

The Normative Order of Reporting Police Misconduct: Examining the Roles of Offense Seriousness, Legitimacy, and Fairness

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Abstract

Using anonymous surveys of 3,235 officers in 30 police agencies, we tested hypotheses derived from prior policing research, legitimacy theory, and disciplinary fairness literature on the intentions of police officers to report acts of misconduct perpetrated by fellow officers. We examined features of the normative order involving peer reporting of police misconduct at both the individual agency and aggregate police subculture levels. Consistent with previous research, the perceived seriousness of the offense and legitimacy (endorsement) are consistently strong predictors of officers' intentions to report misconduct. We also find that perceived fairness of discipline provides significant results, but the direction of the relationship depends on the perceived seriousness of the offense. It is clear that the majority of police officers participate in a shared normative culture of when to and when not to report misconduct. Finally, we note the importance of studying the reporting of police misconduct using a social psychological lens.

Keywords

police misconduct, legitimacy, fairness, normative order

Cases of police misconduct and brutality capture the attention of the public and researchers alike because of the threat police misconduct poses to the rule of law and the stability of democratic states. Any inquiry into reports of misconduct—illegal acts and violations of organizational policy—inevitably leads to a discussion of the “code of silence”—a supposed occupational norm that precludes officers from exposing acts of misconduct to police administrators (Crank 1998; Kutnjak

Ivković 2003; Skolnick 2000; Weisburd et al. 2001). Many researchers have argued that the code is a central

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characteristic of the occupational subculture, with rookie officers socialized by veteran officers to demonstrate loyalty to their colleagues by participating in and upholding the expected silence (Kappeler, Sluder, and Alpert 2005; Kutnjak Ivković and Shelley 2008a; Stoddard 1968). In exchange for turning a blind eye to misconduct (i.e., participation in the code), officers earn the trust of fellow officers and can expect to receive reciprocal protection (Kutnjak Ivković 2003; Stoddard 1968).

While the existence and importance of the code of silence have been studied in great detail, little attention has been given to the normative order that governs the intention to report misconduct in the police subculture. We attempt to fill this gap in the literature by examining the social psychological dynamics that support or discourage willingness to report misconduct. By approaching intention to report misconduct through a social psychological lens, we hope to shed light on how police officers create and maintain their normative order. The official definition of misconduct or occupational deviance is criminal and noncriminal behavior (i.e., policy violations) that occurs during work hours and is committed under guise of a police officer's authority (Barker and Carter 1991). Corruption, on the other hand, relates only to activities that involve a misuse of authority for the purpose of personal gain (Goldstein 1975). Thus, misconduct includes a broader array of activities, one of which may be corruption. We focus on the broader category of misconduct in this article.

Social psychology in policing research has focused primarily on interrogation and confessions (Driver 1968; Kassin and Kiechel 1996), crowd control (Stott and Reicher 1998), and police lineups (Wells and Luus 1990). To our knowledge, however, no previous research has taken a social psychological approach to the

study of the intention to report police misconduct. Theoretical traditions that potentially explain the social normative influences on reporting beliefs and intentions include criminological literature on offense seriousness, legitimacy theory, and theories of fairness. Using concepts from these theories, we examine what normative and social psychological processes influence police officers' intentions to report the misconduct of fellow officers.¹ By addressing this broad question we hope to advance both the criminological literature on the intention to report police misconduct, as well as the understanding of the social psychological processes of legitimacy and fairness.

Previous research, using the data we employ (Klockars 1997), has found support for the effects of seriousness and legitimacy on the intention to report misconduct (see Raines 2010). We, however, extend the work of Raines (2010) in two major ways. First, we test an additional intention to report hypothesis based on perceived fairness of the expected discipline. Second, we explore how seriousness, legitimacy, and fairness interact in the prediction of intention to report misconduct. The examination of the

¹The data we analyzed came from a survey that asked police officers whether they would report misconduct described in hypothetical scenarios, rather than actual cases of misconduct (so we are really studying attitudes, not behaviors). Therefore, as we note later in the article, the data and the results may be biased in favor of reporting misconduct because of officers' desire to give the perception that they will do the "right" thing when confronted with a situation in which they should report the actions of another officer. Accordingly, we used the phrases "intention to report misconduct" and "willingness to report misconduct" throughout the article when referring to officers' individual actions, rather than "report/reporting misconduct." The questions on the survey were phrased as "willingness to report," so the questions themselves, to some degree, communicate to the respondents that they referred to intentions.

interactions between these three factors is important for a complete understanding of how police officers' intentions to report misconduct are decided. For example, legitimacy and fairness may only matter when the misconduct is perceived as serious. Or, perhaps legitimacy is necessary only when the expected punishment is perceived as unfair. These two possible scenarios highlight the interactions that need to be explored to construct a more comprehensive picture of the normative and social psychological processes that influence police officers' willingness to report misconduct.

The article proceeds as follows. First, we briefly review the roles of occupational culture and the code of silence in policing. We then provide a short overview of the literature on offense seriousness, legitimacy theory, and fairness and present our hypotheses. Next, we describe the Klockars (1997) data set that we use to test our hypotheses. We report descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate results that unpack the relationships between the key variables at both the individual and aggregate levels of analysis. Our discussion and conclusion situates our findings within the existing criminological and social psychological literature, suggests limitations in the study, and stresses the importance of taking a social psychological approach to the study of policing.

OCCUPATIONAL CULTURE AND THE CODE OF SILENCE

The importance of occupational culture and the code of silence have been widely studied in policing research. For instance, study findings depict police as having an occupational subculture that is cynical, distrustful of outsiders (the "us vs. them" mentality), and marked by intense loyalty to others working in the occupation (Crank 1998; Kappeler et al. 2005;

Skolnick and Fyfe 1993). Attributions for these occupational characteristics include: the social conflict and alienation officers face from the community (real and perceived), the high probability for mistakes in police work, the ever-present threat of danger, and an array of bureaucratic rules and punitive discipline characteristic of quasi-military bureaucracy (Bittner 1990; Crank 1998; Jefferson 1990; Kutnjak Ivković 2005b). As a result of these issues, scholars have argued that the code of silence functions as a protective mechanism against public criticism and/or unfair discipline from police administrators, leading police officers to "act in accordance with their collective well-being" (Rothwell and Baldwin 2007:610).

Yet despite common features of the occupational culture, empirical research demonstrates that there is no homogeneous or single police culture across the policing profession (Chan, Devery, and Doran 2003; Klockars et al. 1997). The implication this has for the code of silence is that it varies by agency and department, with more corrupt departments having stronger codes (Kutnjak Ivković 2005a; Mollen 1994). Thus, the importance of agency culture on reporting of misconduct cannot be overstated. For example, some research has shown that most police officers and police agencies are of high integrity (Klockars et al. 2000; Klockars, Kutnjak Ivković, and Habersfeld 2006). As a result, some researchers have argued that the code of silence in policing is exaggerated partly because of the high expectations that society places on the ethical conduct of the police (Rothwell and Baldwin 2007). More specifically, "[s]ilence codes may be just as prevalent in civilian agencies and other occupational areas that fly under the radar of the media and concerned citizens because they do not deal with such significant concerns as the use of deadly

force, incarceration, the death penalty and society's most deviant behaviors" (Rothwell and Baldwin 2007:612). In their study of Georgia public employees, Rothwell and Baldwin (2007:626) found that the police were slightly more likely to report misconduct than other civilian public employees were and that "police are less likely than civilian employees to maintain a code of silence."

The complicated occupational culture of police and the extent to which the code of silence does or does not exist in police agencies make understanding the creation and maintenance of the normative order of intention to report misconduct difficult. Therefore, we now turn to a discussion of how offense seriousness, legitimacy, and fairness may influence willingness to report misconduct.

SERIOUSNESS, LEGITIMACY, AND FAIRNESS

Offense Seriousness

Criminologists have shown that the seriousness of the offense in question (see, for example, Raines 2010) influences willingness to report misconduct. Researchers have established that there are consistent views about the seriousness of various types of misconduct across departments (Klockars et al. 1997; Kutnjak Ivković 2004, 2005a). Previous research has consistently shown that the seriousness of the offense was a strong predictor of whether officers would report misconduct—with officers reporting greater willingness to report infractions they perceived as more serious and less willing to report infractions they perceived as minor (Klockars et al. 2000; Raines 2010; Rothwell and Baldwin 2007). These previous findings provide the basis for our first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The greater the perceived seriousness of an act of police

misconduct by another officer, the more likely it will be that the officer intends to report the misconduct.

While criminological analyses have demonstrated the importance of offense seriousness in reporting misconduct, we believe that important aspects of how the normative order of intention to report police misconduct is maintained remain unexplained. We now turn to social psychology to remedy this omission. Although previous studies have used criminological variables to predict the intention to report police misconduct, little if any of it explains *how* and *why* individuals make decisions about intentions to report or not report police misconduct. Here we review legitimacy theory and theories of fairness to help explain the normative influences on officers' decisions whether they intend to report the misconduct of fellow officers.

Legitimacy Theory

Legitimacy theory explains why normative orders become accepted. Legitimacy theory draws on Weber ([1918] 1968), who theorized that norms and values that regulate behavior become accepted by others through legitimacy processes. Johnson, Dowd, and Ridgeway (2006:55) summed up Weber's approach: "Because individuals perceive that others support this social order, the order seems valid, objective social fact. Consequently, individuals act in accord with that order themselves, even if they privately disagree" (see also Ridgeway and Correll 2006:436). Consequently, power that is legitimated creates a stable, accepted normative order.

Dornbusch and Scott (1975) provided a useful framework for conceptualizing legitimacy (see also Zelditch 2006 for an overview). They identified four dimensions of legitimacy: propriety, validity,

authorization, and endorsement. Legitimacy processes operate on two levels, the individual and the group. *Propriety* refers to an individual's beliefs that particular rules and norms of conduct are proper and appropriate patterns of action, while *validity* is the "acknowledge[ment] [of] the existence of a normative order" and the obligation to obey these norms even in the absence of personal approval (Dornbusch and Scott 1975:39; Zelditch 2006:328). While both propriety and validity are two different aspects of legitimacy, validity is arguably more important. An individual can privately reject a norm or belief, but still publicly accept it. People may publicly endorse a norm without accepting it personally for two primary reasons: because of (1) the assumption/perception that most other individuals accept it and (2) the risk of sanctions if they publicly reject the norm or belief.

Validity is complex in that two separate processes, authorization and endorsement, help sustain the current normative order (Johnson et al. 2006; Zelditch 2006). *Authorization* is support of the normative order from people in power, while *endorsement* is the support from peers or subordinates (Johnson et al. 2006). Of these two, obtaining the endorsement of those who are not in power is more difficult because often the current normative order does not benefit subordinates. Therefore, subordinates need to be convinced either that current norms and beliefs are beneficial to them or that those who are in power can use the threat of sanctions/punishments to encourage compliance (Zelditch 2006).

In sum, legitimacy transforms power into authority, which stabilizes the normative order (Zelditch 2006). According to legitimacy theory this occurs through a combination of propriety, validity, authorization, and endorsement. While we recognize the importance of all four

processes in the creation of a legitimate normative order, in the current study we focus on endorsement. In what follows, we use the word *legitimacy* in many places instead of *endorsement*. We mean in no way to equate the complex process of legitimacy with endorsement only; instead we want to remind the reader that our hypothesis and subsequent discussion stem from legitimacy theory. Based on the previous work of legitimacy theorists and criminologists, we derive the following hypothesis regarding the role of legitimacy (endorsement) and intention to report police misconduct:

Hypothesis 2: The greater the perceived legitimacy (endorsement) of reporting misconduct among one's fellow officers, the more likely it will be that an officer intends to report the misconduct.

Fairness

Fairness, the perception that all people, whether superordinate or subordinate, have been treated in a reasonable manner can also create support for the current normative order. Fairness is central in social decision-making processes. Using norms of fairness and following accepted procedures is crucial to good decision making (Thibaut and Walker 1975). As Tyler and Lind (1992:134) suggest, "absent objective indicators of the correctness of a decision, the best guarantee of decision quality is the use of good—which is to say fair—procedures."

Justice models focus on fairness by "suggest[ing] that people react to authorities not by judging whether the authorities' decisions benefit their interests, but rather by assessing whether the authority is acting fairly" (Tyler and Lind 1992:121). Two models of justice—distributive and procedural—posit that fairness is assessed both as an outcome and as a process. *Distributive justice*, which

examines outcomes, and *procedural justice*, which focuses on decision-making processes, compose the core of a justice model approach to establishing the legitimacy of an authority (see also Hegtvedt and Johnson 2000, 2009). Distributive justice is an important component for assessing fairness because people are interested in the outcome of a judgment. Procedural justice, on the other hand, focuses on the “judgments about the fairness of the procedures used to make decisions. Procedural justice theories suggest that people focus on how decisions are made, as well as the decisions themselves, in making justice evaluations” (Tyler and Lind 1992:122, see also Thibaut and Walker 1975, 1978).

Previous scholarship on procedural justice (Tyler and Lind 1992; Hegtvedt and Johnson 2009) identifies several behaviors of authority figures that create an environment of fairness. These include respectful treatment of subordinates, objectivity in decision-making processes, and consideration of subordinates’ personal needs and opinions. Fairness also draws from Dornbusch and Scott (1975) because just as the validity of legitimacy is buttressed by the endorsement of subordinates, for a decision to be considered “fair,” it must also be perceived to be so by subordinates.

Fairness has been studied in regard to the police code of silence. Kutnjak Ivković and Klockars (1998) describe three different models—the *simple deterrence model*, the *discipline indifference model*, and the *simple justice model*—for explaining the relation between discipline environment and reporting of misconduct. Each of these models poses a different causal mechanism for predicting reporting of police misconduct.

The *simple deterrence model* indicates that severe forms of discipline for engaging in police misconduct produce a narrower code of silence because officers are

“intimidated” into reporting misconduct. More specifically, officers are pressured to report misconduct (even if they view the associated discipline as too harsh) because of the punitive costs of not reporting—costs that could be more draconian than those related with breaking the code. Alternatively, lenient forms of punishment should produce a wider code because officers may take the view that it is not worth breaking the code if discipline is unlikely or light. In sum, discipline perceived as too harsh should result in higher reporting of misconduct than discipline perceived as either too lenient or fair (Kutnjak Ivković and Klockars 2000; Kutnjak Ivković and Shelley 2008a).

The *discipline indifference model* indicates that there is no association between the respondents’ views of discipline fairness and the code. Kutnjak Ivković and Klockars (1998) argued that this may be the case because (1) officers feel that the likelihood of punishment for not reporting is improbable or absent or (2) officers believe that the costs associated with violating the code in the subculture are too serious (e.g., social ostracism from colleagues), which invalidates the influence of agency-endorsed punishments. In sum, beliefs about discipline severity should be unrelated to reporting misconduct (Kutnjak Ivković and Klockars 2000; Kutnjak Ivković and Shelley 2008a).

The *simple justice model* refers to officers’ presumed motivation to have acts of misconduct punished in a “just” way. This model is most similar to Victor, Trevino, and Shapiro’s (1993) and Tyler and Lind’s (1992) conceptualization of “procedural justice” and indicates that officers who evaluate the discipline as fair will be more likely to report misconduct than officers who view the discipline as too harsh. The simple justice model does not predict the direction and strength of the

association when punishment is lenient (especially if it is inappropriately lenient) or absent. In sum, if the discipline is perceived as fair, the code should be narrower (Kutnjak Ivković and Klockars 2000; Kutnjak Ivković and Shelley 2008a). Kutnjak Ivković and Shelley (2005, 2010) found empirical support for the simple justice model for police officers in Eastern Europe.

Based on social psychological theories of fairness and the simple justice model of intention to report police misconduct, we hypothesize,

Hypothesis 3: The more likely that an officer perceives the discipline for an act of misconduct to be fair, the more likely it will be that the officer intends to report the misconduct.

In sum, perceived seriousness of an offense, perceived legitimacy (endorsement), and perceived fairness of the expected discipline all potentially have important roles in determining police officers' intentions to report misconduct. It is also possible that the interactions of these three variables may help explain intentions to report misconduct. We now turn to our empirical investigation where we test the relationship of these three concepts with a police officer's willingness to report the misconduct of fellow officers.

METHOD

To identify the normative order that exists in the police subculture, we used bivariate statistics and ordinal logistic regression to examine the intention to report police misconduct by focusing on perceived seriousness of the offense, legitimacy (endorsement), and fairness.

Data

We used the data that were originally collected by Klockars (1997). The sample

was a convenience sample of 30 police agencies in the Northeast, South, Southeast, and Southwest of the United States (Klockars 1997; Klockars et al. 1997). The overall sample included 3,235 police officers, most of whom were employed in patrol/traffic and were experienced police officers. Fewer than 20 percent were supervisors.

The questionnaire contained 11 hypothetical scenarios that describe instances of police misconduct and the use of excessive force.² Each scenario was briefly described and followed by a set of seven questions that explored dimensions of seriousness, willingness to report (i.e., intention to report), and discipline. We eliminated one scenario that describes a situation that was not a violation in many police departments' regulations (i.e., an off-duty business). We chose four of the ten remaining scenarios with varying levels of seriousness (low, medium, high) to examine the effects of offense seriousness, legitimacy, and fairness on the intention to report police misconduct. Based on the respondents' assessment of the level of offense seriousness, we ordered the ten scenarios from least serious to most serious, and chose the first, fourth, sixth, and ninth cases, thus obtaining a representation of the range of seriousness.³ Our descriptions of the

²The 11 scenarios were in no particular order in the survey.

³We chose these four scenarios because we wanted to test the seriousness, legitimacy, and fairness hypotheses among different levels of perceived (own and others') seriousness of offense. We calculated descriptive, bivariate, and ordinal logistic models for all 10 scenarios in the original Klockars (1997) data set and detected the same patterns among the data for the unreported scenarios. To conserve space, we selected four scenarios that represent the range of seriousness. If a reader desires a copy of tables that contains estimates of equations for all 10 scenarios, please email the corresponding author and they will be provided.

scenarios below are verbatim from the survey. The four scenarios we selected, in order from least to most serious, are these:

1. A police officer routinely accepts free meals, cigarettes, and other items of small value from merchants on his beat. He does not solicit these gifts and is careful not to abuse the generosity of those who give gifts to him (hereafter, "free meals").
2. Two police officers on foot patrol surprise a man who is attempting to break into an automobile. The man flees. They chase him for about two blocks before apprehending him by tackling him and wrestling him to the ground. After he is under control both officers punch him a few times in the stomach as punishment for fleeing and resisting (hereafter, "punch for fleeing").
3. A police officer has a private arrangement with a local auto body shop to refer the owners of cars damaged in accidents to the shop. In exchange for each referral, he receives a payment of 5 percent of the repair bill from the shop owner (hereafter, "auto body kickback").
4. A police officer discovers a burglary of a jewelry shop. The display cases are smashed and it is obvious that many items have been taken. While searching the shop, the officer takes a watch worth about two days' pay for that office and reports that the watch had been stolen during the burglary (hereafter, "opportunistic theft") (Klockars 1997; Klockars et al. 1997).

The selection of these scenarios conforms to the previous work of Klockars et al. (2000). In their work, the first scenario was rated as not serious, the middle two scenarios were rated as intermediate infractions, and the last scenario was rated as a very serious offense.

Dependent Variables

The questionnaire developed by Klockars and colleagues contained a measure of the respondents' willingness to report police misconduct. This was the dependent variable in our analyses because it measures the intention of an officer to report misconduct by fellow officers. Following the description of each scenario, the respondents were asked, "Do you think you would report a fellow police officer who engaged in this behavior?" The answer choices range on a scale from 5 = definitely yes to 1 = definitely not. Although the reporting of illegal behavior is difficult to measure because it is vulnerable to social desirability bias (Randall and Fernandes 1991), this data set has been broadly analyzed and cited as valid and reliable, assessing intentions of peer reporting among police (see, for example, Klockars et al. 1997, 2006; Raines 2010). We acknowledge that the results of this study may be biased in favor of intention to report misconduct, but such a bias, to the extent it may be present at all, likely does not affect our results because our primary concern is related not to the levels of reporting but to the extent of its variability with independent variables.

Independent Variables

Seriousness. To test the perception of the seriousness hypothesis we used the question "How serious would most police officers in your agency consider this behavior to be?" This question was measured on a five-point scale where 5 = very serious and 1 = not serious at all.

Legitimacy/endorsement. To examine the effect of the endorsement of peers on the normative order, we used the survey question "Do you think most police officers in your agency would report a fellow police officer who engaged in this

behavior?" This question was scored on a 5-point scale (5 = *definitely yes*, 1 = *definitely not*). This question measures the perception of peers' willingness to report misconduct.

Perceived fairness. Following previous work on procedural justice (Victor et al. 1993) and in a manner similar to Klockars et al. (2000), we created indicators of perceived fairness by taking the difference of two survey questions, "What type of discipline should follow?" and "What type of discipline would follow?" Both questions have responses on an ordinal scale: 1 = none, 2 = verbal reprimand, 3 = written reprimand, 4 = period of suspension without pay, 5 = demotion in rank, and 6 = dismissal. We then calculated an intermediate variable to indicate the level of discrepancy (D) between the discipline that *should* follow and the discipline that *would* follow, where $D = (\text{should} - \text{would})$. D ranged from -5 to 5. Nonzero values of D corresponded to unfair perceived discipline, and $D = 0$ when perceptions of the punishment were fair. D was then transformed into two categories, "fair punishment" and "unfair punishment," by recoding all nonzero values to 0 (*unfair*) and all zero values to 1 (*fair*). This indicator measures the perceived fairness of the expected discipline.

Control Variables

Because the intention to report misconduct by fellow police officers may be affected by rank, agency characteristics, and type of assignment, we controlled for these factors. First, researchers have shown that officers' rank holds influence on how they view and report misconduct (Huon et al. 1995; Kutnjak Ivković and Shelley 2008a); we controlled for this with the variable *supervisory status*, coded as supervisor = 1 and

non-supervisory = 0. Studies have also shown that the length of service is important in understanding the code of silence and beliefs about reporting misconduct (Huon et al. 1995; Micucci and Gomme 2005; Niederhoffer 1967); therefore, we included the number of years the officers had been at their current agency. The specific assignment of an officer has been shown to influence reporting misconduct (Rothwell and Baldwin 2007); we control for this possibility with the inclusion of two indicator variables of the officer's current assignment, with the following categories: "patrol," "detective or special operations," and "communications/administrative" (comparison category). Finally, the size of the police agency in which the respondent was employed was controlled for. Similar to the work of Klockars et al. (2000), we measured this variable on an ordinal scale (1 = fewer than 25 sworn officers, 2 = 25–75 sworn officers, 3 = 76–200 sworn officers, 4 = 201–500 sworn officers, and 5 = more than 500 sworn officers).

Analytic Strategy

First, we removed those respondents from the sample who indicated they had not answered honestly. Specifically, the last question on the survey asked, "Did you give your honest opinions in filling out this questionnaire?" We removed the respondents who replied no ($n = 69$) or left the question blank ($n = 56$) from the sample.

We used bivariate analyses to establish the current normative order regarding attitudes about reporting police misconduct of other officers. Next, we modeled "own willingness to report misconduct" for each of the four scenarios with five equations each. These models were estimated with proportional odds ordinal logistic regression equations (Long and

Freese 2006).⁴ We used ordinal logistic regression because the dependent variable in the analyses is measured in ordered categories (i.e., a scale from 5 = definitely yes to 1 = definitely not). The first equations tested the impact of the three independent variables and the control variables on the dependent variable. The second, third, and fourth equations included the variables from the first equation while adding one interaction term per equation created from the independent variables (i.e., second models—Seriousness \times Legitimacy; third models—Seriousness \times Fairness; fourth models—Legitimacy \times Fairness). Finally, the fifth models included all independent variables, interaction terms, and controls.⁵ We use these series of nested models to examine the main effects of the independent variables separately and then unpack the effects of the interaction terms. This process provides a comprehensive set of tests of our hypotheses.

Last, because of the potential variability in occupational culture, we conducted separate analyses at the agency level. As

⁴We reported proportional odds ordinal regression models. We also estimated ordinal models in which we relaxed the proportional odds assumption for each individual variable using *gologit2* (Williams 2006), a user-written Stata program that estimates generalized ordered logit models. A few of the independent variables failed the Brant test, indicating that relaxing the proportional assumption may provide a better model fit. The models' AIC values, however, indicate that the proportional odds models fit better (the AIC imposes a stiffer penalty than the Brant test does), guiding our choice to report the proportional odds models (Agresti 2010).

⁵In unreported models we also tested the effect of the three-way interaction of the independent variables (Seriousness \times Legitimacy \times Fairness) in all scenarios. The three-way interaction term was not statistically significant in any of the models and did not noticeably change the parameter estimates of the other variables, so we did not include it in our presentation of the results.

noted earlier, previous research has shown the police subculture may operate differently in different agencies (Chan et al. 2003; Klockars et al. 1997). Therefore, we tested our hypotheses at the agency level using data from the seven agencies contained in the Klockars (1997) data set where n is greater than 100, allowing for enough cases to perform the ordinal logistic regression analyses.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Results

Means, standard deviations, modes, and percentages of the respondents' answers are shown in Table 1. Respondents perceived the free meal scenario the least serious (mean = 2.31), with the mode of "not serious." In the other three scenarios, the mode was "very serious." As the perceived seriousness of the behavior increased, the percentage of officers who said that they would report the offense also increased. As the perceived seriousness of the scenario increased, the mean and mode of the "others' willingness to report misconduct" (endorsement) also increased. In addition, the mean of fair discipline (fair coded 1, unfair coded 0) increased from .65 in the first scenario to .89 in the fourth scenario. Finally, the majority of respondents came from very large municipal police agencies, were predominately patrol officers and nonsupervisors, and had been police officers at their current agency for about 6 to 10 years.

The apparent normative order. Before exploring how the normative order of reporting misconduct was sustained, we first focus on the officers' own willingness to report misconduct to shed light on the apparent normative order of reporting misconduct. Similar to Kutnjak Ivković and Shelley (2008b), we calculated bivariate indicators of officers' willingness to

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables in the Analysis

Variables	Scenario 1: Free meals, discounts		Scenario 2: Punch for fleeing/resisting		Scenario 3: Auto body kickback		Scenario 4: Jewelry store burglary	
	Mean (SD)	Mode (%)	Mean (SD)	Mode (%)	Mean (SD)	Mode (%)	Mean (SD)	Mode (%)
Dependent variable								
Own willingness to report	1.92 (1.27)	1 (54.8)	3.39 (1.51)	5 (35.1)	3.95 (1.36)	5 (52.7)	4.54 (1.06)	5 (79.0)
Independent variables								
Other's seriousness perceived seriousness	2.31 (1.18)	2 (31.1)	3.68 (1.27)	5 (35.6)	4.30 (1.13)	5 (53.0)	4.86 (.52)	5 (91.0)
Other officer's willingness to report perceived legitimacy/endorsement	1.82 (1.08)	1 (52.3)	3.07 (1.38)	3 (24.2)	3.71 (1.25)	5 (34.5)	4.34 (1.02)	5 (61.4)
Perceived fair discipline	.65 (.48)	Fair (64.7)	.72 (.45)	Fair (71.7)	.80 (.40)	Fair (79.7)	.89 (.31)	Fair (88.8)
Other ^a								
Own seriousness	2.60 (1.34)	1 (26.4)	4.05 (1.23)	5 (51.5)	4.50 (.90)	5 (69.0)	4.96 (.31)	5 (97.4)
Controls ^b								
Supervisor status	.20 (.40)	0 (80.1)						
Years of service at current agency	4.43 (1.71)	6–10 years (23.8)						
Current assignment—patrol	.63 (.48)	Patrol (62.6)						
Current assignment—detective or special operations	.25	Patrol/communications & administration						
Size of agency	(.44) 4.33 (1.14)	(74.6) Very large municipal police (more than 500 sworn officers) (69.3)						

Notes: ^a The "own seriousness" variable is used only in the bivariate analyses, not the multivariate analyses. ^b The descriptive statistics for the controls are the same for all four scenarios.

report misconduct by recoding “own willingness to report” into two categories (1–2 = *unwilling to report misconduct* and 3–5 = *willing to report misconduct*). The percentages of those willing to report in the four scenarios, in order from least to most serious, were 26.8 percent (free meals), 70.0 percent (punch for fleeing), 82.7 percent (auto body kickback), and 92.3 percent (opportunistic theft).⁶ Thus, the code of silence gets weaker as the perceived seriousness of the offense increases. The observed pattern represents the established normative order of the intention to report misconduct of fellow officers—higher percentages of officers expressed willingness to report misconduct when the act was more serious.

Next, we calculated the effect size (Cohen’s *d*) for the differences between own attitudes and other officers’ attitudes regarding seriousness and willingness to report and found very small effects (Cohen 1992). Own perceived seriousness was slightly larger in each scenario than perception of other officers’ seriousness; however, the effect sizes were small (free meals $d = .22$; punch for fleeing $d = .27$; auto body kickbacks $d = .24$; opportunistic theft $d = .15$; Table 1). Similarly, we found small effect sizes between officers’ own *willingness to report* and the perception of others’ willingness to report (free meals $d = .09$; punch for fleeing $d = .21$; auto body kickbacks $d = .18$; opportunistic theft $d = .18$). These results support the notion that the normative order of intention to report misconduct in police departments was well known and shared by officers. The small effect sizes between

own and others’ willingness to report demonstrated that officers expect roughly the same actions from their peers as they do of themselves.

Multivariate Results

We estimated proportional odds ordinal logistic regression equations for the prediction of officers’ own willingness to report for the four selected behavior scenarios.

Free meals scenario. Table 2 contains the free meals scenario equations. The results in Model 1a indicate that perceived seriousness ($p < .001$) and legitimacy ($p < .001$) are both significant and positively related to own willingness to report (supporting Hypotheses 1 and 2, respectively), while perceived fairness is not a significant predictor in Model 1a (failing to support Hypothesis 3). In Models 1d and 1e, however, which contain the interaction between perceived legitimacy (endorsement) and fairness, both the main effects of fairness (coefficient is negative) and the interaction (coefficient is positive) are significant. This finding indicates that for the free meals scenario, perceived legitimacy has a stronger positive effect on own willingness to report when the expected discipline is perceived as fair. In addition, supervisors ($p < .001$) indicated greater intentions to report misconduct compared to line officers, and officers who were assigned to either patrol ($p < .001$) or detective/special operations ($p < .01$) reported that they were less likely to report misconduct compared to those assigned to communications or administrative positions.

Punch for fleeing scenario. The equations reported in Table 3 focus on the assault for attempted escape scenario. Again (see Model 2a), it is clear that the main effects of perceived seriousness ($p < .001$), legitimacy ($p < .001$), and

⁶We also calculated these indicators for each of the 30 police departments in the sample separately. While some variation existed between departments, the same general pattern that the percentages of officers unwilling to report decreased as the perceived offense seriousness increased and/or remained consistent across departments.

Table 2. Ordinal Logistic Regression Coefficients (*b*), Odds Ratios (OR), and Standard Errors (SE) for Determinants of “Own Willingness to Report” for Scenario 1: Free Meals and Discounts (*N* = 2,576)

	Model 1a		Model 1b		Model 1c		Model 1d		Model 1e	
	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE
Main effects										
Perceived seriousness (S)	.489*** (1.63)	.05	.556*** (1.74)	.09	.405*** (1.50)	.07	.484*** (1.62)	.05	.678*** (1.97)	.12
Perceived legitimacy (L) (endorsement)	1.607*** (4.99)	.06	1.713*** (5.55)	.13	1.604*** (4.97)	.06	1.320*** (3.74)	.08	1.430*** (4.18)	.15
Perceived fairness (F) ^a	.008 (1.01)	.09	.013 (1.01)	.09	-.312 (.73)	.23	-.914*** (.40)	.21	-.740** (.48)	.25
Interaction effects										
S × L			-.035 (.97)	.04					-.055 (.95)	.04
S × F					.128 (1.14)	.09			-.144 (.87)	.10
L × F							.461*** (1.59)	.10	.555*** (1.74)	.11
Controls										
Supervisor ^b	1.521*** (4.58)	.12	1.522*** (4.58)	.12	1.518*** (4.56)	.12	1.450*** (4.46)	.12	1.494*** (4.46)	.12
Years of service	.037 (1.04)	.03	.036 (1.04)	.03	.036 (1.04)	.03	.040 (1.04)	.03	.041 (1.04)	.03
Patrol ^c	-.679*** (.51)	.14	-.680*** (.51)	.14	-.682*** (.51)	.14	-.689*** (.50)	.14	-.678*** (.50)	.14
Detective or special ops. ^c	-.415** (.66)	.15	-.416** (.66)	.15	-.411** (.66)	.15	-.421** (.66)	.15	-.430** (.65)	.15
Size of agency	.051 (1.05)	.04	.051 (1.05)	.04	.048 (1.05)	.04	.043 (1.04)	.04	.049 (1.05)	.04
Likelihood ratio χ^2	2001***		2001***		2003***		2023***		2027***	
Nagelkerke R^2	.590		.591		.591		.595		.596	
AIC	4361		4363		4361		4341		4341	

Notes: ^a Comparison group is “too harsh or too lenient discipline.” ^b Comparison group is “non-supervisor.” ^c Comparison group is “communications/administrative personnel.”
 p* < .01. *p* < .001 (two-tailed).

Table 3. Ordinal Logistic Regression Coefficients (*b*), Odds Ratios (OR), and Standard Errors (SE) for Determinants of “Own Willingness to Report” for Scenario 2: Punch for Fleeing/Resisting (N = 2,572)

	Model 2a		Model 2b		Model 2c		Model 2d		Model 2e	
	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE
Main effects										
Perceived seriousness (S)	.474*** (1.61)	.05	.134 (1.14)	.08	.478*** (1.61)	.07	.480*** (1.62)	.05	.308** (1.36)	.11
Perceived legitimacy (L) (endorsement)	1.615*** (5.03)	.05	1.030*** (2.80)	.13	1.616*** (5.03)	.05	1.445*** (4.24)	.08	.853*** (2.35)	.15
Perceived fairness (F) ^a	.246** (1.28)	.09	.241** (1.27)	.09	.269 (1.31)	.27	-.367 (.69)	.22	.149 (1.16)	.28
Interaction effects										
S × L			.152*** (1.16)	.03					.141*** (1.15)	.03
S × F					-.007 (.99)	.08			-.215* (.81)	.09
L × F							.235** (1.27)	.08	.309** (1.36)	.10
Controls										
Supervisor ^b	1.429*** (4.17)	.13	1.429*** (4.18)	.13	1.429*** (4.17)	.13	1.419*** (4.13)	.13	1.426*** (4.16)	.13
Years of service	.032 (1.03)	.03	.037 (1.04)	.03	.032 (1.03)	.03	.037 (1.04)	.03	.038 (1.04)	.03
Patrol ^c	-.732*** (.48)	.14	-.735*** (.48)	.14	-.732*** (.48)	.14	-.742*** (.48)	.14	-.737*** (.48)	.14
Detective or special ops. ^c	-.479** (.62)	.15	-.479** (.62)	.15	-.478** (.62)	.15	-.493** (.61)	.15	-.487** (.61)	.15
Size of agency	.140*** (1.15)	.04	.150*** (1.16)	.04	.140*** (1.15)	.04	.139*** (1.15)	.04	.150*** (1.16)	.04
Likelihood ratio χ^2	2773***		2795***		2773***		2782***		2805***	
Nagelkerke R^2	.690		.693		.690		.691		.694	
AIC	5333		5313		5335		5326		5307	

Notes: ^a Comparison group is “too harsh or too lenient discipline.” ^b Comparison group is “non-supervisor.” ^c Comparison group is “communications/administrative personnel.”
^{*}*p* < .05. ^{**}*p* < .01. ^{***}*p* < .001 (two-tailed).

fairness ($p < .01$) are strong positive predictors of personal willingness to report police misconduct (providing support for all three hypotheses). The interaction effects reveal some interesting findings. Models 2b and 2e show that perceived legitimacy (endorsement) has a significantly stronger positive effect when the seriousness of the offense is perceived to be higher (interaction coefficients, $p < .001$). The results reported in Models 2d and 2e show that perceived legitimacy has a stronger positive effect when the expected discipline for the punch for fleeing scenario is perceived as fair. Finally, in the full model, Model 2e, the perceived seriousness and fairness interaction becomes statistically significant ($b = -.215, p < .05$). The significant negative interaction coefficient indicates that when officers perceive punch for fleeing as a more serious offense, those officers who also perceive the expected discipline to be fair are *less* likely to report the misconduct. Supervisory status and size of agency both significantly positively predict intention to report misconduct, while being assigned to patrol or detective/special operations negatively predicts intention to report misconduct.

Auto body kickback scenario. Table 4 reports the auto body kickback scenario equations. The main effects of perceived seriousness ($p < .001$) and legitimacy ($p < .001$) are significant positive predictors of willingness to report misconduct (supporting Hypotheses 1 and 2), while perceived fairness is significant and negatively ($b = -.221, p < .05$) associated with intention to report misconduct (failing to support Hypothesis 3). This finding suggests that officers who perceive the expected discipline for the auto body kickback scenario to be fair are less likely to report it. There are also numerous significant interaction effects. Models 3b

and 3e indicate that perceived legitimacy (endorsement) has a stronger positive effect when officers perceive auto body kickback to be a serious offense. Contrary to the findings in the punch for fleeing scenario, Model 3c reports that the interaction between perceived seriousness and fairness is positive and significant. This finding suggests that in the case of auto body kickbacks, when the perceived seriousness of the offense is higher, officers who also perceive the expected discipline to be fair indicate that they are *more* likely to report the misconduct. Similar to the previous two scenarios, Model 3d reports that perceived legitimacy has a stronger positive effect on intention to report misconduct, when the expected discipline is perceived to be fair ($p < .01$). While the fairness hypothesis (Hypothesis 3) is not supported by the main effects only model, it is supported through the interactions with seriousness and legitimacy. In addition, supervisory status, years of service at the current agency, and size of agency are significant positive predictors of intention to report auto body kickback, while those working patrol and detective/special operation are significantly less likely to report the auto body kickback compared with communications/administrative personnel.

Opportunistic theft scenario. The findings of the opportunistic theft scenario (Table 5) are similar to those of the auto body kickback scenario. Model 4a reports that the main effects of perceived seriousness ($p < .05$) and legitimacy ($p < .001$) are significant positive predictors of willingness to report opportunistic theft (supporting Hypotheses 1 and 2), while perceived fairness is significant and negatively associated with intention to report opportunistic theft ($b = -.337, p < .05$). Contrary to Hypothesis 3, those officers who are more likely to perceive the expected

Table 4. Ordinal Logistic Regression Coefficients (*b*), Odds Ratios (OR), and Standard Errors (SE) for Determinants of “Own Willingness to Report” for Scenario 3: Auto Body Kickback (N = 2,581)

	Model 3a		Model 3b		Model 3c		Model 3d		Model 3e	
	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE
Main effects										
Perceived seriousness (S)	.229*** (1.26)	.05	-.184 (.83)	.11	.082 (1.09)	.09	.237*** (1.27)	.05	-.150 (.86)	.14
Perceived legitimacy (L) (endorsement)	2.184*** (8.88)	.06	1.498*** (4.47)	.18	2.183*** (8.87)	.06	1.952*** (7.05)	.10	1.409*** (4.09)	.20
Perceived fairness (F) ^a	-.221* (.80)	.11	-.236* (.79)	.11	-.994* (.37)	.41	-1.108** (.33)	.32	-.952* (.39)	.42
Interaction effects										
S × L			.163*** (1.18)	.04					.145** (1.16)	.04
S × F					.202* (1.22)	.10			.024 (1.02)	.12
L × F							.293** (1.34)	.10	.209 (1.23)	.12
Controls										
Supervisor ^b	1.603*** (4.97)	.16	1.647*** (5.19)	.16	1.608*** (4.99)	.16	1.622*** (5.06)	.16	1.656*** (5.24)	.16
Years of service	.128*** (1.14)	.03	.124*** (1.13)	.03	.128*** (1.14)	.03	.126*** (1.13)	.03	.122*** (1.13)	.03
Patrol ^c	-.789*** (.45)	.17	-.779*** (.46)	.17	-.780*** (.46)	.17	-.780*** (.46)	.17	-.772*** (.46)	.17
Detective or special ops. ^c	-.611** (.54)	.18	-.618** (.54)	.18	-.600** (.55)	.18	-.600** (.55)	.18	-.606** (.55)	.18
Size of agency	.140*** (1.15)	.04	.145*** (1.16)	.04	.140*** (1.15)	.04	.145*** (1.15)	.04	.146*** (1.16)	.04
Likelihood ratio χ^2	2823***		2834***		2827***		2831***		2843***	
Nagelkerke R^2	.713		.715		.713		.714		.716	
AIC	4181		4167		4179		4174		4166	

Notes: ^a Comparison group is “too harsh or too lenient discipline.” ^b Comparison group is “non-supervisor.” ^c Comparison group is “communications/administrative personnel.”
^{*}*p* < .05. ^{**}*p* < .01. ^{***}*p* < .001 (two-tailed).

Table 5. Ordinal Logistic Regression Coefficients (*b*), Odds Ratios (OR), and Standard Errors (SE) for Determinants of “Own Willingness to Report” for Scenario 4: Opportunistic Theft (N = 2,572)

	Model 4a		Model 4b		Model 4c		Model 4d		Model 4e	
	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE	<i>b</i> (OR)	SE
Main effects										
Perceived seriousness (S)	.226* (1.25)	.11	-.647** (.52)	.24	-.238 (.79)	.19	.257* (1.29)	.11	-.718* (.49)	.30
Perceived legitimacy (L) (endorsement)	2.175*** (8.80)	.07	.552 (1.74)	.41	2.179*** (8.84)	.07	1.731*** (5.64)	.14	.485 (1.62)	.44
Perceived fairness (F) ^a	-.337* (.71)	.17	-.345* (.71)	.17	-3.338** (.04)	.04	-2.089*** (.12)	.50	-3.147** (.04)	1.03
Interaction effects										
S × L			.336*** (1.40)	.08					.282** (1.33)	.09
S × F					.654** (1.92)	.22			.330 (1.39)	.23
L × F							.534*** (1.71)	.14	.397** (1.49)	.15
Controls										
Supervisor ^b	1.880*** (6.55)	.26	1.892*** (6.63)	.26	1.927*** (6.87)	.27	1.910*** (6.75)	.27	1.930*** (6.89)	.26
Years of service	.101* (1.11)	.04	.091* (1.09)	.04	.103* (1.11)	.04	.105* (1.11)	.04	.095* (1.10)	.04
Patrol ^c	-.771** (.46)	.23	-.781** (.46)	.23	-.781** (.46)	.23	-.713** (.49)	.23	-.738** (.48)	.23
Detective or special ops. ^c	-.376 (.69)	.26	-.392 (.68)	.26	-.427 (.65)	.26	-.362 (.70)	.26	-.397 (.67)	.26
Size of agency	.246*** (1.28)	.05	.241*** (1.27)	.05	.246*** (1.28)	.05	.248*** (1.28)	.05	.243*** (1.27)	.05
Likelihood ratio χ^2	1787***		1801***		1796***		1800***		1813***	
Nagelkerke R^2	.617		.621		.619		.621		.624	
AIC	2525		2513		2518		2514		2505	

Notes: ^a Comparison group is “too harsh or too lenient discipline.” ^b Comparison group is “non-supervisor.” ^c Comparison group is “communications/administrative personnel.”
 * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

discipline to be fair respond with less likelihood to report misconduct. Again, the interaction effects are important. Models 4b and 4e indicate that perceived legitimacy (endorsement) has a stronger positive effect on officers who perceive opportunistic theft as a more serious offense. Model 4c indicates that when officers perceive the seriousness of the opportunistic theft scenario to be higher and perceive the expected discipline to be fair, those officers are more inclined to report the misconduct. The equations in Models 4d and 4e suggest, as with the other scenarios, that for officers who perceive the expected discipline to be fair in the case of opportunistic theft, legitimacy also has a stronger effect. While the fairness hypothesis (Hypothesis 3) is not supported by the main effects, it is supported through the interaction with legitimacy. Finally, supervisory status, years of service at the current agency, and size of agency are significant and positive predictors of intention to report the opportunistic theft scenario, while those officers who are assigned to patrol have a lower willingness to report compared to communications/administrative personnel.

Analysis at the agency level. We separately analyzed the seven agencies in the data set that had more than 100 officers to test for differences of the effects of the variables across agencies. We estimated 35 equations for each scenario, one equation per agency for each of the five model types. The model types corresponded to the five ways we modeled each scenario in the aggregate analyses. These models contained the same control variables as the equations in the aggregate analyses, with the exception of size of agency (a constant when estimating the models at the agency level). The results are summarized in Table 6, where we report the number of times that a variable's probability level was below $p < .05$ for all the

models. The opportunistic theft scenario averages are out of three total scenarios, instead of seven, because four of the agencies had a least one model that did not statistically converge due to lack of variability of the independent variables. We then calculated the average number of times a predictor was significant across scenarios and equations.⁷ We reported two averages for the fairness variable because the direction of the coefficients changed in the different scenarios. Free meals and punch for fleeing have positive coefficients with a weighted mean = 1.1, while auto body kickback and opportunistic theft have negative coefficients with a weighted mean = -.90.

For the most part, the agency-level analyses mirror those of the aggregate sample. The only difference is that the interaction terms are not always significant at the agency level when they are at the aggregate. Legitimacy (endorsement) is frequently a significant positive predictor of intention to report misconduct at the agency level, followed closely by seriousness of the offense. Similar to the aggregate analyses, perceived fairness is sometimes significant in the models, with the coefficients having a positive sign for the free meals and punch for fleeing and a negative sign for the auto body kickback and opportunistic theft scenarios. When the interaction effects are significant, they also follow the same patterns at the agency level as they do at the aggregate level.

⁷Although we estimated 140 total regression equations, several for the opportunistic theft scenario models did not converge. The actual number of models summarized in Table 6 is 120 because we eliminated all opportunistic theft equations if any models for an agency did not converge. In four of the seven agencies, at least one equation did not converge, therefore eliminating 20 models (four agencies \times five models) from the Table 6 summary. Because of this, we report weighted averages in the last row of the table.

Table 6. Statistical Significance (<.05) Summary of Perceived Seriousness, Legitimacy, and Fairness Variables and the Interaction Terms for the Seven Agency-Level Proportional Odds Ordinal Regression Models where $n > 100$

Scenario	Model # ^a	Seriousness		Legitimacy		Fairness	
		(S)	(L)	(F)	(S × L)	(S × F)	(L × F)
Free Meals	1a	6	7	2	—	—	—
	1b	5	7	1	2	—	—
	1c	5	7	0	—	0	—
	1d	6	7	0	—	—	2
	1e	3	5	0	0	0	3
Punch for fleeing	2a	5	7	3	—	—	—
	2b	1	3	3	3	—	—
	2c	4	7	1	—	0	—
	2d	5	7	0	—	—	0
	2e	0	3	1	3	1 ^b	1
Auto body kickback	3a	5	6	2 ^b	—	—	—
	3b	0	5	0	2	—	—
	3c	2	7	1 ^b	—	0	—
	3d	5	7	2 ^b	—	—	2
	3e	0	4	0	1	2	1
Opp. theft	4a	1	3	0	—	—	—
	4b	0	1	0	1	—	—
	4c	0	3	0	—	1	—
	4d	1	3	2 ^b	—	—	2
	4e	0	1	1 ^b	1	0	2
Weighted average		3.08	5.47	(1.1) (-.9)	1.73	.35 ^c	1.56

Notes: ^a The model numbers correspond to the model number of the equations in Tables 2–5. ^b These coefficients are negative, all other coefficients summarized in this table are positive. ^c The negative coefficient in the punch for fleeing scenario was left out of the weighted average calculation.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Given the seriousness and public concern over police misconduct, understanding the attitudes and intentions of peer reporting among the police is necessary for creating reform and encouraging ethical occupational cultures. This study examines how the normative order of reporting misconduct by police officers is maintained. In particular, we examine hypotheses based on prior criminological research and informed by social psychological theories of legitimacy and fairness. Our findings indicate that police have a cohesive and shared normative culture due to small differences between their own attitudes toward and intentions to report misconduct, and the perceptions

of other officers' attitudes and intentions regarding misconduct.

We hypothesized that the perceived seriousness of an offense would be positively related to intention to report misconduct (Hypothesis 1). We found strong support for this hypothesis in all four scenarios. This finding supports prior research on the intention to report police misconduct (Klockars et al. 2000; Raines 2010; Rothwell and Baldwin 2007). Police officers responded that they were more likely to report an act of misconduct when they perceive the misconduct to be serious.

We next turn to legitimacy theory to help understand how the perceptions of other officers' willingness to report

misconduct affect their own willingness to report misconduct. Legitimacy is a complex process that has four components (Dornbusch and Scott 1975); however, we focused on one, endorsement—the support of the normative order by peers/subordinates. Our findings strongly supported Hypothesis 2 across all four scenarios; the greater the perceived legitimacy (endorsement) of reporting misconduct among one's fellow officers, the more likely it will be that an officer intends to report the misconduct. Social psychologists have found support for the predictive power of endorsement in general (see, for example, Zelditch et al. 1983). Furthermore, police researchers have also found this variable to be a significant predictor of one's "own reporting of misconduct" (Kutnjak Ivković and Shelley 2008b; Raines 2010).

Related to both the seriousness and legitimacy hypotheses (Hypotheses 1 and 2, respectively), we found small effect sizes for the differences between actual attitudes and intentions and perceptions of others' attitudes and intentions. The large majority of police said that they were willing to report serious misconduct, and more than 90 percent said that they were willing to report the most serious offense. The normative order indicates greater support for reporting as the offense increases in perceived severity.

Next, we tested Hypothesis 3—the more likely that an officer perceives the discipline for an act of misconduct to be fair, the more likely it will be that the officer intends to report the misconduct. Fairness has been studied in both social psychology (Thibaut and Walker 1975; Tyler and Lind 1992) and in police research (Kutnjak Ivković and Shelley 2005, 2010). Our findings on fairness are mixed. Drawing from social psychological discussions of fairness and the simple justice model of intention to report misconduct, we hypothesized that perceived

fairness would be positively associated with intention to report misconduct. The hypothesis was supported in two scenarios (auto body kickback and opportunistic theft); however, in the punch for fleeing scenario the relationship was significant, but negative.

The interaction terms of the perceived fairness and seriousness variables explain this change of direction. In the case of punch for fleeing, officers who perceived the offense to be more serious and perceived the expected discipline to be fair reported being *less* willing to report the misconduct. This is an interesting and unexpected finding. Perhaps this is the result of officers realizing that fair punishment for punch for fleeing will result in the offending officers losing their jobs, prompting fellow officers not to report the misconduct because of the consequences for what they perceive as a relatively minor infraction. This is consistent with the findings from Pershing (2002), who found that at the U.S. Naval Academy reports of misconduct were infrequent because the academy members had established a strong sense of camaraderie and peer loyalty that overrode their commitment to the Honor Code. Pershing further concluded that members of organizations often experience a conflict between peer loyalty and loyalty to the organization. At the Naval Academy the loyalty to peers resulted in counseling rather than reporting misconduct as a way to reconcile the conflict between organizational and peer loyalty (Pershing 2002, 2003).

On the other hand, in the cases of auto body kickback and opportunistic theft, when officers perceived the seriousness of the offense to be higher and the expected discipline to be fair, they reported being more likely to report the misconduct. These two offenses are perceived by officers as the most serious (auto body kickback, mean = 4.50;

opportunistic theft, mean = 4.96), which may help explain why officers report being more willing to address them on record since they are perceived as more seriousness and the punishment is perceived as fair. Officers may view these acts as so wrong that they need to be punished, regardless of what the short- and long-term ramifications are on the offending officer.

Our results demonstrated that the two interaction terms that included the legitimacy/endorsement measure were significant predictors in most cases. Perceived legitimacy has a stronger positive effect when the expected discipline is perceived to be fair and has a stronger positive effect when the seriousness of the offense is perceived to be higher. When officers perceive misconduct to be serious and the punishment to be fair, they also are more likely to expect that other officers will report the misconduct. This supports the notion that police have a shared normative order of when they intend to report misconduct.

Finally, we examined these relations at the agency level because previous research on police misconduct has noted that there is not one singular police subculture, and that police cultures might vary across agencies (Klockars et al. 2000). Our findings are very similar to the aggregate analyses; perceived seriousness and legitimacy were significant positive predictors of an officer's willingness to report, while the effect of fairness changed direction (from negative to positive) as the seriousness of the offense increased. The same interaction effects found at the aggregate level were also observed in some individual agencies. Our findings provide evidence that the majority of police agencies in this sample maintain a normative order of reporting misconduct in similar fashion; however, these results should be interpreted with caution for two reasons. First, we

analyzed the seven largest agencies in the sample (out of 30) to have a sufficient number of observations to obtain accurate estimates. This may bias the results because we analyzed only large police agencies; it is possible that seriousness, legitimacy, and fairness operate differently in smaller police departments. There are numerous potential reasons for why this may be the case; however, we do not have data to support this assertion. For example, however, one could hypothesize that within a very small department (e.g., fewer than 10 officers) seriousness is not an important predictor of reporting misconduct. With so few colleagues, it may be that perceived legitimacy is the main (and only) predictor of intention to report misconduct, since the endorsement of peers alone may create the shared normative order in a small department. As long as all the officers endorse whether or not to report, then seriousness and fairness become less important. This cohesion centered on legitimacy may be more important in a small department because each officer interacts with all other officers on a daily basis, and it could make their jobs more difficult and strain relationships with their colleagues if one or two officers did not endorse reporting misconduct the way the established normative order suggests they should. On the other hand, in large departments every officer does not personally know all other officers, and officers have the ability to factor perceived seriousness and fairness into their reporting decisions more easily, because doing so would not carry the same negative consequences to their work lives. Second, a comprehensive analysis of agency characteristics (e.g., size, location—rural/suburban/urban) is beyond the scope of this article; we encourage future research in this area to gain a more complete understanding of these processes at the agency level.

Earlier we discussed how a great deal of policing research has been dedicated to studying the existence (or lack of) a “code of silence” in police departments and subculture (Crank 1998; Kutnjak Ivković 2003; Skolnick 2000; Weisburd et al. 2001). The bivariate results indicate that the code of silence may exist in police subculture when infractions are perceived as minor (only 26.8 percent of officers indicated they would report the least serious scenario—“free meals”). There is, however, a weak code of silence among police officers in this study when the acts of misconduct are perceived to be serious (82.7 percent of officers would report “auto body kickback” and 92.3 percent would report “opportunistic theft, the two most serious scenarios). These results indicate that while police officers do have a shared normative order, the majority of officers do *not* report minor infractions but *do* report serious acts of misconduct. Furthermore, this normative order of reporting misconduct is buttressed by the perceived endorsement of other officers and the expectation of fair discipline. This finding supports previous work by social psychologists that suggested the connection between endorsement and fairness (Hegtvedt and Johnson 2000). Most officers report that they are willing to report serious acts of misconduct because of the endorsement of peers and the expectation that discipline will be fair, which provides empirical support for linking legitimacy and justice approaches in social psychology.

While this data set provides a diverse set of scenarios in which to examine police attitudes and norms, it also has several limitations. First, the data are the result of a nonrandom sample, which may negatively affect the generalizability of the findings. Second, our findings are based on self-report data and were undoubtedly affected by social desirability bias (Randall and Fernandes 1991). The data

examined in this study are from questions asking officers how they would respond to hypothetical instances of misconduct, not actual acts of misconduct that have been committed. Therefore, we are modeling behavioral intentions, not the actual behaviors. The well-documented intention–behavior (or attitude–behavior) gap in social sciences (Sheeran 2002) demonstrates that individuals report attitudes that they may not follow through with in practice, therefore introducing bias in the direction of the perceived desired behavior. This can be especially problematic when the questions ask about unethical and sometimes illegal behavior, as they do in this case. When faced with real-life situations, the officer may be under pressure not to report the act, which may bias our results in the direction of not reporting the misconduct. Since, however, the data stemmed from anonymous surveys, social desirability may not be as serious of an issue as if the surveys were administered differently. In addition, we believe that our findings accurately represent what is occurring in the police subculture given the uniformity of our findings across different levels of analyses (aggregate and by agency). Moreover, to the extent that the social desirability bias may exist, its direction is against finding the results. Specifically, officers in more corrupt agencies may be more adept at telling an audience what it wants to hear (in an effort to conceal corruption), and any differences between patterns prevailing in more corrupt and less corrupt agencies may be lessened because of the differential extent of social desirability bias. Nonetheless, we find relatively strong levels of support for our key hypotheses.

A second limitation pertains to the extent to which we can examine legitimacy processes. While we use the language of legitimacy, we are testing the effects of only one legitimacy process,

endorsement. We do not have access to accurate measures of propriety, validity, and authorization, so a full empirical examination of legitimacy processes was not possible. A third limitation comes from the nature of the data; they are correlational rather than experimental. The causal direction between the dependent variable (own willingness to report misconduct) and the indicator of endorsement (other's willingness to report misconduct) can only be suggested. It is possible that one's own likelihood of reporting misconduct could influence one's perceptions of others' likelihood of reporting misconduct; however, it is also likely that these are mutually enforcing, as some researchers have found (Neighbors et al. 2006). Longitudinal data would be necessary to establish the causal order of these two variables. The results of our analyses, however, show that endorsement is highly correlated with intent to report, indicating a strong consensus or normative order.

We believe that it is important to examine policing in general, and intention to report police misconduct more specifically, from a social psychological perspective. While much of the police misconduct literature focuses on the presence or the strength of the code of silence (Crank 1998; Klockars et al. 2000), little if any research attempts to explain how the normative order of the strength (or lack thereof) of the code is maintained via social psychological processes. Understanding how norms become legitimated in the police subculture is important as the police are endowed with the unique authority to enforce legalized norms over the rest of society.

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