

# Both Sides of the Coin: Motives for Corruption Among Public Officials and Business Employees

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**Abstract** The aim of this study is to better understand why public officials and business employees engage in corruption. Insight into individual-level explanations for corruption was obtained with the aid of a self-report survey. The results suggest that the most indicative factors of whether or not individuals are corruption-prone are as follows: the moral conviction they have to refrain from corruption; perceptions of whether their colleagues approve of and engage in corruption; and difficulties experienced in complying with the rules on corruption. This result pattern was identical for public officials and business employees alike, and as a consequence, for both sides of corrupt acts. The latter indicates that the same motives may not only underlie corruption in both private and public sectors, but also the act of corruption in its active and passive forms. The results of the current study do not provide strong support for the assumption that economic considerations—expected costs and benefits—are crucial in predicting corruption. Based on the findings that norms and the perceived opportunity to comply are dominant factors in explaining corruption, this article focuses on the practical implications for the development of anti-corruption strategies within both public and private sectors.

**Keywords** Active and passive bribery · Corruption · Incentives · Motives · Opportunity · Personal norms · Public and private corruption · Social norms

## Introduction

Corrupt transactions between public officials and business employees distort fair competition, impair equal access to public goods and services, and, perhaps most damaging, undermine government legitimacy (Chan 2000). Although its extent may differ from one society to another, corruption threatens all countries (Mousavi and Pourkiani 2013). The most widely used indicator of the level of a country's public sector corruption is the Corruption Perceptions Index, annually published by the nongovernmental organization Transparency International. According to this index, the public sector of the Netherlands is one of the least corrupt countries. In 2014, worldwide, only seven nations were considered less corrupt (Transparency International 2014). Nevertheless, the Netherlands has also been confronted with serious cases of public officials being bribed (Huberts and Nelen 2005).

At the end of 2013, a high-ranking Dutch official was sentenced to 3 years of imprisonment for bribery, as well as forgery and money laundering. The former deputy was found guilty of accepting large sums of money from private companies in return for preferential treatment (Kreling and Logtenberg 2013). The accused himself, however, seemed convinced of his innocence. He claimed that his conviction was “a political settlement,” “a miscarriage of justice” and defended himself by stating that “corruption and crime are alien to me” (Graanoogst 2013). According to Langsted (2012), this is not unusual for people who engage in corruption. He states that very rarely recipients or providers of

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dubious gifts tend to view their behavior as corrupt. In the Dutch court, the judge spoke harshly about the deputy's failure to acknowledge the moral reprehensibility of his actions. This lack of acknowledgment was considered by the judge to be an aggravating factor. It could, however, also be regarded as an important cause of why individuals engage in corruption.

The aim of this study is to examine why public officials and business employees engage in corruption. The causes of corruption are studied by many academic disciplines, as for instance economics, political science, social psychology, and public administration (de Graaf et al. 2010). However, the vast majority of empirical literature focuses on finding explanations on the national level (Dong et al. 2012; Svensson 2003) and, to a lesser extent, on the organizational level (de Graaf 2007). This predominant nation-based focus together with broad, firm-level antecedents of corruption is referred to as “striking” by Collins et al. (2009, p. 89). According to them, participation of firms in corruption is fundamentally driven by the decisions of executives and, consequently, by decisions of individuals.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, while studies on the national and organization levels may offer explanations for differences in corruption between countries and between organizations, they do not offer insight into why certain individuals—given specific country and organizational conditions—engage in corruption, while others do not. In addition, societal or organizational factors are generally extremely stable. As a result, this knowledge is less likely to lead to the development of effective tools for mitigating corruption within countries and organizations. For instance, notions that corruption is less prevalent in countries with a long tradition of democracy (Treisman 2000), or more common in family-controlled businesses (Fogel 2006; La Porta et al. 1999), renders little opportunity for developing tools that may reduce corruption within newly democratic nations or within family-run businesses. Investing in understanding why people make corrupt decisions may, within a given country or organization, ultimately lead to practical tools preventing prone individuals from engaging in corruption. However, investigating individuals' motives for corruption is a difficult endeavor. Collins et al. (2009) point out three key issues: corruption is difficult to define, difficult to observe, and difficult to measure. Moreover, an overarching framework incorporating individual-level factors proposed by different disciplines explaining why individuals engage in corruption is currently lacking.

## Defining and Conceptualizing Corruption

Farrales (2005, p. 1) states that “in fact, the most enduring aspect of the literature has been the continued difficulty in defining and conceptualizing corruption.” The definition of corruption most widely used in scientific literature is the abuse of public power for private benefit (Aguilera and Vadera 2008; Tanzi 1998). This is a rather broad definition that includes a wide array of unethical and criminal acts, such as conflicts of interest, forgery, and embezzlement. To make progress in the explanation of corruption, according to Collins et al. (2009), research should focus on a rather narrow form of corruption in a limited context. The focus of this study is therefore on a specific form of corruption, on behavior that is closely related to the legal term bribery. As Kish-Gephart et al. (2010) have noted, there is sometimes an overlap between illegal conduct and unethical conduct, with bribery being both unethical and illegal (Pendse 2012). Kish-Gephart et al. (2010) define unethical behavior as “any organizational member action that violates widely accepted (societal) moral norms” (p. 2). The example given by Kish-Gephart et al. (2010, p. 2) of unethical behavior that overlaps with illegal behavior is stealing, since stealing “is considered to be unethical because it breaches widely accepted societal norms. It is also illegal.” The same consideration, as pointed out by Pendse (2012), applies to bribery. Moreover, bribery is a form of behavior that is criminalized not only in national, but also in international legislation: The United Kingdom Bribery Act and The Foreign Corrupt Practices Act are important examples of the latter (Jordan 2011). A question raised by Smith et al. (2007) is whether the distinction between unethical and illegal behavior is important when empirically studying behavior. In their study on acts of corporate crime that are unethical, the above academics use the following definition: “an unethical decision is either illegal or morally unacceptable to the larger community” (Jones 1991, p. 367). They point out that illegal and unethical actions frequently share common characteristics and can be investigated empirically in combination. From a criminological perspective, according to Heath (2008), “moral” and “legal” are viewed on a continuum, the primary difference being that moral norms are enforced through informal sanctions, while legal norms are enforced using the power of the state. However, as pointed out by Smith et al. (2007), it is questionable whether criminal sanction within corporate settings is effective. According to their study on why managers fail to do the right thing, threat of legal sanctions may be ineffective in keeping potential offenders from engaging in unethical and illegal conduct. This is in line with a recent systematic review on the effectiveness of formal legal strategies to curtail

<sup>1</sup> One could argue that studies on firms' involvement in corruption that are based on surveying or interviewing the firms' managers (see for instance Collins et al. 2009; Svensson 2003) actually approach firm-level corruption from an individual-level perspective.

corporate crime, which showed hardly any significant deterrent effects of legal and punitive sanctions on individual offending (Simpson et al. 2014).

As mentioned above, to gain more insight into explanatory factors of corruption, research should focus not only on a rather narrow form of corruption, such as bribery, but also on corruption in a limited context (Collins et al. 2009). According to Rose-Ackerman (1997), corruption primarily arises in the interaction between the public and the private sector. She points out that “whenever a public official has discretionary powers over distribution to the private sector of a benefit or cost, incentives for bribery are created” (Rose-Ackerman 1997, p. 31). When such a corrupt transaction occurs, one can distinguish between active and passive bribery (Huberts and Nelen 2005). Individuals who try to influence professional decisions by offering, giving, or promising money, goods, or services engage in active bribery. Individuals who request, accept, or expect gifts in exchange for the abuse of their discretionary powers commit passive bribery. In bribery involving a business employee and a public official, it is most likely that the former commits active bribery, and the latter engages in passive bribery.

Currently, the literature contains remarkably few empirical studies that take into account both actors’ reasons for their engagement in bribery. According to Beets (2005), the focus in the international business context is more on the active side: the suppliers of bribes to public officials. Beets (2005) therefore proposes to take a closer look at the motivation of public officials who accept or demand bribes. In contrast, Martin et al. (2007) state that understanding bribery from the perspective of the firms supplying bribes is virtually absent. Likewise, Vogl (1998) argues that media and most international institutions have focused more on the passive side: public officials who abuse their office for private gain. Irrespectively, analyzing the behavior of one side seems insufficient (Dong et al. 2012). The current study therefore focuses on the motives of public officials as well as business employees for engaging in corrupt transactions, in order to shed light on both sides of the coin.

## The Empirical Study of Corruption

The empirical study of corruption is challenging, no matter whether the actions of business employees, public officials, or both form the object of the study. Per definition, perpetrators of crimes try to cover up their involvement and are generally unwilling to provide evidence. The study of corruption is hampered by additional challenges, since corruption, certainly if it concerns bribery, is generally a consensual crime, of which its victims are often unaware

(Rabl and Kuehlmann 2008). Consensual crimes, in which two or more parties covertly agree to the transgression, tend to stimulate secrecy (Thachuk 2005). The possibility of speaking up places the perpetrators in a prisoners dilemma in which pointing the finger at one—whether pointed at oneself or at the accomplice—automatically implies incriminating the other. The outcomes are most favorable for both if neither unveils the pact. In addition, it is unlikely that the victims of such corrupt deeds would speak out, as they are generally oblivious to their unlawfully disadvantaged position: when a business firm gives a bribe to an official in a public procurement in exchange for the contract, the other unsuccessful bidders can at best guess that a secret transaction was responsible for the rejection of their bid. More at a distance, also the state and its tax payers could be considered victims of bribery concerning the public sector (Osborne 2013). These ‘distant’ victims are even less likely to be aware of the illegitimate exchange. Victimization surveys are therefore not likely to be very informative (Croall 2007).

Despite these difficulties, scholars do, with the aid of several methods, make empirical contributions to the body of knowledge about the causes of corruption. The most widely used method is based on experts’ perceptions about the prevalence of corruption (Tanzi 1998), of which the Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International 2014) is the best-known example. However, according to Tanzi (1998, p. 122), “These indexes reflect perceptions and not objective and quantitative measures of actual corruption.” Moreover, considering the aggregate nature of the data, it is difficult to assess the relation between corruption and individual actors (Svensson 2003). Within the academic literature, the study of corruption cases also forms a popular research method (Andvig et al. 2001). Corruption cases offer the opportunity to intensively study actual corrupt transactions and the situations under which they occurred (de Graaf and Huberts 2008). However, case-study analyses often consist of only a few cases and are solely based on the cases that came to the attention of regulators, while most corrupt transactions are likely to go unnoticed. Solely relying on the information from detected corruption cases might render a skewed picture of corruption. It therefore seems important to complement case-study analyses with information gathered via other methods. Only a few corruption studies use experimental designs (Köbis et al. 2015; Sequeira 2012). Experimental designs test causal relations between potential causes and corruption. They are, however, generally conducted in laboratories; artificial environments that do not always mimic real-life situations. According to Andvig et al. (2001), the most promising method for empirically studying corrupt behavior is by using self-reports. This method is gaining popularity within empirical corruption literature.

Although survey methods render the risk of social desirability bias, it seems that even when the stakes are high, as for instance in application procedures, people confess to wrongdoing when filling out integrity tests (Pinto et al. 2008). However, due to the sensitivity of the topic, the risk of social bias is of special concern in ethics research (Fukukawa 2002). To control for social desirability response tendencies, Torfason et al. (2013) therefore included a social desirability scale in their study measuring individuals' attitudes towards bribery. As pointed out by Andvig et al. (2001), individuals in both the public and private sectors have shown willingness to answer questions about corrupt behavior. Self-report studies—that include a social desirability scale to correct for social desirability bias—therefore could prove a useful method for measuring corruption in studies aimed at finding explanations for corrupt transactions that involve public officials and business employees.

### Explaining Corruption and Integrating Perspectives

Recent empirical findings concerning why individuals engage in corruption not only suggest that individual characteristics are strongly related to corrupt behavior, but also indicate that corruption is determined by social influences (Dong et al. 2012; Powpaka 2002; Rabl and Kuehlmann 2008; Tavits 2010). From a theoretical point of view, several disciplines—predominantly social psychology, criminology, and economics—have put forward different frameworks that may explain, from an individual perspective, why individuals engage in corruption (Aguilera and Vadera 2008; Andvig et al. 2001; Ashforth and Anand 2003; Dimant 2013; Powpaka 2002; Prabowo 2014; Rabl and Kuehlmann 2008; Wikström 2004). Each of these frameworks contributes to the understanding of corruption, but none of them seem to capture the whole picture, making the other frameworks redundant. Therefore, to gain better insight into why individuals engage in corrupt transactions, offering an integrated model would appear warranted. Social-psychological theories propose norms, both personal and social, as essential features in explaining corrupt behavior (Beck and Ajzen 1991; Cialdini and Goldstein 2004). These theories generally also incorporate the perceived opportunity to comply (Ajzen 1985, 1991; Bandura 1977). The criminological theories uniquely add the opportunity to violate as a dominant building block (Coleman 1987). Economic theory suggests that incentives, both positive and negative, are critical in explaining behavior (Becker 1968; Paternoster and Simpson 1996; Simpson et al. 2002). Thus far, no empirical study has

combined and tested these elements simultaneously to determine which of them are critical in explaining corruption.

From a social-psychological viewpoint, norms are vital in explaining and predicting human behavior in specific situations (Ajzen 1991; Asch 1956; Milgram 1963; Schwartz 1977). Many general social-psychological theories and models have incorporated norms, e.g., the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen 1985, 1991), the focus theory of normative conduct (Kallgren et al. 2000), and the norm activation model (Schwartz 1977). With regard to norms, a distinction can be made between a person's own norms, personal norms, and the norms outside of the self, social norms. As a result of the ethical gravity of corruption, personal as well as social norms are anticipated to be important explanatory factors for why people engage in or refrain from this behavior.

Personal norms refer to feelings of a “moral obligation to perform or refrain from specific actions” (Schwartz and Howard 1981, p. 191). Personal norms are an individual's deeply rooted and relatively stable moral convictions, which are used as personal standards to evaluate behavior (Onwezen et al. 2013; Schwartz 1977). According to the norm activation model, personal norms are activated when a person is aware of the negative consequences for others when engaging in unethical behavior, and when he or she feels responsible for these negative consequences (Schwartz 1977; Steg and Groot 2010). Denkers et al. (2013) examined whether personal norms are related to people's tendency to break or adhere to the rules in the workplace. They found that people with weak personal norms, who did not feel a strong moral obligation to comply with the rules at work, indeed had a stronger tendency to engage in rule-breaking behavior, while people with strong personal norms, who believed rule violation to be more immoral, tended to adhere to the rules. Wenzel (2004) showed that personal norms of tax honesty were negatively related to people's engagement in tax evasion. Regarding the importance of personal norms in explaining corruption, Powpaka (2002), who applied the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen 1985, 1991) to bribe-giving behavior, found that people's attitude towards bribery was affected by the degree to which they perceived corruption as unethical. Indeed, Beck and Ajzen (1991), who postulated the theory of planned behavior, suggest including personal feelings of moral obligation to refrain from behavior in studies aimed at explaining unethical actions. Further empirical evidence for the importance of personal norms as an explanatory factor for corruption was provided by Tavits (2010), who found that public officials who defined corruption as morally wrong were less likely to engage in bribery.

**H1** Personal norms towards corruption are negatively related to corruption.

Social norms, in contrast to personal norms, do not directly refer to personal normative convictions, but to an individual's perception about the beliefs and behavior of relevant others (Cialdini et al. 1990). This perception is an important link between individuals and their environment (Wikström 2004). A person's social environment can be a powerful motivator for (non)normative behavior (Cialdini 2003; Cialdini et al. 1990). With regard to corruption, Den Nieuwenboer and Kaptein (2008) argue that social factors can inhibit, enable, or stimulate individuals to engage in corruption (Den Nieuwenboer and Kaptein 2008). Robinson and O'Leary-Kelly (1998) indeed found that individuals' rule-violating behavior at work was related to norm violation engaged in by their co-workers. While the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen 1985, 1991) only focuses on subjective norms, which refer to the perceived likelihood that significant others approve or disapprove of engaging in specific behavior, the focus theory of normative conduct (Kallgren et al. 2000) postulates that normative behavior is not only influenced by individuals' perception of what is commonly (dis)approved of—injunctive norms—but also by people's perceptions of what is commonly done—descriptive norms. Research consistently shows that the beliefs and behavior of others, or someone's perception about these beliefs and behavior, have a major impact on why people participate in counter-normative behavior (Cialdini et al. 1990; Keizer et al. 2008; Reno et al. 1993). Empirical research confirms that both kinds of social norms seem to affect whether individuals engage in or refrain from corruption. Rabl and Kuehlmann (2008) found that people's desire to act corruptly was weaker if others, important to the actor, did not accept corruption. Tavits (2010) found that people were less susceptible to corruption when they perceived that their peers did not engage in corruption.

**H2** Social norms towards corruption are negatively related to corruption.

Personal and social norms influence the motivation for committing unethical or even criminal behavior. However, for this behavior to occur, offenders need not only to *want* to commit this kind of behavior, they also need to be *able* to do so. Motivation and opportunity are key variables in criminological theories on causes of criminal behavior in general and white-collar crime in particular (Benson and Simpson 2015; Coleman 1987). As pointed out by Coleman (1987): "If there is no opportunity, there will be no crime" (p. 424). Hence, from a criminological viewpoint, the opportunity to engage in certain behavior is an essential component in any potentially unethical or criminal act

(Pendse 2012). Opportunity is also a prominent factor in studies aimed at explaining corruption (Aguilera and Vadera 2008; Pinto et al. 2008). Personal and social norms may withhold people from corruption, but even among those who are motivated to commit corruption—due to weak personal norms with regard to corruption and the perception that corruption is popular among their peers—the opportunity to engage in corrupt acts remains a vital precondition. Because criminological theories generally assume that people are predominantly self-interested (Agnew 2014; Becker 1968; Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990), these theories tend to look at the absence or presence of opportunities to commit crime. If the opportunity arises, people, according to this line of thinking, are likely to commit crime. In contrast, social-psychological theories, such as in the norm activation model, generally tend to look at why people engage in prosocial behavior, or obey the law (Schwartz 1977; Steg and Vlek 2009; Tyler 2006). These theories generally operationalize opportunity as the individual's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing the prosocial behavior. Examples of such concepts are perceived behavioral control and self-efficacy (Ajzen 1991; Bandura 1977; Fishbein and Cappella 2006). Both types of perceived opportunities, the perceived opportunity to violate and the perceived opportunity to comply, may be responsible for people's engagement in corruption. Corruption in organizations in this study is assumed to be more likely when the rules regarding corruption are both easier to violate and compliance is more challenging.

**H3** The perceived opportunity to violate corruption rules and a lack of perceived opportunity to comply with corruption rules are positively related to corruption.

(Ab)using opportunities is a key element in rational choice theories of crime, which is a popular explanation for white-collar crimes such as corruption. White-collar crime is generally viewed as a purposive action which is the outcome of rational decision-making processes in which offenders weigh the costs and benefits of criminal behavior in a specific situation. Due to the context of doing business and the intellectual capabilities of corporate and governmental officials, white-collar crimes are generally seen as being more planned and more based on conscious decision making than most 'ordinary' street crimes (Benson and Simpson 2015; Shover and Hochstetler 2005). According to this economic approach, cost and benefit assessments play a decisive role in explaining why individuals engage in or refrain from rule-violating behavior (Becker 1968). Individuals' engagement in corruption may also be motivated by incentives, both by the perceived costs and benefits (Andvig et al. 2001; Dimant 2013; Prabowo 2014; Shover and Bryant 1993; Svensson 2005). Costs include the probability of detection and the severity of sanctions

(Becker 1968; Klepper and Nagin 1989). Expected gains in economic theory are usually of a monetary nature (Coleman 1987; Pendse 2012). Decisions to engage in corrupt transactions may, however, also include non-monetary considerations, such as excitement, pleasure, or status (Huberts and Nelen 2005; Langsted 2012; Prabowo 2014). While Carrillo (2000) argues that individuals' engagement in corruption is also influenced by the size of bribes, Rabl (2011) did not find a relationship between the size of the bribe and corrupt action. In the theoretical literature, economic considerations are the most common explanation for corruption on the individual level (Andvig et al. 2001; Dong et al. 2012; Tavits 2010).

**H4** Perceived costs are negatively related to corruption; perceived benefits are positively related to corruption.

In brief, whether individuals engage in or refrain from corruption may be influenced by several factors on the individual level. These different factors are derived from theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence emerging from three separate disciplines. While empirical evidence was found for the importance of all four factors, none of the studies examined all four motivational factors simultaneously, in order to determine which of them play a key role in explaining corruption. A model used in practice by enforcement agencies in the Netherlands, to better understand and influence regulatory violations and financial-economic crimes in organizations, consists of these same four motivational factors: personal norms, social norms, perceived opportunities to violate and to comply, and incentives (Goslinga and Denkers 2009; Platform Bijzondere Opsporingsdiensten 2007). The model proposes that these four central motivational mechanisms explain rule violation or compliance in organizations (CTPA 2010; Platform Bijzondere Opsporingsdiensten 2007). While all four are assumed to influence rule-breaking behavior, the model presupposes a sequence of importance of these motives. Both personal and social norms are presumed to contribute most to the explanation of rule-violating behavior, followed by the perceived opportunity to violate and to comply, and by incentives (CTPA 2010, Platform Bijzondere Opsporingsdiensten 2007). Self-report surveys which are focused on regulatory non-compliance in private organizations, provide support for the model's assumptions (Denkers et al. 2013; Goslinga and Denkers 2009; Platform Bijzondere Opsporingsdiensten 2007). With regard to corruption, thus far, no empirical studies have been conducted that incorporate all four motives to determine which of them are best able to explain individuals' engagement in corruption. The current study investigates if the four proposed motives explain corruption in the order that was found with regard to organizational members' rule-violating behavior more generally. The analyses will include a

search for the unique and combined influences of motives on both sides of corruption—among both public officials and business employees.

**H5** In combination with the other motives, normative considerations contribute most to explaining corruption.

## Method

### Procedure and Respondents

A questionnaire study was published on a website that manages online surveys and research panels ([www.flycatcher.eu](http://www.flycatcher.eu)<sup>2</sup>). A selection study was performed first to select panel members: who either worked in the public or the private sector; who frequently interacted professionally with people employed in the other sector; and who carried out tasks over which they had discretionary powers. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The Ethics Committee for Legal and Criminological Research of the Faculty of Law of the VU University approved this study and—given the fact that fully disclosing the purpose of the study beforehand could alter participants' responses—waived the need for obtaining written consent from participants. Given the sensitivity of the topic, rather than specifying that a study was conducted on corruption that was carried out by the department of Criminal Law and Criminology, the introduction stated that a study was conducted on integrity at work on behalf of the Faculty of Law. To counteract order effects, the questions were administered in a randomized order. To prevent missing data, responding to all questions was required. Completing the questionnaire took respondents about twenty minutes.

In the selection study, 2644 panel members participated, with a response rate of 68 %. Of these participants, 551 were selected for the main study. The final sample consisted of 202 public officials and 200 business employees. The response rate to the main survey was 73 %. 53 % of the participants were male. The respondents' age ranged from 17 to 70 years, with a mean age of 43.4 (SD = 11.00). Compared to the general Dutch population, people with a higher education and income level were overrepresented.

<sup>2</sup> The Flycatcher panel consists of approximately 16,000 people who agreed to participate regularly in online surveys. On average, panel members receive eight surveys a year. In exchange for completion of questionnaires, respondents receive a small reward in the form of points, which can be converted into gift vouchers. The Flycatcher panel meets the ISO quality standards for social science research and is used exclusively for research and not for any other purposes, such as sales or direct marketing. Panel members may terminate their panel membership at any time. Panel members cannot select the type of surveys for which they wish to be invited.

The percentage of respondents occupying a management position was 31 % in the private sector and 21 % in the public sector. Regarding the frequency of professional public–private interactions, 39 % of the business employees in the sample interacted with officials on a daily basis and 61 % at least weekly; 42 % of the public officials interacted with business employees on a daily basis, 40 % at least weekly, and 18 % at least monthly. Activities carried out in public–private interactions comprised awarding contracts, enforcement and inspection, spatial planning, and the purchase of goods or services, among others.

### Measures

Two versions of the questionnaire were developed, one for the private sector, the active side of corrupt transactions in this study, and one for the public sector, the passive side. Both versions were kept as similar as possible. Since corrupt public–private interactions occur within an organizational context, all questions were directed at respondents' working situation.

### Dependent Variables

*Corruption* was operationalized by describing bribery-related behavior, without using the words “corruption” or “bribery.” To measure this behavior, two scales were used, one measuring bribery-related intentions and the other past bribery-related behavior. Bribery-related intentions were measured by three items (“In the foreseeable future I can imagine that at my work a situation could arise in which I offer/give/promise (for the private sector); ask/accept/expect (for the public sector) money, goods or services to a public official (private sector); to someone from outside the organization (public sector) in exchange for preferential treatment.” on a 7-points scale (1 “not at all”–7 “to a great extent”). Past bribery-related behavior was also measured by three items (“At my work it has happened to me that I offered/gave/promised (private sector); asked/accepted/expected (public sector) money, goods or services to a public official (private sector); someone from outside the organization (public sector) in exchange for preferential treatment.” on a 7-points scale (1 “never”–7 “often”). Because the two scales were strongly correlated ( $r = .73$ ,  $p < .001$ ), they were combined into one scale measuring proneness to corrupt transactions. The average score across the six items was computed, which formed an internally reliable scale, and indicates that most respondents were not prone to corruption as operationalized in this study ( $\alpha = .94$ ;  $M = 1.36$ ,  $SD = .800$ ). Because the data were not normally distributed, the scale was dichotomized to a corruption-prone category (consisting of respondents who

scored a four or higher on the intention scale and a two or higher on the behavior scale) and a non-corruption-prone category. Twenty percent of the business employees and 22 % of the public officials were categorized as corruption-prone.

### Independent Variables

*Personal norms* were measured by nine items (e.g., “I would feel guilty if I gave... a public official money, goods or services in exchange for preferential treatment.” (private sector); “... someone from outside of my organization preferential treatment in exchange for money, goods or services.” (public sector), “I feel personally responsible for ensuring that my colleagues comply with rules on... offering or giving gifts.” (private sector); “... accepting gifts.” (public sector), “I think it is overdone to have rules about accepting or offering gifts to public officials.” (both sectors). All items were scored on a 7-point scale (1 “completely disagree”–7 “completely agree”). Mean scores for the nine items were computed, which formed an internally reliable scale and indicated that most respondents had strong personal norms regarding corruption, and thus felt morally obliged to refrain from corruption ( $\alpha = .77$ ;  $M = 5.51$ ,  $SD = .948$ ).

*Social norms* refer to perceptions of what important others think and do within a particular context. Since corruption occurs within the occupation context, it was assumed that the most important referents for respondents' own behavior regarding corruption would be that of close colleagues. Social norms were measured by seven items (e.g., “I am convinced that my close colleagues would feel guilty if they gave... a public official money, goods or services in exchange for preferential treatment.” (private sector); “... someone from outside our organization preferential treatment in exchange for money, goods or services.” (public sector), “I am convinced that my close colleagues sometimes give... money, goods or services to public officials in exchange for preferential treatment.” (private sector); “... someone from outside our organization preferential treatment in exchange for money, goods or services.” (public sector). The items were scored on a 7-point scale (1 “completely disagree”–7 “completely agree”), which formed an internally reliable scale ( $\alpha = .82$ ). The mean score indicates that respondents' social norms with regard to corruption were rather strong ( $M = 5.19$ ,  $SD = .948$ ).

*Perceived opportunity to violate* corruption rules was measured by four items (e.g., “The rules on bribery at my work are easy to avoid” (for both sectors), “If I wanted to... I could easily persuade a public official to make decisions based on improper grounds.” (private sector); “... I could make decisions at my work based on improper

grounds.” (public sector) on a 7-point scale (1 “completely disagree”–7 “completely agree”). The items formed an internally reliable scale ( $\alpha = .71$ ). The average score of the scale indicates that the rules regarding corruption were, according to the respondents, not very easy, nor very difficult to violate ( $M = 3.16$ ,  $SD = 1.368$ ).

*Perceived opportunity to comply* with corruption rules was measured by three items (e.g., “I find it difficult to comply with bribery rules at my work.” (both sectors), “It is clear to me which rules I must follow when doing business with... public officials.” (private sector); “... people from outside my organization.” (public sector). The items were scored on a 7-point scale (1 “completely disagree”–7 “completely agree”). The average score across the items was computed, which indicated that, according to the respondents, the rules regarding corruption were not very difficult to comply with ( $M = 2.08$ ,  $SD = 1.049$ ). The items measuring perceived opportunity to comply did not, however, form a very reliable scale ( $\alpha = .58$ ). In the introduction section, a distinction is made between the perceived opportunity to violate corruption rules and the perceived opportunity to comply with corruption rules. These two types of opportunity may, however, comprise different aspects of the same underlying construct. To determine whether the seven items measuring both types of perceived opportunity could be combined into one factor reliably measuring perceived opportunities to engage in corruption, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted. The results of the factor analysis suggested that the items did not measure one underlying variable, but, as expected, measured two distinct factors, namely the perceived opportunity to violate, consisting of four items, and the perceived opportunity to comply, consisting of three items. The two types of opportunity were therefore treated as two separate factors in the remainder of this article. Despite the low Cronbach’s alpha, both types of opportunities were included in the subsequent analyses. The necessary caution that must be exercised in drawing conclusions regarding the importance of this factor in explaining corruption-proneness as a result of the low Cronbach’s alpha it exhibited is addressed in the discussion section.

*Costs* of engaging in corruption consisted of two scales, namely the perceived chance of detection and the severity of punishment. Respondents were asked to assess both (“Imagine that it is discovered that you engaged in bribery. In your opinion, is it likely that the following persons or agencies would discover this, and how serious would the negative consequences be, if the discovery was made by... a direct colleague; a manager of your company; a colleague of the public official; a competitor of your company; an enforcement agency.” (private sector); “... a direct colleague; a manager of your organization; a colleague of the briber; a competitor of the briber; an enforcement agency.”

(public sector). The items were scored on a 7-point scale (1 “not likely at all”/“not serious at all”–7 “very likely”/“very serious”), which formed an internally reliable scale ( $\alpha = .87$ ). The mean score indicates that in the perception of the respondents the costs of engaging in corruption were relatively high ( $M = 4.72$ ,  $SD = 1.177$ ).

*Benefits* of engaging in corruption were measured by asking the respondents to indicate how likely it was, in their perception, that someone would initiate, or go along with, a corrupt exchange (e.g., “How likely do you think it is that... you might get preferential treatment from a public official when offering him or her money, goods or services.” (private sector); “... someone from outside your organization would offer you money, goods or services to receive preferential treatment.” (public sector) on a 7-point scale (1 “very small”–7 “very large”) and the benefits this would render the participant (e.g., “Engaging in bribery render someone personal benefits,” “Engaging in bribery would lead to financial gain,” “Engaging in bribery would make my job more exciting,” “Engaging in bribery would lead to fun and pleasure” (for both sectors) on a 7-point scale (1 “completely disagree”–7 “completely agree”). The items measuring perceived benefits formed an internally reliable scale ( $\alpha = .80$ ). The mean score indicates that respondents did not assess the benefits of engaging in corruption to be very high ( $M = 2.81$ ,  $SD = 1.309$ ).

## Control Variables

*Social desirability* was measured to control for respondents’ tendencies to deny undesirable beliefs or behavior. Although the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne and Marlowe 1960) has been widely used to test for the presence of this type of response, the items of this scale are rather general, for instance “I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble.” Because all the questions in the current study were directed at people’s working situation, and a scale that specifically aimed to measure socially desirable response behavior with regard to the work context was not found in the literature, a social desirability scale was constructed. Social desirability was measured by seven items (e.g., “I did not keep a promise while at work.,” “I have violated a rule while at work.,” “I benefitted from someone else while at work.,” for both sectors) on a 7-point scale (1 “never”–7 “often”), which formed an internally reliable scale ( $\alpha = .86$ ;  $M = 5.61$ ,  $SD = .995$ ). The scores on the scale were reversed during scale construction, so the average score indicates that people responded in a rather socially desirable manner.

*Background factors* such as age, gender, and educational level were measured as well and were included in the analyses as control variables.



**Table 1** Simple and partial correlations between corruption-proneness and the proposed motives, disaggregated for the public sector (i.e., passive corruption) and the private sector (i.e., active corruption)

	Public sector ( $n = 202$ )		Private sector ( $n = 200$ )	
	Simple correlations	Partial correlations	Simple correlations	Partial correlations
Personal norms	-.30**	-.21**	-.39***	-.35***
Social norms	-.29***	-.21**	-.48***	-.46***
Opportunity to violate	.20**	.10	.34***	.32***
Opportunity to comply	.30***	.19**	.41***	.37***
Costs	-.16*	-.11	-.15*	-.14
Benefits	.23**	.11	.16*	.10
Social desirability	-.35***		-.27***	

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## Analysis

To estimate the degree of relationship between corruption-proneness and the proposed motives, point-biserial correlation coefficients were calculated, which is the value of Pearson's product moment correlation when one of the variables is dichotomous and the other variables are measured on a ratio or interval scale (Kornbrot 2005). Next, binary logistic regression analyses were performed to test which of the proposed motives explained respondents' proneness to corruption, and whether the effects of the motives depended upon the respondents' sector and side in the corrupt transactions.

## Results

The point-biserial correlation coefficients between the proposed motives and corruption-proneness are depicted in Table 1. The simple correlations show that all motives for corruption were significantly related to corruption-proneness,<sup>3</sup> in the public and private sectors. In both sectors, the corruption-prone respondents—who reported to have an intention to engage in corruption and/or had done so in the past—indicated that they felt less morally obliged to refrain from corruption; perceived corrupt behavior to be more approved of and more common among their close colleagues; regarded the rules on corruption as easier to violate; and regarded the rules on corruption as more difficult to comply with; perceived less costs of committing corruption; and expected more benefits of engaging in corruption than the non-corrupt respondents. The strength and direction of the relationships between corruption-proneness

and the proposed motives confirm the first four hypotheses of this study. Social desirability, however, also appeared to be correlated with corruption-proneness rather strongly, which suggests that respondents within the corruption-prone category may have answered the questions more truthfully than respondents who indicated to be unsusceptible to corruption. Therefore, for both sectors separately, partial correlations were calculated, which are the simple correlation coefficients controlled for social desirability. The partial correlations, depicted in Table 1 as well, show that in the public sector, personal norms, social norms, and the opportunity to comply are still related to corruption-proneness in the expected direction, in contrast to perceived costs and benefits, which do not appear to be related to corruption-proneness after correcting for socially desirable response tendencies. The same results were found for the private sector, with the only difference that in the private sector, also the perceived opportunity to violate was still significantly related to self-reported corruption-proneness. Hence, in both sectors, the pattern of results appears to be similar, which indicates that the motives that are related to corruption may be identical in both sectors, and therefore also with regard to both sides of corrupt transactions. Because the pattern of results appears to be the same in both sectors and to enhance statistical power, the following analyses will be performed over both groups. To statistically determine whether the same motives explain public and private corruption or passive and active corruption, the interaction terms between motives and sector were separately entered into the regression analysis. Social desirability was included as a covariate in all subsequent analyses.

Binary logistic regression analyses were performed to examine which of the motives were best able to explain corruption-proneness. Three models were tested: the first consists of background factors, the second adds motives, and the third subsequently adds social desirability bias. The first model consisted of the background factors gender, age,

<sup>3</sup> The results were also analyzed separately for corrupt intentions and past corrupt behavior. Because the outcomes were very similar, the two scales were merged into one. Hence, in the remainder of this article, the results are analyzed and reported only for corruption-proneness.

**Table 2** Binary logistic regression model: corruption-proneness (corruption-prone = 1, not corruption-prone = 0;  $n = 402$ )

Factor	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Beta	Wald	Exp (B)	Beta	Wald	Exp (B)	Beta	Wald	Exp (B)
Gender	-.667	6.414*	.513	-.406	1.694	.666	-.480	2.279	.619
Age	-.008	.508	.992	.018	1.524	1.018	.024	2.610	1.024
Education level	-.166	3.341	.847	-.067	.364	.935	-.080	.474	.923
Sector	-.133	.282	.875	.072	.045	1.074	.122	.128	1.130
Personal norms				-.510	8.098**	.600	-.439	5.703*	.645
Social norms				-.559	12.462***	.572	-.578	12.620***	.561
Opportunity to violate				.174	1.702	1.190	.130	.914	1.139
Opportunity to comply				.592	15.881***	1.808	.530	11.990**	1.698
Costs				-.014	.010	.986	-.048	.104	.953
Benefits				.135	1.193	1.145	.049	.140	1.050
Social desirability							-.478	9.119**	.620
Overall fit model 1: $-2$ Log likelihood = 402.361; Cox and Snel $R^2 = .024$ ; Nagelkerke $R^2 = .037$ .									
Overall fit model 2: $-2$ Log likelihood = 304.526; Cox and Snel $R^2 = .235$ ; Nagelkerke $R^2 = .366$ .									
Overall fit model 3: $-2$ Log likelihood = 295.125; Cox and Snel $R^2 = .252$ ; Nagelkerke $R^2 = .394$ .									

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

and education level and the sector respondents were employed in. As shown in Table 2, of the background factors only gender explained respondents' proneness to corruption; females were less prone to corruption than males. After entering the motives in the second model, gender was unrelated to corruption-proneness, suggesting that the initial effect of gender on corruption-proneness was mediated by the motives. In the second model, social norms, the perceived opportunity to comply, and personal norms contributed most in explaining corruption-proneness. Hence, the results suggest that the influence of perceived opportunity to violate corruption rules and assessments of costs and benefits on corruption was outweighed by the other motives. The third model examined to what extent the results of the second model hold after correction for the influence of socially desirable response tendencies. Social desirability indeed seemed to explain whether or not respondents reported to be corruption-prone. However, with regard to the influence of the motives on corruption-proneness, the pattern of results did not alter after social desirability was included in the model. Hence, irrespective of whether the outcomes were corrected for social desirability bias, the most important explanatory factors seemed to be respondents' perceptions of what close colleagues do and think one should do regarding corruption, experienced difficulties in complying with the rules on corruption and the moral conviction that one has to refrain from corruption. These results confirm the fifth hypothesis.

Sector, private or public, did not appear to explain corruption-proneness in any of the three models, as can be seen in Table 2, indicating that the inclination towards corruption is equally strong in both sectors. However, this does not necessarily mean that the motives explain corruption to the same extent within both sectors. To examine if the sector, and therefore the side of corruption, determines the degree to which the motives influence engagement in corruption, six interaction terms were calculated between each of the motives and sectors. After the third model as depicted in Table 2, forward stepwise selection was used to investigate if any of the interaction terms added to a better explanation of corruption-proneness. The results showed that none of the interactions between sector and the motives significantly contributed to the explanation of corruption-proneness. This suggests that the motivational factors that explain corruption-proneness do not seem to differ for business employees and public officials, and as a consequence, nor for the active and passive sides of a corrupt transaction—hence motivations for corruption appear to be similar on both sides of the coin.

To explore if any interaction effects between motives further contribute to explaining corruption-proneness, all fifteen interaction terms between the six motives were calculated. After the third model as depicted in Table 2, forward stepwise selection was used to investigate if any of the interaction terms added explanatory value. None of the fifteen interaction terms were entered into the model, which indicates that the direct effects of the motives on

corruption did not seem to be influenced by any of the other motives included in this study.

## Discussion

This study aimed at gaining better understanding of why, at an individual level, business employees and public officials engage in corrupt transactions. The findings show that all proposed motives were related to self-reports of corruption-proneness. However, those that seem to uniquely contribute to whether individuals do or do not engage in corruption were social norms, personal norms, and the perceived opportunity to comply. Hence, perceptions of how close colleagues behave and think one should behave regarding corruption, the moral conviction that one has to refrain from corruption, and the perceived opportunity to comply with corruption rules best explained people's propensity to corruption. This pattern of results was identical for business employees and public officials and, as a consequence, for both sides of corruption. This indicates that the same motives may not only underlie corruption-proneness in the public and private sectors, but also corrupt behavior in its active and passive forms.

Of the two proposed types of perceived opportunities, the perceived opportunity to violate rules did not seem to contribute to explaining corruption-proneness. This result suggests that the operationalization of perceived opportunity from the social-psychological point of view (Ajzen 1991; Bandura 1977), the opportunity to comply, might be a better predictor of corruption than the operationalization that is dominant within the criminological literature (Coleman 1987). Hence, the criminological literature might advance by specifically incorporating the opportunity to comply within their models. The perceived opportunity to comply scale utilized in this study exhibited a low Cronbach's alpha. This warrants caution in interpreting the results concerning this scale. Further research, including a reliable measure of the perceived opportunity to comply, would appear opportune. If such research renders comparable results concerning the influence of the perceived opportunity to comply on corruption-proneness, this could prove to be an important theoretical and practical contribution to the field of corruption. Within the criminological literature, strong emphasis is placed on the importance of the perceived opportunity to violate rules in explaining white-collar crime; the perceived opportunity to comply receives no attention within this literature. Also, from a practical point of view, a focus on 'making it easier to comply' may provide an effective tool for reducing corruption. That is, in trying to make corruption an impossible option (e.g., by introducing a strict "four-eyes-policy"), within the daily office stress of trying to meet deadlines,

may make it impossible to adhere to the requirements that were set out to diminish corruption. In contrast, by designing non-corruption, or compliance in general, as the easy option, for instance by providing automatic pop-ups with clear instructions as an employee enters a delicate form on the intranet, may facilitate compliance. However, the results of the current study do not imply that the perceived opportunity to violate is completely irrelevant, as these perceptions were related to corruption-proneness, especially in the private sector. The results suggest however that regarding corruption, as may very well be the case for other forms of crime within organizations, other motives seem to outweigh the influence of the perceived opportunity to violate.

In addition, the results of the current study do not provide strong support for the assumption that economic considerations, expected costs and benefits, are vital to predicting corruption. Within scientific literature on motives for corruption, in line with the rational choice theory, economic considerations hold a dominant position. In their review on corruption research, Andvig et al. (2001, p. 51) conclude that "in recent years, economic explanations of corruption have been the most cited and probably also the most influential for policy formulations." Economic considerations were found to be related to corruption-proneness, but the influence of perceived costs and of benefits was outweighed by personal norms, social norms, and the perceived opportunity to comply. The model used by enforcement agencies in the Netherlands to better understand and influence rule-breaking behavior—that consists of the same motivational factors and expects personal and social norms and perceived opportunities to contribute most to the explanation of rule violation or compliance in organizations (CTPA 2010; Denkers et al. 2013; Goslinga and Denkers 2009)—seems to offer good starting points for studying not only why individuals engage in rule-breaking behavior in general, but also why individuals engage in corruption.

The results showed no significant interactions between the motives in explaining corruption-proneness. Although no such interactions were hypothesized, one could argue for an influence on corruption of the interaction between all four motives. For example, several theories predict an interaction between norms and incentives in predicting rule-breaking (Frey and Jegen 2001; Wikström et al. 2011). These theoretical predictions often conflict, however. For instance, Frey and Jegen (2001) state that both costs and benefits may undermine a person's intrinsic motivation to comply, i.e., incentives can undermine the compliance promoting influence of *strong* personal norms. In contrast, Wikström et al. (2011) propose that deterrence would only come into play among those whose morality does not offer a constrained, i.e., perceived costs only have an influence

on the behavior of people who can be characterized by *weak* personal norms. The results of the current study do not provide evidence for any of such notions; no interaction effects were found between the anticipated incentives and personal norms, social norms, or perceived opportunities. This, however, does not rule out that these mechanisms do exist. Statistical techniques might be insufficient to pick up on such a minority in a sample consisting of 402 individuals, as it is likely to be a rather small proportion of Dutch business employees and civil servants who have weak moral standards regarding corruption and who are simultaneously placed in corruption inspiring surroundings. The results of the present study suggest direct effects of three motives on corruption-proneness; the more each of these is present, the larger the chance that an individual might engage in corruption.

A better understanding of corruption appears to call for an interdisciplinary approach (Dimant 2013). Up until now however, there is a lack of communication between the disciplines that study corruption (de Graaf et al. 2010). The current study included motivational factors derived from social-psychological, criminological, and economic theories, in a search for the factors that contribute most to whether individuals engage in or refrain from corruption. In the literature, the economic approach to corruption is arguable the most dominant (Andvig et al. 2001; de Graaf et al. 2010; Dong et al. 2012; Tavits 2010). The current study however suggests that a particular emphasis should be given to the role of norms. While norms are extensively studied and have a long history in social psychology (Cialdini et al. 1990; Schwartz 1977), more recently, behavioral economics also identified norms as an important cause for behavior. Gino et al. (2009), for instance, looked not only at expected costs and benefits, but also at the influence of social norms on unethical behavior. They conclude that whether an individual engages in unethical behavior does not appear to depend on costs/benefit calculations, but rather on the social norms regarding unethicality. While social norms may as well have a powerful influence on engagement in corruption (see also Köbis et al. 2015) and could therefore be an important causal factor on the individual level, scholars have also linked corruption to factors on the level of the organization, such as ethical leadership and ethical climate (Ashforth and Anand 2003). Currently, it is unclear if individual-level factors, such as social norms, and organization-level factors, such as ethical climate, have an independent effect on corruption, or if the influence of ethical climate on corruption is for instance mediated by social norms. Knowledge on this, however, could yield important insights concerning the factors that are most critical to intervene on in attempts to curb corruption.

In the case of the Dutch former deputy who was found guilty of accepting bribes from eleven private companies, the key motives found in the present study might have also

contributed to his endeavors. The judge blamed the deputy for his failure to acknowledge the immorality of his actions (Kreling and Logtenberg 2013). Shortly after the deputy learned he was convicted to 3 years of imprisonment, he indeed stated in an interview: “Also in hindsight, I do not see any harm in it.” (Kreling and Logtenberg 2013). The judge seemed to consider this to be an aggravating circumstance, especially since the accused held a high-ranking position in public office. The results of this study, however, imply that it is precisely this lack of moral awareness—weak personal norms—that may explain why a person engages in corruption. According to the deputy himself, there was no lack of moral awareness on his part, but there was a flagrant lack of clear integrity rules for public sector administrators. Moreover, he pointed out that “my colleagues also engage in a lot of sideline activities.” The deputy’s remarks suggest that he experienced a lack of opportunity to comply, while, in his view, the actions he engaged in were considered to be the social norm. The statements surrounding this court case seem to underline the outcome of the present study. Langsted (2012) came to very similar conclusions after studying a renowned corruption case in Denmark against “the king of Farum.” According to Langsted (2012), the Danish mayor who was sentenced to 4 years of imprisonment was not driven by personal economic gain.<sup>4</sup> The mayor stated on nationwide television that “It is utterly absurd, I have done nothing wrong” (Langsted 2012, p. 139). These findings are corroborated by those from a study of Gopinath (2008) on private corruption, in which he postulates that an individual’s inability to recognize a certain behavior as being unethical can lead to unethical behavior without the person being aware of it. This may also explain why individuals who engage in corruption tend not to regard their own behavior as corrupt (Ashforth and Anand 2003).

The results of the present study are based on a self-report survey. This method is particularly suited to gain insight into key correlates of individual corruption-proneness. Self-report surveys on unethical or illegal behavior, however, come with specific concerns. Due to social desirability, self-reports may lead to underreporting of unethical and illegal behavior. In the present study, approximately 20 % of the survey respondents reported that they had engaged in bribery-related behavior in the past and/or had an intention to do so in the near future. This seems to counter the assumption of underreporting and also confirms the statement of Andvig et al. (2001) that people in both the public and the private sector seem willing to

<sup>4</sup> Also in the current study, financial gain did not seem to contribute to respondents’ proneness to corruption, either in the public or in the private sector. In the public sector, the only expected benefit that contributed to corruption-proneness was excitement, while in the private sector only status turned out to be an explanatory benefit.

answer questions about corruption when a questionnaire is backed up by authority, legitimacy, and anonymity. However, because social desirability bias remains a methodological concern in all ethics research (Fukukawa 2002), a social desirability scale was devised and included in the survey to control for social desirability bias with regard to non-ethical behavior and beliefs in the occupation context. Although social desirability bias seemed indeed to influence self-reports of corruption-proneness, it did not seem to have a major impact on the outcomes; the pattern of results did not change after the results were controlled for social desirability bias. The results of the current study therefore clearly suggest that self-report surveys are a promising avenue for gaining a better understanding of why individuals engage in corruption.

Corruption-proneness in this study was operationalized by measuring both bribery-related intentions and past bribery-related behavior. Both measures were strongly correlated and the pattern of results for both dependent factors was very similar. This is in line with a study of Rabl and Kuehlmann (2008) on corruption in organizations, in which they combined a self-report survey with an experimental simulation design. As a result of their design, they were able to measure participants' intentions to engage in corruption and the participants' corrupt decisions. The outcomes of their study suggest that corrupt intentions were extremely strongly related to actual corrupt decisions. It therefore seems logical to combine intention and behavior when measuring individuals' proneness to corrupt transactions.

Self-report surveys are obviously not the only method of gaining insight into why people engage in corruption, and come with certain drawbacks. While self-report surveys may provide insights into the key correlates of corruption, they cannot identify causality. Only experimental studies can determine whether the motives for corruption proposed in this study actually cause corrupt behavior by individuals. In addition, the use of questionnaire studies requires determining in advance which factors might be explanatory factors for corrupt behavior. Hence, with this method, it is not possible to find explanations not previously envisioned. There may be other important motives for corruption, postulated by other theories and other disciplines, which were not included in this study. A motive that, for instance, may prove an important explanatory factor for corruption is the use of neutralization techniques, such as claiming that no harm or damage is done, that allow offenders to view engagement in corruption as justified (Anand et al. 2004; Sykes and Matza 1957). As pointed out by Coleman (1987), neutralization techniques are not only after-the-fact rationalizations, they can also comprise an integral part of the offender's motivation to engage in the act in question. Furthermore, a distinction that is often made in corruption

literature but not in this study is whether the individual or the organization is the beneficiary of the corrupt act (Smith et al. 2007; Pinto et al. 2008). This same distinction is made in the criminological literature with regard to occupational crime, a corrupt offense committed by individuals for themselves in the course of their occupations, and corporate crime, a corrupt act committed in favor of the organization (de Graaf et al. 2010). Perhaps, the motives that underlie these two distinct forms of corruption are not the same. To distinguish between these different forms of corruption and exploring its underlying motives, case studies can make a valuable contribution, as they offer the opportunity to inductively gain insight into individual characteristics and social factors surrounding corruption. Furthermore, case studies, as opposed to self-report surveys, are well suited to explore the dyadic encounter—as well as the relationship before and after—between the supplier and the receiver of a bribe, for instance, the firmness of their relationship, the amount of trust, and whether and how their relation changes as a result of the secret pact (see for instance de Graaf and Huberts 2008). Moreover, because of the court verdict, hardly any doubt exists that knowledge is based on real corruption, as may be the case when it concerns experiments or self-report surveys. Although in this study corruption was operationalized by describing the behavior instead of using the term itself, corruption is in essence an ambiguous concept (de Graaf et al. 2010). It may be a matter of opinion whether something is meant as a gift or as a reward in exchange for a benefit. Self-report surveys, experiments, and case studies combined, however, might counterbalance the concerns connected to each research method individually. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the causes of corruption on the individual level, findings obtained via several research methods should preferably be combined.

Anti-corruption interventions should target the root causes of corruption. Therefore, insight into the underlying causes of corruption is essential for the development of strategies that effectively reduce corrupt behavior. As was pointed out by Dong et al. (2012), while not many studies have investigated the causes of corruption from an individual-level perspective, most of these studies assume that corruption results from cost/benefit analyses of individual actors. If people indeed engage in corruption when the benefits outweigh the costs, strategies to curb corruption should attempt to influence the incentives associated to corruption, for instance by increasing the probability of being caught and the severity of sanctions (Osborne 2013; Prabowo 2014). The current study however shows that the influence of both costs and benefits was outweighed by the other motives. Corruption-control initiatives that solely focus on increasing the costs and decreasing the benefits of corruption might therefore not prove to be the most effective ones.

To effectively limit corruption on the individual level, it might be more fruitful to target norms and the perceived opportunity to comply. Personal norms, for instance, could be strengthened by drawing organization members' attention to their moral standards. In their experiments on dishonesty, Mazar et al. (2008) found that reminding people about their morality by making them sign an honor code reduced subsequent dishonest behavior. To strengthen social norms within organizations, it might be useful to invite communication within an organization about people's standards regarding corruption. Creating and strengthening an atmosphere in which corruption is openly disapproved of and refrained from by the vast majority of co-workers might be effective in mitigating corruption. Such an intervention however is only likely to have the desired effect in organizations where social norms condemn corruption. Also, perceived opportunities for engaging in corruption could be diminished. Making the rules regarding corruption as easy as possible to adhere to, for instance, by establishing clear-cut rules and actively disseminating these rules throughout the organization, may have a preventive effect. In disseminating integrity rules, organizations should be careful not to flood its members, but rather target personnel conducting corruption-sensitive activities in situations to which these integrity rules are applicable, for instance by providing automatic pop-ups that explain the applicable rules and procedures in a clear and concise manner.

Practical tools that are based on individual-level explanations and that target individual actors may be considerably more effective than interventions aimed at organizations or even whole countries. Organizational cultures and cultures within countries are generally difficult to change, and especially nation-based explanations are not very helpful in designing reform initiatives (Rose-Ackerman 2010). Individuals commit corruption; effective intervention on the individual level would therefore inevitably contribute to the dwindling of corruption at the organizational and the country level.

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