

Preface

The ethical behavior of public officials is critical to the performance of public agencies. Yet, it is rarely the subject of quantitative research. This text contributes to our understanding of the norms followed by police officers regarding misconduct that are shaped among street-level bureaucrats who, regularly and without warning, confront important value choices. A complete investigation of police ethics would need to consider both the factors that contribute to unethical behavior as well as ethical behavior. The literature focuses on the former. This text focuses on those factors that contribute to unethical, as well as ethical behavior. This text examines one type of street-level bureaucrat, namely police officers, and their attitudes toward misconduct using existing data from police officers in thirty police agencies. The specific issue examined is whether a police officer's tendency to report peer misconduct is influenced primarily by attitudes regarding misconduct or individual characteristics, peer behavior, the nature of the misconduct, or organizational characteristics. Using descriptive statistics and regression models, this text explores an officer's willingness to report misconduct as it is influenced by attitudes, as well as the nature of police misconduct.

This text is designed to expose students to police integrity in the United States. Relevant literature in administrative ethics, social deviance theory, organizational culture, and street-level bureaucrats are explored in an effort to better understand what officers face in their day-to-day interactions with citizens. Within this text, there is a recurrent application of data from a National Institute of Justice (NIJ) study. The NIJ study contains realistic scenarios of ethical issues and this text attempts to apply this data to various theoretical frameworks in order to derive an understanding of police integrity.

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Students will benefit not only from the background information presented here, but also from exposure to advanced data analysis. Correlation, regression, and structural equation modeling are each presented several times giving the student and the instructor an opportunity to discuss the difference between strength of relationships and predictability. As students will have little exposure to these concepts, it is presented in a way that should be easier to follow given the subject matter—most students are interested in ethics, integrity, and the implications of unethical behavior.

This text has been a long journey for me, beginning as a dissertation topic. I have learned far more than I can relate in this one text. I hope you enjoy using this text as a springboard for discussing ethical issues as much as I have enjoyed researching these issues over the years.