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## NOBLE CORRUPTION: DOES BRICOLAGE REDUCE UNETHICAL JUDGMENTS AGAINST ENTREPRENEURS? (SUMMARY)

Regan M. Stevenson

*University of Central Florida, USA, [stevenson@ucf.edu](mailto:stevenson@ucf.edu)*

Shannon G. Taylor

*University of Central Florida, USA*

Chaim Letwin

*Suffolk University, USA*

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## ≈ SUMMARY ≈

**NOBLE CORRUPTION: DOES BRICOLAGE REDUCE UNETHICAL JUDGMENTS AGAINST ENTREPRENEURS?**

*Regan M. Stevenson, University of Central Florida, United States*

*Shannon G. Taylor, University of Central Florida, United States*

*Chaim Letwin, Suffolk University, United States*

**Principal Topic**

Is corruption always viewed as immoral? Can it be noble? The entrepreneurship literature has noted that the entrepreneurial context is unique and that some corrupt acts are not only “accepted as part of entrepreneurship” but are in fact virtuous (Brenkert, 2009, p. 448). Building on these works, we hypothesize that when entrepreneurs use clever actions during rule-breaking activities, their actions will be regarded as more noble. In our study, we operationalize clever entrepreneurial actions by drawing on the concepts of improvisation and bricolage (Baker, Miner, & Eesley, 2003; Baker & Nelson, 2005). We propose that this relationship is conditional on the ethical orientation of the person viewing the rule breaking actions (i.e., utilitarianism, formalism). In this study, we also develop and validate a scale designed to assess the *nobility* of corrupt actions undertaken by entrepreneurial actors.

**Method**

We presented 202 third-party observers a vignette featuring a corrupt action in an entrepreneurship context. To test our hypotheses we used a between-participant experimental design in which we manipulated the use of bricolage (high vs. low bricolage) and measured participants’ ethical orientations (formalism and utilitarianism). We then assessed the bystander’s ethical perceptions with regard to the actions of the actors in the entrepreneurship scenario. Specifically, using a scale developed and validated for this study we measured the extent to which participant observers rated actions as noble. Hypothesized relationships were analyzed with moderated multiple regression and a Wald post-estimation test.

**Results/Implications**

Results indicate that corrupt entrepreneur acts that utilize clever bricolage techniques did not significantly increase the likelihood of the actions being viewed as noble. As expected, however, further analyses showed that formalists viewed clever rule breaking acts and the facilitation of such acts by a government official as exceptionally negative (i.e., as less noble). Our paper makes a contribution at the intersection of entrepreneurship and ethics. Specifically, we validate the construct of noble corruption. We also operationalize bricolage in an experimental study and explore entrepreneur rule-breaking behaviors that facilitate bystanders to simultaneously perceive certain entrepreneurial actions as corrupt but still ethical (i.e., noble).

**CONTACT:** Regan M. Stevenson; [Stevenson@ucf.edu](mailto:Stevenson@ucf.edu); (T) 1 407 375 6527; Department of Management; University of Central Florida, P.O. Box 161400, Orlando FL 32816 USA.