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Why police officers and labor inspectors (do not) blow the whistle: A grid group cultural theory perspective.

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to offer and test a theoretical framework that can be used to (1) identify different styles of peer reporting, and (2) explain why police officers and labour inspectors (do not) report peers' misconduct.

Design/methodology/approach: A conceptual framework is developed that identifies underlying mechanisms of peer reporting. It aims to be an alternative for the blue code of silence literature and the general whistleblowing studies which have a number of disadvantages. This newly developed framework is then tested in a qualitative research project in the police and the labour inspection in a West-European country.

Findings: This paper concludes that, in the four agencies, the individualistic type of keeping silent is often preferred when confronted with colleagues' misbehaviour, but in exceptional situations respondent decide to report colleagues' misbehaviour to their boss in a fatalistic or individualistic way. This can probably be explained by the low group (and, thus, fatalistic or individualistic) working context. As for the police, the respondents are 'case officers' that are solely responsible for the success of their investigations. As for the labour inspection, the respondents enjoy wide discretion and autonomy in their investigations. In the labour inspections a hierarchical silence code can be found among inspectors with low seniority.

Research limitations and implications: This qualitative study is an exploratory study, aimed at theory-building by developing hypotheses which need to be tested in future research. It is, thus, not aimed at making generalisations to other police agencies or labour inspections.

Practical implications: Grid group cultural theory could inspire practitioners who want to implement whistleblowing policies by recommending that whistleblowing measures, to be effective, should be adapted to organisational characteristics and the prevalent whistleblowing behaviour.

Originality/value: This paper offers a new theoretical framework to analyse and explain peer reporting in the police and other professional groups, and, thus, not only enriches the police culture literature, but also enables comparative research.

1.   Introduction

The blue code of silence literature describes that police officers are often reluctant to report on colleagues' misconduct as a result of a deep-rooted solidarity in the police (Kleinig, 2001). It is based on the premise that silence codes are typical for the police, and not as prevalent in other professional groups. This is, however, an empirical statement that needs to be tested. The police culture literature does, however, not offer the theoretical framework to conduct this kind of comparative research. Hence, an alternative theoretical perspective needs to be looked for to investigate whether parallels can be found between the police and other, comparable, professional groups with regard to their reporting behaviour. The general whistleblowing and peer reporting studies could be an alternative in the sense that they identify correlations between different variables (both individual and structural) and whistleblowing in various organisational settings. They, however, fail to fully capture the processes that underlie the decisions to report, and can, thus, not really explain whistleblowing. This paper argues that grid group cultural theory – although it has not been specifically developed to study whistleblowing behaviour – could be used to identify different reporting styles and to analyse the underlying mechanisms that could explain why organisation members (do not) report peers' misconduct, both in the police and in other professional groups.

This paper consists of four parts. First, the blue code of silence is discussed as part of the wider police culture literature, after which the perspective is broadened by looking at the more general whistleblowing and peer reporting studies. Second, the GGCT-framework is explained in general and applied to the topic of peer reporting. In the third part, the newly developed conceptual framework is applied in a study on the police and labour inspection in a West-European country. The paper ends with a number of conclusions.

2.   Silence codes and whistleblowing

The blue code of silence in the police culture literature

The code of silence is known by many different names, like e.g., blue wall, curtain, veil or cocoon (Kleinig, 2001: 2) and has been defined in multiple ways (Smith, 1973; Chin & Wells, 1998; Manning & Van Maanen, 1978). Most authors agree on two aspects of the blue code. First, although it is an unwritten rule, it is considered a moral imperative. Second, it is firmly rooted in police loyalty and solidarity. The police are perceived as a brotherhood or a family-like institution (Chin et al., 1998; Rothwell & Baldwin, 2007: 611) in which telling on someone or 'snitching' is perceived as a betrayal. Loyalty has to be understood in at least two ways. On the one hand, there is the immediate solidarity between individual front-line officers who mutually cover up misconduct, strengthening their relationship and future cooperation. On the other hand, there is the loyalty towards the organisation as a whole. Silence can be beneficial for police agencies because it avoids public embarrassment that disclosures about *"mistakes, misguided policies, [and] cover-ups"* (Van Maanen, 1978: 319) would entail.

Loyalty and solidarity are, however, not the only reasons why the code of silence can flourish in police organisations. At least four other explanations are distinguished in the police culture literature: (1) fear of retaliation, (2) negative deal-making, (3) perceived lack of support from management, and (4) 'tunnel vision' induced by the 'war' against crime and the internal pressure to get results. First, some researchers highlight a number of potential negative consequences for those who snitch in terms of social, career, physical and psychological costs (Kleinig, 1996; Trautman, 2001). To prevent retaliation many police officers decide not to report on their colleagues' misbehaviour. Second, covering up misconduct could be the result of some form of negative deal-making in the police. Because police officers are often well-informed about each other's misconduct, they are prone to make implicit deals not to tell anyone (Skolnick, 2002: 12). Hence, everyone keeps quiet in their own interest. A third factor in the literature is the perceived lack of support from management. Officers tend to view their managers as highly punitive, inclined to punish them for small procedural errors (Westmarland, 2005: 162; Walker, 1977). Hence, they have to 'lie low' or 'fly under the radar' (Paoline, Myers, & Worden, 2000: 578), and adopt a 'cover one's ass attitude' because one can't trust bosses to look out for one's interests (Kappeler, Sluder, & Alpert, 2001; Chevigny, 1995). The fourth explanation for the code of silence is closely linked to 'noble cause' corruption and the 'Dirty Harry'[1] problem (Klockars, 1983). Misbehaviour by police officers is then put into a different, more positive, perspective because it leads to beneficial results (e.g., a conviction or a confession). In other words, police officers sometimes apply the 'end justifies the means' principle in the sense that dubious actions can be justified by their potential outcomes.

An interesting, but somewhat troubling, observation is that the police culture literature is based on two implicit assumptions about the blue code of silence. First, there is the assumption that the blue code, and more broadly, the classic conception of police culture exists and prevails in all – or at least the majority of – police departments across the world. Second, one assumes that the code of silence is typical for the police, meaning that in other professions it is not as prevalent as in the police. These are, however, empirical statements, that need to be challenged and tested in genuine empirical research.

As for the first assumption, there is some evidence that a blue code of silence exists in police organisations. This, on the one hand, based on investigations into police corruption in the United States (Knapp, 1973; Mollen, 1994; Christopher, 1991) and Australia (Fitzgerald, 1989; Wood Royal Commission, 1997), and, on the other, based on a number of empirical studies (Punch, 1985; Skolnick,

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[1] The movie 'Dirty Harry,' tells the story of a young woman was has been kidnapped by a psychopathic killer who wants to exchange her for ransom. 'Dirty' Harry Callahan has been assigned the case, and through an illegal entry, he finds the kidnapper, after which he brutally interrogates him until he provides the location of the kidnapped woman. The woman was nevertheless found dead. The movie ends with Callahan killing the kidnapper to prevent his return to society. Hence, in this example, 'noble cause rule breaking' occurs three times: (1) in the illegal entry, (2) in the torture of the kidnapper, and (3) in killing the perpetrator (based on Klockars, 1983 and Crank et al., 2007).

2002; Klockars, Ivkovich, Harver, & Haberfield, 2000; Klockars, Ivkovic, & Haberfeld, 2004; Westmarland, 2005). Most research on the blue code, however, seems to overstate the extent to which the code of silence is part of the occupational culture of the police. Arguably this can vary substantially between different departments, districts, ranks and regions. This is closely linked to the discussion about the idea of a universal, homogeneous and unchanging culture in the police. Many scholars in the field have criticized this monolithic approach, considering it too simplistic and stereotypical (Scripture, 1997; Harrison, 1998; Reiner, 2000; Paoline, 2003; Waddington, 1999; Chan, 1996). This is also confirmed in empirical studies that provide evidence of differences in police occupational culture according to rank (Reuss-Ianni, 1983; Manning, 1994), organisational context (Paoline, 2003; Chan, 1997; Waddington, 1999), and individual officer characteristics (Wilson, 1968; Brown, 1981; Reiner, 1992; Herbert, 1998; Broderick, 1977; Muir, 1977). Arguably, the same could be true for the blue code. Hence, more comparative research is needed to identify how the code of silence is manifested in different police departments.

The second basic assumption is even more contestable. There are indications which raise strong doubts as to the typicality of the code of silence in the police compared to other professions, or differently put, the 'blueness' of the 'blue code'. Skolnick states that, despite the fact that in all occupations – ranging from doctors and lawyers to office workers – a certain degree of inclusiveness, loyalty and mutual support can be observed, police show an *"unusually high degree of occupational solidarity"* (Skolnick, 1975: 96) in a *"tightly woven environment conducive to the development of feelings of loyalty"* (Skolnick, 2002: 8). Therefore, the code of silence in the police would presumably be stronger than in other occupations (see also: Gaines, 1994; Kleinig, 2001). In yet another publication, Skolnick and Fyfe (1993) put forward that the literature may overemphasize the typicality of the silence code in the police because of the intense media scrutiny and relatively high ethical standards for this specific profession. Different researchers confirm that silence codes are also present in occupations that are not as closely looked at by the media (Rothwell et al., 2007; Westmarland, 2005; Wright, 2010) and that silence codes are even more prominent in these other professions than in the police. Wright (2010: 339), for example, compared civilian police staff with mostly administrative tasks and police officers regarding the extent to which both professional groups were inclined to report misconduct of their colleagues. His conclusion was that civilian police staff were less likely to report their colleagues' misbehaviour, possibly indicating a stronger code of silence than among sworn police officers. These results are comparable to previous findings that civilian employees of the State of Georgia (US) were less likely to blow the whistle when confronted with misbehaviour in the organisation than police officers in the same region (Rothwell et al., 2007). Still, further comparative research is needed to reach more decisive conclusions. The problem is, however, that the theoretical framework in the police culture literature does not offer the necessary tools for this. To enable this kind of comparative research a more profession-neutral framework should be applied. Hence, in the next part the perspective will be broadened to the general peer reporting and whistleblowing literature.

Peer reporting in the whistleblowing literature

There is a massive body of literature on the broader topic of whistleblowing that shows a lack of consensus about what the concept means and what its main components are. Based on Jubb (1999) and Vandekerckhove (2006: 22), seven elements of ambiguity in the whistleblowing definitions can be identified: act, actor, outcome, motive, subject, target and recipient. Clearly the most cited definition, is Near's and Miceli's one who describe whistleblowing as *"the disclosure by organisation members (former or current) of illegal, immoral or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers, to persons or organisations that may be able to affect action"* (1985: 4). This definition implies three significant choices. First, it includes internal whistleblowing (reporting to internal members of the organisation) and external whistleblowing (reporting to a person or agency outside the organisation), because the authors claim to have identified the same mechanisms that explain both. Second, they assume that whistleblowing behaviour only occurs when there is some *"reasonable supposition of success"* (Near & Miceli, 1996: 510), meaning that one reports to someone who is able to terminate the wrongdoing. This seems to imply that whistleblowing for purely vindictive reasons is not included in the definition. Third, they present whistleblowing as a type of prosocial behaviour (Dozier & Miceli, 1985: 823), meaning that it is not an act of pure altruism, but it involves both egoistic and altruistic motives in which advantages and disadvantages, for the person and others, are balanced. Hence, self-centred behaviour that is only aimed at avoiding complicity can be viewed as part of the definition (Jubb, 1999: 82). Evans (2008: 270) does not concur with the latter, considering *"a sense of righteousness and a belief in self-sacrifice for the common good"* key traits of whistleblowing. These disagreements fit into a broader conceptual discussion about the question whether to include motive in the definition or not. Johnston (cited in Elliston et al., 1985: 7) made the decision to exclude motives, because they may be mixed and unclear. Jubb (1999: 89) agrees with the latter and, therefore, omits motive from his definition with the argument: *"A patriot or a sheep […] remain what they are even if a spy or a wolf can assume their mantle. Indeed misrepresenting motive is the very thing that makes the deception work."* Others, like Bowie and Duska (1990: 74), De Maria (1999) and De George (cited in Elliston et al., 1985, p. 17), unambiguously state that whistleblowing is done from a moral motive.

Empirical, mostly quantitative, research in this tradition has led to the conclusion that a number of individual, situational and organisational factors can have an impact on whistleblowing intentions or behaviour (see e.g., King and Hermodson, 2000; Near and Miceli, 1996; Jos et al., 1989). It is not our intention to go into detail about the results, but three important remarks should be made. First, although interesting, the empirical findings in different studies do not seem to be completely consistent or conclusive (Near et al., 1996: 515). Hence continuing research is necessary. Second, there seems to be a twofold gap in the empirical research so far. On the one hand, most studies, using surveys or vignettes, respectively focus on what people say they did in the past or what they would do in hypothetical situations, and – due to distortion, forgetting and social desirability bias – that is

not necessarily the same as what they actually did or would do when faced with a particular situation (Miceli, Near, & Dworkin, 2009; Miceli & Near, 1992: 41-42). More importantly, although quantitative studies are interesting to identify correlations between variables that affect whistleblowing, they do not suffice to fully capture the processes that underlie the decision to report (Dworkin & Baucus, 1998: 1283). Hence, qualitative research is needed to gain more insight into the underlying mechanisms that could explain whistleblowing processes (Maesschalck & Ornelis, 2003: 539). Third, peer reporting is in the literature considered a special type of whistleblowing that is more delicate and value-laden than any other form of whistleblowing because it evokes stronger and more emotional reactions than other types of reporting (Treviño & Victor, 1992: 40; King & Hermodson, 2000: 312). The question is then whether or not empirical findings concerning internal and external whistleblowing could unproblematically be applied to peer reporting. In other words, it is difficult to know which conclusions could be adopted from the general whistleblowing literature to explain decisions whether or not to report to report colleagues' misbehaviour. Because empirical studies that specifically focus on peer reporting are limited, further research is necessary to reach more decisive conclusions (Victor, Treviño, & Shapiro, 1993: 259-260; de Graaf, 2010: 770).

3. *Peer reporting from a grid group cultural theory perspective*

We now return to the central topic of interest in this paper: the search for a theoretical framework that is specifically suitable to study peer reporting in the police, but that is also general enough to compare whistleblowing behaviour in the police and other professional groups. The literature review above shows that the concept of the blue code of silence in the police culture literature, although interesting, does not offer the necessary tools for comparing different professional groups, rendering it almost impossible to test its assumption of the typicality of a silence code in the police. The more general whistleblowing literature could be an interesting alternative, but has a number of disadvantages as well (see above). Hence, an alternative theoretical framework will be looked for, following Morrison (2009: 345) who states that *"it may be time for some new theoretical models or perspectives that will inspire scholars to think about whistleblowing in a new way and thereby help to generate the added research energy that seems to push this area further."*

This part presents grid group cultural theory (further referred to as GGCT) as a general theoretical framework that can be applied to the topic of peer reporting in the police, trying to combine the advantages and account for the disadvantages of the theories discussed in the previous parts. More in particular, the argument will be made that the GGCT framework (1) can capture causal processes that underlie peer reporting, (2) is feasible for comparative research on this topic, and (3) can be applied to explain both why individuals in an organisation blow the whistle – which is the central research question in whistleblowing studies – and why they decide not to report – which is typical in studies on the blue code of silence.

First, the theory and its causal claims will be explained. Second, the framework will be further developed by applying it to the topic of peer reporting, elaborating on the work of Evans (2008) who, for the first time, made an effort to 'translate' GGCT in whistleblowing terms. We will, however, not use Evans' definition of whistleblowing – for reasons explained later – but Treviño's and Victor's (1992: 39) approach of peer reporting that occurs "*when group members go outside their group to report a member's misconduct.*"

Two dimensions, four cultural types

GGCT was originally developed by anthropologist Mary Douglas (1982), but subsequently applied in different research domains, like public administration (Thompson, Ellis, & Wildavsky, 1990; Jensen, 1998; Maesschalck, 2004) and other social sciences (e.g., Douglas, 1987; Hendriks, 1999; Mars, 1982; Schwarz & Thompson, 1990). The framework provides a typology for a number of (sub)cultures or ways of organizing (Mamadouh, 1999), based on two dimensions: 'grid' and 'group'. The grid dimension refers to the extent to which an individual's life is bounded by externally imposed formal rules, prescriptions and regulations. The more grid, the less of life is open to individual negotiation (Thompson et al., 1990: 5). The extent to which grid is experienced as excessively restrictive depends on the level of group affiliation (Vaughan, 2002: 413). Group stands for the incorporation of an individual into a bounded unit of actors or the extent to which individual choice is constrained by group choice (Hood, 1998: 8). In other words, group refers to the extent to which commitment to a social unit constrains the way people think and behave (Verweij et al., 2006: 819).

The two dimensions can be put together in a matrix as shown in table 1 below. Four ways of organising can then be identified, that can each be high or low grid/group bound: hierarchy (high grid, high group), egalitarianism (low grid, high group), individualism (low grid, low group), and fatalism (high grid, low group). Some researchers add a fifth way of organizing that implies autonomy by withdrawal from social control in general (the hermit) (Thompson et al., 1990: 8), but this will not be included in this contribution.

Table 1: Two dimensions and four types in GGCT

	Low group	*High group*
High grid	**FATALISM** *Central idea*: Individuals are bounded by a system of rules that is beyond their control. *Conflicts* can be dealt with if you are lucky; just try to survive. *Risk* of inertia and the unwillingness to plan ahead or take necessary measures.	**HIERARCHY** *Central idea*: Rules prescribe roles and responsibilities within a well-defined group. *Conflicts* can be dealt with by referring to rules and authority. *Risk* of misplaced trust in procedural rules and authority.
Low grid	**INDIVIDUALISM**	**EGALITARIANISM**

	Central idea: Individuals are entrepreneurs that operate in a competitive environment. *Conflicts* can be dealt with by one-on-one negotiation and bargaining. *Risk* of chaos due to a lack of cooperation and tendency to put the individual above the common good.	*Central idea*: Everyone is equal and should cooperate for the welfare of the group. *Conflicts* can be dealt with by group negotiation in order to reach consensus. *Risk* of inefficient decision making and even disruption of the group.

Hierarchy is characterized by high grid and high group. In this cultural type formal rules prescribe roles and positions, while the group attachment provides legitimacy for the organisational stratification (O'Riordan & Jordan, 1999). Hence, status is derived from one's position in a well-defined group (Breed, 2007: 70). The central assumption in hierarchy is that each individual has its place and role with accompanying responsibilities. Conflicts can only be solved by referring to legitimate rules and authority. The world is considered controllable, which is enhanced by standard operating procedures that result in routinisation (Rayner, 1986: 579). Because problems can, however, not always be solved with rules or procedures, and the world is not entirely controllable, this organisational culture is not without limitations (e.g., misplaced trust in procedural rules and authority).

In egalitarianism grid is low, while group is high. This means that in this cultural type not formal rules and procedures are central, as in hierarchy, but deliberation and group negotiation in order to reach consensus (Rayner, 1986: 581; Smullen, 2007: 54). Within the group, solidarity is highly valued and individual interests are subjected to the welfare of the group (Rayner, 1986: 581). The central assumption in egalitarianism is that all individuals in the group are equal (Breed, 2007: 71) and authoritative systems should be distrusted leading to the premise of collective decision making (Jensen, 1998: 53; Smullen, 2007). Despite the admirable idea that decisions should be made collectively and conflicts can be solved with group negotiation, consensus is not always feasible, which could lead to deficient decision making processes or even a disruption of the group into smaller subgroups of like-minded individuals (Jensen, 1998: 122).

Individualism can be described as low grid and low group. This gives an individualistic culture market-like characteristics, implying a competitive environment where everyone works hard to develop skills that are necessary to get results (Rayner, 1986: 576). Individuals are considered strategic entrepreneurs that operate within performance-oriented organisations where status is derived from personal skills and efforts (Hood, 1998: 109-118; Smullen, 2007: 52). Individualistic organisations stimulate the strive for self-interest (Verweij et al., 2006: 820) and competition rather than cooperation (Rayner, 1986: 581). The latter does not mean that there is no interaction with others. Ego-focused networks are developed from the opportunistic perspective of getting individual results, using tit-for-that strategies to make deals. Conflicts are dealt with by bargaining practices and one-

on-one negotiation. Undiluted individualism could, however, lead to an aggressive struggle of the fittest, as Thompsons and others (1990: 87) say: *"Without some modicum of hierarchy to make rules and to enforce contracts, unmitigated self-regulation leads to chaos."*

Fatalism, characterized as high grid and low group, is a special type. It is often considered a passive way of life, distinguished from the three active ones in GGCT. Central in a fatalistic culture is that individuals are (or feel) highly bound by a system of externally imposed formal rules that is beyond their control, and against which they cannot take collective action, due to a lack of group affiliations (Vaughan, 2002: 416). The fatalistic world is considered a lottery, characterized by unpredictability and pure chance, where fairness is not to be found. Hence, trying to survive is the only strategy to cope with fatalism (O'Riordan et al., 1999: 87; Breed, 2007: 71), leading to the unwillingness to plan ahead or take drastic measures when necessary. Despite the fact that fatalism seems to imply a highly negative organisational culture that is in no way useful or necessary to adhere to, Hood (1998: 28, 159, 161) highlights some of its positive aspects by referring to managerial instruments that have built-in elements of randomness, like random compliance checks and firewall arrangements in which related parts of decision making are separated in order to prevent corruption. Moreover, fatalism can be a valuable perspective to cope with the unavoidable impotence of front-line officers to find solutions for every single issue, which is obviously not feasible. In other words, it can deliver individuals from the burden of the world's problems on their back by introducing some form of acquiescence.

Causal claims of grid group cultural theory

GGCT is based on three important causal claims. The first causal claim is that the four cultural types explained above shape the behaviour and values of staff members or, in other words, *"[a]s people organise, so they will behave"* (Thompson et al., 1990: 97). This has been referred to as the compatibility proposition. Applied to the topic of this paper this means that the type of peer reporting in the organisation is influenced by organisational factors (e.g., leadership style, punishment and reward systems…), in such a way that a higher grid/bound reporting style can be explained by higher grid/group bound organisational factors.

The second causal claim is the requisite variety proposition. It implies that the four cultural types are in constant competition with each other for dominance, but each type needs the other *"to define itself against"* (Maesschalck, 2004: 31). In other words, they are *"self-defined adversarially"* (David, Johnson, & Ohmer, 1998: 104). As a result *"all four [cultural] types are at least potentially and usually actually, always present"* (Maesschalck, 2004: 31) in a given social unit.

Closely linked to the requisite variety proposition, the third causal claim states that each cultural type has its own built-in weaknesses or blind-spots that, taken seperately, might lead to negative consequences or excesses (Hood, 1998). Hierarchy could for example lead to rule-fetishism, egalitarianism to schism, individualism to anarchy and fatalism to desperation (Schwartz, 1991: 765). Only by combining them in a settlement these weaknesses can be compensated for by the strengths

of the other types (Maesschalck, 2004) as necessary voices in the discussion (Pollock, Lilie, & Vittes, 1993; Thompson & Rayner, 1998). This proposition has been referred to as socio-cultural viability (6, 2003: 398). Hence, the argument is that for an agency to be viable all types of organisational patterns (i.e., hierarchy, egalitarianism, individualism and fatalism) should be present to some extent to correct for each others built-in weaknesses. If one of them is lacking there will be a disequilibrium that could even threaten the survival of the organisational system.

Four types of (not) reporting colleagues' misconduct in grid group cultural theory

GGCT framework has already been applied in many disciplines and in different research settings. Arguably it can also shed some light on reasons why police officers and members from other professional groups (do not) blow the whistle on their peers' misbehaviour. Inspiration is drawn from the work of Anthony Evans (2008), who achieved to use this theory in the domain of whistleblowing. His contribution is twofold. On the one hand, he managed to translate the cultural types into whistleblowing terms, identifying one reporting style (i.e., egalitarian whistleblowing) and three styles of deciding not to blow the whistle (i.e., hierarchical, individualistic and fatalistic decisions not to blow the whistle). On the other hand, he demonstrated how GGCT can be used to explain the failure of most management tools in dealing with dissent, making the link between organisational factors and whistleblowing behaviour.

The approach in this paper is somewhat different, because it is based on the assumption that in all four cultural types different styles of (not) reporting can be identified. This disagreement is mainly due to conceptual differences, in the sense that Evans' (2008) definition of whistleblowing is stricter than the definition of peer reporting in this paper. Being counterintuitive, this statement needs some clarification. Although peer reporting is often considered a subtype of the more general whistleblowing behaviour (that is addressed in Evans' work), it seems that Evans' (2008: 270) interpretation of whistleblowing is very specific. His definition of a whistleblower is restricted to individuals with two key traits: (1) *"a degree of empowerment – a willingness to challenge people in a position of authority […] weak grid"* and (2) *"a sense of righteousness – a belief in self-sacrifice for the common good […] high group"*. This interpretation logically leads to the conclusion that whistleblowing is an egalitarian act, which is in accordance with the interpretation of Hood (1998: 26) who considers whistleblowing one possible egalitarian response to public-management disasters, next to participation and communitarianism. This paper attempts to broaden the perspective by trying to identify other styles of reporting and not reporting. As there are four ways of organizing, arguably, there are also four ways of deciding whether or not to blow the whistle on colleagues' misbehaviour, each of them being more or less grid/group bound (see table 2 below). Hence, we follow the approach of Treviño and Victor (1992: 39), because it allows for analysing all types of decisions individuals make when they *"go outside their group to report a member's misconduct"*.

Table 2: Four types of (not) reporting colleagues' misconduct in GGCT

	Low group	*High group*
High grid	**FATALISM** *Peer reporting*: You don't have a lot of choice, because you could get punished if you don't report. What if they find out you knew about it? *No peer reporting*: It is not any of my business and being a snitch would only make life more difficult.	**HIERARCHY** *Peer reporting*: Reporting is in line with orders, rules and procedures, and it is your responsibility to do it; escalating concerns through the chain of command. *No peer reporting*: It is not your role to report; you are a team player who does not want to rock the boat.
Low grid	**INDIVIDUALISM** *Peer reporting*: Strategic, opportunistic behaviour aimed at personal benefits (e.g., career planning). *No peer reporting*: Opportunistic behaviour aimed at personal benefits; keep quiet for your own sake (e.g., negative deal-making, precautions for the future).	**EGALITARIANISM** *Peer reporting*: We are the pure ones who should ban the bad ones or the 'rotten apple' (sense of righteousness); behaviour harms the group. *No peer reporting*: Unethical behaviour is not framed as unethical; group loyalty is more important.

First, the hierarchical style of peer reporting is characterized by the idea that reporting is in line with orders, formal rules and procedures. Individuals feel it is their role and their responsibility to blow the whistle when they see a colleague misbehave. The high grid aspect in this behavioural style refers to the idea that procedures need to be followed and responsibility needs to be taken. Because there is also high group, the organisation members endorse this viewpoint. Everyone plays his part and agrees upon the unequal distribution of power and responsibility in the organisation. Hence, procedures, roles and responsibilities are considered to be part of a fair system that should be maintained, if necessary even at the expense of the individual. If one wants to report on colleague's misconduct in a hierarchical organisation, one has to follow the procedures of escalating concerns through the chain of command. According to Evans' (2008) interpretation there is no hierarchical way of blowing the whistle, because he defines it as *"the unauthorized revelation of wrongdoing"* (Evans, 2008: 268). In other words, if one follows organisational whistleblowing procedures – e.g., by going through the chain of command – Evans (2008) does not consider it an unauthorized act and, thus, not whistleblowing. In this paper, all types of reporting are included, even those where official procedures are followed. Hence, a hierarchical style of peer reporting makes sense. This idea of whistleblowing in the sense of following duty is connected to what Near and Miceli (1996: 511) call role-prescribed forms of reporting, referring to instances where individuals consider it their role responsibility to report wrongdoing. Implementing specific clauses in the code of ethics which emphasize that whistleblowing is part of all organisation members' role-responsibility can increase the likelihood of reporting (Treviño et al., 1992; Wren, 1985). Hierarchy also implies that there is a sense of fairness

about the system and internal procedures, which is in accordance with the findings in empirical research that individuals are more inclined to report misconduct when they perceive the organisation to be more just (Near et al., 1996: 511), or, in other words, when they think the organisation has a higher intensity of procedural and retributive justice (Victor et al., 1993).

The hierarchical decision not to blow the whistle on colleagues' misbehaviour is inspired by the idea that it is *not* one's role or responsibility to do so. When this style of not reporting is applied one refers to other individuals within the organisation whose job descriptions include whistleblowing, like for example an internal auditor. Evans (2008: 270) states that the hierarchical decision not to blow the whistle could also be induced by the perception that the individual in the organisation has to be a 'team-player' who *"would not want to rock the boat"*.

Second, there is also an egalitarian style of peer reporting. This type of whistleblowing is induced by the idea of uprightness and virtuousness. The whistleblower is convinced that he is a pure one who should ban the bad ones, because one rotten apple can spoil the whole barrel. He is also willing to self-sacrifice for the common good. This is the type of whistleblowing that Evans (2008: 270) refers to: acts that express empowerment and a sense of righteousness. The reporting act is in accordance with a higher moral code (Hood & Jackson, 1991). A slightly less noble egalitarian way of reporting is the disclosure of one group member's misconduct because the behaviour harms the group. Empirical findings suggest that peer reporting intentions will be higher when the misbehaviour is perceived as harmful for the group (e.g., Treviño et al., 1992; Victor et al., 1993). The latter has also been put forward by Christine Horne (2001) who claims that cohesion might strengthen social control. Applied to the topic of this paper this could imply that group members are sometimes encouraged by other members to report on the misconduct of deviants in the group. Although a group member will then be punished, the reporter would still be praised for his/her behaviour because he/she managed to uphold the general group norms (see also: Chan, 2003; Westmarland, 2005).

Egalitarianism can also be manifested in decisions not to reveal peers' misconduct. This can occur in at least two ways. On the one hand, individuals can abstain from peer reporting because they want to remain loyal to their colleagues. This means that in the balancing of various values in the reporting dilemma, loyalty towards peers outweighs loyalty towards supervisors or higher management. The group aspect in the GGCT framework is highly emphasized here. Following formal rules and procedures or respecting the chain of command (grid) are considered less important than sticking together as a team. A case in point is the blue code of silence in the sense that loyalty and solidarity among police officers lead them to perceive peer reporting as a betrayal of their partner (Chin et al., 1998; Rothwell et al., 2007: 611). On the other hand, not blowing the whistle could also be induced by the fact that unethical behaviour is not framed as unethical. The latter is closely linked to the 'noble cause' corruption explanation of the blue code of silence. If breaking the rules leads to beneficial results, like a conviction or a confession, then police officers often do not consider it wrong, following the end justifies the means principle (Ransley, 2002: 26). In other words, due process to

designated perpetrators is sometimes sacrificed for the good of all. Framing unethical behaviour as being ethical can also occur by reshaping the reality of the observer. Group members then present certain unethical behaviour as acceptable by the group and part of the way things are done within the team (Greenberger, Miceli, & Cohen, 1987; King et al., 2000: 314), leading to peer reporting not being considered as an appropriate reaction.

Third, the individualistic style of peer reporting can be defined as strategic and opportunistic behaviour aimed at personal benefits. This type of whistleblowing implies a calculation of pros and cons of disclosing peers' misbehaviour. Only if the gains outweigh the losses the rational choice is made to blow the whistle. The reasoning in this type of peer reporting is also inspired by competition between peers, illustrated by whistleblowing to search for promotion by getting in good terms with a supervisor (King et al., 2000: 312) or to make sure that only other colleagues are being punished for misconduct one was involved in oneself (Punch, 1985: 156).

In the individualistic style not to report, strategy and opportunism are also emphasized. Observers of misconduct who make a rational calculation could come to the conclusion that whistleblowing is too costly, too risky and not at all beneficial (Evans, 2008: 270). Hence, they decide to keep quiet for their own sake. Near and Miceli (1985) already suggested that individuals may oppose whistleblowing if they in any way benefit from overlooking misconduct. A case in point is negative deal-making which is sometimes referred to in the police culture literature (see above). Because police officers are often highly acquainted with each other's misconduct, they implicitly cut a deal with their partner not to snitch (Skolnick, 2002), mutually protecting each other's reputation and career. Another example is the situation where an officer retains from reporting because he makes precautions for the future; a fellow officer whose misbehaviour he observed might become an important ally when confronted with a dangerous situation. Peer reporting might in that situation not be the most opportunistic strategy.

The fourth and final style of peer reporting that can be deducted from the GGCT framework is the fatalistic one. The decision (not) to report is then induced by the fatalistic idea of protecting oneself in a hazardous and unpredictable environment. Because behaviour in fatalistic organisational cultures is often considered to be more or less passive – as in Evans' (2008: 270) statement that *"[t]he fatalist would keep their head down"* – it is expected that peer reporting is not as likely as in hierarchical, egalitarian and individualistic environments. Hence, most observers of misconduct would bury their heads in the sand because they convince themselves that it is not any of their business. Moreover, being a snitch would only make their life more difficult.

Although it is probably less obvious that an individual in a fatalistic environment would consider to report colleagues' misconduct, empirical research mentions whistleblowing behaviour that would fit the fatalistic type (Rothschild & Miethe, 1999: 119). This kind of reporting is then classified as defensive *"in the sense that they feared that if they did not report and the malfeasance was eventually discovered, that it would be blamed on them"* (de Graaf, 2010: 774). Hence, whistleblowers feel they

don't have a lot of choice, because they could get punished if supervisors would find out that they knew about it but tried to cover it up. Especially in fatalistic organisations this is highly risky, because one never knows what to expect from one's boss. The fatalistic style of reporting is perfectly illustrated by Jubb:

> *"[…] whistleblowing is a hazardous mode of dissent involving high risk to the individual and his/her dependents. It demands moral courage, given the typical nature of whistleblowers' complaints. This is not to say that whistleblowing is necessarily proper conduct since the motives of the whistleblower and the circumstances of the action are crucial to its justification. One motive may be to escape complicity so as to protect personal integrity and the ability to live with oneself."* (Jubb, 1999: 82)

4. *A study in the police and labour inspection in a West-European country*

Methodology

The framework above has been tested in an ethnographic research project in the police and the labour inspection in a West-European country. This research was aimed at explaining how organisational factors impact the way police detectives and labour inspectors deal with moral dilemmas (e.g. the 'results versus due process' dilemma and the peer reporting dilemma). Over 670 hours of observations, informal conversations and in-depth interviews were conducted over a period of 21 months.

Ethnography as a method has been used in multiple ways, in different traditions, leading to a numerous set of definitions (e.g., Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Savage, 2000; Willis & Trondman, 2000; O'Reilly, 2005) This study adopts the approach of Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 1) who define ethnography in a loose way as a set of methods, which in its most characteristic form *"involves the ethnographer participating […] in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research"*. Unlike most ethnographic studies, this qualitative research looks at the data in both an inductive and a deductive way. On the one hand, the researcher focuses on the dilemmas that inductively emerge from the data, and, on the other hand, the decision-making processes in these dilemmas are analysed rather deductively on the basis of the GGCT framework.

The project started with a pilot study in one police agency during two months in order to (1) construct the conceptual and theoretical framework and (2) to develop the necessary research skills to apply ethnographic methods. After this pilot, four studies were conducted, two in the police (POL1 and POL2) and two in the labour inspection (INSP1 and INSP2), both in two different regions, a medium-sized (POL1 and INSP1) and a large region (POL2 and INSP2).

During interviews and informal conversations the detectives and labour inspectors were asked to think about a dilemma they experienced in which their colleague(s) acted in an unethical way. They were asked to give a detailed narrative of the event which was enabled by several questions and sub-questions from the researcher. The interviews were recorded and transcribed literally and the informal conversations were summarized in detailed reports. Observations were made to complement the narratives, particularly in cases where the discussed event had occurred while the researcher was present, and to study the organisational context that is assumed to have an impact on the decision-making processes. This resulted in rich data that enabled the researcher to classify the respondents' reactions to the peer reporting dilemmas into the GGCT framework (see table 3 below). The data were analysed with the qualitative software Nvivo using topic coding and analytic coding (Richards & Morse, 2007: 139-143), after which the technique of process-tracing was applied to identify the causal mechanisms that underlie moral decision-making (George & Bennett, 2005).

Before discussing the results, four methodological remarks need to be made. First, although classifying the respondents' reactions in GGCT was not always easy, the 'labelling process' was facilitated by the rich data and the use of a strict and precise coding scheme that was developed on the basis of an extensive literature review and interviews/observations in the pilot study and later refined by discussing it with a number of renomated scholars in the field of GGCT[2].
Second, the cases of peer reporting that are analysed in this study are not necessarily representative for the peer reporting dilemmas the respondents in this study or detectives/inspectors in general face. However, it can be interesting to study these few examples for at least two reasons. On the one hand, the respondents only rarely face this type dilemma, because – as they explained themselves – colleagues who act in an unethical way obviously try to conceal it from others, but also because both in the police and the labour inspection many tasks are performed alone (e.g., desk research) or in small teams of two (e.g., interrogation, house search/inspection) with limited interaction with other colleagues. Each event of this exceptional phenomenon could, thus, provide valuable information about how they deal with peer reporting dilemmas. On the other hand, the goal of this qualitative study is not generalization to a wider population as in quantitative research, but theory-building by developing hypotheses about causal mechanisms that underlie the decision (not) to report, which can be tested in future research.
Third, to protect the respondents' identity neither the country/region where the organizations are located nor the exact teams the respondents work in are identified. Further, the respondents' sex will be concealed by randomly using 'he' or 'she' and in some cases the unethical behaviour will not be explained in detail to avoid identification.

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[2] The author would like to thank Prof. Perri 6, Prof. Jeroen Maesschalck, Prof. Marco Verweij and Dra. Kristel Wouters for their interesting and useful feedback on the coding scheme.

Fourth, although it is a qualitative study, some quantitative aspects will be taken into account. Particularly the prevalence of the reactions will be looked at, not to generalize (as explained above) but, mainly because it can give some information about the dominance of certain cultural types.

Results

During the 21 months of data collection, 183 decisions in the police and 222 decisions in the labour inspection were observed by the researcher and/or discussed during informal conversations and 43 formal interviews. The respondents gave 49 examples of decisions whether or not to blow the whistle on colleagues' misconduct (11 in POL1, 11 in POL2, 16 in INSP1 and 11 in INSP2) (see table 3 below).

Table 3: Styles of (not) reporting in two police agencies and two labour inspections in a West-European country

	H	*E*	*I*	*F*	*I + E*	*I + F*	*I + H*	*H + F*	TOTAL
POL1									
o Say nothing	2		4						6
o Reprimand			1						1
colleague	2			1				1	4
o Report to boss	**4**		**5**	**1**				**1**	**11**
TOTAL									
POL2									
o Say nothing			2		1	1			4
o Reprimand			4						4
colleague		1		1			1		3
o Report to boss		**1**	**6**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**		**11**
TOTAL									
INSP1									
o Say nothing	4		3	3					10
o Reprimand	1	3							4
colleague	1			1					2
o Report to boss	**6**	**3**	**3**	**4**					**16**
TOTAL									
INSP2									
o Say nothing	4		1						5
o Reprimand	1		1						2
colleague	4								4
o Report to boss	**9**		**2**						**11**
TOTAL									
OVERALL TOTAL	**19**		**16**	**6**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**49**

In general, the respondents mentioned three possible reactions to colleagues' misbehaviour: (1) report it to one's boss), (2) reprimand one's colleague without reporting it and (3) say nothing. The respondents did not mention the practice of gossiping about the misbehaviour, which could be considered a fourth reaction, probably because it occurs in a natural way without really thinking it over so they did not consider it a 'reaction' or because the respondents were not aware of doing it. In POL1, 11 peer reporting dilemmas were discussed. In four of them the respondents reported if to their boss, in one the colleague was reprimanded and in sixof them the respondents said nothing. In POL2 the pattern is slightly different; in the 11 peer reporting dilemmas there were three examples

in which the misconduct was reported to one's boss, four examples of reprimanding and four in which the detectives kept silent. In INSP1, 16 dilemmas were discussed; in two the inspector decided to report, in four he reprimanded the colleague and in ten he said nothing. In INSP2, 11 peer reporting dilemmas were looked at; in four of them the inspector reported it to his boss, in two situations he reprimanded his colleague and in five he said nothing. On the basis of the detailed narratives and observation notes the researcher tried to place a 'GGCT-label' on each of the 49 reactions, leading to the classification displayed in table 3 above.

Individualistic peer reporting

Although the dilemmas are not necessarily representative (as stated above), it is interesting to note that individualism is an important behavioural style in all agencies under study, albeit primarily as a style of not reporting (see table 3 above).

In the two police agencies, the main cause for this individualistic style of keeping silent seems to be the system of 'case officer' that is installed. Individual detectives are assigned to specific investigations and become a 'case officer', meaning that they have to coordinate the investigation, determine the direction, consult with the magistrate, and make crucial decisions when necessary. If they need any help from a colleague the standard procedure is to ask one's supervisor to assign someone. Despite the preference of the supervisors for working in larger teams with interchangeable members, in both organisations small teams with two or three people have developed spontaneously with a relationship of reciprocity. Each detective remains responsible for his own investigations, but the other colleague in the team helps out whenever needed. Because it works in both ways, detectives avoid having to work with demotivated colleagues. When one exceptionally needs help from the whole team (between nine to 15 people), the supervisor will assign other people. This individualistic division of work reinforces an individualistic climate in which all detectives focus on their own benefits and interests. If another detective breaks the rules in one's investigation one should not interfere because everyone should deal with one's own business and in the near future one might need another colleague's help.

An interesting difference between POL1 and POL2 is that in POL1 there are five cases that lead to an individualistic response, while in POL2 there are six cases that are purely individualistic and an additional three cases that combine individualism with another type. This pattern seems to indicate that, as explained above, individualism is dominant in both police agencies, but probably slightly more important in POL2. A possible explanation for this difference could be the newly installed computer system to manage investigations by keeping track of the hours spent to reach certain results. Investigations are compared on the basis of quantifiable indicators, like number of reports, arrests, phone taps, investigations, etc. The higher the numbers, the less comments one gets from higher management. This competitive investigative management system could, in POL2, enhance the drive to 'score' which is already high in the individualistic detective work context. This could lead to a

situation where 'case officers' are solely focused on trying to 'score' so they refuse to listen to any feedback given by colleagues or supervisors, possibly leading to a faulty investigation. Reprimanding one's colleague is not considered an effective response in this context and peer reporting is considered too costly, leading to the individualistic type of keeping silent being preferred.

In the two labour inspections, the respondents also gave a few examples of the individualistic type of not reporting. An interesting finding is that when asked for peer reporting dilemmas many respondents started talking about misbehaviour by staff members from other agencies, like the police and the Social Inspection. They explained that they consider them more as colleagues than their 'real' colleagues, due to the highly individualistic work context within the agency. Labour inspectors in the two organizations almost exclusively work alone on 'their' investigations that are assigned according to the territorial areas they are responsible for and in which they have large discretionary powers unlike police detectives[3]. Only when there are joint inspections on social fraud (e.g., in the catering or construction industry) they cooperate with other people, sometimes their 'real' colleagues, but mostly inspectors from other agencies or police officers who are responsible for their physical protection. The latter leads to situations in which labour inspectors do not report racist or disrespectful behaviour by police officers, because they might need the strong arm of the law in the near future (INSP1), or ignore aggressive behaviour from individuals in other inspections to avoid revenge (INSP2). According to some inspectors, misbehaviour or faulty decisions by 'real' colleagues are also not reported, on the one hand, because one should not interfere in other people's investigations, although one can always give advice (INSP2), and on the other, because there is 'negative deal-making' as described by one inspector in INSP1:

> "I think that everyone here sits on his island and does his work in his own way, which is not always 100% as it's supposed to be. And I think that's the reason why people don't meddle with other people's business. […] It seems like they protect each other for their own sake (laugh) and the supervisor doesn't notice due to a lack of surveillance."

In this study, there was only one situation (POL2) where a respondent used an individualistic style to report misbehaviour, albeit combined with hierarchy. In this example the police detective is frustrated because a colleague is – as usual – not willing to do overtime in an investigation run by the respondent. Although he later finds other colleagues who are willing to help him, he decides to report it to his boss, on the one hand, because he believes his supervisor is responsible to deal with the demotivated colleague (hierarchy), but, on the other hand, also because he wants to get in good terms with his boss by proving that he himself is more motivated to work than some other colleagues

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[3] Labour inspectors in this West-European country have a wide discretion because they can for all social law violations decide whether to make a report, give a warning or propose a rectification amount. Police detectives have a rather limited discretion, because they are officially obliged to make a report when confronted with violations in their domain of criminal law. Only the public prosecutor can dismiss a case.

(individualism). Hence, the possible benefits are high, while the costs are low because he knows that this specific colleague will never be motivated to help him in his investigation and he has enough other colleagues he can count on. Although this dilemma breaks the pattern of reciprocity in the studied police agencies, illustrated above, it also confirms the importance of the reciprocal relation in the sense of individuals in small teams who need each other to do successful investigations.

Egalitarianist peer reporting

When individualism is so high that it leads to excesses, like unproductive competition and opportunism (see above), egalitarianist behaviour can sometimes be used to compensate for them. In POL2, one detective mentions a situation where he applied an egalitarian reporting style to try to compensate for the negative effects of the individualistic climate, although it did not have the aspired effect because, in his own words:

> *"[…] if the system does not say: 'You, you and you, you are as from today coordinators and all the other detectives are co-workers', then everyone can at a given time find himself in a situation where he feels more important than everyone else and say 'Hey, this investigation is mine, because I want to score' and I don't care who scores as long as the police scores." "I reported it to the supervisor and my other colleagues, because it harmed the group atmosphere." "My supervisor told me he had already detected it, but I don't think he knows how he can solve this problem."*

In INSP1 an egalitarianist style is used to confront individuals from other agencies, like the police and other inspections, but only in rare cases of extreme misconduct and when the behaviour hinders cooperation. In INSP2 no egalitarian behavioural style is mentioned (see table 3 above). Although this could be coincidental, a plausible explanation could be found in the work context. INSP1 has a history of working together with other agencies and fighting social fraud together, while in INSP2 cooperation is less common and limited to the minima that are imposed by a higher body, the 'Social Intelligence and Investigation Service'. The group boundaries in both organisations are, thus, differently set out. In INSP1 the inspectors feel connected with other agencies, sharing the common goal of 'fighting social fraud', while this group connection is mainly absent in INSP2.

Fatalistic peer reporting

An interesting finding is that in the instances where respondents decide to blow the whistle they often refer to a high grid style (with the egalitarian peer reporting in POL2 as an exception). In the police agencies, there are two examples of a fatalistic reporting style, one in each organisation, that show striking similarities (see table 3 above). Although police detectives in POL1 and POL2 claim that management is distant from street-level bureaucrats (mainly due to the high degree of autonomy individual officers enjoy), in some situations the risk of unethical behaviour being discovered by managers is considerably high. In that case, one could decide to inform management about colleagues' misbehaviour to avoid being accused of complicity, especially when there is a general

(mis?)perception (as is the case in POL1 and POL2) of favouritism and unfair treatment by higher management. In POL1 one detective decided to save her own skin by snitching about the (in this organisation very sensitive) topic of cheating with overtime hours, because there was a high chance that her colleague would tell his version of the story to have a lucky escape. A similar example was given in INSP1, but there the other colleague had already told his own – according to the respondent 'twisted' – version of the story. In POL2 the unethical behaviour occurred during an interrogation. A suspect was treated in an overly rough manner. The respondent explains:

> "My colleague was going crazy. And I don't put up with that, so I called my boss in order to avoid that afterwards… (sigh). If that suspect will tell the examining magistrate, then this examining magistrate will not confront us directly with that story, but will straight go to our boss. And I want my boss to hear the story from me first. […] So from the moment third parties are involved (in this case the suspect) I don't put up with this kind of behaviour. I am not a snitch, but (laugh) at a certain point you must make a choice, you must say: 'Ok now I'm gonna report this or I will get in trouble myself'. "

The respondent, however, emphasized that this type of fatalistic reporting is rare and will only be used as a last resort, which is illustrated by another dilemma from another respondent. She observed her colleague hitting a suspect, but did not report it to her boss, because she and her colleague were able to give the story a twist in the official report by blaming the victim (i.e. "the suspect touched the keyboard and then detective X used light violence to put him back on his chair"). She explained that management would never find out because *"words can be manipulated"* and even if the suspect would tell the examining magistrate it would be the suspect's words against two detectives' words. And in this case the detectives would be considered more trustworthy, because they already admitted to have used light violence. Although one would expect a fatalistic reporting style here, the reporting style that is used is a combination between fatalism (because one needs to put something in the report about the violence) and individualism (because one can create a story that will benefit oneself and one's colleague). Hence, individualism 'rules' until no escape is possible and one can only try to protect oneself.

As for the inspections, fatalistic reasons not to report were only mentioned in INSP1 (see table 3 above). The examples concern situations where certain colleagues from other agencies are known for their misbehaviour, but previous complaints to supervisors have not solved anything. These labour inspectors did not see any other option than fatalistically 'burying their head in the sand'.

Hierarchical peer reporting

The hierarchical behavioural style seems to be rather common in the two labour inspections (six in INSP1 and nine in INSP2). Interesting is that low status is often used as an argument not to report misbehaviour by 'real' colleagues. Low status is then mostly operationalized in terms of low years of experience, which is typical in hierarchy where status depends on seniority. One labour inspector with more experience refers to her 'status' as an argument to reprimand her less-experienced

colleague. The examples of hierarchical peer reporting are almost all about misconduct by other agencies in which the labour inspector does not think it is his role or responsibility to react so he reports it to his own supervisor.

While analysing the hierarchical behavioural style in the police agencies, there seems to be a striking difference between the two of them. In POL1 there are four instances of hierarchical reporting or not reporting and one instance of a combination of hierarchy and fatalism, while the hierarchical style is almost absent in POL2 (see table 3 above). The question could be raised whether hierarchy plays a more important role in POL1 than in POL2. However, this difference in numbers could be misleading, because three of the four hierarchy examples in POL1 are mentioned by one specific detective, giving the impression that personal characteristics are at play here. The fourth case was too exceptional to draw conclusions[4].

5. *Conclusion*

The blue code of silence is an important topic in the police culture literature. It addresses the issue of officers trying to cover up misconduct of their colleagues. Although it offers interesting insights into the way loyalty and solidarity operate in police departments, at least two basic assumptions are insufficiently tested. First, the empirical findings are still somewhat inconclusive with regard to the existence of a code of silence in all – or at least the majority of – police departments across the world. Second, and more fundamentally, the theoretical framework in the blue code of silence literature does not offer the necessary tools to conduct comparative research to test the hypothesis that the blue code would be typical for the police and not as relevant in other, comparable, professions. Hence, a more profession-neutral framework should be applied.

One option would be to apply general whistleblowing theories to the topic of peer reporting in the police. Although the whistleblowing literature provides interesting empirical findings that link whistleblowing (or peer reporting) with a number of individual, situational and organisational variables, it fails to identify the underlying mechanisms that explain why individuals decide (not) to blow the whistle on their colleagues' misbehaviour.

This paper argues that the GGCT framework could shed some light on this topic. GGCT hypothesizes that the relative dose of each type of organisational factors – that are more or less grid/group bound – is associated with similar doses of the corresponding behavioural style. Arguably, this could also be true for peer reporting in the police. If certain cultural types are dominant in the organisation, it can be expected that certain reporting styles will be dominant as well. Hence, this theoretical framework can explain which organisational factors underlie the decision to report or not to report colleagues'

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[4] I.e. a situation where the supervisor was present and saw the detective's unethical behaviour so the respondent did not consider it his job to remind his supervisor about what happened.

misbehaviour by linking these factors to specific styles of reporting. In other words, GGCT can provide insight into the underlying causal mechanisms that explain why organisation members blow the whistle or not. It does, however, not allow for predicting when an individual will report misbehaviour and when he will not, which is in accordance with Elster (1989), who states that it is not always possible to go beyond mere explanation of behaviour because prediction is rarely feasible in social research.

Although partly based on Evans' work – who for the first time applied GGCT to the topic of whistleblowing – this paper adopts a broader viewpoint. Peer reporting or whistleblowing is not considered a purely egalitarian phenomenon, as in Evans' (2008: 267) contribution, but a phenomenon that can occur in other cultural types as well (i.e., hierarchy, individualism and fatalism), though maybe inspired by less noble motives than in the egalitarian type. However, by being open to all different reporting styles, connections can be made with findings in the police culture literature and the general whistleblowing studies. Some very clear parallels can, for example, be drawn (1) between the individualistic style of not reporting and negative deal-making in the police culture literature, (2) between the hierarchal style of reporting and the role-prescribed forms of whistleblowing discussed by Near and Miceli (1996: 551) and (3) between the egalitarian style of not reporting and the blue code that is cultivated in the police because of the deep-rooted solidarity among fellow officers (Skolnick, 1975). The GGCT framework should, therefore, not be used to reinvent the wheel, but merely as an overarching framework within which various types of peer reporting are captured and explained. The framework also allows to analytically single out different types of peer reporting, thus, solving the problem in the blue code of silence literature that different motives for not reporting are clustered in one concept – "the blue code" – while in fact they should be treated separately, because covering up misbehaviour to be loyal to one's colleague (i.e., the egalitarianist style) is completely different than doing it in the context of negative deal-making (i.e., the individualistic style).

This framework was tested in a research project in the police and labour inspection in a West-European country. This study concludes that silence codes exist in all studied organisations, often inspired by individualism. This finding can probably be linked to the work context of both professional groups which is characterised by a high degree of autonomy. The police detectives are individually assigned to their own investigation ('case officer') and perform many tasks alone from behind their desk and the inspectors have their own territorial area for which they are responsible and enjoy a wide discretion in their investigations. This individualistic context leads to keeping silent on colleagues' misbehaviour for one's own benefits (i.e., the individualistic style). Among young inspectors, low seniority is also sometimes mentioned as a reason not to report (i.e., the hierarchical style). The reasons to report are mostly inspired by high grid, for example when the risk of being accused of complicity if management finds out is high (i.e., fatalistic reporting) and when it is not one's role to report misconduct by other agencies (i.e., hierarchical reporting). This study shows that

it is not enough to empirically study the existence of a silence code or the prevalence of whistleblowing, because reporting behaviour is far more complex. This paper illustrates how GGCT can be used to go a step further by explaining why and how individuals in an organisation decide (not) to report by identifying the underlying mechanisms. In other words, GGCT is presented as an interesting framework to study the complexity of peer reporting.

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