although Rose-Ackerman studies corruption, in general she has stated that "I shall always keep bribery in the analytical foreground" [1978: 4]). The body of literature on the effects of bribery, a small portion of which has already been mentioned, is far too large to be described in full.

Two other streams of scholarship, however, are both more pertinent to this book and easier to summarize. Both examine the factors that lead to bribery. The first of these streams attempts to find the causes of bribery within the attributes of cultures or moral systems: indeed, the eminent jurist John Noonan (1987) attached the subtitle *The Intellectual History of a Moral Idea* to his now-classic treatise *Bribes*. Noonan's moral history was followed by inquiries into whether particular cultures or moral systems promoted bribery or created a space in which bribery could flourish

(Green 2007; see, for example, Camarata 2007; de Sardan 1999; Napal 2005; Sandholtz & Koetzle 2000; Tian 2008). This inquiry morphed into a claim by some scholars that the then nascent global anticorruption regime represented a form of "moral imperialism" (for example, Dalton 2006; Salbu 1999a). The moral imperialism argument has been effectively refuted and no longer appears in scholarly literature (Spahn 2009). It should be noted that although many polities fail to control corruption, no society has been found to fully embrace or exalt corruption.

Theories that attribute bribery to structural causes are far more prevalent in current research on bribery. Robert Klitgaard's pioneering *Controlling Corruption* (1988) attributes bribery to structural failures in a governance system. Klitgaard (1998: 4) suggests that:

> [C]orruption may be represented as following a formula: C = M + D – A. Corruption equals monopoly plus discretion minus accountability. Whether the activity is public, private, or nonprofit … one will tend to find corruption when an organization or person has monopoly power over a good or service, has the discretion to decide who will receive it and how much that person will get, and is not accountable.

The notion that bribery is the product of failures in the structure of social institutions has been pursued in a variety of fields, including economics (for example, Aidt 2009; Lambsdorff 2007), international relations (for example, Mutebi 2008; Naím 1997), law (for example, Bishara 2011; Quah 1999), management theory (for example, Naím, Glynn, & Kobrin 1997; Tonoyan et al. 2010), and political science (for example, Gerring & Thacker 2004; Jiménez, Villoria, & Quesada 2012; Levin & Satarov 2000).

Theories of institutional weakness are particularly embraced by organizations dedicated to the control or eradication of bribery. Transparency International, the most prominent of such organizations, promulgates a program that focuses on enhancing the strength of a country's institutional "pillars" (Pope 2000). These pillars include the media, legal enforcement and businesses, as well as the executive, judicial, and legislative bodies within the government. The World Bank considers strengthening institutions a "key to controlling corruption. Well-functioning public management systems, accountable organizations, a strong legal framework, an independent judiciary, and a vigilant civil society protect a country against corruption" (1997: 39).

Each of these bodies of inquiry has in common an impersonalized, systemic perspective of bribery. Bribery is perceived as the byproduct of a culture, or the product of a failure of a moral system or of institutional weakness. These approaches to bribery do not take into account the decision-making process of a person actually encountering the opportunity to offer or to accept a bribe. This book suggests that the study of bribery will benefit from close examination of the process by which individuals make those decisions. Introducing the concept of an individual decision-maker makes necessary an examination, if only briefly, of the normative issues surrounding that decision.

THE NORMATIVE ASPECT

This book approaches the study of bribery empirically rather than normatively; we are interested in research that explains bribery, rather than research that evaluates its ethical dimension. However, empirical research on bribery is meaningless without a normative basis to establish what it is about bribery that makes it unethical (Tenbrunsel & Smith-Crowe 2008).

Most normative ethical frameworks are either teleological or deontological. Teleological frameworks take account of the consequences of an act in determining whether that act is appropriate. The costs and devastating harms inflicted by bribery have already been discussed. These consequences are especially troubling because they particularly affect the least advantaged and most vulnerable (Rahayu & Widodo 2012). In the 1960s, a handful of development theorists argued that bribery offered a benefit, by allowing individuals to avoid cumbersome government burdens (for example, Huntington 1968; Leff 1964). That argument has been rebutted by more robust research that demonstrates that bribe-paying actors actually incur greater costs in dealing with government, as bribe-taking bureaucrats create ever-greater obstacles in order to extract ever-larger bribes (Choi & Thum 2003; Kaufman & Wei 1999). As Steven Salbu points out, "no nation can miss the clear and highly publicized conclusion that corruption is economically devastating" (1999b: 446). From a consequentialist perspective, there can be little doubt that bribery is wrong.

Deontological moral frameworks use rules to determine the appropriateness of an act. Some of the earliest moral rules are found in religious texts; those texts universally condemn bribery as immoral. A doctrinal text shared by Judaism and Christianity, *Deuteronomy* 16:19, clearly directs that "you shall not accept a bribe." The Holy *Qur'an*, of the Islamic faith, is even more forceful, stating in *sura* 28:77 that "Allah loveth not corrupters." Bribery violates fundamental precepts of Buddhism and is considered a practice that will "lead to moral disintegration" (Dhammaratana 1972: 18). The *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Sikhism's most authoritative text, teaches in *ang*

1032 that persons who "take bribes … do not know the essence of reality." The second lecture of the second book of the *Sūtrakṛtāṅga*, one of the foundational texts of Jainism, includes the practice of bribery among the characteristics of "unrighteous" persons. And as described earlier in this chapter, Hinduism has long condemned bribery.

Secular means of determining rules also proscribe bribery. Integrative social contracts theory, for example, posits a moral free space in which discrete communities may negotiate rules but describes that space as bounded by incontestable, nonnegotiated norms: "a thin universal morality … principles so fundamental that, by definition, they serve to evaluate low-order norms … reaching to the root of what is ethical for humanity" (Donaldson & Dunfee 1999: 43). Tom Donaldson and Tom Dunfee (1999: 229) suggest that bribery violates a fundamental rule of "necessary social efficiency," which holds that all institutions and norms should operate to provide people with social goods and that it also violates "a universal right to political participation" (Dunfee & Donaldson 2002: 74).

The research presented in this book does not undertake normative analysis. Instead, this research attempts to understand bribery as a choice made by individual actors. To do so, this research does not base itself in structural or institutional perspectives but instead turns to the sciences of the mind.

HOW SCIENCES OF THE MIND COULD ILLUMINATE THE PHENOMENON OF BRIBERY

Research on bribery has not been entirely bereft of any inquiry into the individual decision-making process. Gary Becker (1968), for example, famously suggested that crime is the product of a conscious decision by rational actors. Becker, with George Stigler (1974), later applied his theory to police corruption, which included bribery. Becker (1968: 177) suggested that a rational decision-maker considers the likelihood of detection and punishment, the burden imposed by that punishment, and "a portmanteau variable representing all these other influences." It is in "all these other influences," not to mention the way in which all of this information is processed, understood, and acted on, that great promise for understanding bribery lies.

Two approaches illustrate the potential that sciences of the mind offer in understanding bribery. Each of these approaches focuses on the way that individuals understand a situation involving bribery. One approach, cognitive neuroscience, pays attention to the mechanics through which these processes occur. The other, behavioral ethics, explores how decision-makers understand the context of a situation in which bribery may occur and how they view themselves within that context. Both approaches, though different, offer useful insights into bribery.

Cognitive Neuroscience. Cognitive neuroscience is the study of cognition – mental processes, experiences, sensations, intuitions, understandings – through the study of biological processes and physical aspects of the brain. The power of this methodology lies in its ability to investigate in real time what is happening in the brain as individuals make decisions. Of particular importance for the study of bribery, neuroscience has explored moral judgment (Greene & Cohen 2004; Shenhav & Greene 2014; Young & Koenigs 2007) and business ethics (see Salvador & Folger 2009 for a review). Although bribery has been the subject of little to no functional magnetic neuroimaging (fMRI, also known as brain scans), this technology could be used to investigate neural activity in the brain as an individual contemplates offering or accepting a bribe. Insights from neuroscience hold considerable promise for learning more about what is happening in the brain in decision making about ethical issues, including bribery. The ultimate goal is to discover meaningful links between brain biology and bribing behavior.

Cognitive neuroscience has been criticized. Critics point out that current technology is incapable of detecting microstructures that may have the more profound relationships with behavior (Uttal 2012). Critics also ask serious ethical questions regarding the use of neuroscience outside of research, raising concerns that people may be privileged on the basis of "desirable" brain structures or disadvantaged on the basis of a brain structure statistically correlated with negative behaviors (Iles & Bird 2006; Lindebaum 2013). And of course, some critics question the ability of neuroscience to understand behavior at all: "No amount of knowledge about the hardware of a computer will tell you anything serious about the nature of the software that the computer runs. In the same way, no facts about the activity of the brain could be used to confirm or refute some information-processing model of cognition" (Coltheart 2004: 22). These criticisms have merit, but do not negate the value of cognitive neuroscience. Rather, they remind students of behavior to understand the limits of any inquiry and the dangers of the misuse of any research. Neuroscience is a new field, but it holds promise for extending the understanding of motivations to act unethically, including engaging in bribery.

Cognitive neuroscience can contribute to the study of decisions about bribery in many areas. Three serve as useful illustrations to show how individuals process reward, how individuals maintain an image of themselves as moral or ethical, and how intuition and emotion are implicated in the bribery decision.

Reward. Reward or the anticipation of reward is an important factor leading to ethical or unethical behavior (see, for example, Treviño 1986). As discussed, an individual contemplating offering or accepting a bribe will most likely engage in some type of risk/reward calculation (Becker 1968). In this calculation, risk includes both the risk of getting caught and the risk of being punished if one is caught. Reward consists of the individual's expectations of the potential benefits to be accrued as a result of the bribery. Neuroscience can provide evidence about how different individual brains respond to different types of rewards. For example, Nobuhito Abe and Joshua Greene (2014) used fMRI to investigate the response of specific brain areas to anticipated rewards representing dishonest gains. Their findings suggest that individuals vary in the value they place on monetary rewards, independent of the honest or dishonest means of their acquisition. Clearly such a finding holds implications for the study of bribery.

Self-Image. The size and salience of a reward is also linked to an individual's ethical or moral identity. Individuals want to consider themselves to be good people. When faced with the opportunity to cheat, they will only cheat in small ways in order to continue to think of themselves as ethical (Mazar, Amir, & Ariely 2008). The risk in this regard seems to be people's fear of losing their own good opinion of themselves, whereas the reward is the ability to maintain their ethical self-image. Similarly, and perhaps counterintuitively, individuals will not necessarily behave more unethically when the rewards are large than when the rewards are small (Jap et al. 2013). The reasoning behind this result is that greater rewards are associated with greater risks and also with greater punishments, to the extent that some risks are not worth taking. This reasoning may also apply to bribery. An individual may feel comfortable offering or accepting a relatively small bribe, thinking both that one's identity as a moral person can still be preserved and that the risk of detection is minimal. Neuroscience can reveal what is happening in the brain as individuals make a risk–reward calculation and consider their moral identity.

Dual Process Theory. Dual process theory (Greene and Haidt 2002; Greene et al. 2001) suggests that individuals make decisions about ethical issues based both on intuitive emotional processes and controlled rational processes; deontological or duty-based moral judgments are driven largely by intuitive processes and utilitarian judgments by rational processes. A further distinction is made between personal and impersonal moral judgments with personal judgments driven largely by emotional responses and impersonal judgments by cognitive processes. These different processes are reflected in distinct systems in the brain and play "crucial and sometimes mutually competitive roles" (Greene et al. 2004: 389). Similarly, the social intuitionist model considers moral judgment to rely on automatic, often unconscious responses to an ethical issue that may be followed by post hoc reasoning (Haidt 2001). Based on neuroscience findings about ethical issues, one can hypothesize that, in addition to cognitive processes, decision making about bribery most likely triggers both intuitive and emotional responses.

Behavioral Ethics. Behavioral ethics constitutes a descriptive rather than a normative approach to ethics. Behavioral ethics is a relatively new field of social science research that focuses on cognition in order to understand and explain how people behave when confronted with an ethical issue. Linda Treviño, Gary Weaver, and Scott Reynolds (2006) and Max Bazerman and Francesca Gino (2012) have written extensively of the contributions made by behavioral ethics research. In particular, behavioral ethics seeks to explain why individuals often behave in a manner contrary to their ethical intentions. The field studies the myriad of different ways that individuals fail to see their own immoral actions in an objective light. Behavioral ethics seeks to answer the perplexing and perennial question of why good people do bad things.

Behavioral ethics research suggests the notion of "bounded ethicality," that is, the presence of cognitive limitations that render us unaware of the ethical nature of our decisions. Indeed, the ability to even recognize the ethical nature of an issue is considered an important first step in making an ethical decision (Reynolds 2006; Robertson et al. 2007). Max Bazerman and Ann Tenbrunsel (2011), for example, identify "blind spots" in our ability to think about ethical issues, which explain the gap between who we want to be and who we actually are. Similarly, Celia Moore (2008) considers "moral disengagement" as a process in which individuals are able to downplay the ethical content or impact of their actions by restructuring their thinking to minimize responsibility, as well as the harmful impact on others. Ann Tenbrunsel and David Messick (2004) suggest that people deceive themselves about the ethical nature of the issues they face through psychological processes that render the ethical nature of an action invisible or irrelevant, a phenomenon they call "ethical fading." Ethical fading happens in a number of ways. Repeated exposures to ethical dilemmas may produce a form of "ethical numbing" in which individuals become less likely to recognize the ethical nature of the dilemma. Language can also be used to disguise the ethical nature of an issue: laying off employees becomes "right sizing" and taking ethical shortcuts on financial statements can be called "creative accounting."

Another well-researched stream of behavioral ethics studies the role of systematic cognitive biases in decision making about ethical issues. David Messick and Max Bazerman (1996) identify a range of such biases. They assert, for example, that individuals fail to consider the full range of consequences of their unethical actions, often limiting their thinking to immediate consequences, rather than also considering consequences that are more far-ranging. Individuals tend to have unrealistically positive views of themselves, as well as illusions of optimism and control. Individuals also tend to be ethnocentric, that is, to believe that the characteristics of our own group or culture are normal, whereas the characteristics of others appear foreign and strange.

Behavioral ethics offers interesting tools to explain confounding aspects of bribery. David Hess and Tom Dunfee (2000: 594), for example, pointed out a "paradox of corruption":

> Corruption is widely condemned yet widely practiced. Firms establish procedures to assure that their employees are not bribed by others, while simultaneously using bribes to obtain business. Firms from countries with minimal domestic corruption play a major role as bribe-payers in corrupt environments.

Behavioral ethics might suggest that individual persons could simultaneously condemn the practice of bribery by others but not consider themselves to be acting unethically when taking a bribe. More importantly, behavioral ethics might provide a means of identifying the factors that enable persons engaged in bribery to excuse their own conduct. If those factors are identified, then they can be accounted for in programs attempting to control corruption.

Clearly, as illustrated by the examples of cognitive neuroscience and behavioral ethics, sciences of the mind can provide insights into the phenomenon of bribery. The chapters that follow in this book apply, each in a different way, sciences of the mind to the question of how people think about the offer or acceptance of a bribe.

THIS BOOK

This book is organized in four parts, each of which presents a distinct approach to bribery. Three of the four parts begin with a chapter that introduces general concepts and that takes a very broad approach to the application of the particular science to bribery. In this way, even readers without training in that science can acquire general knowledge of the application of that science to bribery. The general chapters are followed by chapters that are more focused in their approach. In this way, readers can explore the application of a science to bribery in depth. The combination of these two approaches should be useful to readers with varying levels of expertise in these subjects. The four parts discuss the physical structure and mechanics of the brain, moral cognition, psychology, and social norms.

Structure and Mechanics of the Brain

Part I, *Structure and Mechanics of the Brain*, consists of Chapter 2, "Cognitive Neuroscience Methods: An Introductory Overview for Social Sciences," by Trishala Parthasarathi and Joseph W. Kable, and Chapter 3, "The Conforming Brain and Deontological Resolve," by Melanie Pincus, Lisa LaViers, Michael J. Prietula, and Gregory Berns. This part provides a general introduction to the field of cognitive neuroscience and its research methods and tools, as well as a specific fMRI study related to decision processes about ethical issues. Cognitive neuroscience has developed as both a functional tool and a source of theory advancement and testing in behavioral and decision-making research. The refinement and increased accessibility of neuroscience methods – combined with theoretical perspectives from psychology, economics, and other disciplines – has furthered our understanding of brain–behavior relationships underlying decision making. The chapter by Parthasarathi and Kable introduces an overview of the different methods used in cognitive neuroscience. It introduces these methods at an elementary level to serve as a starting point for those who are new to neuroscience. This introductory overview primarily focuses on the conceptual issues involved in selecting a method, the kinds of inferences each method provides, and the strengths and weaknesses of each technique. Additionally, each technique is explained in conjunction with specific findings from recent studies, particularly those on decision making, that have used cognitive neuroscience to further elucidate brain–behavior relationships. The concluding section considers ways in which these cognitive neuroscience methodologies can be used to inform research questions about decisions to engage in bribery, either to give or take a bribe.

In Chapter 3, Pincus, LaViers, Prietula, and Berns use neuroscience methodology, specifically fMRI, to explore individual differences in one area of the brain, differences that may explain differing propensities to accept bribes. The chapter begins with the concept of sacred values, those values that we defend resolutely and refuse to compromise for material trade-offs. Sacred values are sacred and, thus by their very nature, not easily subject to social influence or possible to be altered for any reason. As expected, sacred values can be based on religion, but they can also be based on group moral norms and may be important to both individual and group identity. Sacred values are represented as deontological rules in the brain, meaning that individuals process sacred values according to a set of rules about right and wrong without consideration of context or consequences.

Pincus, LaViers, Prietula, and Berns' research finds that there is a part of the brain that "may be implicated in the representation of sacred values, relative to non-sacred values, because this region accesses deontological rules that resist revision." Indeed, their study locates activation that is significantly greater for sacred as opposed to nonsacred values. The authors hypothesize and find that individuals with a stronger neurobiological representation of deontological rules are less willing to bend the rules despite social influence to do so; "stronger deontological resolve predicts less conformist behavior with respect to values and attitudes relevant to one's self-concept." Thus, the authors conclude that a lack of willingness to conform to the values of others is associated with deontological resolve, meaning that an individual will stick to the rules and that a tendency toward this resolve can be identified through fMRI technology. Their experiments also involved asking subjects how much money it would take for them to disavow their previously chosen values, a trade-off that may be particularly relevant to bribery decisions. This research is important because it suggests the possibility of finding a biological marker in the brain for ethical decision making and behavior. Locating the area of the brain that accesses deontological resolve holds implications for individual differences in resistance to a wide range of unethical behaviors, including bribery.

The chapters in Part I demonstrate the promise of neuroscience for future research on the question of why some individuals engage in bribery, whereas others resist. Neuroscience suggests that part of the reason for these individual differences may lie in the neural circuitry of the brain. This suggestion must, of course, be approached with caution. Neuroscience, particularly in its current nascent stage of development, cannot be expected to provide all the answers needed. Instead, neuroscience in combination with social science research can provide a foundation to construct theories that inform our understanding of bribery decisions and behavior.

Moral Cognition and Bribery

Part II, *Moral Cognition and Bribery*, consists of Chapter 4, "Corruption in the Context of Moral Tradeoffs" by James Dungan, Adam Waytz, and Liane Young, and Chapter 5, "Cognitive Dissonance, Ethical Behavior, and Bribery" by Andrew Samuel. This part examines the mindset of those individuals who might engage in bribery. Both chapters extend the application of recent research in behavioral ethics to the act of bribery.

In Chapter 4, Dungan, Waytz, and Young dispute the common conception that bribery arises simply from selfishness and point instead to instances in which bribery serves the interests of someone else, usually a member of one's own group. They see corrupt behavior not as a choice between right and wrong, but instead as a trade-off between competing moral concerns, specifically being fair and impartial versus being loyal to one's own group. They conceptualize fairness as a group-independent norm and loyalty as a group-based norm in order to show that both types of norms have a moral dimension. Group-independent morals "condemn differential treatment across individuals." In contrast, group-based morals maintain the protection of the group and its cohesion.

The chapter then explores the internal psychological mechanisms that are involved in the trade-off between fairness and loyalty and how those mechanisms ultimately drive corruption. Important among these are psychological rationalizations of unethical behavior, a theme that recurs throughout the book. Rationalizations include, for example, diverting the blame to others, comparing one's own behavior to the worse behavior of others, dehumanizing the victim of the unethical act, distancing the unethical behavior from one's own moral character, and well-documented psychological biases, such as the tendency to ignore or downplay harmful consequences of our actions.

The authors thus offer an explanation of bribery behavior that has more to do with loyalty to a group than with self-interest. They point out that loyalty concerns can potentially overpower fairness concerns and remind us that corruption is more rampant in collectivist societies than in individualistic societies. This chapter previews the importance of context that emerges throughout the remaining parts of the book. Group-based morals may well prevail and may be beneficial to the group. Therefore, engaging in bribery cannot be considered in terms of an individual acting independently of his or her organization or reference group or society. Dungan, Waytz, and Young's chapter is especially instructive for at least two reasons. First, it calls attention to the complex set of cognitive and psychological processes accompanying bribery decisions emphasized throughout later chapters in the book, especially in Part IV. Second, it demonstrates that studying bribery independent of the context of the bribery decision is not productive. Specifically, the authors conceptualize the significance of context as that of group membership and loyalty.

Chapter 5 by Andrew Samuel contends that bribery typically takes place in order to avoid being punished for some other moral offense. A common example is bribing a police officer in order to avoid getting a ticket for speeding. Samuel argues that the decision to bribe cannot be separated from the original offense. Again this chapter takes notice of the fact that bribery cannot be considered in a vacuum, but this time it is not a question of the context surrounding the decision to engage in bribery. Instead it is the moral offense that the bribery accompanies that needs to be considered. Samuel argues that models of bribery decision making that do not take this accompanying transgression into account are incomplete.

Samuel calls upon recent research in behavioral ethics that suggests the importance of blind spots, ethical fading, and ethical numbing, concepts discussed in greater detail later in the book. Individuals are able to frame decisions in ways that render the ethical nature of the decision irrelevant, often by thinking of it as strictly a business decision. Samuel discusses the cognitive processes in which individuals engage to reconcile "the cognitive dissonance between their moral compunctions and their decisions to act unethically." Using a "slippery slope" argument, an initial unethical act can render an individual ethically "numb," making it easier to commit a second unethical act, in this case bribery.

After an individual has engaged in bribery, Samuel suggests further that the individual will see the original offense as less bad; in other words, the individual will use the bribery to justify the original offense. This seems almost counterintuitive. One might think that the second unethical act (the bribe) would only compound the unethical nature of the first act. Instead, Samuel argues persuasively that cognitively the opposite is true. The bribery decision renders the unethical nature of the original act less severe. One is reminded as well of the research surrounding lying or deception, which typically can also be considered a secondary unethical act. That is, individuals lie to cover up previous unethical behavior. This chapter emphasizes the complexity of thought surrounding the decision to bribe. The important contribution of the Samuel chapter is focus on the cognitive processes associated with coupling bribery to the original offense and exploration of the mindset accompanying the slippery slope.

Psychological Insights into Bribery

Psychology is the scientific study of the mind and its functions, particularly those that relate to behavior in a specific context. Psychology differs from cognitive neuroscience in its method of inquiry rather than in its objective. Neuroscience examines the physical structure of the brain and attempts to correlate structures with behaviors. Psychology investigates the mind and mental processes and attempts to correlate the mind with behaviors. While neuroscientists benefit from technology such as fMRIs, no physical tool has yet been developed to reveal the contours of the subconscious, unconscious, or preconscious mind. Nonetheless, psychology has for over a hundred years been the foundational science in understanding individual human behavior.

Psychology has long explored the development of moral attitudes and ethical behavior in people (see, for example, Kohlberg 1969; Lickona 1976). The field of moral psychology asks many questions about such development. How, for example, is moral identity formed and how does it affect behavior in a morally ambiguous context (Hardy & Carlo 2005)? How is a moral personality formed, and how does it interact with moral identity in shaping behavior (Lapsley & Narvaez 2004)? How are situations involving ethical questions perceived or understood (Musschenga 2009)? Are there moral intuitions or emotions, and how do they affect the manner in which people frame questions regarding ethics (Haidt 2003; Sinnott-Armstrong 2008)?

Part III of this book, *Psychological Insights into Bribery*, is comprised of Chapter 6, "Beyond Black and White: Three Decision Frames of Bribery" by Xiao-Xiao Liu, Ying-yi Hong, and George I. Christopoulos, and Chapter 7, "Effects of Reminders of Personal Sacrifice and Suggested Rationalizations on Residents' Self-Reported Willingness to Accept Gifts" by Sunita Sah and George Loewenstein. These chapters apply insights that have been developed through the field of psychology, especially moral psychology, to illuminate individual decisions regarding the offer or acceptance of a bribe. In particular, this part introduces the importance of professional, organizational, and cultural settings on an individual's decision to engage in bribery. These settings influence the way in which the individual frames bribery as an ethical issue or fails to recognize it as an ethical issue.

The part begins with the work of Liu, Hong, and Christopoulos (Chapter 6), who develop a general model in which a bribery decision is considered a valuation process. Individuals assign weights to three decision frames – Ethical, Economic, and Relational – such that the weights assigned essentially determine the individual choice made. The model thus includes multiple influences and considerations that come into play in an individual's bribery decision and acknowledges that bribery can result from a mixture of the three frames. Bribery has been most frequently conceptualized strictly as an ethical issue, an economic transaction, or as a part of relationship building, when in fact it can be all three simultaneously. Liu, Hong, and Christopoulos devote a section of their chapter to an illustration of how findings from neuroscience can enhance understanding of decisions regarding bribery. They review research demonstrating that low levels or poor quality of sleep can lead to decreases in self-control associated with unethical behavior (Ethical frame), emphasis on short-term rewards over future rewards (Economic frame), and lower levels of trust (Relational frame), all of which hold implications for bribery behavior. The influence of identity on bribery is also examined; moral and professional identity, organizational identity, and social identity all contribute to bribery decisions. For example, Liu, Hong, and Christopoulos posit that bribe-giving can be to the benefit of the individual's organization and that "organizational identity enhances unethical pro-organizational behaviors." Thus, they explicitly discuss the impact of the organization itself, an impact only implied in many of this book's chapters. Finally, the authors also emphasize the importance of culture as an overarching influence on bribery behavior, a theme that resonates throughout the book.

Sah and Loewenstein (Chapter 7), in turn, situate their research in a specific professional setting, that of US medical residents. The authors conceptualize a bribe as a conflict of interest, principally because the medical profession requires individuals to adhere to certain standards of ethical behavior. A bribe constitutes a breach of those standards. Sah and Loewenstein are concerned with how an individual frames a bribery decision. Their specific empirical research underscores the significance of rationalizations as a means of framing behavior as having or not having an ethical component (often unconsciously or subconsciously).

Sah and Loewenstein test empirically the power of priming the sacrifices and hardship involved in medical training as providing an excuse for receiving gifts from the pharmaceutical industry. Previous research has shown the power of positive priming on individuals' cooperative or altruistic behavior. Sah and Lowenstein's experiment reveals that negative priming can be equally powerful. Their study demonstrates that the use of rationalizations (conscious or not) can be an effective way to absolve oneself of moral responsibility for one's actions.

Part III reinforces the complexity of the factors influencing a bribery decision and also demonstrates that manipulating factors in the decision can have an impact. Liu, Hong, and Christopoulos present a general model of bribery decision making, and Sah and Loewenstein test the impact of two specific factors (hardship itself and rationalizations based on hardship). This part serves as a reminder that, in various and nuanced ways, context matters: from how much sleep an individual got the night before, to how demanding the individual's profession is, to the country in which the individual resides. These themes of complexity and context will be elaborated in Part IV with a particular emphasis on framing and rationalizations.

Norms and the Decision to Engage in Bribery

As Jack Gibbs (1965) pointed out long back, although the social sciences agree that norms play a critical role in how people make decisions, the social sciences have not agreed on a universal definition of norms. The most simplistic definition of norms would be that which is normal or expected. One might say, therefore, that in the United States the norm is to leave a tip to a server in a restaurant, whereas in Japan the norm is to not leave a tip. This simplistic definition does nothing more than observe that common behaviors exist and provides no explanation regarding the power norms have to guide behavior.

The field of sociology is no closer to a universal definition of norms than any other field. However, a viable working definition, which Christine Horne (2001: 4) claims is "the most widely accepted," is that "norms are statements that regulate behavior." In this sense, norms are "ought" statements: students ought to do their homework, parents ought to care for the needs of their children. Norms may find their power to regulate behavior in their internalization by individuals (Coleman 1990: 243; Cooter 2000). They may also accrue power through sanctions levied externally when an individual behaves in a way that violates a norm (Coleman 1990: 242; Fehr & Fischbacher 2004).

The fourth and last part of this book, *Norms and the Decision to Engage in Bribery*, includes Chapter 8, "Determinants of Corruption: A Socio-Psychological Analysis" by Cristina Bicchieri and Deshani Ganegonda, and Chapter 9, "Moral Norms, Behavioral Ethics, and Bribery Activity" by Robert Prentice. The two complementary chapters integrate research drawing from sociology as well as psychology and behavioral ethics to investigate the question of why individuals engage in bribery. Both chapters suggest that people's motivations to offer or accept bribes are shaped by complex sets of social and moral norms, along with individual characteristics. The influence of norms on bribery indicates that cognitive processes alone cannot account for the decision to engage in bribery. Instead a dynamic and complex interaction between norms and cognition must be investigated. The assumption behind the chapters is that understanding the individual motivations underlying bribery will lead to better informed and more effective public policy and corporate initiatives to counteract it. The chapters extract valuable lessons for the study of bribery from research on norms, decision making, and biases and rationalizations.

Norms. Norms play an important role in shaping an individual's thought processes (conscious or unconscious) about giving or accepting a bribe. Prentice draws a distinction between moral norms and social norms, as well as a distinction between descriptive norms and injunctive norms. Moral norms represent the right thing to do and exist independent of the way in which people actually behave, whereas social norms are based on prevalent behavior. Bicchieri and Ganegonda frame the discussion slightly differently in terms of normative (injunctive) and empirical expectations. Normative expectations are what individuals think is the behavior expected of them by others. Empirical expectations, on the other hand, are what individuals think is the behavior of a large number of people in their reference group. Thus, it is not only cultural norms and expectations but also the norms and expectations of an individual's reference group that matter. Anticorruption initiatives are usually based on injunctive norms, that is, on directives that one should not bribe or be bribed. However, there is also scope for changing descriptive norms, or at least changing perceptions of descriptive norms.

Decision-Making Processes. A bribery decision holds factors in common with other behavioral decisions, and its study can benefit from decision theory research. Bicchieri and Ganegonda review the applicability of Icek Ajzen's (1985) theory of planned behavior to motivation for engaging in bribery, as well as the assumptions of Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky's prospect theory (1979). As Bicchieri and Ganegonda indicate, engaging in bribery constitutes risky behavior and entails the possibility of both gain and loss to the individual. As with any risk, in contemplating bribery, an individual weighs the potential costs and benefits of bribing, including, of course, the potential for getting caught and any ensuing punishment or penalties. As mentioned previously, a promising avenue of decision theory research for the study of bribery is recognition of the importance of emotion in decision making. Both Prentice and Bicchieri and Ganegonda point out that norm compliance is underpinned by an individual's emotions. People may conform to norms to feel good about themselves, or at least so that they do not experience guilt or shame for not conforming.

Biases and Rationalizations. Both chapters acknowledge that individuals want to see themselves as good people and present an overview of how individuals engaged in bribery can maintain their sense of moral identity. The cognitive processes by which this identity is upheld are rich and varied and include everything from not recognizing the ethical nature of one's act of bribery to seemingly endless variations of rationalizing one's bribing behavior. Prentice believes that in thinking about why people behave ethically or unethically, the effects of conformity bias "cannot be overstated." Another strong bias is the self-serving bias, in which an individual conflates what is fair with what benefits oneself. The more that is at stake, the more that self-interest surfaces. Biases can be conscious or unconscious and include framing whether the issue is ethical by means of ethical fading, psychological numbing, routinization, and omission versus commission, as well as adjusting one's moral compass. Rationalizations, on the other hand, are conscious. Prentice goes so far as to call people "rationalization machines." Some rationalizations that are particularly applicable to bribery include "No one gets hurt"; "I'm just doing my job"; "It is such a small amount" (meaning that a bigger bribe would be much worse); "I am underpaid" (so the bribe is part of my deserved compensation); and "I was just following orders." Both chapters also discuss creative euphemisms that enable people to depart from moral norms and yet still think well of themselves – bribery becomes "greasing the wheels," "gift-giving," or "providing incentives."

Means to Counteract Bribery. The authors of both chapters offer recommendations about reducing bribery based on their discussion of norms, decision-making processes, and biases. Bicchieri and Ganegonda include sections on changing attitudes, changing norms, and changing institutions. They suggest that attitudes can be changed by reducing the gains associated with bribery and by increasing the costs of engaging in such behavior and the likelihood of getting caught. Norms as well as the perception of norms need to be changed. Finally, institutions need to enact more powerful regulations around bribery with penalties for the person accepting the bribe as well as for the person bribing. Similarly, Prentice calls for "increased potential punishment coupled with stronger enforcement" and greater likelihood of detection. He believes that small steps are necessary in the face of the enormous nature of the problem and points to countries that have managed to reduce levels of corruption. Taken together, the two chapters in this fourth part offer valuable lessons drawn from sociology, psychology, and behavioral ethics – lessons that can further explain why individuals choose to engage in bribery and the measures needed to discourage them from doing so.

CONCLUSION

Bribery merits scrutiny. Bribery inflicts a great deal of harm on people and on the environment in which people and other living things exist. Bribery pulls apart the social bonds that hold societies and polities together. Bribery negatively affects hundreds of millions of people, who are becoming more vocal in their attention to it and its effects.

Bribery deserves scholarly attention as well. Most research on corruption has focused on those effects. The damage inflicted by bribery is well theorized and thoroughly documented. Research on the causes of bribery, however, is less abundant and tends to hypothesize that characteristics of moral systems or cultures contribute to bribery, or that failures of or weaknesses in institutional structures lead to bribery. Most current research approaches bribery from a system perspective and fails to take serious account of the individual person making a decision regarding the offer or acceptance of a bribe.

This book brings together research on the thought processes that underlie such a decision. The chapters that make up this book draw on a variety of sciences of the mind. All of the approaches represented in this book, however, have at least three things in common.

First, each of these approaches is empirical rather than normative. The approaches attempt to understand bribery as a phenomenon and, in particular, attempt to explain decisions about bribery. They do not attempt to ascertain whether bribery is good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate, laudatory or blameworthy.

Second, each of these approaches perceives individual persons as discrete, autonomous decision-makers. Systems, institutions, groups, and other social artifacts may play a role, but the decision to offer or accept a bribe is made by the individual. How, therefore, an individual perceives and understands the context, how an individual processes the decision, and how an individual expresses the decision are all important aspects, critical to actually understanding bribery.

Third, each of these approaches understands a decision to engage or not engage in bribery as the result of complex interactions of numerous disparate factors. These approaches do not look for a single or simple explanation for bribery, but instead try to account for the complexity of human decision making. Such approaches might support more complex solutions to the serious problem of bribery.

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