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UNDERSTANDING BUREAUCRATIC REPORTING BEHAVIORS AND EXTRA-JUDICIAL DECISION-MAKING

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

BY THE COMMITTEE CONSISTING OF

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Dedications

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements……...iv

Table of Contents……....vii

List of Tables…….....ix

Abstract…….....x

Chapter 1: ***Street-Level Bureaucratic Client Reporting and Extra-Judicial Behaviors***…..…...1

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework……3

Rule Following and Accountability……...3

Bureaucratic Buy-In: A Question of Legitimacy? A Question of Efficiency? Expertise?.....4

Coping Behavior: Emotions and Belief in a Just World.....8

Emotions and In-Group Feelings..... 10

Data and Methods……...11

Study Variables.....11

Methodology.....13

Analytic Strategy.....14

Data Limitations.....15

Results…….16

Descriptive Statistics.....16

Deciding to Report.....17

Discussion……..21

Conclusion and Directions for Future Research…….22

References……...23

Chapter 2: ***Punctuated Equilibrium and Street-Level Bureaucratic Reporting Behaviors***…..32

Literature…….34

Uncertainty.....34

Public Service Ecosystems.....35

Punctuated Equilibrium Theory.....37

Organizational Attention.....38

Sensemaking.....40

Rule-Breaking During Disruptions.....42

Artificial Intelligence—a Punctuation to the Academic Bureaucracy.....44

Data and Methods……...46

Study Variables....46
Methodology....47
Analytic Strategy....48
Data Limitations....49
Results....49
Descriptive Statistics....49
Deciding to Report....51
Reporting Behaviors in Times of Disruption vs. Status Quo....53
Discussion....54
Conclusion and Directions for Future Research....57
A Note on the Role of AI in the Workplace....58
References....62
Chapter 3: *Workplace Sexual Harassment and Bureaucratic Reporting Behaviors*....76
Literature....78
Discipline and Workplace Retaliation....78
Reporting Behavior, Sensemaking, and the Intersections of Privilege....79
Reporting Behavior and Outcomes....83
Clarity and Guidance....84
Data and Methods....85
Methodology....85
Study Variables....86
Analytic Strategy....88
Data Limitations....89
Results....89
Descriptive Statistics....89
Deciding to Report—Race Specified Models....91
Deciding to Report—Gender Specified Models....94
Discussion....97
Conclusion and Directions for Future Research....100
References....104

List of Tables

Table 1.1: Descriptive Statistics……16

Table 1.2: Correlates of Bureaucratic Reporting Behavior……...18

Table 2.1: Descriptive Statistics……49

Table 2.2: Frequency of Perceived Reliability of Integrity Office to Handle Academic Misconduct……..50

Table 2.3: Correlates of Bureaucratic Reporting Behavior in Disruption……..…51

Table 2.4: Correlates of Reporting Behaviors……...54

Table 3.1: Descriptive Statistics……90

Table 3.2: The Effect of Workplace Retaliation on Reporting Behaviors for Sexual Harassment for White/Minority Employees……91

Table 3.3: The Effect of Workplace Retaliation on Reporting Behaviors for Sexual Harassment for Men/Women Employees……94

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I leverage literature from public administration and public policy to understand the ways in which bureaucrats decide to engage with the misconduct offices and processes of their organizations, be they client-sanctioning or HR/employee-reporting offices. I utilize three studies that involve reporting behaviors of some type.

The first chapter serves as a baseline for describing the general prevailing theories of public administration surrounding bureaucratic behavior. This baseline allows me to understand how street-level bureaucrats make the decision of whether or not to formally report the clients that they serve for misconduct. The second chapter is closely related and furthers the prior chapter's work by focusing on a more particular time-period, in which the organization a street-level bureaucrat works for is facing a period of disruption, a punctuation. The third and final chapter examines how bureaucrats decide to report sexual harassment in the workplace in light of both the clarity of managerial expectations and past experiences with the reporting process.

Overall, I expected to find that the clarity of guidance and perceived appropriateness of sanctions—as well as a few other chapter-specific variables—play significant roles in the decision-making processes for bureaucrats. However, I only find *some* support for the role of clarity and sanction-perceptions; instead, I find that the decision-making processes bureaucrats use in determining when to formally report misconduct is highly contextualized based on the type of misconduct, the proximity of the potential reporter to the individual potentially being reported, and the influence of a disrupting exogenous shock to the overall organization.

Chapter 1: *Street-Level Bureaucratic Client Reporting and Extra-Judicial Behaviors*

By virtue of their necessarily close relationship to the public, street-level bureaucrats are often ill-afforded opportunities to act as the highest decision-making authorities in any given situation. Even when street-level bureaucrats have substantial experience in their field, ultimate decision-making authority is typically restricted to individuals in managerial positions. This diminished authority comes with an increased assumption of accountability on the part of the public, given that street-level bureaucrats are considerably more beholden to the pressures of hierarchy than managers are (Overman and Schillemans 2021; Dubnick and Romzek 1993). Indeed, there is an expectation that street-level bureaucrats are obligated to give account of their work and show that they are following proper procedures as laid out by their organization (Bovens 2007; Schillemans et al 2021). And yet, despite the assumption of accountability among street-level bureaucrats, there is a consistent pattern of individuals operating outside of the preestablished boundaries of their roles. This pattern presents a problem for managers (as they are expected to keep their subordinates within acceptable discretionary limits), the public (as they already wield little control over the bureaucracy), and street-level bureaucrats themselves whose granted-discretion relies in part on professional norms of behavior (Friedrich 1940).

As a rule, street-level bureaucrats find themselves in a position of mixed authority, where they serve as front line workers who wield authority over the general public but also lack other formal decision-making capabilities when it comes to further sanctioning (Lipsky 1969, 1997, 2010). However, many scholars note that just because street-level bureaucrats lack *formal* authority in some respects, they often still use what discretion they do possess in a way that can significantly impact the lives of their clients (e.g., Lipsky 1997; Wolff 2024; Brockmann 2017; Flemming 2020). There is no clearer example of this impact than in the decision that street-level

bureaucrats make of whether to hold clients accountable. More specifically, street-level bureaucrats working for organizations that sanction clients must, at every instance of client misconduct, decide if the client should be sanctioned by the organization itself. However, this phenomenon has seldom been paid attention to in the literature. While prior public administration literature on accountability focuses on the mechanisms by which bureaucrats are held accountable (Overman and Schillemans 2021; Dubnick and Romzek 1993) and the ways in which bureaucrats are able to hold clients accountable (Miller 1983), little work has been done about how bureaucratic perceptions influence how street-level bureaucrats choose to engage with the client-sanctioning processes of their organizations. In this paper, I attempt to address this gap in the literature by asking why street-level bureaucrats sometimes choose to engage in extra-judicial behaviors instead of following established processes when dealing with potential cases of client misconduct.

It is important to note that while in the context of this research both the street-level bureaucrats and clients alike are rule-breakers, I am specifically looking at the rule-breaking behaviors of street-level bureaucrats. To examine these behaviors, I combine literatures on organizational legitimacy, bureaucratic expertise, accountability, just world beliefs, and rule breaking. These literatures are then used to formulate empirically testable hypotheses which I test by leveraging data from an original survey distributed in 2025. From there, I go over the results of these analyses and discuss whether my hypotheses are supported. Finally, I conclude with directions for future research and the implications of my findings on street-level bureaucratic behavior beyond academic settings.

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Rule Following and Accountability

According to Flemming (2020), rule following is foundational to bureaucracy (see also, Weber 1946; Blau 1963). However, because the decision to follow those rules is contingent upon the assessment and interpretation of those rules by workers (Flemming 2020; Mills and Murgatroyd 1991; DeHart-Davis 2009), the effectiveness of any given rule is determined by the extent to which it is followed. There are myriad reasons why any street-level bureaucrat might break a rule, such as pro-social behavior—"intentional violations of formal organizational policies, regulations, or prohibitions with the primary intention of promoting the welfare of the organization or one of its stakeholders" (Morrison 2006, 7-8; see also: Borry and Reuters 2022), "socially harmful deviance" (Robinson and Bennett 1995; Martin et al 2013), workplace power struggles (Dodson 2009; Adler and Borys 1996) and workplace resistance at both the individual and group level (Dodson 2009; Edwards and Wajcman 2005).

Additionally, there are many triggers that could lead street-level bureaucrats to break the rules. While rule-breaking may be done to help clients (e.g., Wolff 2024), a coping behavior (e.g., Lipsky 1980), or a means of finding satisfaction in the workplace (e.g., Nielsen 2006), there are also organizational factors that come into play. For example, rule-breaking may be an individual behavior, but it can also be a function of organizational factors (Dehart-Davis 2007; Blau and Scott 1962; Schminke 2001), such as hierarchical encouragement, and even expectations from managers (Martin et al 2013; Borry 2017).

For the purposes of this paper, I center the discussion around the ways in which individual street-level bureaucrats break the rules as coping mechanisms within an inefficient or otherwise poorly perceived system. However, the organizational implications of bureaucratic

rule-breaking extend far beyond individual extra-judicial actions. The discussions of guidance, buy-in, and coping behaviors all matter for more than just the every-day discretionary actions of street-level bureaucrats who are tasked with sanctioning clients. Such factors are not only correlated with extra-judicial behavior, but numerous different rule-breaking actions across bureaucracies.

Bureaucratic Buy-In: A Question of Legitimacy? A Question of Efficiency? Expertise?

Mosley and Wong (2021) discuss three types of internal legitimacy in collaborative decision-making. The first type is input legitimacy, which is the degree to which the decision-making process is open to participants to offer their opinions. The second is throughput legitimacy, which the adequacy of the decision-making process itself. The final type of legitimacy is output legitimacy, which is the fairness of the decisions at the end of the deliberative process. They conclude that perceptions of throughput legitimacy rely on input legitimacy. In other words, processes will only be viewed positively if participants believe they have a voice in those same processes. Furthermore, these two types of legitimacy are, according to Mosley and Wong (2021), more important to shaping perceptions of legitimacy than output legitimacy, on the grounds that an output can still be viewed as fair without the organization being considered legitimate.

Output legitimacy, however, can still be an important perceptual variable. Amirkhanyan, Meier, and O'Toole (2016) discuss cross-sectoral managers' perceptions of legitimacy surrounding regulatory decisions (outputs) from government bodies. They find that organizations whose managers "perceive regulations as fair and effective [in other words, legitimate] will have clearer expectations and be more committed to compliance" (Amirkhanyan, Meier, and O'Toole 2016, 383; Schloz and Pinney 1995). Furthermore, when these standards and regulations are well

understood by organizations, performance can be corrected earlier and more consistently, suggesting that there is a relevant link between output legitimacy and shared understandings of accountability systems. These findings are in line with Suchman's (1995) argument that the legitimacy of an account holder (formal authoritative body) is dependent on the degree to which the account holder's actions are in line with the account giver's (individual/bureaucrat) values and understanding of proper governance, and lead me to hypothesize that street-level bureaucrats' behaviors are contingent upon the degree to which they find their organization's client-sanctioning office to be legitimate. As a stand in for true legitimacy, I use the perception of an organization's staff's qualifications. As such, I hypothesize that perceived qualifications of the client-sanctioning body's staff is an important part of mitigating uncertainty. This assumption falls in line with work by Niaconachie (1993), who argues that the notion of who is "skilled" (i.e. qualified) is relative, "depending on the relationship between public servant and client" (239).

H1: Bureaucrats will be less likely to engage in extra-judicial behaviors when they view the client-sanctioning office of their organization as qualified.

It has also been argued that perceived legitimacy is increased among principals when an organization is able to prove its expertise and efficiency in its particular area (Carpenter and Krause 2015). Should this be the case, then it would be expected that when a client-sanctioning organization's processes are inefficient for holding clients accountable, bureaucrats would not see the organization as legitimate. Furthermore, when the same organization is unable to provide guidance to street-level bureaucrats, those street-level bureaucrats will similarly view the organization as illegitimate.

When examining bureaucratic behavior, it is important to keep in mind the rationale behind a behavior. It has been argued that bureaucrats may "resort to rule-breaking

behavior…when faced with the prospect of worse alternatives" (Lenz and Eckhard 2025, 2). What, then, counts as a worse alternative in this context? It is difficult to simply conjure an example to illustrate the idea perfectly. However, that in and of itself better serves to make the case here. Just as one might be uncertain about using a particular example for illustrating their argument, there is massive uncertainty in any given decision made by bureaucrats (Simon 2000). Decisions made under uncertainty are oftentimes a way to cope with the uncertainty of the moment, as we cannot possibly know every outcome of every possible action (Wolff 2024; Lindblom 1959; Tversky and Kahneman 1986). At the very least, it has been argued that more successful decisions are made when operating with the acknowledgement that decision-makers know that they are not capable of making perfect decisions (Lindblom 1959; Simon 2000).

Typically, researchers in this discipline argue that the perceived legitimacy of the organization comes from the willingness of bureaucrats to bound "their decision-making alternatives with the values and interests of the organization" (Rivera and Knox 2022, 68; citing Simon 2000), as a legitimate organization itself *should* "relieve individual responsibility from the direct and latent effects of decisions" (Rivera and Knox 2022, 68; citing Kelman and Hamilton 1989; Laswell 1971). In other words, a legitimate organization is one that provides bureaucrats with the environment necessary for them to be comfortable making decisions without full certainty. And indeed, it has been argued that bureaucratic organizations do their best (ostensibly) to reduce uncertainty in both the processes they use and the outcomes they are producing through said processes (Gajduschek 2003). In dealing with uncertain times, the organization is afforded two options that should reduce uncertainty in both processes and outcomes. The first is an increase in rules and regulations so as to (theoretically) account for an even greater number of

uncertain outcomes (Dudau 2010). The second option is to do the opposite, decreasing regulations to allow for greater bureaucratic discretion (Dudau 2010).

Of course, organizational changes to rules (and as such, the processes used and the outcomes created) will in turn affect how bureaucrats perceive their organization. These changes and their associated effects then lead me to hypothesize a second relationship about determinants of extra-judicial bureaucratic behavior.

H2: Bureaucrats will be less likely to engage in extra-judicial behaviors when they find the client-sanctioning office of their organization to be efficient.

I hypothesize that perceived efficiency is important in determining bureaucratic behaviors because (as discussed previously) efficiency plays a role in the perception of organizational legitimacy (Carpenter and Krause 2015). If efficiency and legitimacy covary, then it is logical to use efficiency as a stand-in for legitimacy in hypotheses and (as discussed later on) empirical models. If the two concepts do not covary, then I believe there is all the more reason to examine perceived efficiency's relationship to decision making.

Guidance is necessary for reducing uncertainty, and is, therefore, a component of how street-level bureaucrats gauge the efficiency—and because of that, legitimacy—of their organization. If a street-level bureaucrat is uncertain of the rules they need to be following, it stands to reason that they would be more likely to turn toward an individual whom they perceive as able to provide *meaningful* guidance on the matter (Portillo and Kras 2020; Enkler et al 2017). Therefore, I expect to see a positive correlation between the decision to report client misconduct and both the qualifications of the staff, and the staff's ability to provide guidance on dealing with potential client misconduct.

H3: Bureaucrats will be less likely to engage in extra-judicial behaviors when they receive meaningful guidance on how to handle client misconduct.

From here, I connect the discussion of perceptions of legitimacy and efficiency to literatures on emotions, Just World Theory, and the ways in which both emotions and Just World Theory lead to coping behaviors among street-level bureaucrats.

Coping Behavior: Emotions and Belief in a Just World

Public administration literature (e.g., Maynard-Moody, Williams, and Musheno 2003; Tummers 2011; Lipsky 2010) has often focused on the reasons that street-level bureaucrats engage in coping behaviors. Defined as "behavioral efforts front-line workers employ… in order to master, tolerate or reduce external and internal demands and conflicts they face on an everyday basis" (Tummers et al 2015, 1101-1102), plenty of research has been done to explain the motivation behind coping behaviors (e.g., Tummers 2011; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003; Lavee et al 2018; Lavee and Strier 2019). For example, going off of Lipsky's (1980) work on how coping behavior among street-level bureaucrats is a way to manage the frustrations of the working environment, Nielsen (2006) finds that the opposite is also important, that coping behavior may also be intrinsically enticed as a means of gaining satisfaction in the workplace.

Other work on coping behavior, Lavee and Strier (2019) suggests that street-level bureaucrats engage in such behaviors (in the case of Lavee and Striers' work, transferring emotional capital) to deal with structural deficiencies in their organization. Emotional capital is defined as "knowledge, contacts, and relations, as well as access to emotionally valued skills and assets, which hold within any social network characterized at least partly by affective ties" (Nowotny 2018). The authors found that such capital is transferred from the street-level

bureaucrats to their clients when a policy they are tasked with implementing fails to adequately provide capital for "economic independence" (Lavee and Strier 2019, 914). In other words, in order for street level bureaucrats to cope with the issues present in their work, they feel it necessary to put the emotional tools they are provided with onto the clients themselves, forcing the clients to use said tools to achieve independence on their own.

Introduced by Lerner (1965), the "Belief in a Just World" (BJW) theory posits that there is a tendency for people to cling to the notion that the world is "just" in the sense that the world operates in such a way that "everyone gets what they deserve and deserves what they get" (Pedersen, Stritch, and Taggart 2017, 875; see also: Dalbert 2009). BJW theory has largely been linked to victim blaming (e.g., De Judicibus and McCabe 2001). Meanwhile, Haefer and Olson (1998) find that people who believe in a just world are less likely to be dissatisfied with negative outcomes than those who do not believe in a just world (see also: Lerner and Montada 1998). However, in public administration research, stronger belief in a just world has also been correlated with lower concerns of hiring processes one might typically consider biased (Pedersen, Stritch, and Taggart 2017). More importantly (for purposes of this research), Wilkins and Wenger (2015) find that street level bureaucrats who believe in a just world are "more likely to believe that individuals deserve their observed outcomes as a result of their choices, abilities and attitudes" (156; see also: Wilkins and Wenger 2014).

In addition, Belief in a Just World Theory (BJW) has been applied (infrequently) to public administration literatures in the past (e.g., Wilkins and Wenger 2014, 2015)—especially with regard to pro-social rule-breaking (Wolff 2024). However, despite the emphasis on BJW and its correlation with pro-social rule breaking, there is a major gap in the correlation between BJW and rule breaking behaviors for "ignoble" or "anti-social" reasons.

Extending this idea with work from Windsor and Ashkanasy (1995), I argue that "just world beliefs" are associated with increased bureaucratic beliefs in independence (see also: Svanberg and Öhman 2013), thereby increasing their own discretionary use of coping strategies. Therefore, I argue that extra-judicial behavior may be a coping mechanism for bureaucrats dealing with what they perceive to be an unjust system.

H4a: Bureaucrats will be less likely to engage in extra-judicial behaviors when they believe that the client-sanctioning process is fair to clients.

H4b: Bureaucrats will be less likely to engage in extra-judicial behaviors when they believe that the client-sanctioning process is fair to bureaucrats.

However, Lerner (2003) also argues that Belief in a Just World becomes a less powerful predictor of both attitudes and behavior when individuals have less of an emotional attachment to a process (see also Rice and Trafimow 2011). Therefore, it may also be reasonable to assume that bureaucrats' belief that the process delivers proper outcomes will be independent of their perceptions of fairness in the process as a predictor of extra-judicial behavior.

H5: Bureaucrats will be less likely to engage in extra-judicial behaviors when they believe the client-sanctioning body of their organization appropriately sanctions clients.

Emotions and In-Group Feelings

Wolff (2024) also notes that, in keeping with work by Conover (1984), Druckman et al (2021), and Tajfel (2010) "people automatically sort themselves and others into groups based on social identities" and that "membership in these categories largely dictates social behavior, and individuals tend to favor people who are members of the same groups as them" (88). To that end, there is cause to think that bureaucrats will treat clients of the same in-group as them differently

than clients from out-groups (or at least, clients with whom they hold less of a connection to). This difference in behavior leads me to my final hypothesis:

H6: Bureaucrats who feel a sense of connection with their clients, or see their clients as part of the same in-group as them, will be more likely to engage in extra-judicial behaviors about said clients in order to keep clients from the negative consequences of dealing with the client-sanctioning body.

With these hypotheses laid out, I now move into the empirical portion of the chapter, in which I detail the data collected for this study and the methods used to test the hypotheses discussed in the above sections.

Data and Methods

Study variables

The explanatory variables in this study are primarily perceptual. Following Maynard-Moody, Musheno, and Palumbo (1990), I focus on specific aspects of the process (e.g., efficiency, fairness, staff qualifications), as opposed to general satisfaction with the entirety of the academic misconduct reporting system. In addition, I also look at the typical size of classes that faculty teach, either large-n ($n>75$) or small-n ($n<75$) undergraduate classes, as well as graduate classes. Without using demographic data such as race, gender, etc., to measure in-group/out-group reporting behavior, I believe using the class-size variable to examine the connections between client and bureaucrat to test hypothesis 6 (that bureaucrats will be less likely to engage in extra-judicial behaviors when they see their clients as part of the in-group) teases out more relationships of interest.

Faculty were asked a series of questions on their experiences of the academic integrity process and how they view the system that they have no real influence over. This series of questions includes (for example) perceptions of the qualifications of the staff that handle the academic misconduct process, fairness of the process to both faculty and students, and the efficiency of the process from time of reporting the potential misconduct to end of the case. I argue that because the study revolves around the ways perceptions lead to organizational behavior, the problem that Meier and O'Toole (2013) point out regarding perceptual data as independent variables is less problematic. Additionally, given that the dependent variables are primarily "real" or experiential responses (discussed below) the perceptual data are not performance indicators of the academic integrity system itself, merely the behaviors of the respondents giving their perceptions of the system.

As previously stated, the dependent variables used in this study are largely behaviors that could be taken by faculty respondents. For example, professors are asked, given a case of potential academic misconduct, if they choose to report or not report (on a 5-point Likert scale), and (in a separate question) if they typically choose to handle such cases themselves, rather than letting the Office of Academic Integrity Programs determine if misconduct occurred, whether sanctions should be given to the students, and if so, what sanctions. Additionally, professors were asked about the likelihood that they will report future academic misconduct, should they encounter it.[1] However, to operationalize some of the variables, I use some of the perceptual data as dependent variables against other perceptions (discussed below).

[1] Note: As discussed below, professors who said they have not dealt with a case of academic misconduct in any of their classes were forcibly skipped to later questions in the survey. So, they were not asked if they choose to handle cases themselves, or if they choose not to report, since such respondents have never been put in a position to make such decisions. However, these respondents were still asked about the likelihood that they *would* report misconduct, should they encounter it in the future.

For control variables, this study relies on demographic data, including faculty rank (tenure track, non-tenure track, tenured) and highest degree earned (e.g., PhD, JD, etc.). While it would have been possible to collect other demographic data such as race, gender, sexuality, etc., I opted not to gather such data as there are concerns about identifying oneself in the current political landscape; such questions might decrease participation in the survey, and so, they were therefore cut before distribution. It is important to note that the "typical course" variables are not mutually exclusive. For example, a respondent could teach both large undergraduate courses and graduate courses. Each of these variables are coded binarily (0=does not teach, 1=does teach). However, they are not indicative of average courseload (which is coded separately on a 5-point scale). Similarly, the variable of highest degree earned is not mutually exclusive, as there is no reason to consider a PhD as higher than a JD, and MD, or an EdD. Each degree is coded as a dummy variable (0=does not have/not highest earned, 1=highest earned). A better variable for understanding faculty respondents' experience would be through the years of experience they have, which is measured on a 5-point scale (done in five-year increments until reaching twenty years).

Lastly, several free-response items were included in the survey to better guide creation of the models (see below). For purposes of this chapter, the item in question follows a scale in which participants were asked to rate how often they decided not to report. Simply put, participants were then asked why they choose not to report—provided they said they stated they decide not to report at least some of the time (in the data as a score of 3, 4, or 5).

Methodology

This study uses an original survey focusing on perceptions surrounding the academic integrity process at the University of Oklahoma. A majority of the questions on the survey are

measured using 5-point Likert scales, as is suggested by Hinkin (1998: see also, Tummers and Knies 2016; Perry 1996). However, while Hinkin (1998) suggests that scales should use at least four items per scale, one question only contains three items where it makes little sense to further delineate opinions. Specifically, when asking "when it comes to sanctioning student academic misconduct, which of the following sentences best match your experiences with your university's academic misconduct office?", the only necessary answers are "not punitive enough", "appropriately punitive", and "too punitive".

The survey was disseminated to 70 departments, yielding 113 responses. Of these responses, 102 had enough data to be used at least in part. However, respondents who reported having not dealt with the academic integrity office before were forcibly skipped through this part of the survey, leading to only 85 usable observations in this chapter. While there may be concerns about the predictive power of the models run using this data set and therefore their validity (Gren 1991: See also: Harris 2001; Nunnally 1978), time constraints meant that the survey was distributed during the summer, when many professors are simply less available than they would be during the school year.

Analytic Strategy

Before examining the primary relationships I am interested in, one must understand the influences of street-level bureaucrats' perceptions of the efficiency of client-sanctioning bodies. This is because of the 44 responses given to the question "In your opinion, why might professors at your university choose not to report suspected academic misconduct to the academic integrity office?" over 25% mentioned a lack of efficiency in the system. To this end, I estimate a linear regression model that correlates the perceived efficiency of the academic misconduct process with several other perceptual variables, such as fairness of the process for both students and

faculty alike, qualifications of the client-sanctioning staff, familiarity with the process, appropriateness of the sanctions given, and the reliability of the staff to provide guidance.

Moving forward, in order to then examine relationships of interest, I estimate linear regression models to see how specific perceptions around the academic misconduct process influence the ways in which faculty (as street level bureaucrats) engage with the "judicial" system at their university. While numerous studies (e.g., Masuoka and Junn 2013; Jung and Welch 2022; Bernier and Rocco 2003) all find reason to estimate different models by gender and race, as stated above, the political climate is as such that I decided to not collect such data. I estimate separate models for the likelihood of reporting potential misconduct in the future, the preference to handle potential misconduct oneself, and the decision not to report potential misconduct. I treat these three behaviors as separate variables because they all operate independently from one another. For example, a professor could opt not to report misconduct but also not handle it themselves (in other words, ignoring it all together). Or, a professor could prefer to handle misconduct themselves but still be likely to report it to the appropriate office instead.

Data Limitations

As previously discussed, the primary limitations of this study are twofold. First, there is a regrettably small sample size. With only 113 initial responses, and only 85 being useable, the predictive power of this study is somewhat limited. Secondly, the data are unfortunately limited by the lack of racial/gender (and other) demographic variables, as again, I expected that the current political climate would lower participation if such variables were included. While the overall research question can be answered without such data, the analysis is limited in its scope and may be less nuanced than initially hoped.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1.1 reports the descriptive statistics of the dataset. Importantly, the n of the first four variables listed is 102. This n is higher than the sample size of the rest of the variables (n=85). I attribute this to two reasons. The first is that several respondents (13) indicated that they had not had any experience with the academic misconduct process of their institution. There are *actually* 98 responses that can be used for data analysis, but 13 of these 98 were not given the questions discussed in this chapter precisely because they had no experience with the process.[2]

Table 1.1: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Observations
Familiar with Process	4.137	.965	102
Required to Report Misconduct	2.049	.65	102
Likely to Report Misconduct	3.81	1.02	102
Misconduct is Issue at University	4.009	.777	102
Process is Efficient	3.470	1.249	85
Process is Fair to Students	4.094	1.064	85
Process is Fair to Faculty	3.811	1.129	85
Can Rely on Office for Guidance	4	1.214	85
Staff are Qualified	3.576	1.257	85
Severity of Sanctions	1.823	.467	85
Choose to Handle Misconduct Myself	2.811	1.18	85
Choose Not to Report	2.576	1.05	85
Teaches Large Undergraduate Classes	.277	.450	83

[2] Chapter 2 makes use of these individuals.

Teaches Small Undergraduate Classes	.734	.444	83
Teaches Graduate Classes	.493	.503	83

Interestingly, we can see that of the variables presented here, a majority skew toward favorable opinions of the process. For example, on a 5-point scale, where 1 is that the process is extremely unfair (for students and faculty, respectively) and 5 is that the process is extremely fair, the mean perception of the process is that the process is quite fair to students (μ=4.094), and somewhat fair to faculty (μ=3.811). In line with this perception of fairness, respondents tend to decide to report misconduct (μ=2.576)[3] and opt not to handle misconduct themselves (μ=2.811). Similarly, those same respondents on average state that they are more likely than not to report misconduct at a higher rate (μ=3.81). In that same vein, the perception of the process's efficiency skews only slightly positive (μ=3.470).

Despite the general positive perception of fairness to students and efficiency of the process, it should be noted that on average, the appropriateness of the sanctions given to students is perceived poorly (μ=1.823), in the sense that sanctions applied are far too lenient. This suggests that the perceived fairness of the processes may not be evaluated with by same metrics that the appropriateness of the process is.

Deciding to Report

Table 1.2 shows the relationship between pro-judicial/extra-judicial behaviors and particular perceptual variables that are hypothesized to influence said behaviors. The table is broken into three separate but related models: the likelihood of reporting student academic

[3] Note: variable is coded in the reverse of much of the other variables

misconduct; the opposite, choosing not to report; and the preference to handle student academic misconduct oneself.

Table 1.2: Correlates of Bureaucratic Reporting Behavior

	Likelihood Model	Likelihood Model	Not Report Model	Not Report Model	Handle Self Model	Handle Self Model
Variables	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Perceived Efficiency of Process	.133	.108	-.07	.113	.009	.131
Perceived Fairness of Process for Students	.319*	.133	.025	.139	-.189	.161
Perceived Fairness of Process for Faculty	-.013	.120	-.14	.126	-.058	.146
Reliability of Office to Provide Guidance	.288**	.119	-.22*	.125	-.251*	.144
Perceived Qualification of Staff	-.039	.102	-.059	.107	.163	.123
Severity of Sanctions	-.247	.264	.163	.277	.291	.320
Typically Teaches Large Undergraduate Classes	-.216	.231	-.127	.242	-.328	.280
Typically Teaches Small Undergraduate Classes	-.229	.205	.637**	.215	.771**	.249
Typically Teaches Graduate Classes	-.38*	.210	.806**	.220	.753**	.255
Constants	1.601**	.420	3.551**	.441	3.274**	.509
Prob > F	.0000		.0003		.0017	
Adjusted R^2	.321		.245		.201	
N	85		85		85	

**=.10*
***=.05*

The likelihood-to-report-misconduct model reveals three important correlated findings. First and foremost, the perceived reliability of the Academic Misconduct Office is positively correlated ($p<.05$) with the likelihood of faculty reporting student academic misconduct. Similarly, perceptions of the fairness of the process to students are positively correlated ($p<.1$)

with the likelihood of reporting misconduct. On the other hand, however, teaching graduate-level classes is negatively correlated with reporting behavior ($p<.1$).

However, as shown in the latter two models—not reporting misconduct and handling alleged misconduct personally instead of reporting it, respectively—teaching graduate-level courses is positively correlated ($p<.05$) with both not reporting and with handling the possibility of student misconduct privately. This correlation similarly holds true for both models and the relationship between said dependent variables and the teaching of small-n undergraduate classes, (again at the $p<.05$ level), which notably was not significantly correlated with the decision *to* report. Finally, we see that the reliability of the office to provide guidance is weakly ($p<.1$) and negatively correlated with both the decision to not report and to handle the issue personally.

From here, I discuss the status of my hypotheses. First, hypothesis 1, that bureaucrats will be less likely to engage in extra-judicial behaviors when they view the client-sanctioning office of their organization as qualified, is unsupported in any of the models. There is no statistically significant relationship between faculty reporting behaviors and the perceived qualifications/legitimacy of the sanctioning body and its staff. Hypothesis 2, that bureaucrats will be less likely to engage in extra-judicial behaviors when they view the client-sanctioning office of their organization as efficient, is similarly unsupported. The hypotheses related to the perceptions of the appropriateness of sanctions (5) and the perceptions of the fairness of the process to bureaucrats (4b) are also unsupported.

However, hypothesis 3, that bureaucrats will be less likely to engage in extra-judicial behaviors when they feel they can rely on the client-sanctioning office to provide guidance, is consistently supported across all three models. This finding may suggest that organizational cues from above are influential in determining the extra-judicial behaviors of bureaucrats. However, it

is also possible that guidance shifts behavior for reasons not accounted for in the models. Guidance, of course, is given in order to direct behaviors. It is possible that some behaviors (specifically, the decision not to report potential misconduct) could be drive by previous guidance from the academic misconduct office telling a faculty member that a particular type of alleged misconduct does not rise to the level of significance for the office to handle.

Similarly, hypothesis 6, that bureaucrats will be more likely to engage in extra-judicial behaviors when they share a connection with their clients, is supported by the findings. We can see that faculty respondents reported that they are less likely to not report academic misconduct of their students when they teach small-n undergraduate courses and graduate courses. Additionally, they reported typically handling these issues themselves. All four of these relationships (not reporting in small n-undergraduate a graduate classes, and handling cases personally in both types of classes) are statistically significant at the .05 level. Furthermore, there is a weak statistically significant negative relationship between the likelihood of reporting misconduct and teaching graduate classes ($p<.1$). Conversely, teaching large-n undergraduate classes is not significantly correlated with reporting behavior in these analyses.

Lastly, hypothesis 4a—that bureaucrats will be less likely to engage in extra-judicial behaviors when they see the process as fair to their clients—is partially supported. As previously discussed, there is a weak statistical significance ($p<.1$) between the perceived fairness of the process for students and faculty members' likelihood to report student misconduct. However, this relationship does not hold across the other two models (not reporting misconduct and handling misconduct themselves, respectively).

Discussion

What, then, can we take from these findings? Of the seven hypotheses, four were wholly unsupported in the data, one was only partially supported, and two were supported. I cannot fully ascertain the reason for the lack of support for many of these hypotheses due to the small sample size in the data set. However, what is important to look at are the significant relationships presented in the data.

The positive relationship between the perceived reliability of client-sanctioning offices to provide guidance and the likelihood of reporting is, at face value, logical. When there are clear guidelines to follow, bureaucrats are far more comfortable handing cases of potential client misconduct off to the sanctioning bodies rather than handling such cases themselves. When accounting for its statistical significance, it can be understood that bureaucrats do indeed rely on organizational guidance and cues to know how they should operate.

The most interesting relationships, however, come from the ways in which bureaucratic behavior is correlated with the relationship to the client. Across all three models of behavior, faculty who taught graduate courses were less likely to report student misconduct. This finding held similarly true for faculty teaching smaller undergraduate courses. Such an outcome suggests that for street-level bureaucrats, seeing clients (students) at a more personal level, as opposed to massive undergraduate course where one-on-one time is extremely limited (if possible at all) is vital to understanding and shaping behavior. Additionally, the coefficients for these relationships were larger for the graduate classes than the small-n undergraduate classes. This difference in coefficients, I argue, is evidence of the importance of seeing clients as part of the in-group. Graduate students are "junior scholars" and therefore, future street-level bureaucrats. Professors

likely see sanctioning graduate students as more problematic than undergraduate students, given the closer relationship between graduate students and faculty.

Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

In conclusion, bureaucratic behavior is shaped by a myriad of beliefs, perceptions, and relationships. Familiarity with clients, perceiving the process as fair to those clients, and receiving guidance on how to properly handle cases of client misconduct all majorly influence street-level bureaucrats' decisions on whether to report or not, and if they will handle such client misconduct themselves in a way that is more in line with their own views of procedural and moral appropriateness.

The obvious limitation of this study is the extremely small sample size. So, the next logical step for this research is to recreate the study and disseminate it to a larger faculty pool across the country at numerous universities, which would allow for the collection of a wider variety of perceptions of numerous academic integrity offices instead of only one office of one university. This could also provide different cultural references that may lead to results unexplored in this paper. Additionally, I believe that the true major failing of this work is the lack of meaningful demographic data such as race, gender, sexuality, etc. Public administration research must consider the ways that different groups behave in the same organizational contexts, as such extra-judicial behavior leads to vastly disparate outcomes for clients of different communities. Future research could examine these relationships with the added context of social group differences. However, the research presented in this paper was done in such a way as to protect faculty during a time of political uncertainty where self-reporting demographic data may be unsafe.

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Chapter 2: *Punctuated Equilibrium and Street-Level Bureaucratic Reporting Behaviors*

> "One of the hallmarks of public bureaucracies is their ability to digest routine requests… to 'do more' or to 'do better.' Yet, on occasion the demands are novel because the problem has changed" (May, Workman, and Jones 2008, 517).

During times of major upheaval to an organization, a system, or even a society more broadly, there are numerous hurdles that impede typical bureaucratic processes from functioning as they do in "normal" times. Indeed, bureaucratic "turbulence", problems that present as novel and often nebulous to public servants (Ansell and Trondal 2018; Ansell, Sørensen, and Torfing 2021; Eriksson et al 2021) largely confound and encumber an already burdensome system. Therefore, turbulent problems create situations in which organizational competence is heavily scrutinized while simultaneously being far harder to gauge.

Street-level bureaucrats are under constant pressure to perform, to provide services in a timely and efficient manner. And yet, their efficiency is often hampered by questions of bureaucratic discretion. The public has a vested interest in knowing that civil servants are conducting themselves properly, following the appropriate procedures prescribed by higher-ranking bodies. This interest is especially emphasized during times of confusion or disruption, when there is less certainty about what constitutes appropriate bureaucratic behavior. And so, to this end, I ask in this chapter: how do exogenous shocks shape bureaucratic behavior at the street level?

As with any major development in a bureaucratic regime, the introduction of artificial intelligence has led to an increasingly polarizing and confusing time in academia. Professors, as

street-level bureaucrats, rely on policies and directives from upper-level administrators for guidance on how to handle issues in the classroom. Therefore, when facing a novel disruption to the status quo such as the rapid rise of artificial intelligence, street-level bureaucrats are more heavily reliant on such guidance so as to better perform their duties (Ansell, Sørensen, and Torfing 2021). But what happens when the upper-level administrators are similarly unsure of how to respond to an emergent issue?

Following the previous chapter of this dissertation, here, I once again ask if street-level bureaucrats' decisions of whether to illicitly handle client misconduct on their own are contingent upon their perceptions of the client-sanctioning body of their own organization. However, I narrow the scope of my research to street level-bureaucrats' behavior during times of extreme organizational disruption. Specifically, I investigate how bureaucratic decision-making changes in light of punctuations to an organizational status quo.

To answer this question, once more I use literature on accountability, legitimacy, and rule-breaking to inform the theoretical framework. However, I also bring in a more detailed discussion of uncertainty, organizational attention, sensemaking, and Punctuated Equilibrium Theory to examine the ways in which an exogenous shock (specifically, the advent and widespread usage of artificial intelligence—AI—among students) to the system (education) disrupts the relationships that play a role in bureaucratic behavior (professorial reporting of student misconduct). I leverage more data from the same novel survey used in Chapter One, incorporating specific data hitherto not discussed. With these data in mind, I discuss the results of several regression analyses before concluding with future directions for this line of research, as well as my own thoughts on the current state of Artificial Intelligence as a threat to both the practical side of public administration and the academic side, including further research

questions that simply will not be available to be studied until we sit with the technology for a while longer.

Literature

Uncertainty

Flemming (2020, citing Cyert and March 1963) states that rules are invaluable for reducing bureaucratic uncertainty. However, there are many reasons that workers may give for why they choose not to follow said rules. Particularly, it has been noted that in times of uncertainty, workers may look to others for cues on how to behave, rather than the rules themselves (Flemming 2020; Brehm and Gates 1999). In other words, during disruptions to an organization, the uncertainty reduction typically associated with instruction from above is no longer necessarily the driving factor in bureaucratic decision making. Mechanically, this change in what influences behaviors stems from the rules and instructions from managers being unable to adequately meet the demands of the new situation. The inability of managers to meet these novel demands leads to street-level bureaucrats no longer buying into the systema or processes that are being disrupted (Cyert and March 1963, Flemming 2020).

The lack of bureaucratic buy-in to these systems and processes, by its very nature, has implications for the hierarchy within and legitimacy of a bureaucratic agency, as discussed in the previous chapter (see also: Suchman 1995). However, it has also been discussed in public administration literature that what makes an organization work is (in part) the codification of rules and strict subordination in a hierarchy (Taylor 2008; Gajduschek 2003; Leivesley, Carr, & Kouzmin, 1994). While of course there are issues

with the “Taylorian” (Gajduschek 2003) ideas of Scientific Management such as an emphasis on rationality (as opposed to bounded rationality: Lindblom 1959; Simon 2013), and the overt borrowing of chattel slavery-era rhetoric (Kranz 1974), it is nevertheless argued that Taylor’s (and later, Weber’s 2009) notion of hierarchical decision making provides a strong foundation for organizational cohesion and efficiency (Gajduschek 2003).

This foundation is especially relevant in the context of bureaucratic uncertainty. Weber (1954; see also Habermas 1984; Gajduschek 2003; Sager and Rosser 2009), argues that the bureaucracy is necessary for both “the application of formal law” (Gajdushek 2003, citing Weber 1954) and “the functioning of the capitalist economy because the capitalist firm is based internally on precise calculation and accounting” (Gajdushek 2003, citing Weber 1954). The necessity of this precise calculation is indicative of modern civilization’s dependence on reliable and consistent bureaucratic behavior. When a bureaucracy is unable to function in a consistent and predicable manner, the bureaucratic ecosystem that the bureaucracy, its constituent bureaucrats, the surrounding agencies and institutions, and the general public, are all situated in loses contexts that allow for calculability. A disruption, or punctuation, to the bureaucracy no doubt has the greatest potential to foment uncertainty in what is normally a predictable bureaucratic process.

Public Service Ecosystems

Borrowing from the natural sciences, the idea of “ecosystems” was first applied to the social sciences by Moore (1993), who used the biological concept to better explain the “co-evolutionary business systems that include actors, technologies, and institutions”

(Petrescu 2019, 1738; citing Moore 1993; Aarikka-Stenroos and Ritala 2017). There are three levels of analysis: individual, organizational, and network (Petrescu 2019). However, there is some degree of interplay between the levels, as organizations are made up of individual actors, who themselves create networks both internal to the organization and externally between other individuals at other organizations. In public administration literature, these ecosystems appear most specifically with regard to the co-creation of public services and resources (Aarikka-Stenroos and Ritala 2017; Taillard et al 2016; Vargo and Lusch 2010). "Co-evolution" in this case, refers to the ways in which actors, technologies, systems, and more all compete and coexist over long periods of time that are demarcated by the connections between these moving parts (Moore 1993; Aarikka-Stenroos and Ritala 2017). In other words, the ecosystem in this sense is continuously shaped by coexisting structures that are constantly interacting with, and therefore influencing, one another.

These ecosystems are maintained by a particular status quo that reinforces specific functions (Erikkson et al 2021). Therefore, when events occur that may challenge the predominant systemic methodology, these ecosystems are disrupted to varying degrees. Examples include the COVID-19 pandemic, which was a major catalyst to healthcare reform (Erikkson et al 2021), Artificial Intelligence, which has become a major disruptor to the way we think about and pursue jobs (Madan and Ashok 2024), as well as major resource insecurities, ecological events, and shifting demographics in a given area (Hartley Kuecker and Woo 2019; Kuecker 2014). Such disruptions to bureaucratic ecosystems can, for all intents and purposes, be referred to as punctuations in much the same way that catalyzing events in natural ecosystems are. This discussion of

ecosystems (both natural and organizational) leads us, then, to Punctuated Equilibrium Theory.

Punctuated Equilibrium Theory

As with the idea of ecosystems, Punctuated Equilibrium Theory similarly has roots in the life sciences (Eldredge and Gould 1972; Tëmkin 2025). This theory posits that (at the most surface level) "species exhibit extended periods of morphological stability interrupted by rapid phenotypic change at speciation events" (Tëmkin 2025, 765). In broader terms, exogenous shocks to an ecosystem can be so impactful to a species' relatively unchanged phyletic status quo, that the species undergoes rather rapid (relatively) changes at the genetic level. Baumgartner and Jones (1991) adapted this broader idea to the policy world.

Whereas in the natural sciences punctuations lead to evolutionary changes for species, in the policy field, Punctuated Equilibrium Theory handles policy change as a direct result of exogenous shocks outside of a given policy arena (Fagan 2021; Nohrstedt 2005; Nohrstedt 2008; Baumgartner and Jones 2009; Albright 2011), as well as the public attention drawn from the use of policy framing to influence public opinion (Baumgartner and Jones 2009). Once a catalyzing event occurs, policy change is set to follow in response. Following arguments made by LeLoup (1978) about the issues around the concept of incrementalism in policy sciences—and whether or not incrementalism is even analytically useful (Berry 1990)—Baumgartner and Jones argue that the policy process, through examining policy equilibria and the changes that take place, "can explain both periods of extreme stability and short bursts of rapid change" (1991, 1045; see also: Baumgartner and Jones 2009).

While typically used in the field of public policy, rather than public administration, several scholars have used Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET) in administrative research (e.g., Flink 2017; Robinson 2007; Park and Sapotichne 2020). Jones, Sulkin, and Larsen (2003) argue that the stability of organizational and policy processes can be attributed to the institutional friction caused by the costs of translating inputs into outputs such as "informational" "cognitive" "decision" and "transaction" costs (154; see also: Robinson 2007). Decision making in light of these costs is ultimately slowed, which forces a stasis in an organization. Additionally, Chubb and Moe (1990) posited that the degree to which an organization is "bureaucratized" will directly correlate to poorer outcomes. In other words, the increased friction and stasis caused by an overly complicated bureaucracy will inhibit outcomes for clients. Meanwhile, Meier, Polinard, and Wrinkle (2000) argue the opposite, that bureaucratization is a way for organizations to respond to the negative equilibrium by forcing change, thereby overcoming the already frictional organization. This argument was further corroborated by Robinson (2004), who found that "bureaucratization may actually reduce rigidity in organizational responses to their environments" (36; see also: Robinson 2007).

Organizational Attention

Baumgartner and Jones write "before a problem is likely to attract the attention of government officials, there must be an image… that links the problem with a possible governmental solution" (2009, 27). To influence policy change, Punctuated Equilibrium Theory assumes that attention from multiple sources (such as the public, the media, and government officials) must be given to a particular issue for a sustained period of time and intensity (Baumgartner and Jones 2009). Attention, therefore, necessitates strong and salient public opinions on any given policy issue before it can be addressed. But why

does attention matter? Why does attention from outside the government force policy makers and policy implementers alike to act on any given issue?

According to Baumgartner and Jones (2009) punctuations are moments when the status quo of any given policy arena is wildly upended, which may or may not bring about new policies. These bursts of rapid change come from the attention given to an issue by the public. Echoing the work of Schattschneider (1975) and Cobb and Elder (1983) about shifts in policy venues and managing the scope of conflict as a tool for manipulating the policy process, Baumgartner and Jones (2009) state that:

> "interactions of image and venue may produce a self-reinforcing system characterized by positive feedback. Such systems can produce… dramatic reversals in [policy] outcomes in relatively short periods of time" (37).

In other words, the more that the public and media pay attention to an issue, the more that the government is in turn forced to address an issue. Through attention, Punctuated Equilibrium Theory is a "self-reinforcing system" (Baumgartner and Jones 2009, 37) insofar as media will pick up on some policy issue, which in turn brings it to the public's attention, which will incentivize the media to continue to discuss the problem, which will then increase the public's awareness even more, and so on. At some point, public awareness and media engagement on an issue makes it impossible for a government to ignore, and it must change a policy.

We return, then, to the quote from May, Workman, and Jones (2008) at the beginning of the chapter. While bureaucracies consistently "digest routine requests… to 'do more' or to 'do better'" (May, Workman, and Jones 2008, 517), the punctuation in the status quo occurs when there is a relatively atypical request that comes about from the nature of a policy arena itself

changing. Atypical requests and the disruptions they cause, of course, lend themselves to the discussion of attention in shaping bureaucratic behavior.

In public administration literature, attention is handled somewhat differently. Weick and Sutcliffe (2006) note that attention is as limited in organizations as it is in individuals. However, more important in their estimates is the *quality* of attention, not the quantity. They also point out that "[a]ttention is scarce when it is undisciplined and obstacles interfere with clear comprehension" (Weick and Sutcliffe 2006, 521; see also: Sullivan 2010). The scarcity of attention is important to note because it firmly ties back into the discussion of Punctuated Equilibrium Theory and the uncertainty caused by a major disruption to the system. It has also been found that urgency created by problems will directly influence the priority of which problems are addressed by an organization (Sullivan 2010). In addition, such urgency caused by punctuations may lead to a "reprioritization" of problems for rule-makers and bureaucrats alike (Park and Sapotichne 2020; Baumgartner and Jones 2009).

Sensemaking

Another facet of attention is, then, sensemaking. "At the micro level, organisational members engage in sensemaking to reduce ambiguity resulting from exogenous signals and institutional demands and develop shared meanings" (Madan and Ashok 2024, 1; citing Weick, 1995). In other words, sensemaking is the process by which individuals mitigate their uncertainty that stems from various sources. Sensemaking is a necessary component of bureaucratic behavior as bureaucrats must make (boundedly) rational sense of an inherently irrational world (Maitlis 2005).

However, there is more to sensemaking than just an interpretation of disruptive or confusing occurrences. Organizational scholars (Maitlis and Christianson 2014; Weick 1995) argue that also involved in sensemaking is the "active authoring of events and frameworks for understanding, as people play a role in constructing the very situations they attempt to comprehend" (Maitlis and Christianson 2014, 58; citing Weick 1995; Sutcliffe 2013). Furthermore, as noted in Weick (2005; see also: Weick 1995; Maitlis and Christianson 2014), there is a social component to sensemaking. Indeed, sensemaking operates "in a social context of other actors" (Weick 2005, 409).

The social component of sensemaking takes us back once more to the discussion of cues and guidance within the context of bureaucratic rule-breaking (Flemming 2020; Suchmann 1995). I must acknowledge that much of the sensemaking literature finds that a rigid hierarchy is problematic when dealing with the uncertainty (Weick 2005; Bigley and Roberts 2001; Stark 1999; Maitlis and Christianson 2014). Regardless, there is more than enough literature on bureaucratic behavior to suggest that bureaucrats still take cues from those around and above them (Flemming 2020; Brehm and Gates 1999; Gajduschek 2003).

The social factor of sensemaking, by necessity, assumes that bureaucrats (especially at the street-level) take on some level of direction from managers in times of uncertainty. Sensemaking literature, while largely finding issues with strict and controlling hierarchies (Weick 2005; Bigley and Roberts 2001; Stark 1999; Maitlis and Christianson 2014) in no way prescribes that individuals act without any sort of guidance from higher-up members of their organization. That said, there are times during crises, disruptions, and uncertainty wherein bureaucrats intentionally go against what management decides is the best course of action.

Rule-Breaking During Disruptions

Lenz and Eckhard (2025) discuss some explanatory variables in determining how street-level bureaucrats behave in crisis, including conflicting pressures from elites, norms of professionalism, the public, and their own personal beliefs and values (Tummers et al 2015), as well as "bureaucratic discretion, pragmatism, flexibility, and creativity" (Lenz and Eckhard 20205, 2; Ansell and Boin 2019; Eckhard et al 2021). However, while the authors note that these traits might typically be associated with good bureaucratic performance/management, they also argue that such traits could actually lead to greater rule-breaking, especially during times of crisis (Lenz and Eckhard 2025).

While in the previous chapter, I discussed prosocial rule-breaking and other reasons why street-level bureaucrats might behave in ways contrary to an organization's official regulations (Borry and Reuter 2022; Flemming 2020; Robinson and Bennett 1995; DeHart-Davis 2009; Dodson 2009; Edwards and Wajcman 2005), the literatures I used to support hypotheses around bureaucratic extra-judicial behavior were not specific about the scenarios in which typically observed bureaucratic behavior might vary. In this chapter, I take the discussion in a much more specific direction, looking at how a disruption (a punctuation) in the status quo of a bureaucratic sanctioning ecosystem creates different behaviors based on an even greater level of uncertainty in the ecosystem than the general need for guidance seen in the ecosystem at equilibrium. While punctuations are not always crises specifically, the disruption to the system should in theory be the same regardless.

This discussion leads me to my hypotheses for this chapter. First, as I discussed in the prior chapter, there is reason to believe that bureaucrats who feel that the client-sanctioning

office of their organization provides useful guidance on appropriate actions are more likely report client misconduct.

> *H1: In times of disruption to the organization, bureaucrats will engage in fewer extra-judicial behaviors when they receive meaningful guidance on how to handle client misconduct.*

Similarly, I hypothesize that the perception of the appropriateness of sanctions levied against clients (thought to be useful in predicting reporting behaviors among street-level bureaucrats) will be similarly important when behaving in the context of AI's punctuation to the status quo.

> H2: *In times of disruption to the organization, bureaucrats will be less likely to engage in extra-judicial behaviors when they believe the client-sanctioning body of their organization appropriately sanctions clients.*

To further this line of reasoning, in times of disruptions, it is arguably more important for the client-sanctioning office to provide guidance on street-level bureaucrats' actions, as without guidance and relevant rules, street-level bureaucrats are less likely to trust and follow the prescribed procedures (Suchman 1995; Cyert and March 1963, Flemming 2020; Nielsen 2006; Carpenter and Krause 2015). Therefore, it is logical to assume that there would be a stronger correlation between the perceived quality of the office's guidance and bureaucratic extra-judicial behavior during punctuations in an organization's operational context. The same can be argued for the appropriateness of sanctions in times of disruption/status quo, leading to the following two hypotheses.

H3a: The quality of guidance for street-level bureaucrats on how to handle a novel (disruptive) form of client misconduct will be more strongly correlated with bureaucratic extra-judicial behavior than the quality of guidance in general.

H3b: The appropriateness of sanctions against novel (disruptive) forms of client misconduct will be more strongly correlated with bureaucratic extra-judicial behavior than the appropriateness of sanctions in general.

Artificial Intelligence—a Punctuation to the Academic Bureaucracy

At this point in time, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in public administration spaces has yet to be fully examined in the literature (Madan and Ashok 2024; Neumann Guirguis and Steiner 2024; Zuiderwijk Chen and Salem 2021). This gap in the literature is, in part, a reflection of the novel space that Artificial Intelligence takes up in the practitioner side of public administration as well. In the past few years, AI has taken off in the workforce and society as a whole. And indeed, the bureaucracy has felt this meteoric rise profoundly. Bureaucrats receive a myriad of (oftentimes competing) cues on AI, ranging from beneficial uses that can make the job of implementing public policy easier, to more detrimental (and perhaps even harmful) aspects of the technology such as government surveillance and the threat to jobs that AI poses (Madan and Ashok 2024).

For purposes of this paper, I look at the uncertainty around these competing messages on the use of Artificial Intelligence and the effect such uncertainty causes among bureaucrats in their roles as both street-level bureaucrats with power over the general public (Lipsky 1969; 1980/97) and as subordinates in bureaucracies under upper and mid-level managers (Lipsky 2023; Keulemans 2020; Keulemans and Groeneveld 2020). To this end, I believe that academia

is the ideal context in which to study the AI phenomenon as a punctuation in bureaucratic systems. First, the problem of academic integrity violations has increased steadily over many years. (Christensen and Eaton 2022). Second, such issues with academic integrity violations are further pronounced with the advent of new technologies such as the globalization of contract cheating (Gray 2022), and now, specifically, Artificial Intelligence (Adzima 2025; Leaton Gray, Edsall, and Parapadakis 2025; Lee et al 2024).

Artificial Intelligence is a punctuation to the academy's bureaucratic ecosystem because it is both novel and disruptive. Because the technology is so new, there is a general lack of both knowledge on and consensus around the proper usage of AI in the classroom (Holmes and Tuomi 2022). The lack of knowledge and consensus, in turn, has caused Artificial Intelligence to disrupt Academia's status quo, thereby fueling uncertainty among professors (as street-level bureaucrats) who are engaging with the academic misconduct process.

The discussions surrounding AI's place in the classroom are oftentimes nebulous and without nuance. These discussions then prove to be confusing and perhaps even discordant. For example, at the University of Oklahoma, students are provided numerous resources on proper academic integrity and the standard practices by which OU holds its students accountable. The *Academic Integrity Code* states that:

> Academic misconduct is any act which improperly affects the evaluation of a student's academic performance or achievement. Misconduct occurs when the student either knows or reasonably should know that the act constitutes misconduct. The Provost shall develop policies and instructional materials to illustrate specific forms of misconduct such as fraud, plagiarism, and improper collaboration. (University of Oklahoma, Section 1.3, 1).

However, despite the statement that the Provost is in charge of guiding policies surrounding what is or is not academic misconduct, usage guidelines provided to both faculty and students fail to mention the ways in which Artificial Intelligence can be used inappropriately ("AI Usage Guidelines for Students", "AI Usage Guidelines for Faculty"). This failure, of course, means that in neither of the "official" published policies for employees and clients of the university can one figure out whether a student's actions are appropriate, or if they need to be reported for alleged academic misconduct. To this end, the empirical work presented in the next part of this chapter seeks to illustrate the negative consequences for such vague and unhelpful provisions.

Data and Methods

Study Variables

While the first chapter mostly relied on perceptual variables (e.g., perceived fairness of the process, perceived efficiency of the office, etc.), the part of the survey used for specifically this chapter only has two variables that rely on respondents' perceptions of another organization. Once again, in line with following Maynard-Moody, Musheno, and Palumbo (1990) and Lee (2020), I argue that the use of perceptual variables, especially those that are focused on more narrowly defined aspects of a bureaucratic process, are internally valid, despite arguments to the contrary by Meier and O'Toole (2013).

Faculty respondents were asked five questions on their beliefs about the use of Artificial Intelligence in the classroom (three non-perceptual variables), as well as their experiences with the academic misconduct process specifically regarding AI-related student cheating (two perceptual variables). In addition to these five questions, data used in this chapter also include

more general perceptions and experiences around student academic misconduct irrespective of the emergence of AI.

For control variables, this study collected particular demographic data, including faculty rank (tenure track, non-tenure track, tenured), highest degree earned (e.g., PhD, JD, etc.), and size of the typical class respondents teach (large undergraduate classes—X>75 students; small undergraduate classes, or graduate classes). While it would have been possible to collect other demographic data such as race, gender, sexuality, etc., I opted not to gather such data as, given the current political climate, there are more concerns about self-identifying that need to be taken into consideration well above the benefits to the research. I decided that such questions might also decrease participation in the survey, and they were therefore cut before distribution.

Additionally, the variables on a respondent's "typical" courses taught are not mutually exclusive. For example, a respondent could regularly teach both large undergraduate courses and graduate courses, or both large and small undergraduate courses, etc. Each of these variables are coded binarily (0=does not teach, 1=does teach). However, they are not indicative of average courseload (which is coded separately on a 5-point scale). Similarly, the variable of highest degree earned is not mutually exclusive, as there is no reason to consider a PhD as higher than a JD, and MD, or an EdD. Each degree is coded as a dummy variable (0=does not have/not highest earned, 1=highest earned). Instead, the 'ranking' of faculty is done via measuring what experience they have, as measured on a 5-point scale (done in five-year increments until reaching twenty years).

Methodology

This chapter uses the same novel survey used in the first chapter. The survey covered opinions on the academic integrity process among professors (as street level bureaucrats) at the University of Oklahoma. In line with Perry (1996), Hinkin (1998), and Tummers and Knies (2016), respondents were given a number of questions measured via 5-point Likert scales. Specifically, the section of the survey used specifically for this chapter focused on five questions that related to professors' views on the role of AI in the classroom.

The survey was sent out to all 70 departments at the University of Oklahoma. From these 70 departments, 113 professors responded, with 102 of these responses being useable. From there, 98 responses were kept, as 4 of the 102 responses did not complete the AI-related portion of the survey (which can be attributed to attrition and drop-off). Importantly, this part of the survey includes 13 respondents who were not included in the analyses provided in the first chapter, as the 13 professors selected that they had not interacted with the academic misconduct process at the University of Oklahoma, and were thusly forcibly skipped to the second section of the survey that involved thoughts around Artificial Intelligence and academic misconduct. There is a possible concern about the predictive power of the data (Nunnally 1978; Green 1991; Harris 2001), but 98 responses is more than enough to begin to tease out any correlations between variables.

Analytic Strategy

I estimated multiple linear regressions to examine the relationships of interested described above. Specifically, these regressions are used to tease out the ways in which disruptions to the bureaucratic ecosystem (in this case, AI) lead to different bureaucratic

behaviors than in times of status quo. Once more, while previous literature supports the use of race and gender to contextualize different models (Bernier and Rocco 2003; Masuoka and Junn 2013; Jung and Welch 2022), because I specifically left out such variables from data collection, I instead estimate different models for bureaucratic perceptions and behaviors during times of status quo and times of punctuation.

Data Limitations

There are two major limitations in this dataset. First, the sample size (113 total responses, only 83-98 useable responses) the predictive power of this study may not be all that strong. This could lead to problems in analysis, and therefore, any findings discussed in this chapter should be taken not as Canon, but as preliminary results of work that can and should be extended further in the future. Secondly, I was unable to collect demographic data (e.g., gender identity, racial identity, sexuality, religion, etc.,) as I decided that such question would lead to lower participation due to the current political climate. While these data were not necessary for the completion of this dissertation, such identities could have a pronounced effect on bureaucratic decision-making (Blessett 2018).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2.1: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Observations
AI Guidance is Clear	2.21	1.075	83
AI Makes Grading Harder	4.012	1.006	83
AI Has No Place in the Classroom	2.253	1.238	83
Severity of AI Sanctions	2.662	.845	83

Choose to Handle Misconduct Myself	2.811	1.18	85
Choose Not to Report	2.576	1.05	85

A quick tabulation of responses to the Likert scales reveals an important distinction. Table 2.2 shows that while roughly 75% of respondents of the survey either somewhat or strongly believe that they can rely on the Integrity office at their university to provide clear guidance on how to handle alleged academic misconduct, only 10% believe that the same office can provide clear guidance on handling AI-specific misconduct.

Table 2.2: Frequency of Perceived Reliability of Integrity Office to Handle Academic Misconduct

	Generic	Generic	AI Specific	AI Specific
Reliability	Freq.	Percent	Freq.	Percent
Strongly Disagree	6	7.06	36	36.73
Somewhat Disagree	6	7.06	29	29.59
Neither Agree nor Disagree	8	9.41	23	23.47
Somewhat Agree	27	31.76	8	8.16
Strongly Agree	38	44.71	2	2.04
Totals	85	100	98	100

While this table has little explanatory power, descriptively, we see a staggering pattern. This pattern provides, it can be argued, evidence of the disruption to the bureaucratic ecosystem that is comprised of the academic integrity offices (as client-sanctioning bodies), professors (as street-level bureaucrats), and students (as client-citizens). If the presence of artificial intelligence in the classroom was not a stark punctuation in the academic equilibrium, the shocking disparity

in the perceived reliability of the academic integrity offices to handle generic student misconduct versus AI-related misconduct would be decidedly less pronounced.

Deciding to Report

Table 2.3 shows the relationship between pro-judicial/extra-judicial behaviors and various perceptual variables within the context of Artificial Intelligence and its effects on the academic landscape. As in Chapter One, the analysis is broken down into three sperate (but related) behavioral models: the likelihood of reporting student academic misconduct; the opposite, choosing not to report; and the preference to handle student academic misconduct oneself after the decision to not report the potential academic misconduct to the proper in-organization body.

Table 2.3: Correlates of Bureaucratic Reporting Behavior in Disruption

	Likelihood Model	Likelihood Model	Not Report Model	Not Report Model	Handle Self Model	Handle Self Model
Variables	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Reliability of Office to Provide Guidance on AI Misconduct	-.030	.104	.055	.119	.051	.129
Severity of Sanctions for AI Misconduct	.269**	.119	-.152	.129	-.215	.139
AI Has Made It Harder to Evaluate Student Work	.282**	.101	.014	.115	-.045	.124
AI Has No Place in the Classroom	.049	.081	.012	.088	.012	.095
Teaches Large Undergraduate-Level Classes	-.204	.244	-.044	.267	-.244	.288
Teaches Small Undergraduate-Level Classes	-.110	.209	.483**	.230	.710**	.249
Teaches Graduate-Level Classes	-.218	.207	.685**	.229	.815**	.248
Constants	2.112**	.574	2.205**	.621	2.714**	.671

Prob > F	.021	.057	.005
Adjusted R^2	.098	.081	.150
N	98	85	85

First and foremost, there is further proof of AI being a punctuation to the status quo, as the belief that Artificial Intelligence has made it significantly harder to evaluate student work appears to be strongly significantly correlated with the likelihood of reporting student misconduct through the "proper" channels ($p<05$). While this was not necessarily a hypothesized relationship, I argue that this correlation between perception and action is directly supportive of the rationale behind the hypotheses laid out earlier in this chapter.

Moving on to the actual relationships of interest, we see no support for the first hypothesis—that extra judicial behavior will be mitigated when there is reliable guidance on how to handle AI-related academic misconduct. This null finding holds true across all three models. However, in the model showing the relationships between various perceptions and the likelihood of reporting, there is support for the second hypothesis, that extra-judicial behavior will be less likely to occur when client sanctioning is deemed appropriate ($p<.05$). Importantly, this relationship is positive, showing that a "lesser" or inappropriately inconsequential sanction is more likely to diminish the chance of a bureaucrat reporting client misconduct, while a more severe sanction is correlated with an increased likelihood of reporting student academic misconduct. However, the models relating to the decision not to report and the decision to handle client misconduct oneself are both unable to show statistically significant findings in this realm.

Additionally, in similar fashion as the first chapter, teaching smaller-n undergraduate classes or graduate classes (which are by default considerably smaller than many undergraduate

courses) is both positively and significantly correlated ($p<.05$) with extra-judicial behaviors. While not hypothesized about in regard to the presence of artificial intelligence, this once again provides evidence supporting the prior chapter's hypothesis that proximity to clients will lead to a lack of formal reporting behaviors and a greater chance of bureaucrats handling client misconduct themselves.

Reporting Behaviors in Times of Disruption vs. Status Quo

Referring back to Table 1.2 in Chapter One, we can recall that the reliability of the client-sanctioning office to provide guidance is significantly correlated across all three models of reporting behavior at either the .05 or .1 level. However, Table 2.3 shows that the reliability of that same office to provide guidance on AI-specific client misconduct is not significantly correlated to any of those reporting behaviors. This finding means that the third hypothesis, that guidance in times of disruption is more strongly correlated with reporting behaviors than general guidance is unsubstantiated. That said, there is reason to believe that the fourth hypothesis, that the appropriateness of sanctions (or rather, the perception thereof) in times of disruption is more strongly correlated with reporting behaviors than in times of status quo, is supported. While the general perception of sanctions is insignificant across all three models in Table 1.2, Table 2.3 shows that the appropriateness of sanctions on AI-specific student misconduct is correlated positively significantly ($p<.05$) with the likelihood of reporting student misconduct. Table 2.4 illustrates the analyses relating to hypothesis 3a and Hypothesis 3b.

Table 2.4: Correlates of Reporting Behaviors

	Likelihood Model	Likelihood Model	Not Report Model	Not Report Model	Handle Self Model	Handle Self Model
Variables	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Reliability of Office to Provide Guidance	.288**	.119	-.22*	.125	-.251*	.144
Reliability of Office to Provide Guidance on AI Misconduct	-.030	.104	.055	.119	.051	.129
Severity of Sanctions	-.247	.264	.163	.277	.291	.320
Severity of Sanctions for AI Misconduct	.269**	.119	-.152	.129	-.215	.139

With these findings in mind, I fail to reject the null for hypothesis 3a, while finding reason to partially reject the null for hypothesis 3b. However, these findings (as well as the results of the prior analyses in this chapter) may be contingent upon the somewhat limiting nature of the small-n sample size. This is why I am hesitant to claim a total rejection of the null for hypothesis 3b with absolute certainty. At the same time, I am similarly hesitant to say that hypothesis 3a is wholly without merit, as the results here may simply not be reflective of the true nature of the relationship is theorized.

Discussion

The results of the analyses performed in this chapter tell us a few things. In total, we can reject the null hypothesis for two of the four hypotheses presented in the front end of this chapter. Once more, the small-n sample size means it is difficult to determine if there is no correlation between some of the variables discussed herein, or if there are simple issues with the measurements.

Whereas in the first chapter, despite a lack of statistical significance in several of the hypothesized relationships, there was still an overall directional validity to the relationships, I

cannot fully say the same for the analysis of this chapter. There is a negative (but statistically insignificant) relationship between trust in the Academic Integrity Office to provide guidance on AI cases and reporting misconduct, while conversely being a positive relationship between the same perception of organizational guidance and choosing to not report/handle the issue oneself. This result suggests either a problematic measurement tool, or an issue with the analysis with such a small sample size. I believe that one possible "fix" for this could be, in the future, creating an AI-specific set of dependent reporting variables in much the same way that there were AI-specific independent variables. This is, however, conjecture with minimal bearing on the rest of this paper.

Secondly the finding of statistically significant support for the second and fourth hypotheses merits further discussion. Hypothesis 2, that in times of disruption street-level bureaucrats will be less likely to engage in extra-judicial behavior when they believe that the client-sanctioning body of their organization properly sanctions clients, was partially supported in the data. In a broader discussion, it is important to understand the mechanisms by which bureaucrats (especially at the street level) choose to engage/disengage with the systems that they work under. When higher-level administrators provide clear guidance on the procedures and policies that regulate the reporting and sanctioning of clients, street-level bureaucrats will be more willing to engage with those higher-level administrators. However, when there is a lack of reliable guidance (as evidenced by the lack of trust in the guidance shown in Tables 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3) it appears that the severity of sanctions of novel forms of misconduct become the heuristic by which street-level bureaucrats decide to report client misconduct.

Additionally, Hypothesis 3b, that the perceived appropriateness of sanctions against clients will be more important in determining street-level bureaucrats' extra-judicial behavior in times of disruption than in times of relative status quo, sees similar support. With the findings of both of these hypotheses in mind, we can more generally understand the influencing factors in decision-making processes for bureaucrats. Not only is clear guidance a necessary part of keeping bureaucrats operating within the bounds of organizational policy; showing them that such behaviors lead to what those bureaucrats perceive as the "correct" outcome for the clients they've sent through the process (especially in times of systemic uncertainty) reinforces the proper conduct to support the system.

Once more, there is a relationship between the size/type of course taught by faculty and reporting behavior, where professors teaching smaller undergraduate-level courses or graduate-level courses are considerably more likely to handle any potential academic misconduct themselves and not report the alleged offense to the "proper" authoritative body. This relationship has, again, implications for how bureaucrats more broadly conduct their jobs. If a more direct and personal connection between bureaucrat and client leads to a greater likelihood of bureaucratic extra-judicial behavior in both times of disruption and status quo, there is reason to believe that bureaucrats are operating with their clients' best interests in mind as opposed to simply not trusting the client-sanctioning bodies for whatever reason (reliability, efficiency, procedural fairness, etc.).

Finally, I believe that the truly most substantial finding presented herein is actually in the descriptive statistics of this dataset. Table 2.1 once more reflects the basis of this chapter, that punctuations to an organizational equilibrium lead to distrust among street-level bureaucrats for

the same intra-organizational bodies that they typically rely on for guidance. While there is no evidence in the data to suggest that such distrust leads to significantly different behaviors in the aggregate, there is more than enough evidence in the literature to assume some of the results of this analysis stem from the small-n sample collected.

Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

As discussed above, there is more than enough reason to believe that scholars are only just now scratching the surface of the "AI question" in public management spaces (and indeed, public administration literature altogether). First and foremost, I believe that the most useful undertaking in this space would be to start with a meta-analysis of what little AI-related public administration research is currently available, and extending that analysis to other disciplines such as public policy, business and economic fields, organizational psychology, and education as its own focus (as opposed to merely a vehicle by which to discuss bureaucratic behavior writ large). I believe that this would provide future scholars with a better understanding of where the field is right now, which would in turn help with examining pressing questions that come up from both this research, and those of other academics.

Additionally, as with then prior chapter, one of the hurdles to overcome in future research is the limited sample size presented in this study. There are just enough data points to claim some statistical significance, but not nearly enough to be wholly comfortable with the assertions delivered in the findings. What's more, as public administration as a discipline further seeks to incorporate perspectives from multiple groups instead of treating all respondents as coming from the same socioeconomic hegemony (Blessett et al 2019), future research in this area[4] needs to do

[4] In all areas, really.

a better job of providing inclusive and comprehensive data that allow for more wholistic understandings of social phenomena.

One other direction for future research that traces back to the natural sciences once more returns to Eldredge and Gould's (1972) Punctuated Equilibrium Theory. While the life sciences handle PET as a mechanism for species change (allopatric speciation, specifically), so too could the administrative sciences examine exogenous shocks as mechanisms for organizational change, such as employee turnover, mission drift, organizational identity/cultural shifts that occur both in relation to other organizations and in isolation as the "speciation" of organizations. This work could involve a sort of process tracing that would map the changes to an organization and how such changes reflect the influence of the previously mentioned exogenous shocks on the operations and culture of the organization. Such an undertaking would likely involve a series of interviews of current and former employees (both subordinates and managers) that seek to explain how they believed their organization changed in relation to the disruptions such as advent of modern Artificial Intelligence or the COVID-19 pandemic.

A Note the Role of AI in the Workplace

It goes without saying that Artificial Intelligence is already a major disruptor in many aspects of everyday life. There is no clearer indication of this disruption than in public administration (both as an academic field and as a practice). Academically, for example, AI can handle extremely large data sets in ways not previously possible (Reis, Santo, and Melão 2019). In practitioner spaces, on the other hand, AI has been seeing more and more support in a variety of areas such as transportation, healthcare, law, energy, and emergency services (Reis, Santo, and Melão 2019; Mikhail, Aleksei, and Ekaterina 2018, Androniceanu 2023). There are

numerous question on how Artificial Intelligence may be used to more efficiently meet the numerous demands bureaucracies are inundated with (Androniceanu 2023), as well as questions surrounding how the constant disruption created by a continuously evolving technology will continue to lead to similarly novel ethical dilemmas (Bignami 2022; Keppeler 2024).

And yet, little has been written on the bureaucratic friction that this technology is creating. In public management, Keppeler (2024) points out that there are issues that come along with increased application of AI in the workplace, specifically lack of user skills with AI technologies and more pressing, the difficulties with interpretation the stem from AI-generated outputs that are often less than reliable.

Just as concerning is the role of Artificial Intelligence in the hiring process for many organizations. Organizations are increasingly relying on AI to screen resumes in ways that may be legally murky (Lacroux and Martin-Lacroux 2022; Cai, Zhang, and Zhang 2022). There is reason enough to believe that Artificial Intelligence is, as it stands now, an overall negative for recruitment decisions, being seen both as an untrustworthy resource by hiring managers for choosing between job candidates (Lacroux and Martin-Lacroux 2022) and an unfair decision maker by those being selected for/against in the job market (Cai, Zhang, and Zhang 2022). Nonetheless, we are seeing an ever-increasing usage of AI for both sides of this process. Recruiters use AI to screen through resumes at a far more efficient pace, though such efficiency is marred by the previously mentioned concerns (Lacroux and Martin-Lacroux 2022). Meanwhile, job applicants are similarly tailoring their own resumes to stand out to AI screeners *and* using AI to even create their resumes entirely (Jha, Paliwal, and Jha 2025). It remains to be seen how this constant cycle of AI-driven resumes and AI-driven screenings of said resumes will

shape the future of the job market. What happens when the application process turns into one AI model talking to another to determine whether someone is qualified for a particular job?

In a different direction altogether, it is necessary to discuss the applications of AI in academia and the possible consequences thereof. The current state of education literature focuses heavily on the "technological arms race" (Oravec 2023, 213) between instructors and their students. Many scholars are currently looking at AI detectors and their efficacy in figuring out which students are using AI to generate or augment their submitted assignments. If not that, literature explores cheating behaviors of the students, looking at how AI has made cheating an entirely different game for students compared to five years ago (Lee et al 2024), how feelings of guilt among students may lead to a decrease in the continued use of AI (Qu and Wang 2025), or even simply what students themselves believe the role of AI to be in the classroom (Freeman 2024).

These issues are, of course, important to discuss. However, what this chapter has sought to address is the behaviors after AI-assisted cheating has occurred. A cursory glance of the literature suggests that such behaviors are wholly unaccounted for. If educators and scholars seek to maintain the academic integrity of their institutions, there must be a concerted effort to properly address inappropriate use of Artificial Intelligence, which necessitates a more comprehensive and agreed-upon idea of what constitutes proper/improper usage. As hypothesized in this research (despite the inability to reject the null hypothesis), a formalized system of rules and regulations regarding student reliance on AI could considerably improve the likelihood of faculty working within the university system to better combat the issue.

Furthermore, it will be several years before the discipline is able to research outcomes of workers who went to college at the advent of AI. What concerns and issues will we find among practitioners of high-risk fields such as medicine and engineering? Will doctors be less confident in their ability to diagnose and treat illnesses when they spent their academic training replacing critical thinking skills with a reliance on AI? Will we see more structural defects and a lack of knowledge on how to resolve such issues crop up more and more with individuals who admit to having used ChatGPT to get through their undergraduate programs? Will the quality of research itself among many fields deteriorate as writing skills become less and less meaningful when one can simply ask an AI language model to produce a "better-stated" thesis than what the scholar feels they themselves could produce? Without academia being able to figure out how to enforce a hard limit against AI, or even determine what that limit should be, we will no doubt see a marked shift in the quality of work done by everyday professionals in a myriad of fields.

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Chapter 3[5]: *Workplace Sexual Harassment and Bureaucratic Reporting Behaviors*

Organizations must provide a safe workplace for employees. To accomplish this, processes must be put into place that allow for employees to safely report issues that come up in their workplace. A large body of literature has examined how whistleblowing is shaped by motivation (Miceli et al 1988; Prysmakova and Evans 2020; Rothwell 2003; Rothwell and Baldwin 2006; Kyu Wang et al 2018; Callier 2017), the reasons for and consequences of retaliation for whistleblowing (Perry 1992; Lee and Kleiner 2011; Callier 2012; Near and Miceli 2008), and demographic characteristics that may shape reporting behavior (Prysmakova and Evans 2020; Exmeyer 2017) [6]. Similarly—in line with intersectional work in the public administration field (e.g. Blesset et al 2019; Blesset 2020; Brown 2024)—scholars have looked at internal reporting behaviors (especially for sexual harassment and assault), and such behaviors' relationship with race and gender (Yu 2022; Yu and Lee 2019; Yu and Lee 2020), and importance of public managers in dealing with inappropriate/unsafe workplace behavior (O'Toole and Meier 1999; Callier 2021; Fredericksen and McCorkle 2013; Narayan 2024).

Despite these large bodies of work, the relationship between workplace retaliation and sexual harassment reporting behavior has largely been overlooked. While Callier (2012) examined employee perceptions of potential reprisal and their relationship with organizational culture, such work has not been extended to examine how prior instances of workplace retaliation shape the decision to report sexual harassment. I seek to extend the literature on whistleblowing, reporting behaviors, and workplace retaliation to better understand how retaliation directly influences reporting behaviors beyond employees' perceptions of expected

[5] First presented as a stand-alone article for the Bureaucratic Politics section of the Midwest Political Science Association conference in 2024
[6] For a detailed review of whistleblowing literature, see Kang 2023

consequences for their actions. Whereas the prior two chapters of this dissertation focused on the reporting behaviors of street-level bureaucrats to client-sanctioning bodies within organizations, this chapter focuses on the same intra-organizational politics of reporting and factors that influence decision-making, while at the same time shifting the examined behaviors and contexts to sexual harassment and reporting behaviors thereof without the of sanctioning clients and the possibility of extra-judicial behavior. The primary connection between the first two chapters and this chapter comes in the form of bureaucrats' trust in the system and processes, the guidance provided by the administrators that oversee the system, and the perceptions of the reported individuals (this time, coworkers rather than clients) receiving meaningful and appropriate discipline.

One tool that scholars consistently use in examining organization culture and public management is the Merit Principles Survey. Published every few years by the Merit Systems Protection Board, prior scholarship has used this survey in studying employee behaviors and perceptions (Hameduddin and Lee 2023; Lee 2020; Callier 2017; Near and Miceli 2008; Cho and Song 2015). In this paper, I leverage the 2021 edition of this survey to empirically test several hypotheses. While perceptual data from surveys has been argued to be less accurate for measuring certain parts of public administration/management (Meier and O'Toole 2013), perception does play a role in decision making and behaviors across contexts (Lee 2020). In this case, I leverage employee perception variables as controls in theoretical models. However, this study is primarily focused on the relationship between non-perceptual variables. Specifically, retaliation for varying actions occurred (either affecting the respondent or someone else), or it did not. Similarly, employees either filed formal complaints after experiencing sexual harassment

or they did not. Any perceptual variables merely inform the interaction of the independent and dependent variables used in the models.

In this paper, I ask if the existence of retaliation in federal workplaces has an effect on employee reports of sexual harassment. To answer this question, I first discuss the literature on whistleblowing, reporting behavior, and workplace retaliation through an intersectional lens. Drawing from said literature, I present multiple empirically testable hypotheses. I then explain the data taken from the 2021 MPS before describing the methodology used to analyze them. Following that, I present the findings of this study. Lastly, I discuss implications drawn from these findings and point out areas that merit further consideration from public administration scholars.

Literature

Discipline and Workplace Retaliation

Discipline has been defined and researched by numerous scholars (Belohav 1985; Greer and Labig 1987; Robbins et al 2014; Franklin and Pagan 2006), with the one consistent defining aspect of discipline being actions taken by management to correct certain behavior. Some scholars argue that discipline is a means of increasing productivity (Belohav 1985), while others suggest discipline enforces rules and regulations, and further compliance with such organizational policies (Robbins 1994; Werther and Davis 1993). Compliance, specifically, has so far been used in extant literature to connote following socially acceptable behavioral standards and norms (see: Werther and Davis 1993; Robbins et al 2014). However, discipline need not be so narrowly construed. As Franklin and Pagan (2006) point out, discipline is influenced by the culture of an organization, and "can also…reinforce a code of conduct" (53). There is nothing

explicit in the literature that states that discipline is, by nature, only used to correct morally reprehensible or organizationally damaging behavior. Discipline is simply the means by which organizations' cultural norms are established and perpetuated. If a workplace's culture heavily encouraged unethical behavior, a code of silence around sexual misconduct, or following managerial requests over federal law, discipline could follow an employee whistleblowing, reporting sexual harassment, or refusing to break the law. Retaliation is defined as "undesirable action taken against a whistle-blower—and in direct response to whistle-blowing" (Miceli et al 2008, 11). For purposes of this paper, this definition can be broadened to include actions taken against those who whistle-blow, file formal grievances, or refuse to violate the law.

Reporting Behavior, Sensemaking, and the Intersections of Privilege

The purpose of having a formal complaint process is to allow for employees to make sure that incidents of misconduct in the workplace are handled properly by the organization. And indeed, it stands to reason that the job of those in charge of formal complaint channels would be tasked with determining what did or did not happen. After all, agents involved in the sensemaking process are tasked with pulling together all the relevant information. In other words, they "structure the unknown" (Waterman 1990, 4). Hence, after incidents of sexual harassment in the workplace, employees tasked with investigating the claims must make sense of the potential incident, its likelihood, and the parties involved. However, Weick (1995) states that "sensemaking is tested to the extreme when people encounter an event…so implausible that they hesitate to report it for fear they will not be believed" (1). This is a familiar theme among those who choose not to report sexual harassment. Garrett and Hassan (2019) find that the most common reason for which people choose not to workplace report sexual harassment is their belief that:

> there is no point in reporting because they have seen how people treat those who do report and have seen the lack of action when an assault is reported, especially due to others' disbelief. (650)

It has been found that victims of workplace sexual harassment, specifically, victims that report their harassment or attempt to confront the perpetrator(s), deal with a number of potential social problems that arise from the behaviors of the perpetrators. These problems can include being ostracized or otherwise excluded from the social life of the workplace, bullying and harassment outside of the already present sexual harassment, and even receiving detractions on their employee reviews (Brown 2024; Flanagan 2025). These reporters, as a consequence of the continued or increased issues at their workplace that resulted from reporting the sexual harassment, may even wind up with a myriad of physical and mental health issues, including but not limited to sleep loss, hypertension, burnout, and anxiety (Flanagan 2025; Brown 2024; Hope 2025), as well as being forced to work longer hours, receiving higher workloads, and even having their pay docked (Hope 2025). The potential to not be believed after experiencing workplace harassment, and the subsequent issues that come about from reporters not being believed directly leads to this chapter's first hypothesis. If there is reason for victims of sexual harassment to think that they will not be believed, especially when they know other reporters were treated improperly by their organization, then these victims may be less likely to report sexual harassment themselves.

> *H1: Employees who know of, or have experienced retaliation in the workplace, for whatever reason, will be less likely to file formal complaints after experiencing sexual harassment.*

Of course, workplace retaliation occurs for many reasons. The dataset used in this study gives three possible rationales for retaliation: whistleblowing, the internal filing of grievances to the proper complaint channels, and refusing to violate the law/rules/regulations. For purposes of this paper, internal filing of grievances is the closest metric to sexual harassment complaint filing as one can reasonably find. I posit that workplace retaliation for filing grievances specifically is more important in shaping reporting behaviors than workplace retaliation for the other two given reasons.

H2: Retaliation for filing grievances will have a higher correlation with reporting behavior than retaliation for whistleblowing or refusing to violate the law.

Recalling the earlier discussion of discipline as a means of reinforcing organizational culture, workplace retaliation may, as a disciplinary measure, have a greater impact on reporting behaviors if the reason for discipline (filing a grievance) is the same as the action an employee wishes to take (filing a formal complaint of sexual harassment).

Both race and gender are important factors in reporting behaviors. Jung and Welch (2022) state that "women and minorities experience the workplace differently than men and whites" (523). Literature on reporting behavior goes further, finding that women and people of color report workplace issues at different rates than men and whites, respectively (Yu and Lee 2019, Yu and Lee 2020, Yu 2022). As prior scholars find, power dynamics often lead to women reporting misconduct (of both sexual and nonsexual matters) less than their male counterparts for a variety of reasons (Hameduddin and Lee 2023; Prysmakova and Evans 2022). Specifically, Hameduddin and Lee (2023) report that

> "organizational and societal pressures, and their lower power status compared to that of men, could make women less likely to express their negative reactions to adverse treatment…in the workplace" (518).

This work from Hameduddin and Lee (2023) is in line with discussions of power dynamics elsewhere (Hope 2025; Igbinobas, Osibanjo, and Salau 2022; Nyitse and Zamani 2023), which detail the ways employee behaviors and intra-organizational relationships are shaped by the balance/imbalance of power between individuals.

Similarly, there are numerous studies that find numerous gendered effects on workplace harassment and bullying (Rosander and Salin 2023; Salin 2021; Salin and Hoel 2013). Such findings suggest that the presence of workplace retaliation could further hinder reporting behaviors of women in the workplace more so than such retaliation does for men. Furthermore, it has been noted repeatedly in the literature that women who self-report sexual harassment in the workplace are likely to (or believe they are likely to) come up against bias or more regularly be retaliated against (Hart 2019).

> *H3: Women will be less likely to report sexual harassment than men when dealing with workplace retaliation.*

However, reporting literature has found differing results on minority behaviors. Some scholars find that there is no statistically significant difference in the reporting behaviors of white employees and employees of color (Callier 2021), while other researchers find that women of color may actually report more often than white women (Yu 2021). However, in the case of Yu (2021), the research was done specifically looking at law enforcement officers, which may provide contextual factors that do not appear in other organizations. Enough literature has been

done that notes the power imbalances between white employees and employees of color to suggest that employees of color will have theoretically significant reasons to report less than white employees (Rocco et al 2014; Bernier and Rocco 2003; Hartel et al 1999). Specifically, it has been found that employees of color more often face termination from their jobs as a result of retaliatory practices for those who report sexual harassment (Flanagan 2025; Brown 2024).

Additionally, the physical and mental health outcomes of employees of color after reporting sexual harassment have been found to possibly be worse or more impactful than for white employees. Literature suggests that employees of color who face consequences for reporting sexual harassment are more likely to suffer from suicidal ideation and stress (Brown 2024; Flanagan 2025). Therefore, it stands to reason that employees of color might forgo reporting sexual harassment in the workplace at a higher rate than white employees. I hypothesize that employees of color, in the context of a retaliatory workplace, will report sexual harassment less than their white colleagues.

H4: Employees of color will be less likely to report sexual harassment than white employees when dealing with workplace retaliation.

Reporting Behavior and Outcomes

As with the first two chapters of this dissertation, there is a necessary discussion of what happens to the perpetrator of misconduct after reporting. Instead of looking at client misconduct (such as student cheating), however, this chapter looks at sexual misconduct from one employee to another. This change in focus means that some of the justifying literature used to support the hypotheses surrounding bureaucratic behavior in light of perceptions of sanction appropriateness is not wholly useable. However, there is still some reasonable overlap. For example. The “Just

World Hypothesis" argues that people rely on the world to more or less arc toward justice and appropriate outcomes (Lerner 1963).

Behaviorally, it has been argued that this belief is especially true for individuals who have an emotional attachment to a particular process or system that they are operating within (Lerner 2003). Therefore, there is a possibility that perceptions around "just" or "appropriate" sanctions would be correlated with future reporting behaviors. This possibility leads me to my fifth hypothesis.

> *H5: Bureaucrats who believe that their organization correctly handles sexual harassment will be more likely to report sexual harassment.*

Clarity and Guidance

Finally, as with the first two chapters of this dissertation, there again needs to be a brief discussion of the ways in which perceived obfuscation of policies and procedures impacts bureaucratic behaviors. In other words, once more, I seek to understand how the clarity of sexual harassment reporting processes is related to actually reporting of misconduct. As stated in chapter one, Portillo and Kras (2020) and Enkler et al (2017) both find that bureaucrats are far more likely to turn to someone for guidance when they perceive that the individual is able to provide quality guidance when things are unclear. Such behavior, of course, also extends to an organization's human resources office and the policies the office provides to employees. Therefore, I am led to two additional hypotheses on the nature of clear guidance and the understanding of the proper policies and procedures, which would, theoretically, only come about from clear guidance on those policies.

H6: Bureaucrats who perceive their organization's harassment policies to be clear will be more likely to report sexual harassment.

H7: Bureaucrats who are familiar with their organization's proper harassment-reporting channels will be more likely to report sexual harassment.

Data and Methods

From here, I now move to the methodology of this study, including how the data were collected, what the data actually are, the variables used in this study, and the strategy employed to properly analyze these data. I follow that with the results of said analyses, as well as a general discussion of the implications of my research.

Methodology

Since the 1980s, the MSPB has repeatedly launched surveys on the federal government's workplace culture by using stratified random sampling techniques. Whereas the 2015 MPS survey collected data from a sample of 37,452 (as noted in Callier 2021), the 2021 edition of the survey received responses from 33,139 federal employees. However, the 2021 survey also collected data from twenty-seven agencies, three more than the 2015 version.[7] Additionally, the 2021 MPS was not exclusive to cabinet level and large federal agencies, although the only "small" agencies included in the survey were the MSPB and OGE, both of which were new additions.

[7] The three agencies added to the 2021 survey are the Merit Systems Protection Board itself, the Office of Government Ethics, and the Department of Health and Human Services. The Department of Health and Human Services was not a part of the 2015 survey due to reported technical issues (Callier 2021).

Study Variables

This study focuses on whether or not employees who have experienced sexual harassment internally filed a formal complaint in after the fact. In this paper, the dependent variable of interest is whether or not a complaint was filed by a victim of workplace sexual harassment. Respondents either reported or did not report that they filed a formal complaint following sexual harassment. Since the formal complaint process is not actually described in the MSPB's survey, there is no way to have a more in-depth coding system. However, it should be noted that the survey also includes multiple actions employees could take, including reaching out to an EEO counselor, using informal conflict resolution processes, changing jobs, or reporting the behavior to a supervisor or manager. Therefore, it is possible that the formal complaint action involves speaking to a different party than either the EEO or supervisors/managers.

The primary explanatory variables are measures of incidents that happened in the workplace. In other words, they are not perceptual measures in the same vein as employees' feelings toward their respective organizations' cultures; rather, the explanatory variables are from real-world events, as opposed to hypothetical scenarios in experiment-based research. As such, this study is focused on the sequence of events that occurred after an instance of sexual harassment in real life. While one could argue that whether or not a given interaction actually involved sexual harassment is dependent on the "perception" of the victim, the survey used in this dataset makes no distinction as to the validity of the grievance, and there is no reason to suspect any given reporter lied about what happened to them. Furthermore, as the survey questions used in this study are not hypothetical scenarios in which respondents are asked to give their perception of how the workplace (although such perceptual questions are indeed asked

elsewhere in the study), the validity of this research relies on events that we must assume happened in some manner.

The purpose of this study is to examine how the presence of workplace retaliation influences employees' decisions to report sexual harassment. The 2021 Merit Principles Survey provides questions about retaliation for three specific reasons: whistle blowing, filing grievances, and refusing to violate the law/regulations/rules. The initial survey codes these questions on a three-point scale, where 1 indicates that retaliation has not occurred, 2 indicates that the employee knows retaliation has occurred but has not been personally affected, and 3 indicates that the employee has experienced or been personally affected by retaliation. For purposes of this study, each of these three variables were transformed into dummy variables, condensing options 2 and 3 into one possible choice. This choice means that the relationship between workplace retaliation and the decision to report/not report sexual harassment is simplified.

In addition to the explanatory variables, this study controls for numerous other variables. Some are demographic, such as gender (coded as 0-man and 1-woman), and a dummy variable for supervisor status which was transformed from a variable that gives multiple options for where the employees fit in their organizations/ hierarchies (such as regular employee, team leader, or supervisor). There are also several perceptual measures that explain how employees view their workplace, the actions and attitudes of the people therein, and the systems put in place surrounding sexual harassment. Measures surrounding employees' perceptions of the workplace include their belief in how well their organization holds sexual harassers accountable and their confidence in issues of sexual harassment being resolved. For a measure of employees' perceptions of those they work with, a control variable of employees' confidence that their coworkers would support/assist those dealing with sexual harassment is included as well. Lastly,

policy/system-related measures include how effective and clear (respectively) the organizations' sexual harassment policies are[8], how effective and clear (respectively) the organizations' sexual harassment trainings are[9], and how familiar employees are with the proper complaint channels when dealing with sexual harassment.

Analytic Strategy

To examine the relationships of interest in this study, I estimate logistic regression models to see how specific conditions shape workplace retaliation's influence on reporting behavior. When dealing with cases of sexual harassment, the initial model is filtered to include solely those who have experienced sexual harassment. In line with previous work (Masuoka and Junn 2013; Jung and Welch 2022; Bernier and Rocco 2003) I estimate separate models for white and minority employees, as well as men and women employees, as prior research shows that there are meaningful differences in both perceptual and non-perceptual variables between white respondents and respondents of color, and men and women respondents.

However, I also include race (coded in the dataset as minority/white) in the gender-specified models while including gender (coded men/women in the dataset) in the race-specified models. These additional models allow the study to examine the relationships of interest through a more intersectional lens, as I can better understand the ways in which women of color experience the workplace differently from men, men of color, and white women. Crenshaw (1989) argues that analyses that do not explicitly look at the experiences of Black women often

[8] Only 0.28% (81 respondents) stated that their respective organizations did not have a policy. Since every agency had far more respondents say that said agencies had policies, it can be assumed that those who said no are incorrect, and therefore it is reasonable to not include that variable in the models. This prevents collinearity with the variables asking about how effective/clear said policies are.

[9] Collinearity prevents the use of the question of whether or not employees received training about sexual harassment. However, it should be noted that roughly 15% of employees stated that they had not received training on sexual harassment. Descriptively, this could be potentially be studied in the future.

then produce results that "cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated" (140). Similarly, Bernier and Rocco (2003), argue that "researchers who tend to be unaware of the permanence and pervasiveness of racism … underestimate their own responsibility to the complexity and factuality of discrimination" (15). Therefore, it is incumbent upon current public management research to account for differences in racial experiences in the workplace.

Data Limitations

It should be noted that there are several limitations that come from the availability of the data. While the MPS has a more detailed questions about race—in that the questions do not simply break the groupings down into minority/non-minority—the MSPB decided to only provide the data in a binary fashion. Similarly, there are questions about sexual orientation and gender identity beyond the cisgender man/woman binary, yet the data are once more left out from the dataset provided by the government. Unfortunately, the choice to withhold such data means that analyses are somewhat limited. Furthermore, it prevents scholars from looking at the how people of color and members of the LGBTQ+ community interact with their workplaces, and potentially how the intersection of multiple minority statuses influence those same lived experiences.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 3.1 reports the descriptive statistics for two groups—those that did not file a formal complaint after experiencing sexual harassment (N = 2630), and those that did (221). Before the use of logistic regression, contrary to the proposed hypotheses, it appears that the means of all

three retaliation dummy variables skew toward 0 for those who did not file formal complaints after experiencing sexual harassment. Conversely, the means indicate that those who did file complaints also knew of or experienced workplace retaliation.

Table 3.1: Descriptive Statistics

	Did Not File Formal Complaint	Did Not File Formal Complaint	Filed Formal Complaint	Filed Formal Complaint
Variables	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Whistleblowing	.19	.39	.63	.48
Grievance	.31	.46	.76	.42
Refusal	.19	.39	.56	.49
Woman	.65	.47	.67	.47
Minority Status	.35	.47	.44	.49
Supervisor	.22	.41	.23	.42
Familiar with Complaint Channels	3.73	1.06	3.91	1.13
Confident Harassment will be Resolved	2.88	1.22	2.14	1.34
Harassment Policy Is Clear	4.08	.85	3.93	1.06
Harassment Policy is Effective	3.35	1.13	2.69	1.38
Received Harassment Training	.77	.42	.73	.44
Harassment Training Clear	4.06	.79	3.88	1.07
Harassment Training Effective	3.33	1.12	2.83	1.43
Exp. Any SH	1	0	1	0
Exp. Rape	1.02	.20	1.14	.45
Exp. Stalking	1.14	.47	1.57	.82

Exp. Gendered Lang.	1.723	.86	1.89	.91
Exp. Sexual Offer	1.03	.24	1.22	.57
Exp. Sexual Convo	1.45	.76	1.62	.86
Exp. Sexual Material Exposure	1.11	.41	1.29	.66
Exp. Sexual Teasing	1.59	.81	1.79	.88
Exp. Date Pressure	1.09	.38	1.30	.66
Exp. Sexual Favor Pressure	1.04	.26	1.18	.52
Exp. Sexual Looks/Remarks	1.36	.71	1.60	.87
Exp. Invasion of Personal Space	1.71	.84	2.08	.89
Exp. Unwelcome Communication	1.28	.63	1.66	.88
	N = 2,630		N = 221	

Deciding to Report—Race-Specified Models

Table 3.2 details results for the race-separated models (which include being a woman as a variable of interest). First, retaliation for whistleblowing has no statistically significant relationship with the likelihood of filing a formal complaint for sexual harassment. Conversely, retaliation for filing a grievance has a statistically significant relationship ($p<.05$) with reporting behaviors for the full and minority models, and a somewhat statistically significant relationship (<.10) with reporting behaviors for the white model.

Table 3.2: The Effect of Workplace Retaliation on Reporting Behaviors for Sexual Harassment for White/Minority Employees

Variables	Full Model Coef.	Full Model Robust SD	White Model Coef.	White Model Robust SD	Minority Model Coef.	Minority Model Robust SD
Whistleblowing Retaliation	.79	.51	.81	.87	1.12	.75

Grievance Filing Retaliation	1.37**	.40	1.17*	.64	2.02**	.70
Refusal Retaliation	-.55	.45	-1.27*	.73	-.36	.68
Woman	.33	.31	.10	.43	.24	.52
Supervisor	-.17	.32	-.06	.44	-.57	.63
Familiar with Complaint Channels	.24	.20	.70**	.36	.03	.30
Harassment Policy Clear	-.07	.19	-.46	.29	.34	.45
Harassment Policy Effective	-.22	.19	-.25	.24	-.39	.31
Harassment Training Clear	-0.09	.18	.19	.27	-.26	.28
Harassment Training Effective	.21	.18	.24	.21	.18	.31
Harassment Held Accountable	-.09	.17	-.04	.21	-.11	.42
Confident Harassment will be Resolved	-.36**	.19	-.46*	.24	-.11	.36
Constants	-2.14**	1.10	-3.30*	1.73	-2.66	.28
Prob > Chi^2	.00		.00		.00	
Pseudo R^2	.19		.16		.33	
N	721		480		208	

=.10*

**=*.05*

Interestingly, there is a positive relationship instead of the hypothesized negative relationship. Alternatively, retaliation for refusing to violate a law/rule/regulation is negatively related to reporting behaviors, as was hypothesized. However, the relationship is only statistically significant for the white model ($p<.10$). Given these results, I am unable to find support for H1. Instead, there is no evidence to suggest that the presence of observed of experienced retaliation has any diminishing effect on filing formal complaints of sexual harassment. However, since

retaliation for filing grievances is the only reason for retaliation that is statistically significant across all three models, and has the highest coefficients, I do find support for H2, that such retaliation will be more impactful than the other two.

Similarly, I do not report any significant differences in the likelihood of reporting between men and women. While the data point to women being more likely to report harassment than men there is no statistically significant relationship across any of the models. I fail to reject the null hypothesis for H3. The same holds true for the differences in being a regular employee or a supervisor. There is not statistically significant difference in reporting behaviors between those two groups.

Interestingly, the results suggest that the relationship between workplace retaliation for filing grievances is more statistically significant for employees of color ($p<.05$) than white employees ($p<.10$). Additionally, the strength of the correlation is higher for employees of color than their white employees, but since the relationships are positive across the board, I do not find support for H4.

Across all three models, the only other non-perceptual variable that has statistical significance (.05 level) is the familiarity of the respondent with the formal complaint channels. For white employees only, there is a statistically significant positive relationship between knowing about the proper channels to report sexual harassment and actually reporting such incidents ($p<.05$).

Among the perceptual variables, only one actually shows statistical significance. In the full model ($p<.05$) and the model accounting for only white employees ($p<.10$), confidence that the sexual harassment issues will be properly resolved is significantly correlated with reporting

sexual harassment. However, this relationship is actually negative. Additionally, there is a lack of any statistically significant relationship between the effectiveness or clarity of either harassment policies or harassment trainings and reporting behavior.

Table 3.3 provides models separated by gender (and include minority status as a variable of interest). Unlike the race-specified models, there does appear to be a statistically significant relationship ($p<.10$) between workplace retaliation for whistleblowing and reporting behavior, but only for women. However, this relationship is positive, which is opposite of what was hypothesized. Retaliation for filing grievances is found to be significantly related ($p<.05$) across all three models when including minority status in the models and separating men and women employees into different models.

Deciding to Report—Gender-Specified Models

Table 3.3: The Effect of Workplace Retaliation on Reporting Behaviors for Sexual Harassment for Men/Women Employees

	Full Model	Full Model	Men Model	Men Model	Women Model	Women Model
Variables	Coef.	Robust SD	Coef.	Robust SD	Coef.	Robust SD
Whistleblowing Retaliation	.79	.52	.13	.82	1.40*	.74
Grievance Filing Retaliation	1.40**	.41	2.35**	.76	1.05**	.5
Refusal Retaliation	-.72	.45	-2.68**	.88	-.21	.6
Minority Status	.53*	.28	.19	.61	.18	.37
Supervisor	-.05	.33	-1.76*	.93	.22	.41
Familiar with Complaint Channels	.31	.2	1.50**	.59	.02	.23
Harassment Policy Clear	-.07	.19	-1.24**	.54	.16	.27
Harassment Policy Effective	-.28	.18	-.17	.45	-.24	.26

Harassment Training Clear	.03	.17	.00	.36	-.16	.22
Harassment Training Effective	.15	.17	.35	.37	.19	.24
Harassment Held Accountable	-.1	.17	-.03	.32	-.15	.24
Confident Harassment will be Resolved	-.32*	.18	-.89**	.36	-.08	.27
Constants	-2.64**	.33	-1.76	1.73	-2.45	1.52
Prob > Chi^2	.00		.00		.00	
Pseudo R^2	.2		.34		.222	
N	725		258		430	

*=.10

**=.05

Once again, however, there is a positive relationship that goes against the first provided hypothesis. Finally, retaliation for refusing to violate the law is both significantly ($p<.05$) and negatively correlated with reporting behavior. However, this relationship only appears to be statistically significant for men. Hypothesis 2—that grievance filing-based retaliation is more important for reporting behaviors than the other two given types—appears to mostly be supported.

Retaliation for filing grievances is a statistically significant ($p<.05$) part of reporting behaviors for both men and women, and indeed, it is still significant when not accounting for gender ($p<.05$). Importantly, my findings provide evidence for my third hypothesis, showing that men seem to report more than women when grievance-based retaliation is present in the organization. However, contrary to my hypothesis, I find that the relationship between retaliation for violating the law and reporting behavior is actually more negatively correlated for men (the only model in which it is statistically significant, $p<.05$) than for women. Additionally, retaliation for whistleblowing is only statistically significantly correlated with reporting behavior for

women, ($p<.10$), and the relationship is far more positive for women than for men. So, support for H3 is somewhat mixed.

While retaliation for refusing to violate the law is statistically significant, it is only statistically significant for men. On the other hand, retaliation for filing a grievance is statistically significant across all three models provided in Table 3. Minority status only appears to be significantly related to reporting behaviors in the full model that combines both men and women ($p<.10$). However, the relationship appears to be positive, which is the opposite of the expected outcome (H4).

Hypothesis 5, that the belief that workplace sexual harassment is appropriately held accountable would lead to an increased likelihood of reporting harassment, is met with zero support in the analyses across all models, including those specified by race and gender. This finding suggests that much like the first chapter of this dissertation's findings, it appears that bureaucratic reporting behavior is not influenced by the ways in which organizations' sanctioning bodies address improper behavior (either on the part of the client or the employee).

Similarly, there is minimal evidence to suggest that bureaucratic reporting behavior is influenced by clarity of sexual harassment policies or familiarity with the proper complaint channels. Hypothesis 6, that bureaucrats will be more likely to report harassment if the policies are clear, finds no support. However, there is an important caveat to this finding. The male-specified model shows a statistically significant correlation ($p<.05$) in the opposite direction than initially hypothesized. Instead, it appears that male bureaucrats are less likely to report harassment when they believe policies to be clear.

Conversely, only one of the six models (between tables 3.2 and 3.3) seems to show some support of Hypothesis 7, that familiarity with complaint channels will lead to an increased likelihood of reporting. Once more, only the model specifically looking at men seems to support the hypothesis at a statistically significant level ($p<.05$).

Unexpectedly, there are multiple other variables in the models that only appear to be statistically significant for male employees. Supervisor status the perceived clarity of harassment policies, and confidence that harassment will be resolved are all negatively statistically correlated with reporting behaviors ($p<.05$), but such a relationship is not present among women employees or in the gender-inclusive model. Conversely, men appear to be more likely to report sexual harassment when they are familiar with complaint channels ($p<.05$). However, once again, this relationship does not appear in the full or women-only models.

Discussion

The positive relationship between workplace retaliation for grievance filing and reporting behavior is unexpected. The work presented in this paper was done under the assumption that a retaliatory culture would hinder reporting, as the potential for reprisal against reporters would seemingly be more present. One possible explanation for the discrepancy between the hypothesis and analysis could be temporal. The data collected in the MPS does not provide directionality for which happened first, workplace retaliation or reporting sexual harassment, so I cannot say if the retaliation occurred before reporting took place. It could be that the reporting of sexual harassment took place before respondents experienced workplace harassment. If that is the case, it could be that those who report sexual harassment are then facing retaliation as a result of that action. However, the survey does not ask about if reporters then faced retaliation for that specific report, so I cannot draw a definite conclusion here.

The positive nature and potential directionality issues of the aforementioned relationship does not affect the second hypothesis. In both the race-specified and gender-specified models, workplace retaliation for filing grievances consistently has a stronger statistical relationship with reporting behavior than retaliation for whistleblowing. This result falls in line with the second hypothesis, suggesting that the reporting behavior (when following the formal complaint channels) is internal. External reporting (whistleblowing) does not necessarily have an effect on internal disciplinary actions, so it makes sense that I see a stronger correlation with grievance-based retaliation. Additionally, as there is no reporting behavior involved in retaliation for refusing to violate the law, it once more stands to reason that such retaliation would play less of a role in shaping reporting behavior than retaliation for filing a grievance.

Results suggesting that employees of color may actually report sexual harassment at higher levels than white employees go against H4. However, this result seems to track with prior work done on reporting behaviors by Yu (2022), who found that women of color in law enforcement were more likely to report sex-based discrimination than white women. As Yu suggests, such results could indicate that "Women of Color are more used to having to stand up for themselves and bearing the associated fear and stigma when faced with the decision to report" (2022, 587). My own findings seem to extend this possibility to men of color as well.

The negative relationship between male bureaucrats reporting workplace harassment and the perception that sexual harassment policies are clear could potentially be for one of two reasons (outside of methodological error). The first is that, perhaps, there is a *worse* understanding of sexual harassment policies among male bureaucrats. This potential misunderstanding could suggest an issue with training, or perhaps male bureaucrats are simply conditioned to not pay as close attention to sexual harassment policies in the workplace. On the

other hand, perhaps male bureaucrats believe that the policies are specifically geared toward women's issues and may not believe that the policies apply to men in the same manner.

The recurring notion that (excluding times of disruptions to the status quo) bureaucratic reporting behaviors are not influenced by perceptions of the appropriateness of sanctions against misconduct is striking. I believe that the similar findings in this chapter with such a large-n dataset potentially lends more credence, then, to the findings of the previous two chapters. In both Chapter One and Chapter Three, perceptions of sanctioning appropriateness were not correlated with an increased likelihood of reporting misconduct. Meanwhile, in Chapter Two, reporting behavior *was* significantly increased given those same perceptions of appropriate sanction during times of punctuation. Taken together, these findings further illustrate the disrupting nature of punctuations on organizations and bureaucratic behavior.

Lastly, my findings indicate that workplace retaliation is a significant factor in reporting behavior for both men and women. Once more it appears that grievance filing-based retaliation is far more statistically significant across the board. I find that for such retaliation, the relationship with reporting behavior indicates that men will report sexual harassment more frequently than women in such a workplace. This result follows work by Prysmakova and Evans (2022), which finds that women are less likely to report misconduct than men. However, my findings for whistleblowing-based retaliation and retaliation for refusing to break the law both show relationships to the contrary. The notion that men might be less likely to report misconduct after experiencing/witnessing retaliation is potentially supported in work done by Winstok (2006), which found that there the tendency for perpetrators to escalate situations and act aggressively toward men is higher than when acting toward women (see also: Rosander and Salin 2023). The mixed results for hypothesis 3 may suggest that further specification ought to have been done

(perhaps H3a, H3b, and H3c), and that the substantive theoretical implications need to be investigated further.

Conclusion and Directions for Future Research

Organizations need to be free of retaliation in order for employees to be able to report issues in their workplace. However, extant literature in public administration has seemingly overlooked the potential role of workplace retaliation in influencing whether or not employees report sexual harassment. Because public managers play such an important role in shaping the directions and outcomes of organizations (O'Toole and Meier 1999), as properly managing and handling employee grievances (including but not limited to sexual harassment complaints) is a major part of keeping organizations working smoothly and efficiently (Naagar 2024), the actions that managers take in the day-to-day operations of their organizations actively influence the actions that their employees later take when dealing with sexual harassment.

While I hypothesized that retaliation would actively depress reporting behaviors, my initial findings indicate that workplace retaliation may actually lead to heightened reporting behavior. These findings suggest that another variable is mediating the interaction of workplace retaliation and reporting sexual harassment in a way that appears to encourage reporting behaviors in more hostile environments. I also find that familiarity with formal complaint channels is positively related to reporting behaviors, as hypothesized, and that familiarity with formal complaint channels is significantly and positively correlated with the clarity and efficacy of both sexual harassment trainings and policies. The implications for practice here are straightforward: employees will report sexual harassment when they are provided the tools to do so.

It should be noted that these findings are applicable to the sample of federal employees sampled by the 2021 MPS. As mentioned earlier in the paper, these employees worked almost exclusively for cabinet-level and large federal agencies (and two smaller agencies). Therefore, the results detailed in this study may or more not be generalizable to the larger population of federal employees, public personnel at other levels of government, nonprofit employees, or workers in the private sector. The venues of the federal agencies may not be perfect for generalizing to all workplaces. However, the data used here were readily available from the federal government, providing an excellent opportunity to examine the relationships of interest. It is possible that said relationship between workplace retaliation and reporting behavior is similarly positive across multiple venues, but it could easily be negative, or even nonexistent. Future scholars should test these relationships in state and local agencies, nonprofits, and private sector organizations.

Lastly, one overlooked aspect of this study is compliance and HR personnel themselves. Current literature on workplace harassment and retaliation has found, with significant evidence, that there are minimal protections for compliance officers in the realm of Equal Employment Opportunity (Boles, Eisenstadt, and Pacella 2025). More specifically, there is considerable retaliation directed at those who are charged with handling employee grievances in the workplace. This increased retaliation would, of course, theoretically lead to different behaviors among said compliance officers, which in turn could create different outcomes for reporters of workplace harassment, and thus lead to hypothetical changes in the way employees choose to

report/not report sexual harassment. However, the survey data used in this chapter do not mention anything specifically directed at EEO officers and their experiences.[10]

As stated earlier, there are numerous limitations in the presently available data. While the MSPB collected data on specific racial, gender, and sexual orientation demographics, these data were not made available for research. I think more nuanced results could be gathered from a discussion of how different racial groups exist in organizations. There is also a distinct lack of research in public administration on the LGBTQ+ community, especially transgender populations. As the data exist in the 2021 MPS, future research needs to attempt to get demographic data from the MSPB. While in this paper I attempt to frame the reasons for why I might expect to see differences in the reporting behaviors of white employees and employees of color, and examine how those same behaviors differ between men and women, the intersectional nature of these lived experiences (in conjunction with those of the LGBTQ+ community) is simply impossible to fully bring to light unless future scholars are able to get the requisite (and again, already collected) data. Blessett et al (2019) note the importance of intersectional work in public administration. However, the field seemingly still struggles to figure out how to actually fit intersectionality into practice. Data collection is difficult, and even publicly available data are only partially reported, as was the case with the racial data in the MPS.

Additionally, in this paper, I look only at the presence of retaliation in the workplace. Therefore, I collapsed experiencing retaliation into a dummy variable. However, there may be differences in reporting behaviors based off of whether an individual experienced retaliation personally, or they simply know that it occurred in their workplace.

[10] Is should also be noted that this research by Boles, Eisenstadt, and Pacella (2025) came out after the first iteration of this paper, as it was presented in April of 2024.

It also should be noted that the MPS is a massive data set, as evidenced by the fact that numerous other studies use these data (albeit for other years' surveys). There are still more questions that these data can be used to answer. In the future, researchers should attempt to examine the relationship between employee perceptions of how workplaces handle cases of sexual harassment and actual reporting behaviors of supervisors and managers who are aware of said sexual harassment in the workplace. Work from Callier (2021), Hameduddin and Lee (2023), and Yu and Lee (2019) all show that authority plays a major impact on the workplace in regard to reporting behaviors and sexual harassment. However, less work has compared the realities of reporting behavior versus employee perceptions. Similarly, while Hameduddin and Lee (2023) examine employee engagement and its relationship with perceived supervisory support, I would like to examine how employees perceive the appropriateness of the actions that supervisors/managers take against sexual harassment offenders in the workplace.

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