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An Evidential Review of Police Misconduct: Officer versus Organization

Emma Rose Bonanno
University of Western Ontario, ebonanno@uwo.ca

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Abstract

This paper explores the critical societal issue of police misconduct. Though a vast amount of literature surrounds the issue of police misconduct, conclusions regarding the correlates of police misconduct remain inconclusive. Previous research that attempts to explain police misconduct has consistently shown to be divided based on either individual or organizational correlates. Thus, the crux of the debate has become whether police misconduct is the product of a "bad apple" (individual or micro-level correlates), or a "bad barrel" (organizational or macro-level correlates). The aim of this paper is to explore existing empirical evidence, and discover which factors most strongly correlate to police misconduct. Specifically, the author aims to determine which side of the theoretical debate is most supported by empirical evidence. Though empirical evidence abounds for both sides of the debate, the author concludes that the macro-level evidence is much stronger. In contrast to the inconsistencies and contradictions of the micro-level evidence, the macro-level evidence is consistent and builds upon itself. Though the study is not an exhaustive review of the empirical evidence, the analysis demonstrates that organizational, structural, and social forces are powerful predictors of police misconduct. The findings of this study offers important insight as to where future research is warranted, as well as policies and strategies that could potentially be implemented.

Introduction

In March of 2009, a father had his fingers broken and was arrested in front of his wife and children for "driving too slowly" past an airport. He was detained for approximately three hours in a small cell without any explanation (The Daily Mail, 2013). On September 11th, 2011, a Saudi Arabian mother of two was handcuffed, forcibly removed from an airplane, strip searched and later held for four hours in a small cell, despite any suspicious behaviour (ACLU, 2014). On May 3rd, 2013, two Winnipeg officers stopped and unlawfully detained a man walking with a wooden stick, which they presumed was a weapon. Following the incident, Canadian Judge Cynthia Devine blasted the actions of the officers (Winnipeg Free Press, 2014).

There is no shortage of unlawful stops, searches, arrests and detentions in today's society. These instances reflect police misconduct and abuse of authority. However, the

ability to make sound empirical judgments regarding police misconduct has been undermined by the lack of willingness among law enforcement agencies to collect and analyze data concerning these instances (Rudovsky, 2011).

In the name of law enforcement, police officers have been given a wide range of power. Misused, these powers have the ability to deprive the liberty of citizens. Recognizing this potential for abuse, efforts have been made to strike a balance between the protection of citizens versus the deprivation of their liberty. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom, and the Fourth Amendment to the US Constitution have intended to safeguard against instances of police misconduct such as unlawful arrest and detention. Regardless, police officers have managed to work around these safeguards. For instance, the Supreme Court ruled in the 1968 case of *Terry v. Ohio*, that police officers have the constitutional right to stop and search an individual based on "specific reasonable inferences he is entitled to draw from the facts in light of his experience" (392 U.S. 1, p. 27). This court ruling led to what is known as the "reasonable suspicion standard".

Police officers often use this standard to justify and defend themselves when they have engaged in unlawful arrest and detention. The standard has gained a great deal of negative attention, and its critics argue that it has produced many examples of police abuse and that it does not advance the legitimate law enforcement goals (Hutchins, 2013). Police officers, who hold the power to both uphold the law, and deprive citizens of their liberty, subsequently face constant scrutiny and evaluation.

In a society where tremendous value is placed on personal liberty, discretion by police officers can become a critical and extremely difficult task. What is clear is that the police have a great amount of power to utilize discretion. However, what it less clear is why discretion varies amongst officers and across circumstances. Why are some officers

more likely to engage in police misconduct than others? What factors influence whether or not an officer will abuse his or her authority?

It is much easier to discount anecdotal instances of police misconduct than it is to refute statistical, quantitative data reflecting unlawful police practices. However, the increasing amount of empirical evidence on police misconduct has exposed numerous underlying variables that may contribute to these instances. As police misconduct can lead to distrust, fear and cynicism among citizens and their views of police officers, understanding the causes of police misconduct is critical. Keeping the peace, enforcing the law, and protecting the people are recognized as the main mandates of policing. Thus, distrust of the police undermines the fundamental role and function they aim to serve in society (Griffiths, 2012).

Literature Review

Scholars have long sought to identify reliable correlates of police misconduct, and the tremendous amount of literature on this topic illustrates its popularity and importance. Studies have produced a large body of research establishing numerous correlates of police misconduct. Disagreement amongst scholars presenting theories of police misconduct reflects the complexity of the phenomenon (Groeneveld, 2005). Research attempting to explain police misconduct has consistently shown to be divided based on either individual or organizational correlates (Donner and Jennings, 2014). Therefore, the theoretical perspectives illustrating these two themes will be further discussed in detail.

Individual Correlates of Police Misconduct

Research on the individual correlates of police misconduct focuses on characteristics of the officer or the suspect. A great proportion of individual-level research surrounds the 'rotten-apple' theory. Emphasizing characteristics of the officer, the theory

agues that deviance within policing exists amongst a small number of "rotten apples" rather than being spread throughout the agency (Sherman, 1978). Griffen and Ruiz (1999) suggest that this perspective is favoured by policing agencies as it offers an easy solution to police deviant behaviour. In this perspective, deviant police officers are those who failed to be screened out of psychological testing.

Numerous individual-level correlates of police misconduct such as gender (Greene et al., 2004), age (Greene et al., 2004), race (Greene et al., 2004; Kane & White, 2009), and education (Kane & White, 2009) have been identified, supporting the rotten-apple theory. In addition to these demographic characteristics, the "authoritarian personality" has also been presented as a theoretical perspective of police misconduct. In application to policing, the authoritarian personality theory argues that police officers tend to display traits such as suspicion, conventionality, cynicism, prejudice, and distrust (Balch, 1972).

Gottfredson and Hirschi's General Theory of Crime (1990) has also been utilized to explain police misconduct. The authors contend that those who lack self-control are more likely to engage in crime because they lack the ability to consider long-term consequences. Therefore, individual differences in criminal and deviant behaviour are correlated to individual differences in self-control. According to the authors, individuals with low self-control are "impulsive, insensitive, physical, risk-taking, short-sighted, and non-verbal" (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990, p. 90). Researchers have since explored this theory in an attempt to explain police misconduct. Pogarsky and Piquero (2004) found in their study that impulsivity directly effected police misconduct. Further, research conducted by Donner and Jennings (2014) demonstrated that low-self control is positively correlated to police misconduct.

Evaluating correlates of police misconduct at the individual-level also requires an examination of suspect characteristics (Terrill, 2005). The focus on racial profiling in regard to police misconduct has proliferated copious amounts of evidence pointing to race as a correlate of police misconduct (Glover, 2009). Worden (1996) demonstrated that police misuse of force is more likely to occur in incidents where suspects were male, black, and antagonistic with police. Examining the Driving While Black phenomenon in major Canadian cities, Foster (1996) documented that for decades, Blacks have been frequently stopped and searched solely based on their skin color. Bowling and Phillips (2002) suggested that Blacks were eight times more likely to be stopped and subsequently searched by police than Whites. Aboriginals and South Asians have also been shown to face similar issues of racial profiling leading to stops, searches and arrests (Wortley & Tanner, 2003).

A vast amount of literature argues that police misconduct goes far beyond individual-level correlates (Donner & Jennings, 2014). The bad apple theory has faced heavy criticism in recent years (Klockars et al., 2000). In the book *Challenging the Myth of a Few Bad Apples*, Tator and Henry (2006) contend that the bad-apple theory creates a false illusion that solving racial profiling and police misconduct simply involves providing officers with more culturally sensitive training and greater recruitment of racialized officers. The authors argue, "this leaves the structure of police unchanged as well as the core ideology of police officers- their beliefs, values and norms" (p. 17).

Along these lines, and in contrast to individual theories, researchers are focusing on structural and organizational correlates of police misconduct, and how these correlates exert influence over the behaviour of their officers (Brooks, 2005).

Organizational, Structural, and Social Correlates

Researchers focusing on the organizational, structural, and social correlates of police misconduct adopt a macro-level approach. A broad body of literature addresses the influence of the police organization on police misconduct. Organizational influence may be exercised indirectly (through values and culture) or directly (through hiring practices and policies) (Donner & Jennings, 2014). Classical organization theories view organizations as a social device for "efficiently accomplishing some stated purpose" (Groeneveld, 2005, p. 25).

One particular theoretical perspective is the 'systems theory'. The logic behind the systems theory is that *whole* of a phenomenon should be contemplated, rather any individual part. (Scott, 1996). Essentially, the systems theory argues that activities within a system are interrelated, and events within the system can be explained as a product of interactivity within the system. Systems theories have been used to explain many organizations, including policing. In explaining police misconduct, systems theory argues that one has to look at the organization and how it operates as a system. Therefore, the police organization contains many interrelated components, which interact producing events (both good and bad) (Groeneveld, 2005).

Recent scholars have also begun looking at the structural impediments faced by police officers, which subsequently lead to police misconduct (Parnaby & Leyden, 2011). The authors utilized Robert Merton's original theory of anomie, and applied it to the realm of policing. Merton's theory states that deviant behaviour is likely to occur when individuals have limited access to the normatively accepted means of achieving culturally celebrated goals. Deviance is thus a probabilistic outcome of structural impediments. In

response to the structural impediments, four deviant modes of adaptation are likely to occur; Innovation, Ritualism, Retreatism, and Rebellion (Merton, 1938).

Applying this theory, Parnaby and Leyden (2011), argue that police misconduct can be understood as a function of anomic social structure in which a heavy emphasis is placed on police officers as noble, masculine, 'crime fighters'. As a result, the North American public comes to equate successful policing with fighting crime. However, various structural impediments can make achieving this ideal extremely difficult. For instance, police departments are limited by the economic structures within which they operate. Monetary restraints can limit recruitment and technological improvements. Consequently, in an attempt to meet these cultural expectations, yet limited by various structural impediments, police officers engage in deviant behaviour, which closely correlate with Merton's four models of adaptation (Parnaby & Leyden, 2011).

Innovators for instance, adopt unethical means to achieve noble ends, as illustrated by officers who may engage in coercive interrogation tactics in hopes of securing a confession (Parnaby & Leyden, 2011). In this respect, innovators characterize the concept of "Noble Cause Corruption". Noble Cause Corruption is a mindset or subculture within policing which fosters a belief that the ends justify the means (Rothlein, 2008). As described by Rothlein (2008), "if it requires suspending the constitution or violating laws in order to accomplish the mission, then for the greater good of the society, so be it" (para. 3).

Further supporting the structural perspective, Piquero and Wolfe (2011) suggested that officer's perceptions of the organizations in which they work influence the likelihood of police misconduct. In particular, those who view their agency as fair and just in managerial and organizational practices are less likely to engage in police misconduct, or

believe that police corruption in pursuit of a noble cause is justified.   Research on organizational and institutional influences is of critical importance as they can help guide the implementation of effective management strategies to reduce incidences of police misconduct (Piquero & Wolfe, 2011).

Researchers have also utilized the Social Learning Theory and Differential Association as a conceptual framework in understanding police misconduct. The main assumption behind the social learning theory is that the same learning processes can produce both conforming and deviant behaviour (Akers, 1998). Akers posited four variables which strengthen attitudes toward social behaviours; Differential association, definitions, reinforcement and modeling. However, differential association serves as the central variable in social learning theory. Differential association refers to the influence of those with whom one associates frequently (Akers, 1998).

In application to the police, the subculture of policing is the primary means by which officers learn norms, definitions, values and acceptable or deviant behaviour (Chappell & Piquero, 2004). The subculture may enable deviant behaviour as the shared value system of the officers allows them to rationalize, excuse and justify their deviance (Kappeler et al. 1998). According to Kappeler et al. (1998), the occupational subculture and structural elements that facilitate deviant acts establishes a "police worldview" in which these acts are thus justified.

Research on the police recruitment and hiring practices, as well as officer training procedures reflects the social learning theory explanation of police misconduct. Tator and Henry (2006) argue that the rigid methods by which officers are recruited and selected perpetuates the police culture. In particular, recruiting methods ensure that new applicants will sustain the organization's existing culture. Therefore, individuals who

demonstrate having similar characteristics as the agency's existing officers have a greater chance of being hired (Harrison, 1998).

Following the selection procedure, new recruits are sent to training where along with the basic policing skills, the academy transmits their organizational values. Tator and Henry (2006) suggest that the training police receive often encourages stereotypical thinking about certain racial and cultural groups. Harris (2002) argues that recruits are often trained to identify characteristics of a killer. Further, when these characteristics include race or ethnicity as a factor in predicting crime, it leads officers to believe that "skin color is a valid indicator of a greater propensity to commit crime" (p. 11).

A strong means of socialization into the police culture occurs when an officer is assigned to street duty under the supervision of an older, more experienced officer of the force. These 'mentoring' experiences allow for the new officer to experience the organization's values, standards, norms and patterns of thought through first hand experience (Tator & Henry, 2006). Getty (2012) investigated police field training programs (FTP), where new recruits are mentored and supervised by Field Training Officers (FTOs). Exploring the concept of 'learned misconduct', Getty (2012) found that allegations of misconduct were correlated with trainee's FTP experience. Particularly, FTOs exerted an influence on the likelihood of misconduct, demonstrating that they impact officers beyond simply teaching them the basic policing skills (Getty, 2012).

Literature depicting the characteristics of the police culture also seems to contribute to the social learning theory/differential association explanation of police misconduct. Beginning with the work of Skolnick (1966), researchers have maintained that social isolation is a distinct feature of the police subculture. As authority figures and enforcers of the law, police see themselves as an outsider, which to an extent limits their

social interactions (Tator & Henry, 2006). Officers tend to develop a 'we-they' perspective, in which they believe the public cannot understand the demands made on police (Tator & Henry, 2006). As a result, officers tend to isolate their peer groups and spend more time with other officers. Subsequently, officers are "subjected to intense peer influence and control" which can involve the acceptance of deviant behaviour (Kappeler, Sluder, and Alpert, 2001).

Solidarity amongst officers is another key element of the policing culture (Tator & Henry, 2006). As a result of the unpredictable and volatile nature of their work, officers tend to feel highly vulnerable. Officers may feel that the only protection they have is from other officers (Skolnick, 1966). In turn, a heightened sense of solidarity including a 'code of silence' within the organization develops. Consequently, officers may turn a blind eye to any misconduct committed by a fellow officer in order to maintain solidarity and honour the code of silence (Tator & Henry, 2006). As illustrated by the vast amount of literature, socialization processes play a powerful role in reinforcing the police culture. Therefore, the correlation between social influences, and well as the police culture on police misconduct seems highly feasible.

The Current Study

Research on police misconduct has important practical and policy implications. In particular, research has the capacity to guide the implementation of new strategies and policies aimed at decreasing police misconduct. However, measuring the scope and extent of the issue is problematic, when relying on officer reports and anecdotal evidence. Without empirical data reflecting unlawful police practices, it is much easier for law enforcement to dismiss the magnitude and importance of this issue.

Further, the various theoretical perspectives regarding police misconduct are critical as they serve as the basis for conducting empirical studies. Though a vast amount of theories and literature surround the issue of police misconduct, conclusions regarding the correlates of police misconduct remain inconclusive. As outlined in the previous section, the majority of research is organized around two theoretical themes. While some scholars have focused on the individual-level (micro) correlates of police misconduct, others have focused on the organizational and structural-level (macro) correlates of police misconduct. This division of perspectives situates an important theoretical debate.

The current study attempts to build on the literature and fill these gaps by exploring and comparing existing empirical evidence. In particular, the study aims to discover which factors most strongly correlate to police misconduct in the face of qualitative and quantitative research. As the majority of research explores many types of police misconduct (ie. unlawful arrests or excessive force), 'police misconduct' as a broad encompassing category will serve as the dependent variable for this study. Individual-level and organizational-level factors will serve as the independent variables in the study. Studies examining the individual and organizational correlates of police misconduct will be utilized in order to compare the findings and draw conclusions regarding the strength of these independent variables.

Broadly speaking, the study aims to answer two research questions. Firstly, what is the observed organizational influence on police misconduct? Secondly, to what extent do individual-level factors influence police misconduct? Though empirical support undoubtedly exists for both sides of the theoretical debate, the current study aims to address which is most supported by empirical evidence. Empirical findings are critical not only to this study, but to future research. Empirical evidence provides a strong

foundation as to where future research is warranted, while also suggesting policies and strategies that could potentially be implemented.

Analytical/Critical Review of Evidence

Various studies have sought out to study individual-level correlates of police misconduct, thus addressing the rotten-apple theory. In their study of career-ending misconduct amongst New York City police officers, Kane and White (2009) discovered interesting findings, which support the rotten-apple theory of police misconduct. Using multivariate analyses, the authors found that several individual-level factors were significant predictors of police misconduct. Race emerged as a significant risk factor, with Blacks and Latinos 2.41 and 2.12 times more likely to be dismissed compared to their White counterparts. Prior criminality and prior poor employment also emerged as significant risk factors leading to police misconduct. In addition, the authors found that having a Bachelor's degree served as a protective factor against police misconduct.

A limitation of Kane and White's study is that only career-ending misconduct was evaluated. Therefore, the factors influencing police misconduct that did not lead to dismissal could not examined, thus limiting the scope of the findings. However, the findings highlight the importance of investigating background characteristics such as previous criminality, and emphasize that additional educational requirements for incoming officers may be beneficial (Kane & White, 2009).

In a similar attempt to identify individual characteristics of officers who engaged in misconduct, Brandl et al. (2001) compared 200 low-complaint officers (those who had two or less complaints of excessive force) with 200 high-complaint officers (those who had three or more complaints of excessive force). The authors compared the two groups on background characteristics such as gender, race, education, age and length of service,

and found that high-complaint officers were significantly younger and less experienced. It was also found that males overrepresented high-complaint officers, however this difference was not statistically significant.

Friedrich (1980) and Worden (1996) also demonstrated the relatively weak effect of individual variables on police misconduct. Friedrich (1980) measured officer's attitudes toward their jobs, as well as length of service on the job and found neither variable had a significant effect on misconduct. In contrast to Kane and White's study (2009), Worden (1996) found that education had no impact on improper force. Further, psychological variables such as attitude toward the use of force had only a marginal effect, contributing to 3-4% of the variation in the dependent variable (improper force).

Perhaps most influential to the current study, is the work of Christopher Harris. Harris (2009) conducted a systematic review of studies examining the causes of police misconduct, looking at both individual/psychological variables, as well as situational variables. Harris synthesized existing published empirical evidence in an attempt to draw conclusions regarding the numerous independent variables previously studied. The most significant predictors of police misconduct (specifically improper force) were being young, inexperienced, and male. However, all three studies examined by Harris found only weak effects for these variables. In comparison, situational factors had a much greater impact on police misconduct. The strength of Harris' conclusions must be viewed cautiously, as they are based on a limited number of studies, each with their own caveats. Regardless, his systematic review provides evidence that police misconduct is largely determined by situational factors, whereas individual characteristics have a minimal effect.

In a recent study, Donner and Jennings (2014) used Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory of low-self control (1990) to evaluate the extent to which low-self control predicts police misconduct. The independent variable, low self-control was measured using selected behavioural indicators within a sample of 1935 police officers' Personal Data Questionnaires. The authors found both a significant and positive correlation between low self-control and police misconduct at the bivariate level of analysis. Further, correlations for only two of the six measures of low-self control were not statistically significant. These findings support Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory, and ultimately support the broader rotten-apple theory of police misconduct.

Several researchers have attempted to debunk the idea a 'policing personality' and the 'authoritarian police officer'. Matarazzo et al. (1964) conducted psychiatric assessments of 116 applicants for the Portland police department, administering a variety of psychological tests such as the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI). The authors concluded that typical police applicants were extremely similar to the average college student.

Similarly, Smith, Lock and Walker (1968), compared authoritarianism of police-college students with a sample of non-police students. The authors examined data from self-administered questionnaires and found that the policing students were significantly less authoritarian than the students. Though this finding casts doubt on the supposed policing personality, the results must be interpreted carefully. Twenty-five percent of the students said they were committed to having a career in policing, and thus these students are unrepresentative of the general population (Smith, Locke & Walker, 1968).

The issue with empirical evidence that compares personality characteristics of police officers with other citizens is that it fails to take into account any socialization or

organizational influences on the personality. If there is one, perhaps the policing personality develops *after* individuals have spent time on the job (Balch, 1972). With this mindset, a vast amount of researchers have conducted studies aimed at evaluating the effect of organizational and structural variables on police misconduct. Consequently, a large body of empirical evidence exists, supporting the hypothesis that police misconduct is largely impacted by organizational, structural and social variables.

Baumer and Gustafson (2007) conducted research that assessed the empirical validity of Merton's anomie theory. The researchers hypothesized that the interaction between commitment to pursue monetary success and weak commitment to legitimate means would result in higher rates of instrumental crime (robberies, burglaries, larcencies, and auto thefts). A multivariate regression analysis indicated a positive, statistically significant interaction effect between the commitment to pursue monetary success and a weak commitment to legitimate means. Though this research does not directly address police misconduct, its findings contribute to the current study, as they are consistent with theoretical explanations of deviant behaviour. Further research assessing the empirical validity of Merton's theory in respect to police misconduct would be beneficial.

Comparably, Eitle, D'Alessio and Stolzenberg (2014) analyzed the effects of organizational and environmental factors on police misconduct. The researchers utilized data derived from the 2009-2010 National Police Misconduct Statistics and Reporting Project, and analyzed 497 police departments. Organizational size, the presence of a full-time internal review unit, and in-service training were found to be strong predictors of police misconduct.

Larger police departments were found to have greater difficulty controlling the deviant behaviour of their officers. Police departments with a full-time internal-review unit experienced 84% more incidents of police misconduct than departments without a full time unit. However, this strong positive effect may simply reflect the discovery and thus investigation of a greater number of incidents of misconduct. Finally, the results demonstrated an approximate 4% decrease in police misconduct for each additional hour of in-service training by the police department. Though the generalizability of these results is limited as they only pertain to city police departments and may not apply to other police organizations, this study offers strong empirical evidence that organizational factors may be salient in explaining police misconduct.

Groeneveld (2005) found similar results concerning the organization of police departments. Using arrest discretion as a measure of police misconduct, Groeneveld found that larger departments had lower scores on the Arrest Discretion Control Scale. Moreover, as the number of officers assigned to one supervisor increases, the department score on the Arrest Discretion Scale decreases.

Contributing to the macro-level approach of police misconduct, Chappell and Piquero (2004) conducted a study exploring the social environment of policing. Specifically, the authors examined the extent to which the social learning theory provides an explanation of police misconduct. The dependent variable, police misconduct, was measured by the presence of citizen complaints. Numerous independent variables were obtained from officers' responses to several hypothetical scenarios. The authors also examined perceptions of peer behaviour and attitudes, by asking officers how their peers would respond to the hypothetical scenarios. Interestingly, respondents who thought their

peers consider using excessive force to be less serious were more likely to have citizen

complaints.

Although their analysis uncovered important linkages between officers'

perceptions/attitudes of their peers' behaviour and individual officer behaviour, the

indicators of misconduct were based on hypothetical situations rather than actual

misconduct events. Despite this limitation, the study offers interesting support for Aker's

social learning theory (1998).

Research by Getty, Worrall and Morris (2014) provides further empirical evidence

supporting the social learning theory. The authors aimed to determine how much variation

in post-training misconduct (measured by officer complaints) could be attributed to their

field-training officers (FTOs). The results demonstrated that 26.4% of the variation in

officer complaints could be explained by the FTOs who trained that officer. They concluded

that within the data analyzed, there does appear to be statistically significant variation in

officer complaints that is attributable to the FTOs.

In a similar line of research, Harris (2010) discussed the 'experience-misconduct

curve'. Harris hypothesized that new police officers, once on the street under the

supervision of an FTO, would engage in more problematic behaviour as they are

"learning the ropes" and are expected to "prove themselves" (p. 49). Further, he

hypothesized that deviance would increase over the first few months, as the officer seeks

to earn a positive reputation amongst fellow officers, and begins to adopt the work

practice of their peers, both good and bad (Harris, 2010). Both of these hypotheses were

validated through the results, supporting the experience-misconduct curve.

Finally, Savitz (1970) looked at how police recruits' attitudes towards police

deviance changed over different time periods. The author concluded that as recruits

advanced from the police academy to the streets, thus gaining greater exposure to the police subculture, their attitudes became more permissive regarding deviant behaviour. For instance, the officers began to favor less severe punishments for various forms of misconduct, such as accepting bribes and theft (Savitz 1970). One caveat to this study is that Savitz examined the attitudes and beliefs of the officers, rather than their overt behaviour. Therefore, it difficult to conclude that more lenient attitudes towards police deviance ultimately leads to police misconduct. However, the study still demonstrates that police socialization, including increasing exposure to the police subculture, has the potential to alter the mindset of police officers.

Conclusion

The importance of empirically studying police misconduct has not gone unnoticed by scholars. An examination of previous literature demonstrates that this area of research can be roughly divided into two theoretical approaches. The micro-level (rotten-apple) approach focuses on individual correlates of police misconduct, notably demographic, psychological and historical characteristics of the officer. In comparison, the macro-level (organizational) approach focuses on the organization or structure of policing, along with the social processes and culture of policing.

The theoretical perspectives and framework surrounding police misconduct are critical as they create a foundation upon which empirical studies can be conducted. Further, empirical evidence not only serves to validate the theoretical perspectives, but allows for a concrete picture to be drawn regarding police misconduct. Though anecdotal instances and experiences of police misconduct help highlight the issue, statistical and quantitative data reflecting unlawful police practices creates a sense of legitimacy.

Accordingly, organizational practices, policies, and training mandates may be implemented as necessary, reflecting the conclusions drawn by empirical evidence.

The objective of this study was to bridge the theoretical perspectives with the empirical evidence. Specifically, the study aimed to evaluate which theoretical explanations could be most validated by empirical evidence. The two broad research questions were as follows; To what extent do individual-level factors impact instances of police misconduct? To what extent can police misconduct be attributed to organizational, structural and social factors? By reviewing existing empirical research on police misconduct, the study intended to provide clarity on this issue.

A review of the existing studies suggests that empirical support undoubtedly exists for both sides of the theoretical debate. Research by Kane and White (2009), and Brandl et al (2001) offered evidence in support of the rotten apple theory of police misconduct. Kane and White (2009) found that several individual-level factors, such as being Black of Latino, prior poor employment and education, and prior criminality were significant predictors of police misconduct. Brandl et al (2001) found that younger, inexperienced officers were more likely to be characterized as 'high-complaint' officers.

Donner and Jennings findings also supported the rotten-apple theory (2014). The researchers found both a significant and positive correlation between low self-control and police misconduct. However, with the exception of Donner and Jennings' study, it is important to note that the majority of examined studies finding correlative links between individual variables and police misconduct were relatively weak in statistical strength.

For instance, though Brandl et al. (2001) found that males overrepresented high-complaint officers, this difference was not statistically significant. Additionally, Friedrich (1980) found that neither officer's attitudes toward their jobs, or length of service on the

job had a significant effect on misconduct. Moreover, in contrast to Kane and White (2009), Worden (1996) found that education had no impact on improper force. Therefore, though some research seems to validate the rotten-apple theory, an equal, if not greater amount of research appears to contradict its findings.

Researchers have also attempted to debunk the rotten-apple theory. Aiming to delegitimize the concept of a 'policing personality', Matarazzo et al (1964) concluded that typical police applicants were extremely similar to the average college student. Similarly, Smith, Lock and Walker (1968), found that policemen were significantly less authoritarian than regular students. Though both studies have limitations, their findings casts doubt on the supposed 'policing personality', and ultimately the rotten apple theory.

In contrast to individual-level research, empirical evidence regarding the organizational, structural and social influences of police misconduct appears to be much more consistent. Research by Eitle, D'Alessio and Stolzenberg (2014), and Groeneveld (2005) identified important organizational factors, such as large department size, as a significant predictor of police misconduct.

Adding to the empirical evidence of organizational factors, Piquero and Wolfe (2011) demonstrated that officers who viewed their agency as unfair and unjust were more likely to engage in misconduct. The results of these studies ultimately support Parnaby and Leyden's Mertonian analysis of police misconduct (2011). Organizational factors, including organizational injustice, serve as structural impediments to the police officers. The officers subsequently engage in misconduct as a means of adapting to the impediments.

Most noteworthy to the current study is the large amount of empirical evidence supporting Aker's social learning theory (1998). Chappell and Piquero (2004)

highlighted how perceptions of peer attitudes can influence police misconduct. Savitz (1970), found that as officers gained exposure to the police subculture, their attitudes became more permissive regarding deviant behaviour. Further, Getty, Worrall and Morris (2014) along with Harris (2010) provided empirical evidence that instances of police misconduct could be attributed to experiences with field training officers. These findings all illustrate that the negative aspects of the policing subculture can indeed be reproduced and learnt trough socialization.

In summary, though empirical evidence abounds for both sides of the theoretical debate, the macro-level evidence is much stronger. Firstly, it is consistent and builds upon itself, in contrast to the inconsistencies and contradictions of the micro-level evidence. Secondly, the macro-level approach is undeniably multi-faceted, in contrast with the simplistic micro-level approach. While the study did not review an exhaustive amount of existing empirical evidence, the analysis provides evidence in favour of the macro-level correlates. Though evidence does show that a few bad apples exist, the role of the organizational, structural and social forces appears to be a much more powerful predictor of police misconduct.

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