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DECIDING TO BLOW THE WHISTLE: HOW INDIVIDUAL AND  
ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS INFLUENCE THE REPORTING OF  
WRONGDOING IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

By

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written under the direction of

Gregg G. Van Ryzin

and approved by

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

### Deciding To Blow The Whistle: How Individual And Organizational Factors Influence The Reporting Of Wrongdoing In The Federal Government

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The act of blowing the whistle on wrongdoing is essential to good government, yet it poses an ethical dilemma to the individual, the organization and society. Using a mixed methods approach, the aim of this dissertation is to examine the individual and organizational factors that facilitate or impede whistleblowing in the US federal government. A logistic regression analysis of survey data collected by the Merit Systems Protection Board, covering 36,926 federal employees from 24 agencies, is employed to examine various individual and organizational factors empirically. In addition, qualitative data from 18 original in-depth interviews with federal whistleblowers were gathered to provide a better understanding of the influences involved in the decision about whether or not to blow the whistle. Findings from the quantitative analysis suggest that, although whistleblowing is a rare event within most federal agencies, its likelihood is positively associated with norm-based and affective work motives, but negatively associated with job satisfaction and several key indicators of organizational culture, including perceptions of respect and openness, cooperativeness and flexibility in the work setting, and fair treatment and trust in the supervisor. The qualitative interview findings revealed similar themes but also suggested additional, more detailed explanations of why public employees blow the whistle in the federal government. Specifically, when asked about the factors associated with their whistleblowing, interviewees frequently mentioned intrinsic individual motives linked to their personal upbringing and values and their commitment to serving the larger public. They also pointed to the existence of a maladapted and unethical work environment that ignored or covered up wrongdoing and threatened to punish whistleblowers. This indicates intrinsic individual motives, particularly those associated with norm-based and affective work motivations, along with perceptions of the existence of an unethical work environment and organizational culture, should be taken into account when developing and sustaining policies to promote ethical behavior and responsible public service in the federal government.

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## Introduction

It was around 1998 when Cathy Harris<sup>1</sup>, a U.S. Customs Service agent, verified her suspicions that African American women entering the U.S. were wrongfully targeted for detentions and strip searches as possible drug couriers. She reported “illegal, demoralizing and abusive pat-downs, intrusive strip-searches, cavity searches, X-ray examinations, monitored defecation, prolonged detentions of up to 4 days and targeted intimidation by drug sniffing dogs against African American women international travelers” (Harris 2013). By blowing the whistle on wrongdoing by the U.S. Customs Service (later a part of the Department of Homeland Security), Harris was instrumental in exposing the racial profiling practices of customs and border protection services to Congress and to the public. Her revelations resulted in a US Government Accountability Office (USGAO 2000a) study of the US Customs Service (USCS) profiling practices, and federal legislation to reform these unconstitutional practices<sup>2</sup> (Civil Rights and International Travelers Act- HR 4001 and the Reasonable Search Standards Act-S2393). Broadly, this legislation is expected to ensure that international travelers have more legal protections and stronger avenues of recourse if abused by U.S. Customs officials.

Though Cathy Harris’ story is inspiring for most scholars and practitioners

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<sup>1</sup> More information on this case is available at <http://www.thecathyharrisstory.com> Accessed February 18, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Both the *Civil Rights for International Travelers Act* and the *Reasonable Search Standards Act* prohibit U.S. Customs Service inspectors or other officials from subjecting travelers to detentions and searches based on the traveler's race, religion, gender, national origin, or sexual orientation, except when acting upon specific information that a particular traveler suspected of engaging in specific illegal activity is described by one or more of such characteristics. Other additional provisions include requirements for employees to undergo periodic training on profiling practices and documenting the reasons for believing profiling is necessary.

advocating for “ethical resistance” of such a kind (Glazer and Glazer 1989), she is one of many public servants who, after blowing the whistle, were subjected to reprisals, abuse, and harassment from their agency.

The visibility of whistleblowing has been captured over the years by the media and by official reports published by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board<sup>3</sup> (USMSPB 2011), however, employees’ experiences seem to better capture the deep complexities of those who feel compelled to oppose wrongdoing and expose it. Therefore, Harris’ story is central to understanding how blowing the whistle on wrongdoing matters to the study and practice of public administration. First, this case shows the fundamental role whistleblowers play in terms of leading organizations towards responsible conduct and enhancing ethical work environments. When abuse occurs within public organizations, employees face organizational and societal pressures to act since “the rationale for whistleblowing is that the interests of the public are generally harmed by organizational abuses that are illegal, violate widespread moral norms, or that breed inefficiency” (Weinstein 1979b: 75). Likewise, whistleblowers are considered to be a valuable resource to managers in terms of employee involvement and commitment through providing useful information on existing organizational wrongdoing (Miceli and Near 1994; Zipparo 1999). For the organization, encouraging whistleblowing is expected to lead to climate and culture change (Berry 2004; McDonald Dryburgh 2009), as well as policy change (Johnson and Kraft 1990). In this sense, organizations that facilitate

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<sup>3</sup> According to the latest report, in 2010, 11.1 percent of respondents have personally observed or obtained direct evidence of one or more illegal or wasteful activities involving their agency compared to 17.7 in 1992. Though this shows a drop in perceptions by more than a third between 1992 and 2010, of those who made a report and were identified as the source, the percentage of respondents who personally experienced reprisal or a threat of reprisal remains unchanged (USMSPB 2011: 3-4).

whistleblowing are thought to influence the development of an organizational culture that allows for employee communication, questioning, and reporting of misconduct. This helps build trust and enables the detection of organizational wrongdoing while developing an ethical work environment (Berry 2004). Recent efforts by the federal government to recognize whistleblowing as an ethical behavior, thus legitimizing the idea that blowing the whistle is beneficial not only for enhancing an ethical culture but also improving federal government's performance, are evident. For example, a newspaper article appearing on USA Today<sup>4</sup> last year explains how whistleblowers are key in fighting health care fraud (February 22, 2012). However, more knowledge is needed on how individual employee attributes interrelated with the organizational work environment and culture would contribute to enhancing responsible conduct aligned with the values of public service in the federal government. This would shed light on how whistleblowers' voice(s) could serve to prevent organizational deviation from ethical norms even when wrongdoing goes unnoticed or whistleblowers are retaliated against (Hirschman 1970; Bovens 1998; Jun 2006).

This case also shows whistleblowers deserve protections as well as highlights importance of honoring public servants who resist unethical behavior for their courage. On November 27, 2012, *The Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act* (S. 372, H.R. 1507) was signed into law to provide protection federal workers need to safely report government corruption and wrongdoing. Federal employees are now additionally protected from reprisal if they: are not the first person to disclose misconduct; disclose misconduct to coworkers or supervisors; disclose the consequences of a policy decision;

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<sup>4</sup> <http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/washington/story/2012-02-22/health-care-fraud-whistleblowers/53212468/1> Accessed February 18, 2013.

or blow the whistle while carrying out their job duties. Still, the need for improved or additional formal protection for federal employees might show that blowing the whistle on wrongdoing is a practice that does not always receive the expected response from colleagues, supervisors, and managers across the federal government. More often than not, whistleblowing is thought to be grounded on selfish motives and individual ethical autonomy, triggering accusations of disloyalty, secrecy breaching, and leaking of sensitive information (Bok 1981, 1982; Robinson and Bennett 1995; Bovens 1998). Previous research refers to the development of “moral muteness” within organizations (Lovell 2003). According to Lovell (2003: 202) moral muteness occurs “where whistleblowing is regarded as a more serious problem than the crime it reports, and where managerial imperatives allow organizational loyalty to be treated as more important than personal integrity and societal interests.” In this sense, when the image of the whistleblower that is authorized within organizations is that of the ‘disloyal’ employee imperiling the agency, loyalty to conscience is omitted and whistleblowing is likely to be discouraged and punished, and the organization runs the risk of normalizing wrongdoing, ultimately deceiving the public interest. Hence, more knowledge is needed on how certain organizational factors of the work environment and culture of the federal government encourage the legitimization of mechanisms to expose wrongdoing. Conversely, it would be beneficial to gather information on whether certain organizational strategies to address wrongdoing support and encourage whistleblowers, ultimately authorizing ethical behavior from public servants.

## **Rationale for the study**

The issue of whether someone should blow the whistle on an employer or an employee for some perceived wrongdoing has been controversial, because in the context of public organizations, whistleblowing concerns fundamental individual, organizational and societal questions about employees' duties and responsibilities (Nader 1972; Weisband and Franck 1975; Bok 1980; Miceli and Near 1985; Jos et al. 1989; Glazer and Glazer 1989; Brewer and Selden 1998). Public administration theory looks into whistleblowing in public organizations through the following lenses: political control of bureaucracy, bureaucratic politics, organizations and management, and public service ethics (See Frederickson and Smith 2002; Bowman 1980; Jos 1990; Weinstein 1979b; Hirschman 1970; Kaufman 1960; Glazer and Glazer 1987; Maynard-Moody and Kelly 1993; Weisband and Franck 1975; O'Leary 2006; Nader 1972; Bok 1982; Johnson 2003; Denhardt 1988, Cooper 2006; Lovell 2003; Rainey 2009; Bovens 1998; DesAutels 2009; Miceli, Near and Dworkin 2008; among others). Overall, previous research has been mainly normative and descriptive, focused on searching for the meaning of whistleblowing as a type of desired responsible conduct and acknowledging the fact that public servants are faced with conflicting value choices on a daily bases, that pose ethical dilemmas to their behavior. Though certain studies using the organizations and management lens have moved further into the analysis of whistleblowing to discover a model for whistleblowing behavior or prosocial organizational behavior (Miceli, Near and Dworkin 2008), the public administration literature as a whole has not integrated the examination of the organizational context (people and values) into an empirical examination of why public servants blow the whistle in public organizations. In this

sense, this study contributes to linking the theory of organizational behavior to the context of the values at stake among public sector employees. In methodological terms, while some previous studies have focused on the use of quantitative data and others on qualitative data, these fail to be integrated into a mixed approach. Thus, this study advances whistleblowing research in its attempt to bridge the quantitative and qualitative approaches to understanding social phenomena overcoming this methodological deficiency.

Based on the argument that whistleblowing behavior is fundamental to maintaining and enhancing the administrative responsibility of upholding obligations as public servants to address irresponsible conduct in public organizations, this study was written to explore the factors influencing the decision to blow the whistle in the federal government. The research presented here makes the case that whistleblowing raises the following issues for the field of public administration. First, the issue of why public servants engage in ethical behavior by resisting illegal and unethical acts. This relates to a need to understand in what ways following a public service ethic is a motive triggering ethical behavior, and to what extent putting principles over loyalty to management should be a desired attribute of public servants as they engage in whistleblowing to redress wrongdoing. Second, the issue of whether whistleblowing should be encouraged or discouraged within public organizations, given the implications of actual cases of employee disclosures of waste, fraud and abuse for the functioning of the federal government. And in this sense the question is whether the exposure of wrongdoing in the federal government through employee whistleblowing constitutes a legitimized strategy to reduce or handle wrongful acts within organizations.



Thus, the purpose of this study is to shed a theoretical light on the intersection between public service work motives and values, and decisions to behave ethically (i.e. blow the whistle) in the context of public organizations. In practical terms, this study examines the individual and organizational factors predicting the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government, based on the belief that these could be useful in addressing why public servants behave ethically, as well as in what ways the individual motives, the organizational work environment and culture matter to enhance ethical behavior in public organizations.

### **Main Assumptions and Research Question**

Blowing the whistle on wrongdoing constitutes a source of information not only about public and private sector illegal, unethical and wrongful practices but also about the process through which such practices are observed, reported and solved in given organizational environments.

A basic premise of this research is that whistleblowers have a role to play in correcting specific abuses in public organizations. In line with previous research, this study assumes that -- through exposing inadequate, dangerous or illegal practices in particular government and private organizations -- whistleblowers become the informants (source of information) on workplace corruption as well as the enforcers of ethical standards (corrective action) within public and private organizations (Miceli and Near 1984; Jos et al. 1989; Peeples et al. 2008).

Moreover, this study considers that maintaining and promoting ethical behavior leads to administratively responsible conduct of public servants, and ultimately encourages less conflictive and more ethical public organizations. Thus, understanding

what individual and organizational factors influence the likelihood of whistleblowing is fundamental for enhancing organizational practices that render the exposure of wrongdoing as legitimate ethical behavior and focus on achieving organizational change while redressing wrongdoing.

The present study asks why federal employees decide to either report or not to report illegal, immoral or illegitimate practices (wrongdoing) occurring within their workplace. Reported or unreported activities include the following broad understanding of wrongdoing: health and safety dangers, waste, fraud and abuse or unlawful behavior occurring within the workplace. Specifically, this dissertation aims at answering the following research questions: what are some characteristics of individuals that encourage or discourage whistleblowing? And in what ways do organizational work environment and culture characteristics influence actual disclosures of wrongdoing (or whistleblowing)?

Using the analytical framework by Miceli, Near and Dworkin (2008), this study explores whistleblowing through the organizations and management lens. Specifically, this research looks into the association between individual motives and organizational work environment characteristics, and public employee disclosures of wrongdoing, or actual whistleblowing. As suggested by the major relevant areas of previous research the association of certain individual factors -employee mission valence, satisfaction with the job, rational and norm-based and affective work motives- and the likelihood of blowing the whistle on wrongdoing (reporting) is investigated. Likewise, this study explores the association between certain organizational work environment and culture characteristics - perceptions of respect and openness, and cooperativeness and flexibility, fair treatment

and trust in the supervisor - and the likelihood of blowing the whistle on wrongdoing (reporting).

## **Methodology**

This dissertation examines the individual and organizational factors that facilitate or impede whistleblowing in the US federal government by using a mixed method approach. The study began with a logistic regression analysis of survey data collected by the Merit Systems Protection Board (USMSPB 2005), covering 36,926 federal employees from 24 agencies, which was employed to examine various individual and organizational factors empirically. After the quantitative analysis, the study continued with the collection and analysis of qualitative data from 18 original in-depth interviews with federal whistleblowers. These interviews were gathered to provide a better understanding of the influences involved in the decision about whether or not to blow the whistle among federal whistleblowers. After this data was collected and analyzed by themes, a final step of this study involved the integration of qualitative and quantitative data analyses to emphasize the link between the findings common to both strands of data.

## **Results**

Findings from the quantitative analysis suggest that, although whistleblowing is a rare event within most federal agencies, its likelihood is positively associated with norm-based and affective work motives, but negatively associated with job satisfaction and several key indicators of organizational culture, including perceptions of respect and openness, cooperativeness and flexibility in the work setting, and fair treatment and trust in the supervisor. The qualitative interview findings revealed similar themes but also suggested additional, more detailed explanations of why public employees blow the

whistle in the federal government. Specifically, when asked about the factors associated with their whistleblowing, interviewees frequently mentioned intrinsic individual motives linked to their personal upbringing and values, in addition to their commitment to serving the larger public. They also pointed to the existence of a maladapted and unethical work environment that ignored or covered up wrongdoing and threatened to punish whistleblowers.

Results show that intrinsic individual motives, particularly those associated with norm-based and affective work motivations, along with perceptions of the existence of an unethical work environment and organizational culture, should be taken into account when developing and sustaining policies to promote ethical behavior and responsible public service in the federal government. This would be an important contribution to the existing literature, by linking public service motives to organizational work environment and culture as factors predicting the likelihood of public servants' engagement in blowing the whistle on wrongdoing. In practical terms, this study has provided evidence for implementing policies focused on increasing public service motivation as a way of enhancing ethical behavior in organizations, together with suggestions related to enhancing an ethical work environment for redressing wrongdoing in public organizations.

### **Key terms and concepts**

Nader and colleagues (1972: vii) are credited with providing the first academic description of what constitutes whistleblowing behavior as “the act of a man or woman who, believing that the public interest overrides the interest of the organization he serves, publicly “blows the whistle” if the organization is involved in corrupt, illegal, fraudulent

or harmful activity.” More than a decade later, Glazer and Glazer (1987: 215) refer to whistleblowers as “ethical resisters” who “in government and industry confronted issues of major national concerns ... [and] disobeyed their superiors by bringing these issues to public attention.” Such issues include the safety of nuclear plants, the dumping of toxic chemicals, the production of unsafe cars and drugs, sexual exploitation, abuse of patients, and government waste and fraud.

For analytical purposes, previous research considers whistleblowing in organizations as “the disclosure by organization members (former or current) of illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers to persons or organizations that may be able to effect action” (Near and Miceli 1985:6). Current U.S. law specifically defines whistleblowing as “the act involving any disclosure of information by an employee or applicant which the employee or applicant reasonably believes evidences: (i) a violation of law, rule, or regulation, or (ii) gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority; or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety” (WPA 1989, 5 U.S.C. 2302 (b)(8)).

In line with the existing conceptualizations of whistleblowing, this study defines actual whistleblowing as the act of reporting or formally disclosing observed waste, fraud and abuse or unlawful behavior by employees in the federal government. This definition understands whistleblowing behavior as a situation in which the individual disclosing the practice(s) considers the disclosed practices to be wrong, even if multiple individual motivations are engaged when deciding to report wrongdoing. Moreover, this definition includes cases in which the disclosure has been either internal or external to the organization, and is thus consistent with the legal usage of the term.

Organizational culture will be defined as “a pattern of shared basic assumptions, invented, discovered or developed by a given group, as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, is to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems” (Schein 1992: 16). Schein (1992) acknowledges culture is visible at three levels within an organization: artifacts, espoused values and basic underlying assumptions<sup>5</sup>. Using Schein’s (1992) framework for the analysis of organizational culture, this dissertation looks into the level of the artifacts, espoused values and basic underlying assumptions, as organizational factors influencing the likelihood of whistleblowing behavior.

### **Dissertation Roadmap**

This section offers a brief overview of the dissertation. The first chapter places whistleblowing within the existing literature and presents an overview of the meaning of whistleblowing in the context of public administration. Next, the chapter discusses the limitations of previous studies and ends up presenting this study’s objective and research question. Chapter 2 describes the employed methodology for data collection and analysis, and addresses the advantages and limitations of using a mixed method approach. Chapter 3 begins with the operational definitions and descriptive statistics for the key variables of this study. Next, the chapter reports the quantitative analysis and results of a series of

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<sup>5</sup> According to Schein (1992), the artifacts are visible organizational structures and processes including the physical environment, language, technology and products, observable rituals and ceremonies, etc. The learning that is done through its socialization process reflects the espoused values of the organization. Espoused values are related to what the organization “ought to do” in a certain situation (strategies and goals), the espoused justifications. The basic underlying assumptions show the core and essence of culture. These are difficult to discern because they exist in an unconscious level and are key to understanding why things happen the way they do.

logistic regression models of whistleblowing. Implications are drawn at the end of the chapter, followed by the analysis of model predictions to enable the application of results to possible contextual scenarios. The chapter presents an appendix that details how the supplemental sub-group analysis was performed, as well as it presents a detailed analysis of these results. Chapter 4 deals with the qualitative data analysis and results. The chapter highlights the important emergent themes that developed throughout the qualitative data analysis process, using evidence from in-depth interviews to federal whistleblowers. The appendix to the chapter presents the contents of the coding process and analysis scheme that were followed. The final chapter attempts to integrate the findings from quantitative and qualitative sources of data used in this study, as well as it aims to link these results to the conceptual framework in chapter 1. Finally, Chapter 5 ends the study with a discussion of the research and policy implications drawn from this dissertation research.

## **Chapter 1. Research Problem, Relevant Literature and Research Question**

This chapter introduces and contextualizes the problem under study, presents an overview of how disclosures of wrongdoing within government have been described by public administration scholars and explained by social psychology researchers. The chapter concludes with a presentation of this study's research significance, statement of objectives and research question.

### **Research Problem and Context**

On January 30, 1971, the Conference on Professional Responsibility, held in Washington D.C. gathered some leading exponents of whistleblowing, individuals “who in different circumstances have felt compelled to speak out against the activities of their organizations” (Nader et al. 1972: vii). Those present at the Conference included, among others, Ernst Fitzgerald, who was fired by the Pentagon for exposing the cost overrun on the C-5A aircraft program (1968) and Jacqueline Verrett, a biochemist with the Food and Drug Administration, who exposed her agency's tolerance of cyclamates in the face of overwhelming evidence that they cause birth defects (1969) (Peters and Branch 1972: 16). These cases illustrate the behavior of whistleblowing in the federal government: a courageous act with often harsh consequences for the individual whistleblower, yet with vital benefits for government and society. Likewise, such examples of employees speaking out against government institutions raise questions about what should be considered permissible dissent in the public interest.



In the context of public organizations, employee reporting of wrongdoing involves the interaction of complex issues operating at the level of the individual (ethical judgment), the organization (institutional loyalty), and the expectations of society (public interest). The main concern of this study is the possible discouragement of formal employee reporting of wrongdoing in public organizations, as well as the threat to administrative ethics caused by the existence of organizational environments where wrongdoing is normalized. Existing federal and state legislation provides some protections for public employees who formally disclose wrongdoing, and certain institutional arrangements are offered for those observers of wrongdoing who either want to remain anonymous or who prefer to move through the formal disclosure channels. **Table 1.1** (see Appendix at the end of this chapter) summarizes the legal and institutional governance framework for federal whistleblower protections in the United States. Current U.S. law specifically defines whistleblowing as “the act involving any disclosure of information by an employee or applicant which the employee or applicant reasonably believes evidences: (i) a violation of law, rule, or regulation, or (ii) gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority; or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety” (WPA, 5 U.S.C. 2302 (b)(8)).

The combination of laws and institutions in place would seem to provide an array of guarantees within a complex governance structure that should protect federal employees who report wrongdoing from discrimination, while also setting ethical standards for public agency operations. Though broad, the framework fails to provide a comprehensive account of how employees decide to report wrongdoing, or address what are the value choices at stake when reporting wrongdoing in a public service context.

What is more, the existing legislative and institutional protections do not inform us about how federal employees are helped or hindered through their ethical decision making process, nor do these present the strategies taken by organizations to internally deal with wrongdoing and whistleblowers (Devine 1988; GAP 2012). Official documents show laws and institutions are not enough, opening an avenue for research aimed at improving management strategies that promote ethical behavior within federal government. For an analysis of the current legal and institutional framework on whistleblowing please see the Appendices section at the end of this dissertation.

Both the individual administrator and the public organization operate in an environment that either allows for administrative ethics, such as whistleblowing, or discourages such ethical behaviors. If the discouragement of ethical behavior persists, exacerbating hostility towards whistleblowing within public organizations, it may lead to devaluing public administrators' commitment to the core values of society. Moreover, the organizational structure and culture of certain public organizations often interferes, adding pressure to the individual decision to take action against the persistence of wrongdoing. Thus, it is of interest to public administration to discover the factors that encourage or discourage individual administrators to report wrongdoing while deciding on their own ethical behavior in the context of their organizational role.

This dissertation will investigate whistleblowing behavior in US federal agencies by exploring the individual and organizational conditions that influence such behavior and the ways in which federal employees interpret and understand whistleblowing. While the conclusions offered will stem from existing survey data and in-depth semi-structured interviews, a critical review of several literatures was completed to contextualize and

inform the research design, methodological approach and theoretical grounding of the study.

This critical review draws from several fields in the social sciences that are considered relevant to the study's questions and participants. Theoretically, this study looks into the public administration and public management literatures about individual behavior within organizations, with a specific focus on the action of reporting or voicing out wrongdoing in the federal government. The following sections present the descriptions and explanations of whistleblowing within the field of public administration and related disciplines.

### **Theorizing Whistleblowing in Public Organizations**

This section introduces the theories of political control of bureaucracy, bureaucratic politics, organizations and management, and public service ethics, as the lenses from which public administration theory views whistleblowing in public organizations. **Table 1.2** (see Appendix at the end of this chapter) shows a summary of the analytical framework used to describe whistleblowing in the field of public administration.

***Political control of bureaucracy.*** Matters of compliance and responsiveness are central to the control of bureaucracy theory (Frederickson and Smith 2002). Theories posing a need for controlling bureaucracy are based on the notion that some sort of separation between politics and administration is required for a democratic system to function (separation of powers) as well as an assumption of distrust for administrative power. The focus is on the need to separate political actions, from administrative actions as a way of justifying the need for developing a mechanism allowing for elected officials

to control civil servants. Thus, a debate on the mechanisms for controlling the bureaucracy, based on Friederich (1940) and Finer's (1941) discussion on the nature of administrative responsibility of public servants emerges in the field of public administration as the integrity-compliance continuum (Bowman 1980, Jos 1990). The notion of an integrity-compliance continuum states that bureaucrats behave according to an internal sense of responsibility as well as an external mechanism of compliance to certain standards for their actions. In this sense, whistleblowing behavior could exemplify cases where individual administrators react to ambiguity and conflicting demands of their environments to exercise administrative discretion, and ultimately report wrongdoing in their workplace (Burke 1986). According to Bowman (1980: 20) "whistleblowing punctures the myth of neutrality and consensus in administration," suggesting that "bureaucracy is a political system consisting of human beings as purposive actors with a sense of individual responsibility." In this sense, whistleblowers play a role in the construction of a responsible public administration through promoting integrity among public servants. As stated by Weinstein (1979a: 15) whistleblowing requires bureaucrats "to transcend the every day world by naming abuses where none are supposed to exist, by challenging authority when obedience is required, by overcoming narrow self interests, and by inventing and creating novel ways of achieving their goals." Likewise, blowing the whistle on wrongdoing is presented as the exercise of administrative responsibility through the practice of a moral autonomy among public administrators that will ultimately enhance the commitment to fundamental principles of justice (Jos 1990). According to Jos (1991: 108) whistleblowers contribute to administrative responsibility given that by reporting waste, fraud and abuse they alert a broader audience on wrongdoing, triggering

existing accountability mechanisms and providing “an important check on the abuse of the public interest.”

Research focused on understanding administrative responsibility tends to describe disclosures of wrongdoing as a product of an inner sense of duty by public administrators, while recognizing the need to take into account how an organization’s cultural setting and strategies contribute to such behavior (Bowman 1980: 21).

***Bureaucratic politics.*** The bureaucratic politics lens is concerned with understanding the boundaries between administration and politics, focusing among other issues on the political role of bureaucracy (Frederickson and Smith 2002). One subset of the bureaucratic politics literature studies whistleblowers as a form of opposition within public organizations. As such, whistleblowing, a type of administrative behavior related to bureaucratic discretion is considered an expression of public employee opposition, voice and dissent or deviance (Weinstein 1979b; Hirschman 1970; Kaufman 1960; Ermann and Lundman 1978; Glazer and Glazer 1987).

Kaufman (1960) examines the Forest Service of the 1950s to address how the agency detects and discourages deviation from preformed decisions, maintaining uniformity and control of bureaucratic discretion and discouraging dissent. As stated by Maynard-Moody and Kelly (1992: 87), “whistleblowing stories involve at least two levels within the bureaucracy: the central tension between the lower-level worker, who either goes public with concerns or considers doing so, and his or her boss, who tries to suppress the disclosure and retaliates if the worker goes public.” However, another subset of scholars refer to whistleblowing as a form of functional or creative disobedience that has positive effects on other individual employees and on the organization’s performance as a

whole (Weisband and Franck 1975; Warren 2003; O’Leary 2006). Weinstein (1979b) posits whistleblowing as a form of bureaucratic opposition aimed at raising awareness of organizational practices threatening the public interest. Similarly, Nader and colleagues (1972: vii) refer to the value commitment involved in whistleblowing as “the act of a man or woman who, believing that the public interest overrides the interest of the organization he serves, publicly “blows the whistle” if the organization is involved in corrupt, illegal, fraudulent or harmful activity.” O’Leary (2006: 104) considers whistleblowing as a form of dissent that “when managed properly, [is] not only positive but essential to a healthy population.”

Similarly, theoretical conceptualizations of whistleblowing as the exercise of employee voice build on Hirschman’s (1970) typology of responses to dissatisfaction or reactions to the decline of firms. This typology comprises the notions of exit (leaving the organization), voice as “any attempt at all to change, rather than to escape from, an objectionable state of affairs,” and loyalty (special attachment to the organization) (Hirschman 1970: 30). Based on Hirschman’s notion of voice, Bjorkelo et al. (2010) discuss whistleblowing as an action in which employees exercise voice to encourage something to happen (organizational change) and encourage some type of practice to stop (prevent wrongful practices from occurring). Likewise, Bok (1982: 211) refers to blowing the whistle as “a recent label for those who make revelations meant to call attention to negligence, abuses or dangers that threaten the public interest. They sound an alarm based on their expertise or inside knowledge, often from within the very organization in which they work. With as much resonance as they can muster, they strive to breach secrecy or

else arouse an apathetic public to dangers everyone knows about but does not fully acknowledge.”

Decisions to blow the whistle within federal agencies are also considered expressions of dissent that occur within a particular context (public organizations) and involve conflicting value choices (in particular, loyalty to the organization versus accountability to the public). According to Johnson (2003: 29), “the subject of the whistleblower’s dissent, unlike other dissenters, is narrow and concerns negligence, abuse, and public risk.” Similarly, Glazer and Glazer (1987: 215) consider whistleblowers as “ethical resisters in government” who “disobeyed their superiors” by bringing issues of major national concern such as abuse of power, fraud, waste and actions threatening public safety and health to public attention. The act of blowing the whistle can be considered a political act as it refers to public servants who deviate from the rest of the employees by claiming their dissent will achieve a public good (Bok 1981).

Public administration scholars focused on relating whistleblowing behavior to bureaucratic politics assume such behavior entails some sort of protest and willingness for organizational change. Accordingly, researchers raise the following questions: “how can public administrators solve policy problems including (but not limited to) inevitable tensions between democracy and bureaucracy, between expressive behavior and instrumental activity and between policy innovators and policy sustainers?” (O’Leary 2006: 11). However, the bureaucratic politics lens has developed research largely along descriptive lines rather than searched for explanations of why public servants engage in whistleblowing behavior.

***Ethics.*** Public administration research focused on discussing the ethics of public service often situates whistleblowing in a discussion about whether reporting of wrongdoing constitutes a desirable ethical behavior among public servants (Denhardt 1998; Cooper 2001; 2006). According to Denhardt (1988: 27), the model of administrative ethics developed in the field of public administration considers the following aspects of ethics: “ethical action involves a process of examining and questioning accepted standards for making decisions, the content of ethical standards should reflect the core values of society, administrators must consider their role within the organization and the goals of the organization when determining how to act.” A variety of different arguments have been emphasized in the discussions of the ethical dilemmas faced by observers of wrongdoing within organizations. Public servants who engage in whistleblowing expose inadequate, dangerous or illegal practices in particular government and private organizations, becoming the informants (source of information) on workplace corruption as well as the enforcers of ethical standards (corrective action) within public and private organizations (Jos et al. 1989).

Cooper (2006: 220) considers responsibility to be a key ethical behavior in the public sector and refers to whistleblowing as cases in which public servants safeguard the ethical autonomy of the organization when dealing with unethical superiors and organizations. In this sense, whistleblowers engage in understanding the morality of society and take a stance to protect the public interest, facing conflicting pressures upon their own moral virtues (integrity and loyalty). When deciding whether to report or not report wrongdoing, whistleblowers engage in balancing the boundaries of their responsibility to superiors and the citizenry, which according to Cooper (2006: 222) is



“experienced as a problem of loyalty” as these obligations may at times come into conflict. Lovell’s (2003: 202) research points to “moral muteness” which occurs “where whistleblowing is regarded as a more serious problem than the crime it reports, and where managerial imperatives allow organizational loyalty to be treated as more important than personal integrity and societal interests.” Research aimed at uncovering the motives of whistleblowing explores the consequences for the public servant of autonomous moral decision-making. These effects derive from the difficult ethical responsibility of public servants who at times face situations of ethical deliberation when observing wrongdoing and are pressured to decide between loyalty to team and loyalty to conscience (Jubb 1999; Rothwell and Baldwin 2006; Rowe et al. 2009). As Glazer and Glazer’s (1989: 96) research shows, whistleblowers “have accepted positions in their organizations because they believe in its goals,” and are among those who have “developed a strong commitment to upholding professional values” (Glazer and Glazer 1989: 69). When employees are asked to subordinate their commitment to the professional values and comply with unethical workplace activities that might threaten the public interest, the normative standards of conduct and values of the organization shift. The individual faces the pressure of being bound to the administrative hierarchy of an organization where unethical or illegal activities appear to be condoned (Cooper 2006). When abuses occur within public organizations, employees face inside/organizational and outside/societal pressures to act as “the rationale for whistleblowing is that the interests of the public are generally harmed by organizational abuses that are illegal, violate widespread moral norms, or that breed inefficiency” (Weinstein 1979b: 75).

Public administration researchers also have acknowledged that a conflict often exists between an individual's moral obligation and organizational goals, complicating his or her decision to blow the whistle. However, a more detailed and empirical understanding of the individual and organizational elements influencing the decision to engage in whistleblowing is needed in order to improve ethics management within public organizations.

***Organizations and management.*** The organizations and management lens focuses on the study of organizations as “the group of people who work together to pursue a *goal*” (Rainey 2009: 20). According to Rainey (2009: 20) the framework employed for an organizational analysis includes the following elements: goals/values, leadership/strategy, culture, environments, structure, processes, organizational performance/effectiveness, tasks/technology, incentives, and people (groups and individuals).

This analytical framework relates to the study of whistleblowing as behavior occurring in public organizations that is linked to an organization's environment, structure (responsibility, hierarchy, rules and regulations), culture, processes (power relationships, decision making, communication and change), and people (values/motives, perceptions, motivation, job satisfaction and organizational commitment). Thus, public organizations and management scholars ask: What are the environmental factors that make it possible for whistleblowers to succeed? Does whistleblowing occur in organizations with certain structures and processes? Is there a relationship between public service motivation and whistleblowing? (Rainey 1982; Perry and Wise 1990; Brewer and Selden 1998). The organizations and management lens provides for a description of whistleblowing behavior, and it presents some exploratory hypotheses on the link between the presence of certain

organizational elements and the occurrence of whistleblowing in the context of public organizations.

In descriptive terms, organization and management scholars state organizations both are shaped by, and seek to shape, the environment in which they exist, and “public organizations, ... thrive in environments that include influences from the concerned public, the elected officials, etc.” (O’Leary 2006: 15). Johnson (2003: 72) presents cases where whistleblowing was most likely to succeed when the external environment (media coverage, interests groups and legislators) were more supportive of the whistleblowing case. Denhardt (1988) considers the organizational context is critical for understanding administrative ethics as the organization imposes obligations, pressures and constraints on the individual whistleblowing decisions in the form of conflicting loyalties, decision-making structure and values. Similarly, research along these lines has focused on describing a possible association between the structure of responsibilities, the processes (power relations) and the people (values, commitment, motivations) working in public organizations to the existence of whistleblowing behavior (Miceli, Roach and Near 1998).

Related to the structure of responsibilities within complex organizations, Bovens (1998:191-2) refers to whistleblowing as a case of active responsibility, where “a member (or ex-member) of an organization, without having received an assignment or consent to that end from someone in a position of authority, reveals information or in some way goes public with the aim of drawing attention to an abuse of which he gained knowledge by virtue of his work within the organization.” This view recognizes public servants are also citizens who can “no longer easily hide behind the orders of their superiors,” but at the same time are allowed for certain forms of legitimate civil disobedience when loyalty to

the public cause may be threatened (Bovens 1998: 168; Cooper 2006). Bovens (1998) focuses on developing a typology of responsibility in public organizations to include whistleblowing behavior as a form of civil disobedience and, at the same time, an expression of active responsibility of civil servants (form of free speech, source of information on abuses).

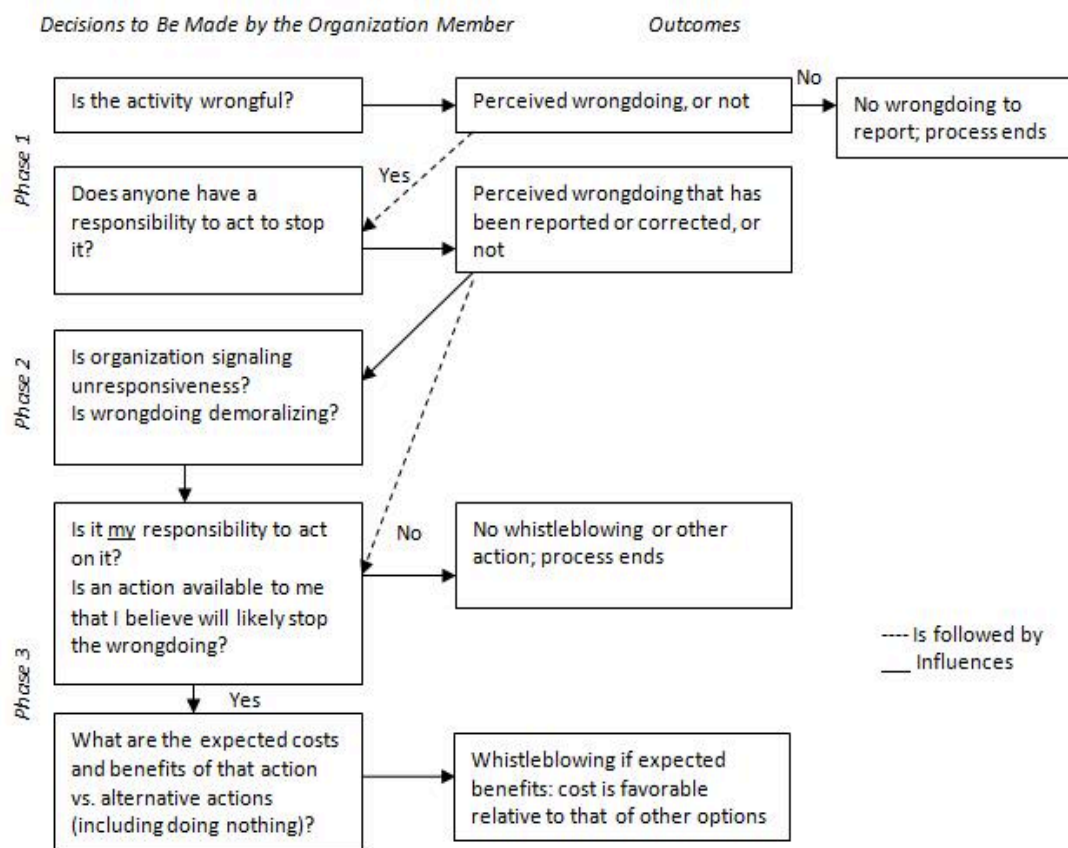
Focusing on the effect of power dynamics on individuals within organizations, DesAutels (2009: 223) studies the potential for moral damage to individuals who resist organizational power through whistleblowing. In line with identifying how the power relations within the organization operate to accept or reject whistleblowing behavior, Alford (2001) studies whistleblower narratives to develop a theory on ethics and politics based on their experiences with the organizational life. The author highlights organizational power intervenes “to transform an act of whistleblowing from an issue of policy and principle into an act of private disobedience and psychological disturbance” (Alford 2001: 32). Studies following the organizations and management lens also aim at explaining the occurrence of whistleblowing in organizations asking the following question: What causes the occurrence of whistleblowing within organizations? What explains whistleblowing as a prosocial behavior? What are the consequences of whistleblowing for individuals and groups within the organization? (See Brief and Motowidlo 1986; Near and Miceli 1985, 1995, 1996; Miceli et al. 1999, Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran 2005; among others). Broadly, studies that have empirically examined whistleblowing behavior to establish an explanation for wrongdoing reporting within organizations ask: “What aspects of the person, the context, and the transgression relate to whistleblowing intentions and to actual whistleblowing on wrongdoing? Which aspects

relate to retaliation against whistleblowers? Can we draw conclusions about the whistleblowing process by assessing whistleblowing intentions?” (Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran 2005: 277).

***The Miceli-Near-Dworkin Model.*** With a focus on empirical research to uncover the individual (people) and organizational (environment, structure, culture) conditions associated with wrongdoing reporting within organizations, Near and Miceli (1985: 6) investigate whistleblowing in organizations as “the disclosure by organization members (former or current) of illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers to persons or organizations that may be able to effect action.” These decisions concerning reporting of wrongdoing occurring within an organizational context are part of the prosocial organizational behavior model used by organizational behavior scholars to explain what causes whistleblowing to occur (Brief and Motowidlo 1986; Miceli and Near 1992; Miceli, Near and Dworkin 2008).

**Figure 1.1** reproduces Miceli, Near and Dworkin’s (2008) phases in the prosocial organizational behavior model of whistleblowing. Prosocial behavior theory uses the bystander intervention model proposing that “observers of an emergency or wrongdoing ask themselves a series of questions, ... [and] affirmative answers to all the questions increase the probability of intervention” (Miceli, Near and Dworkin’s 2008: 35-6).

**Figure 1.1** Miceli, Near and Dworkin's (2008) Phases in the Prosocial Organizational Behavior Model of Whistleblowing



Source: Reproduced from Miceli, Near and Dworkin (2008: 38)

An analysis of the prosocial behavior model explaining whistleblowing reveals specificities in terms of its predictors and its consequences. Broadly, predictors of whistleblowing within Miceli and Near's (1992: 48) model include characteristics of the individual, the situation (including the content and process of the case), the organization that committed the alleged wrongdoing, and the relative power of the parties over one another as well as the consequences for the individual given the channels used for disclosing wrongful behavior among employees. Research concerning the consequences

or outcomes of blowing the whistle on wrongdoing include the effects of disclosing wrongdoing for the individual, the organization and its culture (Miceli, Near and Dworkin 2008: 125).

For the purpose of exploring why public employees blow the whistle, this research looks into the organizations and management lens to review the key findings related to the antecedents of whistleblowing behavior in the context of public organizations. Next, several major areas concerning individual and organizational characteristics as antecedents that help explain whistleblowing behavior in organizations are reviewed.

### **Major Relevant Areas: Individual Characteristics and Organizational Elements**

#### ***Individual Characteristics: The People Element of Organizations***

***Mission valence.*** Whistleblowing actions have been related to employee commitment to organizational values as well as loyalty to the organization. According to the organizational management literature, an agency's mission is understood to represent the agency's pursued goals and values (Rainey 2009). Thus, a good understanding of public organizations and its management practices should start by acknowledging an "agency's mission statement has the purpose of engaging and attracting people who are engaged with the agency's intended goals and values" (Rainey and Steinbauer 1999: 16 in Wright and Pandey 2010: 23). The importance of an agency's mission in determining agency recruitment practices and performance levels has been developed by the literature on mission valence. Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) advance the concept of mission valence to describe employee "affective orientation toward particular outcomes" associated with an organization's mission. Also, it has been used to refer to an employee's perceptions of the attractiveness or salience of an organization's purpose or social contribution that is

derived from the satisfaction and individual experiences from advancing that purpose (Pandey et al. 2008; Rainey and Steinbauer 1999; Wright 2007). Wright and Pandey (2010) consider “mission valence” (or attractiveness of organizational goals) is determined at different levels and even through interactions between variables operating at these levels. These levels include the concepts of goal clarity at the organizational level, work impact at the job level, and public service motivation at the individual level.

Moreover, researchers suggest a public organization’s mission or “mission valence” has effects on human resource outcomes (job satisfaction and absenteeism). The attractiveness of the mission is expected to influence the ability of the organization to recruit, retain and motivate its workforce. Consistent with these expectations, it has been found that the more attractive the mission, the more likely an employee will want to be associated with the organization and strive to help it succeed. Wright and Pandey (2010: 27) explore how employee perceptions of the organization’s “mission valence will have a direct, positive effect on job satisfaction and an indirect positive effect on absenteeism through its influence on job satisfaction.” The authors make the following methodological point: organizational environments are enacted realities, and individual perceptions are a critical determinant of individual behavior in organizations, mediating the relationship between objective characteristics of the work environment and individual responses. So, organizational goals and values expressed in the agency’s mission influence the value employees give to the agency’s mission. And, the individual value given to the agency’s mission or mission valence has beneficial effects in terms of organizational outcomes and performance (high job satisfaction and decreased absenteeism). Goodsell (2011) focuses on the “mission mystique” of public organizations as representing the belief systems



attracting as well as motivating the public sector workforce into public agencies. The author considers a personal value alignment with agency mission exists in public organizations combined with a strong presence of mandated moral principles. Thus, perceptions of an agency's mission that are likely to reflect a personal commitment and alignment with public values are expected to be associated with reporting of wrongdoing behavior among public servants.

***Job satisfaction.*** Several researchers have considered job satisfaction as an intrapersonal characteristic predicting the decision to report wrongdoing in organizations (Brief and Motowidlo 1986; Miceli and Near 1992; Brewer and Selden 1998; Mesmer-Magnus and Viswevaran 2005). Brief and Motowidlo (1986: 718) analyze whistleblowing as a prosocial behavior to conclude it can be explained by job satisfaction. The idea is that individuals who are satisfied with aspects of their working life are more likely to engage in whistleblowing. As stated by Miceli and Near (1992: 130) "research in organizational contexts has shown that individuals who are satisfied with aspects of their working life or who feel equitably treated by their organizations are more likely to engage in some types of prosocial behavior."

Brewer and Selden (1998: 431) examine whether whistleblowers report higher levels of job satisfaction than do inactive observers of wrongdoing in federal agencies. Researchers conclude federal whistleblowers are "high performers who possess high levels of job commitment and satisfaction, yet place themselves at risk to further the public interest." Moreover, results show federal whistleblowers were motivated by concern for public interest and reported high levels of job security, job achievement, job commitment and job satisfaction.

Mesmer-Magnus and Viswevaran (2005) study job satisfaction as a correlate of whistleblowing intentions and actions in organizations. Results from their analysis shows job satisfaction relates to actual whistleblowing actions as “more satisfied employees might feel more comfortable to expressing dissent” than the rest of the employees in the organization (Mesmer-Magnus and Viswevaran 2005: 286). However, researchers have presented mixed results concerning the relationship between job satisfaction and the likelihood of whistleblowing. Sims and Keenan (1998) test the positive relationship between job satisfaction and the likelihood of acting pro-socially in organizations to find out results were contradictory to their expectations as not all surveyed employees might have considered whistleblowing to be a prosocial behavior. This study will explore the relationship between job satisfaction and the inclination to report wrongdoing in federal government.

***Individual Work Motives and Motivational Bases of Public Service.*** Related to the notion that public sector workers are imbued with a unique service ethic, the theory of public service motivation has linked this construct with employees’ proneness to engage in whistleblowing. Perry and Wise (1990) introduce a discussion of what constitutes a public service ethic and speculate about the behavioral implications of public service motivation theory in the field of public administration (also see Rainey 1982). For Perry and Wise (1990: 368), public service motivation comprises “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions and organizations.” This individual predisposition is generally characterized by rational (utility maximization), norm-based (public interest: patriotism, duty and loyalty) and affective (human emotion) motives. The authors push researchers to focus on conducting

research to explore individual motives such as “commitment to a public program because of personal identification with it, ... a desire to serve the public interest, loyalty to duty and to the government as a whole, and social equity, ... and the affective aspects of public service motivation, ... such as patriotism of benevolence” (Perry and Wise 1990: 369).

Contrary to what is expected for those employees motivated to public service, employees that are motivated by rational, instrumental or utilitarian motives are expected to be less likely to blow the whistle as doing so represents a threat to the status quo and ultimately to organizational survival (Miceli et al. 2008).

Brewer and Selden (1998) examine the conceptual linkage between public service motivation and whistleblowing. The expectation is that public employees are more likely than private sector employees to hold prosocial values and seek opportunities to help others and benefit society (Crewson 1997; Frank and Lewis 2004; Brewer 2003). Public service motivation theory suggests public sector employees concerned for public interest might be motivated to engage in whistleblowing in response to motives inherent in public institutions such as following the rules and protecting the public interest (norm-based and affective motives). Similarly Jos, Tompkins and Hays (1989) suggest a set of interrelated variables might influence decisions of whether to blow the whistle or not. These include particular characteristics of the issue at hand, the employee’s power relationship to the organization, and the employee’s personal characteristics and motivations. Jos and colleagues’ (1989) research explores the motivation and decision-making styles of potential whistleblowers. The authors anticipate that those employees who are “committed to blow the whistle will be committed to certain values but are capable of acting on this sense of obligation even when there are strong organizational and situational pressures to

the contrary” (Jos et al. 1989: 557). These values include a sense of individual responsibility, commitment to the organization’s goals, and trust in the organization’s response to their concerns. Given the altruistic or community service nature of the goals and activities of public organizations, employees with higher levels of public service motivation (norm-based and affective motives) should be more likely to view their organization’s mission as important because of its congruence with their own values. According to Perry and Wise (1990) it is expected that individuals with greater levels of public service motivation will seek membership in a public organization. Thus, individuals that highly value the agency’s mission --or are normatively or affectively motivated by its core set of values-- are attracted to environments where organizational values and goals are viewed as personally meaningful and can be incorporated into the individual’s own sense of identity (Weiss and Piderit 1999). More recent research, however, has found that government employment provides more opportunity to “help others” or be “useful to society” (Frank and Lewis 2004) and that public service motivation increases public employee perceptions of the organization’s mission valence (Pandey et al. 2008; Wright and Pandey 2010).

Brewer (2003:14) finds public servants score higher on social altruism, showing that they are more altruistic and helping than other citizens; on equality, expressing stronger support for the goal of equality; on tolerance and acceptance of diversity, and on humanitarianism. Specifically, they are more trustful, altruistic, supportive of equality, tolerant, and humanitarian than other citizens are. Brewer (2003: 18) tests the central premise of public service motivation theory which suggests an affective motivation is more prevalent among public employees to confirm that public employees are motivated

by a strong desire to perform public service rather than by self-interest (rational or instrumental motives). Brewer's (2003: 20) study shows there is something else, rather than self-interest, driving public servants as public employees appear to be "more civic minded than other citizens, and more likely to participate in civic affairs."

In a study linking public service motivation to work related attitudes and behavior, Brewer and Selden (2000: 695) state "public service motivation is linked to important work-related attitudes and behaviors such as achievement, commitment, job satisfaction, individual performance, and whistleblowing (Crewson 1997; Brewer and Selden 1998; Lewis and Alonso 1999), and extraorganizational attitudes and behaviors such as altruism, trust in government, serving the public or one's country, civic involvement and political participation" (Brewer and Maranto 2000; Brewer, Selden and Facer 2000). In line with Brewer and Selden (2000), Elliston and colleagues (1984: 6) believe that "whistleblowing is more likely to occur if individuals are (a) committed to the formal goals of the organization or to the successful completion of the project, (b) identify with the organization, and (c) have a strong sense of professional responsibility." The authors discuss the link between personal traits and individual role perceptions and decisions to blow the whistle. Elliston and colleagues (1984) consider whistleblowers must have relatively high ideals and principles to warrant jeopardizing or sacrificing a career. Their research suggests whistleblowers are among those employees who feel a strong obligation to "take action" rather than compromise their standards by remaining silent or conscientious employees who identify closely with their organization.

Similarly, Glazer and Glazer (1989: 6) interview a sample of whistleblowers overtime and find that they "invariably believed that they were defending the true mission

of their organization by resisting illicit practices and could not comprehend how their superiors could risk the good name of their company by producing defective products, the reputation of their hospital by abusing and neglecting patients, or the integrity of their agency by allowing safety reports to be tampered with or distorted.” Glazer and Glazer (1989) examine the testimonies of whistleblowers, to conclude that as workers realized there were serious violations to the agency’s values going on, they were moved to protest and refuse to comply with illegitimate behavior. This study will explore a set of constructed measures of work motives as individual characteristics expected to be associated with whistleblowing behavior in the federal government.

In addition to these variables the literature suggests other factors such as personality and morality of individuals involved in ethical decision-making in public organizations. Though briefly described next, these variables will not be relevant to the empirical model explored on this dissertation but might appear as themes during the data collection and analysis of interviews.

***Personality.*** Elliston and colleagues (1984) concentrate explanations of whistleblowing on characteristics of the individual, using personal traits theory, while acknowledging whistleblowing is a process contingent on the conventions or meanings mediating how human beings relate to the world. Personal traits theory asks whether there is something common to the personality structure of whistleblowers that separates them from other employees. According to Elliston and colleagues (1984: 26) “whistle-blowing is a “political” act committed by an employee who has the fortitude to go beyond the established system of organizational power and control.” In this sense, individuals with high ideals and principles, who identify closely with their organization, show a

commitment to explicit organizational goals and take responsibilities very seriously are those generally regarded as more prone to blow the whistle on organizational wrongdoing.

Dozier and Miceli (1985) consider the reasons why some observers of organizational wrongdoing blow the whistle while others ignore it, suggesting that moving from observation to action is determined by both egoistic and altruistic motives on the part of the whistleblower. The authors hypothesize that “certain stable personality characteristics of individuals may interact with their perceptions of organizational situations and may lead to predictable whistleblowing behavior” (Dozier and Miceli 1985: 823). Several individual characteristics such as “empathy, extraversion, social responsibility, education, age, achievement motivation,” have been explored as antecedents of this prosocial behavior (Brief and Motowidlo 1986: 720; Miceli and Near 1988; Miceli, Near and Dworkin 2008). Near and Miceli (1985) point towards other personality factors, such as high self-esteem, whether the individual perceives she/he is largely in control of her/his outcomes, and a higher level of moral reasoning (Near and Miceli 1985: 8).

***Morality.*** Miceli and Near (1992) present a preliminary model of whistleblowing which considers individuals’ level of moral development, motivation, and organizational commitment as explanations of who blows the whistle. Moral development research looks into which sets of assumptions a person uses to reason about relations with other people in society and what constitutes moral or ethical behavior vis-à-vis others. Thus, moral development explanations relate whistleblowing behavior to differences in moral standards among individuals. In this sense, differences in moral standards are grouped by levels of moral reasoning following Kohlberg (1969), and used to explore whether a

person's level of moral reasoning<sup>6</sup> determines whether he or she would blow the whistle on wrongdoing. A reformulation of this perspective, the neo-Kohlbergian approach, considers individuals base ethical decisions on different criteria which provide a different worldview to guide action (Kohlberg 1991). In this sense, whistleblowers are expected to be individuals who "have internalized higher and more universal standards of justice, social responsibility and modes of moral reasoning and are more empathic to the feelings of others" (Brief and Motowidlo 1986: 717, also Frederickson and Ghore 2005, Brabeck 1984; Liyanarachchi and Newdick 2009). Rest and colleagues (1999) show that the higher the individual's level of moral reasoning, the more likely he/she will blow the whistle than their counterparts with lower levels of moral reasoning. Miceli and colleagues (1991: 114) relate motivational antecedents of decisions to report wrongdoing to feelings of being morally compelled to report harmful activities, thus moved by a responsibility to act. Miceli and colleagues (1988) state that "some observers will feel a greater sense of moral obligation to act than will others. Thus, individuals who endorse the general principle that whistleblowing is morally correct would feel a greater obligation to act on perceived wrongdoing" (Miceli et al. 1988: 283).

### ***Environment, Culture and Structure: Organizational Elements***

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<sup>6</sup> Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning include: pre-conventional morality (obedience and punishment orientation; individualism and exchange); conventional morality (good interpersonal relationships; maintaining social order); and post-conventional morality (social contract and individual rights; universal principles). The idea is that children move into adulthood evolving from a pre-conventional morality (where the 'right' thing to do is to obey authority avoiding punishment), through a conventional morality (people think as members of conventional society with its values, norms and expectations) into a post-conventional morality (concerned with principles and values that make for a good society and basic rights). For an updated review on empirical research on moral reasoning in public administration see Frederickson and Ghore (2005).



Previous research has suggested that particular characteristics of an organization's environment, structure and culture are important determinants of whistleblowing within organizations (Miethe and Rothschild 1994; Cooper 2006). For example, by providing a supportive climate for disclosing wrongdoing an organizational structure of values might influence the likelihood of whistleblowing (Miethe and Rothschild 1994). Thus, the organizational structure and culture matter as these may trigger existing accountability mechanisms to promote a more responsible public service through an increased likelihood of whistleblowing (Jos 1991; Berry 2004; Cooper 2006). Dworkin and Baucus (1998) rely on legal cases of employees fired for whistleblowing to investigate the characteristics of the whistleblower and the situation, among other factors. Dworkin and Baucus (1998: 1284) found evidence that, whistleblowers "tend to report externally when the context seems unfavorable ... if the organization does not tolerate dissent." Miethe and Rothschild (1994: 336) also consider employee perceptions of the organization's culture and, "the ethics of senior management are also expected to influence whistleblowing behavior." As noted by Jos et al. (1989: 557), those committed to blowing the whistle "are committed to certain values but are capable of acting on this sense of obligation even when there are strong organizational and situational pressures to the contrary."

Vadera and colleagues (2009: 566) maintain "whistleblowing is a complex process" and organizations that disregard these complexities are not always able to ensure that unethical practices are reported. Similarly, Trevino and Weaver (2001: 651) state that "achieving goals on an ethics program may depend as much on the broader organizational context as it does on the formal ethics program itself." Thus, it is

important to consider some of the specific organizational and cultural characteristics of public agencies and how these might be related antecedents of whistleblowing behavior.

***Respect and openness.*** Elliston and colleagues (1984: 39) point out that organizations are tied to their environments. Understanding whether or not there are any particular organizational job settings that are more likely to encourage whistleblowing seems helpful for understanding the practical implications of whistleblowing. Researchers have suggested a work environment more respectful of workers will more likely encourage whistleblowing actions by employees. According to Elliston and colleagues (1984: 37) “whistleblowing is more likely to occur when the work group accepts and agrees with the whistleblower’s technical assessment and provides emotional support in deciding to blow the whistle.” Thus, a job setting more respectful of employees would seem more likely to encourage whistleblowing. Miethe and Rothschild (1994: 124) found that when an organization is seen as open, “permissive of employee voice in a decision-making process” employees will be more likely to blow the whistle internally in an attempt to return to the legitimate purpose of the organization.

Similar to the situation with supportive supervisors, however, a more open and respectful organizational culture may offer more ready access to internal channels for resolving wrongdoing. According to Miethe (1999) open organizations are less formalized and participatory work environments that respond to employees’ internal concerns through group solidarity and greater personal involvement in working relationships, thus dealing with wrongdoing internally. If so, openness and respect could be negatively related to the probability of blowing the whistle as employees find ways to address wrongdoing without needing to report to an outside authority or oversight body.

Additionally, more open and respectful organizations may actually encourage more ethical behavior in the aggregate, resulting in less wrongdoing within the organization to report on. In this way, an open and respectful organization may be associated with less whistleblowing.

***Cooperativeness and flexibility.*** Within the organizational culture and climate predictors of whistleblowing we find the existence of a cooperative work environment, that is, one in which teamwork and group cohesiveness prevails for making decisions about the organization's ethical climate (Rothwell and Baldwin 2006, 2007a, 2007b, Vadera et al. 2009). Public administration scholars suggest groups in organizations matter not only because of the strong pressures to conform these usually represent but also for the implications of certain group operations to the enforcement of attitudes and norms within an organization (Rainey 2009; Cooper 2006). Rothwell and Baldwin (2006) contend public organizations characterized by caring ethical climates are more likely to evidence willingness of wrongdoing reporting among employees. The authors describe a caring ethical climate as one "primarily concerned with the well-being of others within and outside the organization" (Rothwell and Baldwin 2006: 220). In a later empirical study on the relationship between ethical climates and police whistleblowing in the state of Georgia, Rothwell and Baldwin (2007a: 353) show that friendship or team interest climates (a caring dimension of the organization) are significantly related to willingness to report misdemeanors, felonies and misconduct as well as willingness to blow the whistle (not actual reporting). In this sense, the group cohesion through acting cooperatively to support the team interests (peer or group well-being) predicted the likelihood of willingness to blow the whistle among the police officers in the study.

Similarly, Vadera and colleagues (2009) review the literature on the organizational determinants of whistleblowing to conclude that individuals in organizations with team or friendship climates, strong ethical climates or democratic climates are more likely to engage in whistleblowing when they observe wrongdoing.

However, it is possible that wrongdoing is less likely to occur in cooperative organizations. Because such environments are characterized by information sharing and flexibility of communication flows among employees, these might evidence lower levels of wrongdoing occurrence and consequently less likelihood of wrongdoing reporting by employees. Likewise, it is also possible that cooperativeness or teamwork among employees might also produce a lower propensity to blow the whistle as such cohesion and commitment to teamwork might enforce attitudes such as allowing wrongdoing to be handled internally (cooperatively). For example, Rothwell and Baldwin (2007b: 610) refer to silence among police officers as “a means of internal cohesion necessary for solidarity and protection,” ensuring police officers “will act according to their collective well-being.” Thus, whistleblowing is handled internally (cooperatively by the group) as it threatens the solidarity among police officers.

***Fair treatment.*** Previous research has suggested that fairness in the work environment could increase the reporting of wrongdoing within organizations (Near et al. 1993; Miethe 1999; Trevino and Weaver 2001; Seifert 2006). Near, Dworkin and Miceli (1993) suggest higher employee satisfaction with the fairness of reporting procedures results in a more favorable and less retaliatory response for the whistleblower. Likewise, Miethe (1999: 66) analyzes the situational and organizational determinants of whistleblowing to consider “employees in fair and high integrity settings ... may feel at

greater ease talking to management about misconduct without fear of reprisals.” Trevino and Weaver (2001) examined the relationship between fairness and whistleblowing. Trevino and Weaver (2001: 653) considered perceptions of an organization’s overall fairness affect how employees will conform to organizational expectations, suggesting “when employees are treated fairly by an organization ... they believe that they owe something in return to the organization.” Thus, employees might engage in extra-role behavior to support the organization through reporting ethical problems rather than keeping silent about them. Trevino and Weaver (2001: 664) test whether employees perceptions of a just organization are more willing to help the organization deal with problems impeding the organization’s goal achievement and more willing to report ethical problems to management to find that perceived fair treatment was a significant predictor of reporting problems to management.

Seifert (2006) extended the stream of literature on fairness and whistleblowing by testing, in an experimental setting, the likelihood of employees internally reporting fraud when faced with fair or unfair whistleblowing procedures; fair or unfair interactions with management during the reporting of wrongdoing; and, fair or unfair whistleblowing complaint resolution process. Seifert (2006) concludes that when whistleblowing circumstances are perceived as fair, whistleblowing is more likely. In a related but also different take on the issue, Vadera et al. (2009: 563) conclude that “when organizations are perceived to be fair, observers are more likely to blow the whistle internally and less likely to engage in external whistleblowing.”

As mentioned, another possible explanation is that supportive, cooperative and fair work environments allow for group solidarity that results in addressing wrongdoing

internally in the organization before these escalate to the point of being formally reported by employees. As Miceli and Near (1992: 144) suggest “group norms may interact with the power of the group to enforce norms (...) to produce or inhibit whistleblowing.” The authors refer to research suggesting that when potential whistleblowers acknowledge others have observed the wrongdoing and are aware of it, “they are less likely to intervene that when they believe they are alone, because of the “diffusion of responsibility” for intervention” (Miceli and Near 1992: 144). Thus, it might be that a supportive, cooperative and fair work environment operates as a diffuser of responsibility, as observers of wrongdoing might expect a group rather than individual intervention on the wrongdoing before formally disclosing it. Similarly, a supportive, cooperative and fair work environment does not necessarily mean that the organization supports or encourages whistleblowing or those employees who report wrongdoing, or is less tolerant of wrongdoing. Thus, employees might perceive the work environment as cooperative, supportive and fair, but this is not necessarily connected to situations where wrongdoing occurs or to the history of reactions of wrongdoing within the organizations. It is possible that even when the work environment is perceived as cooperative, supportive and fair in general terms, it might not be the case when wrongdoing occurs, is observed and reported. The organization might be more tolerant of wrongdoing and less tolerant of whistleblowers, intervening to inhibit disclosures of wrongdoing among employees.

***Trust in Supervisory Authority.*** The fear of retaliation, which is a major deterrent to whistleblowing, might be mediated by an employee’s evaluation of the supportiveness of the work environment, especially the supportiveness of supervisors. Supervisor support seems to increase the likelihood that an observer of wrongdoing will intend to

blow the whistle, but to decrease actual whistleblowing behavior (Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran 2005; Miceli, Near and Dworkin 2008). Miceli and colleagues (1991) suggest that employees who enjoy the support of their supervisors in some domains perceive that this support is likely to extend to a whistleblowing situation. As such, they may be more likely to intend to blow the whistle upon observing a wrongdoing, knowing their supervisor will likely “back them up.” Thus, perceptions of trust in the supervisory authority build into employees’ perceptions of the supervisor as an authority who would reward whistleblowing behavior or employee ethical behavior (refrain from favoritism and act with integrity).

Similarly, Vadera and colleagues (2009: 563) review the empirical work on the contextual determinants of whistleblowing and conclude that perceived support from top management and from supervisors predicts whether and how wrongdoing is reported. Based on social exchange theory, Vadera and colleagues (2009) suggest a high level of supervisory support leads to norms of reciprocity, which develop trust in the channel an individual can use to report unethical practices.

Sims and Keenan (1998) consider that, if a communication situation is guided by supportiveness, there will be more openness in any subsequent communication of wrongdoing. According to these authors (Sims and Keenan 1998: 412), “a supportive climate is one in which there is empathy and an attempt to understand, listen, and maintain feelings of mutual respect.” Thus, these researchers hypothesize that if the immediate supervisor of a potential whistleblower is perceived as supporting the concerns about observed wrongdoing, and trusted by employees it can be expected that this would encourage such reporting. Sims and Keenan (1998: 416) found that perceived

supervisor support is significantly related to the choice to blow the whistle among employees.

However, Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran (2005) found an inverse relationship with actual whistleblowing behavior, suggesting that employees with supportive supervisors were less likely to actually blow the whistle. The authors consider one possible explanation is that employees with supportive supervisors may feel a greater responsibility to ensure that their supervisors are not adversely affected by a whistleblowing claim. These individuals may choose silence to voice in an effort to spare the supervisor embarrassment or discipline that may result from a report of illegitimate, unsanctioned, or immoral acts occurring within their department/ division (Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran 2005).

Another possible explanation is that employees with supportive supervisors that are trusted by employees to support ethical behavior, can find ways to get their concerns addressed within their work unit or department, by the supervisor even, without feeling compelled to turn to an outside authority or arbitrator. Research has shown that nearly every observer of perceived wrongdoing who reports it to someone outside the organization reports it to at least one party within the organization as well (Miceli and Near 1992; Miceli, Near and Dworkin 2008). Miceli, Near and Dworkin (2008: 8) address the fact that external whistleblowing has come to represent a continuing process -- "perhaps because internal efforts to get wrongdoing corrected have failed." If the employee encounters a supportive supervisor, she/he need not feel that the complaint of wrongdoing has been ignored because of the response of internal channels for resolving or correcting the wrongdoing. Thus, a supervisor who is perceived by employees as trustful



and supportive of ethical behavior, may represent a decrease in the number of actual whistleblowing acts as observers of wrongdoing would decide against escalating the complaint to someone external with more power in order to bring pressure on the organization, given the supportive environment within the organization. Another possible explanation is suggested by Glazer and Glazer's (1989: 133) case studies, which found that whistleblowers expected more responsiveness to their initial complaints, that they "understood that there might be some retribution, but few realized how damaging and extensive it would be." Thus, even if employees perceive they can trust the supervisor to be supportive of ethical behavior, distrust of organizational procedures and fear of retaliation, blacklisting, dismissal, transfer, personal harassment, etc. might intervene to discourage employees' willingness to report wrongdoing.

### **Limitations of Previous Studies**

In the field of public administration, studies on whistleblowing have focused on exploring the meaning of whistleblowing in the context of public service. This search for meaning has been mostly normative and descriptive; however, at times it has used case study analyses, interviews, and storytelling as research tools to find explanations for whistleblowing as a desired ethical bureaucratic behavior. Maynard-Moody and Kelly's (1993) administrative ethics research focuses on stories public managers tell about relations between civil servants and career bureaucrats and elected officials. The researchers present the stories that bureaucrats tell each other to deal with giving voice in public organizations. Findings from stories tell "the singular message in these stories for would- be whistleblowers is 'Don't'," suggesting conformity pressure (compliance) seems to be present in stories on whistleblowing (Maynard-Moody and Kelly 1993: 89).

Likewise, Alford (2001) uses interviews with whistleblowers to convey narratives behind decisions to report wrongdoing. The purpose is to explain the actions of whistleblowers, and understand how whistleblowers experienced their world by listening to the stories they tell about it, and uncovering the narratives<sup>7</sup> in these stories. Golden (2000) conducted interviews at four federal agencies to uncover what motivates bureaucrats. Research results showed only a low incidence of whistleblowing occurring among career civil servants; even during the Reagan administration, when there were many non-career appointees with different ideological leanings. Civil servants did not support whistleblowing but ostracized those few whistleblowers among them as “mavericks” who had violated the bureaucracy’s norms and damaged the reputation of their agencies (Golden 2000).

Empirical studies of whistleblowing as prosocial behavior include samples of nurses (King 1997), for profit employees (Miethe 1999), and government employees (Miceli, Rehg, Near and Ryan 1999; Miceli, Near and Schwenk 1991, among others). These studies operationalize the whistleblowing construct as presented by Near and Miceli (1985) and measure such construct through surveys distributed to a sample of employees

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<sup>7</sup> First, what the author calls an imagination for consequences. Within this narrative, the author states “whistleblowers are not connected to those they benefit, though the structure of their imagination for consequences is nonetheless the structure of all empathy, taking up in one’s imagination the place of the other” (Alford 2001: 68). Second, whistleblowers identify with the victim, this “takes the form of a refusal to align themselves with the aggressor coupled with an inability to choose sides” (Alford 2001: 71). Third, whistleblowers reveal they are unable or unwilling to perform doublings, positioning themselves as dysfunctional actors in society. In Alford’s terms (2001: 72) “doubling takes place when a part of the self comes to act autonomously, as though part of the self were authorized to act for the entire self, it is through doubling that we are able to ignore our ethical qualms at work because our work self temporarily speaks for our whole self. Doubling takes place when the voices of the family self no longer hears the voice of the work self, and vice versa. In this regard, they are dysfunctional actors in modern society.”

across organization types. Empirical studies on whistleblowing in public organizations use the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) surveys (1980, 1982, 1992) to measure antecedents and consequences of whistleblowing behavior of public servants. What is central on these survey instruments is the identification of whistleblowers as employees witnessing wrongdoing and the type of wrongdoing that most affected these employees (see Vadera et al. 2009).

Referring to empirical analyses using the MSPB surveys, researchers conclude such data have proven very useful and reliable for those interested in whistleblowing, as the sampling methods used by these surveys allowed for large stratified random samples of employees within agencies, and response rates obtained were quite high; a central concern for obtaining a reliable quantitative analysis (Near and Miceli 2008). As well, these data provide some information about the extent to which the cases are representative, allowing for a comparison of perceptions, experiences, and characteristics of employees who are not whistleblowers with those who are. Secondary analyses of the MSPB data has focused primarily on four basic issues: assessing the overall incidence of wrongdoing, whistleblowing process and status, and retaliation against whistleblowers, determining the difference between observing and deciding to report, predicting which whistleblowers are most likely to suffer retaliation, and exploring the conditions under which whistleblowers are most likely to be effective in persuading their organizations to stop the wrongdoing (Miceli and Near 1984, 1985, 1988, 1992; Miceli, Near and Schwenk 1991; Near and Jensen 1983; Near and Miceli 1985, 1995; Near, Van Scotter, Rehg and Miceli 2004). Few studies have used a mixed methods approach to the study of whistleblowing in public organizations (Jos et al. 1989; Bjørkelo et al. 2008; Vadera

2010). Most mixed methods studies have focused on case studies on whistleblowing posing several limitations such as “uniqueness paradox” or “the bias toward viewing personal experience in an organization as unique, even if these experiences are repeated in many other settings accessible only to an outside analyst” (Jos et al. 1989: 553). Thus, mixed methods studies that purposefully select cases of whistleblowers typify the experience of one type of whistleblowers, but present limitations concerning the generalizability of its results.

### **Research significance**

The significance of this dissertation is to contribute to the existing gap in the public administration literature explaining whistleblowing, through examining the individual and organizational work environment and culture context under which disclosures of wrongdoing are decided, and thinking about ways of improving ethics management in the federal government. In terms of theory, this study aims at contributing to linking the theory of organizational behavior to the context of the values at stake among public sector employees. This research will allow for empirically exploring the individual and organizational factors associated with decisions to blow the whistle in the context of the U.S. federal government. The hope is to cast some light on the intersection between public service motivations, public service values and deciding on ethical dilemmas in public organizations. Past research in the field of public administration has not empirically explored the particularities of the decision-making context and antecedents under which public sector workers operate, leaving a gap of knowledge to be filled.

In methodological terms, using quantitative and qualitative data to answer this study’s research question will allow for explaining results in more detail, “especially in

terms of detailed voices and participant perspectives because little is known about the mechanisms behind the trends” (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011: 151). Thus, this study will advance whistleblowing research in methodological terms in its attempt to bridge a quantitative with a qualitative approach to understanding social phenomena (Riccucci 2010).

In practical terms, an examination of the factors underlying decisions to blow the whistle on organizational wrongdoing among U.S. federal employees could be useful in improving the visibility of the phenomenon, and the responses offered to federal employees at the organizational level (ethics management). In line with this visibility, this study might be useful for raising awareness on organizational power issues involved in decisions to blow the whistle as well as motivations of federal employees to change their present work environments. This research could contribute to designing improved employee protections at the agency level as well as enhance an understanding of what is at stake when observers of wrongdoing decide to use internal or external reporting channels to disclose wrongdoing. Results from this study may have an impact on organizational effectiveness and individual behavior ultimately aiming at improving public organizations’ work environment.

### **Objectives and Research Question**

This dissertation aims at answering the following broad research question: Why do federal employees decide to report or not report illegal, immoral or illegitimate practices (wrongdoing) occurring within their workplace? With respect to the model of the whistleblowing process developed by Miceli, Near and Dworkin (2008), this study focuses on the stage when the employee recognizes the wrongdoing occurring within the

organization, assesses whether to act or not, considers whether she/he is responsible for acting, and finally chooses to act (or not) in response to the identified wrongdoing.

Accordingly, this study will explore the antecedents of whistleblowing for those observers of wrongdoing who are at the stage of deciding whether it is their responsibility to act on wrongdoing and whether any reporting action is available to them. Specifically this study aims at answering the following research question: what are some characteristics of individuals that encourage or discourage whistleblowing? And in what ways do organizational work environment and culture characteristics influence actual disclosures of wrongdoing (or whistleblowing)?

**Figure 1.2** shows the conceptual scheme together with the key variables and expected relationships to be investigated in this study (see Appendix at the end of this chapter). Using the research findings within the major relevant areas previously discussed as suggestions on the possible determinants of whistleblowing, this study will explore the individual and organizational antecedents of public employee disclosures of wrongdoing, or actual whistleblowing.

Related to the *individual factors* influencing federal employees to blow the whistle, this study will address whether there is an association between an understanding, importance and contribution assigned to the agency's mission (mission valence), perceptions of satisfaction with the job (job satisfaction), rational work motives, norm-based and affective work motives, and the likelihood of blowing the whistle on wrongdoing (reporting).

Related to the *organizational factors* or culture influencing federal employees to blow the whistle, this study will draw attention to whether there is an association between

perceptions of respect and openness, perceptions of cooperativeness and flexibility, perceptions of fair treatment, perceptions of a trustful supervisory authority within the organization's work environment and culture and the likelihood of blowing the whistle on wrongdoing (reporting).

To answer this study's research questions, whistleblowing actions will be empirically examined to come up with a description or illustration of the main individual and organizational characteristics associated with the reporting of wrongdoing within public organizations, and implications drawn for improving ethics management in public organizations. Furthermore, testimonies of federal employees will be collected and examined to uncover why would federal employees decide to report wrongdoing in the federal government. Both secondary and primary sources of data on how public sector employees experience the whistleblowing process within their workplace will be assessed, to help clarify how the organizational ethical climate could be managed to allow for whistleblowing within public organizations.

The ultimate goal of this study is to arrive at a better understanding of the individual and organizational characteristics operating to influence the individual decision-making process when observing unethical, wrongful, or illegal behavior in the context of the federal government. A better understanding of the factors at stake when deciding whether to blow the whistle or not in federal government will hopefully advance knowledge on the affective involvement of federal employees when faced with wrongful or illegal activities within the workplace. Such knowledge will inform the organization's human resources (federal workers, co-workers, supervisors, managers) and external policy makers on the organizational values at stake when individuals decide on blowing the

whistle. This will ultimately lead to improved management strategies for channeling protected employee disclosure practices and addressing/redressing wrongdoing within the organization as part of the organizational learning process in federal government.

Chapter 2 presents the methodology that will be used for empirically exploring the individual and organizational factors expected to determine the likelihood of employee reporting of wrongdoing in the form of whistleblowing.



## Appendix

**Table 1.1** Legal and Institutional Whistleblowing Protections

<b>Legislation Name</b>	<b>Key Content</b>	<b>Referred Institution</b>
National Labor Relations Act (1935)	Protects employees engaging in union-related activities that testified or filed charges concerning illegal unfair labor practices.	Secretary of Labor
Occupational Safety and Health Act (1970)	Administers 21 whistleblower protection statutes that prohibit employers from retaliating against employees who raise various protected concerns or provide protected information to the employer or to the government.	Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Department of Labor
Civil Service Reform Act (1978)	Prohibits certain adverse personnel practices by agencies against employees for whistleblowing disclosures to any recipient.	Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) Office of Special Counsel (OSC)

Legislation Name	Key Content	Referred Institution
Whistleblower Protection Act (1989, Amendment 1994)	<p>Enforces the government employees' code of ethics, protects any whistleblowing disclosure if the contents are significant and reasonable. Obliges the OSC to provide status reports to employees seeking help as well as refrain from disclosing the identity of an employee making a whistleblowing disclosure without consent.</p> <p>Gives whistleblowers control of cases through allowing them an evidentiary hearing at the MSPB (or filing an Individual Right of Action).</p> <p>Eliminates the need to prove that the agency had retaliatory motives.</p> <p>Eases the necessary burden of proof to proving that the employee's protected whistleblowing disclosures are a "contributing factor."</p> <p>Provides an interim relief to whistleblowers by allowing them to return to their job during the appeal process.</p> <p>Allows winning whistleblower to receive placement preference for a new job.</p> <p>Strengthens disclosure channels by including the whistleblower's critique in all public releases and files, and protects alternative statutory remedies (Devine 1997: 125-7).</p>	Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) Office of Special Counsel (OSC)
False Claims Act (1863, Amendment 1986)	Provides rewards to whistleblowers who prosecute successful suits in the name of the US government against individuals or companies who have fraudulently claimed federal funds.	Department of Justice

<b>Legislation Name</b>	<b>Key Content</b>	<b>Referred Institution</b>
U.S. Constitution: First Amendment; Fourteenth Amendment.	Freedom of speech	U.S. Supreme Court
Sarbanes-Oxley Act (2002)	Calls for companies to establish a code of ethics and whistleblowing procedures which applies to top corporate officers	Reports of suspected fraud go to a federal regulatory or law enforcement agency, or to any member or committee of Congress.
Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (NO FEAR)	Requires federal agencies to give annual reports to Congress, the attorney general and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on disciplinary actions taken for conduct by employees that is inconsistent with federal whistleblower protections. Requires the OPM to conduct a comprehensive study in the executive branch to identify best practices for taking appropriate disciplinary actions for conduct that is inconsistent with federal whistleblower protection laws and issue advisory guidelines for the agencies.	Office of Personnel Management

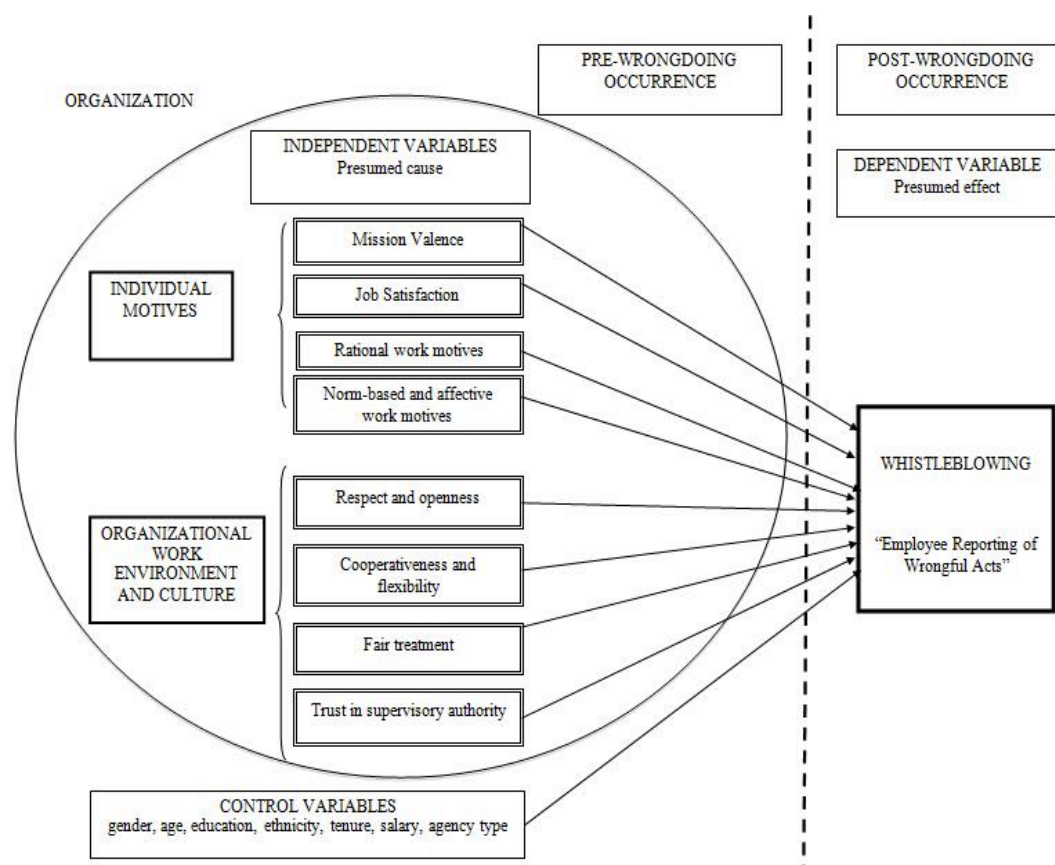
Legislation Name	Key Content	Referred Institution
Whistleblower Enhancement Protection Act (WPEA)	<p>Expands free speech overriding a Supreme Court decision, <i>Garcetti v. Ceballos</i>, which limits federal workers' free speech rights while carrying out job duties.</p> <p>Expands coverage and due process rights to the intelligence community agencies.</p> <p>Expands remedies and resources. Provides compensatory damages reimbursement for expert witness fees to prevailing whistleblowers cases. Provides the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) with authority to file friend of the court briefs in court to support employees appealing MSPB rulings. Facilitates the Office of Special Counsel to discipline those responsible for illegal retaliation by modifying the burdens of proof, and by ending OSC liability for attorney fees of government managers. Requires the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) to file annual reports providing for data on the outcomes of whistleblower cases, from administrative judge through Board appeal. Creates a whistleblower ombudsman as a five-year experiment to advise employees of their rights in Offices of Inspectors General (OIG) for title 5 employees.</p>	Office of Special Counsel Merit Systems Protection Board Whistleblower Ombudsman

**Table 1.2** Summary of Descriptions and Explanations of Whistleblowing Behavior in Public Administration

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Contributing Author(s)</b>	<b>Tradition of Inquiry</b>	<b>Descriptors</b>
Political control of bureaucracy	Weinstein (1979a, 1979b) Bowman (1980) Burke (1986) Jos (1990) Frederickson and Smith (2002)	Interpretivism	Politics-Administration Integrity-Compliance Administrative Discretion
Bureaucratic politics	Kaufman (1960) Hirschman (1970) Bok (1981, 1982) Glazer and Glazer (1987) Johnson (2003) O'Leary (2006) Bjorkelo et al. (2010)	Interpretivism, Rationalism and Empiricism	Responses to wrongdoing in Organizations Exit, Voice, Loyalty, Neglect Deviants Dissent
Ethics	Denhardt (1988) Cooper (2006) Adams and Balfour (2009)	Interpretivism, Rationalism and Empiricism	Ethics Ethical decision-making Responsibility (objective/subjective) Moral beliefs in tension with duties Teleological/Deontological decisions
Organizations and Management	Denhardt (1988) Perry and Wise (1990) Brewer and Selden (1998) Bovens (1998) Alford (2001) Johnson (2003) Rainey (2009) DesAutels (2009)	Rationalism and Empiricism: Organizational Environment and administrative behavior Organizational Dynamics and administrative behavior	Ethics Management (compliance/integrity) Leadership Managing People Structure, Culture, Environment
	Elliston et al (1984) Brabeck (1984) Dozier and Miceli (1985) Near and Miceli (1985) Brief and Motowidlo (1986) Miceli et al. (1988, 1991, 1992) Rest et al. (1999) Frederickson and Ghore (2005)	Positivist and Post-positivist: Personality Morality	Empirical findings: Certain individual characteristics are associated with the likelihood of employees blowing the whistle on

	Miceli, Near and Dworkin (2008)		wrongdoing
	Rainey (1982, 2009) Jos et al, (1989) Glazer and Glazer (1989) Perry and Wise (1990) Crewson (1997) Weiss and Piderit (1999) Lewis and Alonso (1999) Rainey and Steinbauer (1999) Brewer and Maranto (2000) Brewer et al (1998, 2000) Brewer (2003) Frank and Lewis (2004) Wright (2007) Pandey et al. (2008) Wright and Pandey (2010)	Positivist and Post-positivist: Organizational behavior in the context of public organizations Mission Valence Public Service Motivation	Empirical findings: Certain values held by individuals who become employees of public organizations are associated with the likelihood of employees blowing the whistle on wrongdoing
	Elliston et al. (1984) Jos et al. (1989) Jos (1991) Miceli et al. (1991, 1992, 2008) Near et al. (1993) Miethe and Rothschild (1994) Dworkin and Baucus (1998) Sims and Keenan (1998) Miethe (1999) Trevino and Weaver (2001) Berry (2004) Seifert (2006) Rothwell and Baldwin (2007) Vadera et al. (2009) Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran (2005) Seifert (2006)	Positivist and Post-positivist: Organizational culture Supportiveness Respect and openness Cooperativeness Fairness	Empirical findings: Certain shared values held within the organization are associated with the likelihood of employees blowing the whistle on wrongdoing

**Figure 1.2 Model Variables**



## **Chapter 2. Research Design and Methodology**

As detailed in the previous chapter, this dissertation examines how decisions to report, or not to report, wrongdoing may be driven by a combination of motivational and contextual factors. Thus, the central characteristic of this study's research design is the use of multiple sources of evidence to study whistleblowing at both the individual and organizational levels of analysis. This chapter addresses the methods for data collection and analysis used to answer the study's main research question.

### **A Mixed Methods Approach**

Blowing the whistle on wrongdoing poses ethical dilemmas to federal employees exposing the complexity inherent in decisions to report wrongdoing (value conflicts) in the context of federal government. According to Yin (2009: 63) "mixed methods research can permit investigators to address more complicated research questions and collect a richer and stronger array of evidence than can be accomplished by any single method alone" (Yin 2009: 63). Thus, this study employs a mixed methodology to understand whistleblowing in U.S. federal agencies. Cresswell and Plano Clark (2011: 5) explain that mixed methods research involves "philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases of the research process." They suggest that a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis in a single study or series of studies "provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone" (Cresswell and Plano Clark 2011: 5). Similarly, Riccucci (2010: 108-109) considers the use of mixed methods "combines the benefits of qualitative and quantitative methods," as well as



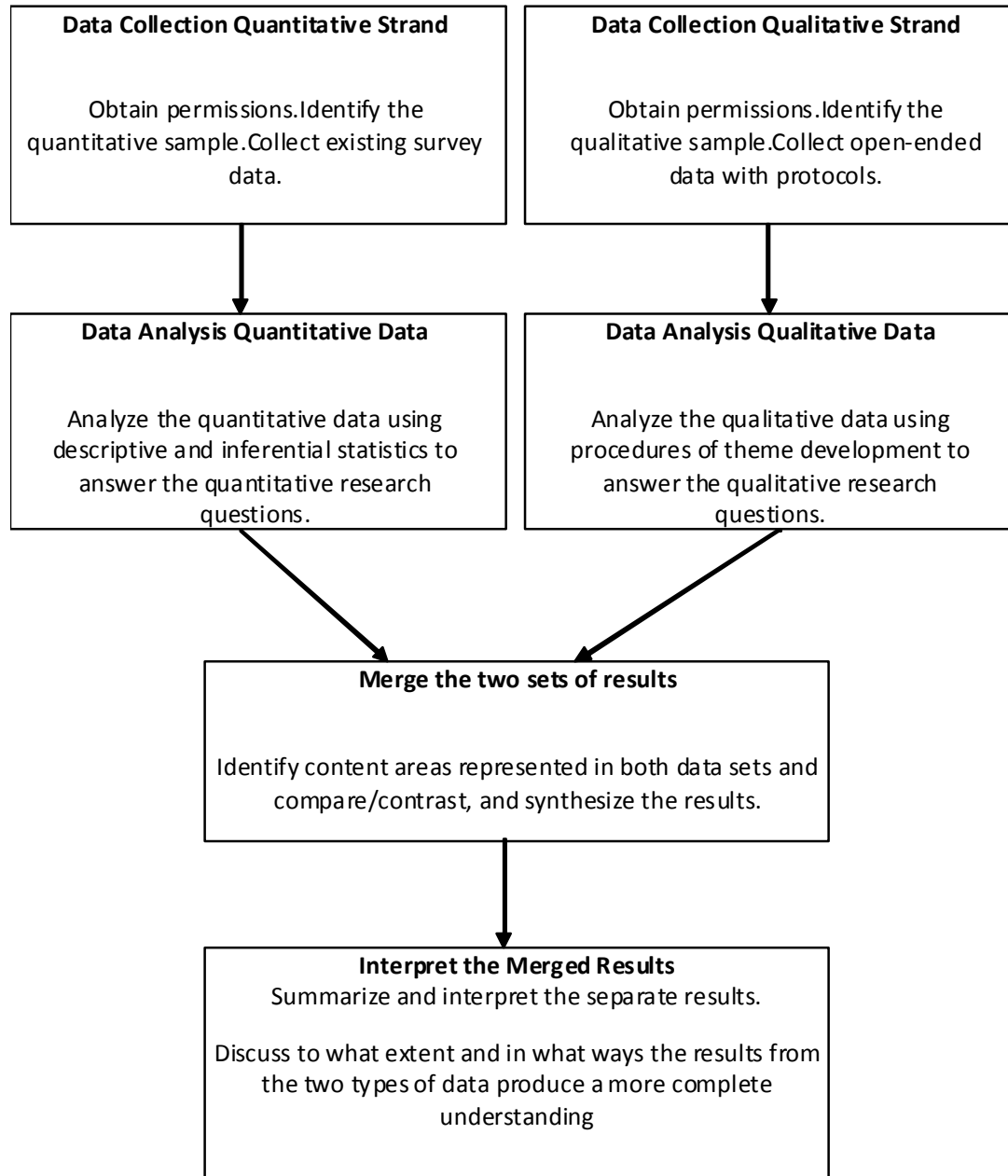
“provides flexibility in efforts to find solutions to practical, real-world problems.” Thus, using a mixed methodology seems appropriate given the complexity of the phenomena under study as well as the intricate context of interest.

Specifically, this study begins with large-sample survey data to quantitatively test whether or not individual and organizational conditions influence decisions to blow the whistle for workers at U.S. federal agencies. Next, qualitative data are collected to explore in-depth federal employee individual motivations and work environment and organizational culture conditions encouraging or discouraging whistleblowing among federal workers in the U.S. The reason for adopting this design is based on the notion that the individuals’ perceptions need to be captured in order to develop an improved support system which guides behavior within public organizations. Using data sources that could provide additional evidence to the phenomenon under study, this study employs both quantitative and qualitative forms of data with the purpose of bringing greater insights into the problem and capturing the ethical complexities involved when deciding to report wrongdoing in the workplace.

**Figure 2.1** summarizes the methodology for data collection and analysis employed in this study. The primary unit of analysis for this study is the individual, including both present and former employees of public organizations at the federal level of government (presently or formerly belonging to Federal Civil Service). The overall target population in this study will be present and former federal employees in the United States as this study uses a nationally representative sample survey conducted by the Merit Systems Protection Board’s Merit Principles Survey (USMSPB 2005), and original interview data collected from a purposive sample of federal employees. The next section

introduces the quantitative data and methods employed in the quantitative strand of the research design.

**Figure 2.1** Mixed Methods Research Design



Source: Adapted from Creswell and Plano Clark (2011: 84).

## Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

**Data.** The quantitative analysis uses existing survey data collected by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (USMSPB 2005a: 2) from “a representative, random sample of full-time, permanent, non-seasonal employees in 24 participating agencies”<sup>8</sup>. The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board is an independent quasi-judicial agency in the executive branch established by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. The Board’s mission is to protect federal merit systems and the rights of individuals within those systems. Consequently, the MSPB conducts studies related to the civil service and other merit systems. The Board considers disclosures of wrongdoing to be an important concern of the merit system, as it is considered a merit systems principle that “all employees should maintain high standards of integrity, conduct and concern for the public interest” (USMSPB 2011: 1). A copy of the survey instruments of the studies conducted by the MSPB is available online on the Board’s website<sup>9</sup>.

The Merit Systems Protection Board collects civil service personnel data in the form of surveys on several issues related to the merit system in the U.S. Since the 1980s, the MSPB has conducted a series of surveys on prohibited personnel practices that include specific questions on whistleblowing (USMSPB 1980, 1982, 1989, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2005b, 2007, 2010). A few MSPB surveys have focused more specifically on

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<sup>8</sup> The agencies included in the MSPB 2005 Merit Principles Survey are the Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Department of Defense (Air Force, Army, Navy), Department of Education, Department of Energy, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, General Services Administration, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of Justice, Department of Labor, Department of Interior, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Office of Personnel Management, Social Security Administration, Department of State, Department of Transportation, Department of Treasury, Department of Veterans Affairs.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.mspb.gov/> Accessed June 20, 2012.

whistleblowing, particularly those collected by the MSPB in 1980, 1982, 1992 and 2010. According to the MSPB's (2011) latest report comparing the 1992-2010 survey, "the percentage of employees who perceive any wrongdoing has decreased [since 1992]; however, perceptions of retaliation against those who blow the whistle remain a serious concern" (USMSPB 2011: i). Though the MSPB report states the 2010 "survey data also indicate that the most important factors for employees when deciding whether to report wrongdoing are about the personal consequences for the employee," there seems to be no reference or analysis on the factors facilitating or impeding decisions to report wrongdoing in federal agencies (USMSPB 2011: i).

For this dissertation, the Merit Principles Survey of 2005 on prohibited personnel practices, which includes several key questions on whistleblowing, as well as the 2010 survey with more questions on whistleblowing, were both requested from the MSPB for use as raw numerical data for statistical analysis (USMSPB 2005b, USMSPB 2010). This entailed filing a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request for the raw data using a formal letter request form. The MSPB requires individuals to file an electronic FOIA request on the agency's website; thus, such procedure was followed. The FOIA request letter was first submitted to the MSPB's FOIA Officer on May 30, 2012. Only the 2005 Merit Principles Survey was provided in time and in complete form with all relevant variables. The 2010 Merit Principles Survey, unfortunately, was only released many months later and in an incomplete form, with key variables missing from the dataset. This made it impossible to include the 2010 MSPB data set for analysis on this dissertation. Still, the 2005 survey is quite recent and provides the key outcome measure

of whistleblowing behavior, along with a rich array of attitudinal and organizational characteristics that allow the model to be explored.

The sample size of the 2005 Merit Principles Survey is determined in part by practical limitations as well as by the sampling methods employed by the USMSPB. For the 2005 MSPB Merit Principles Survey, the methodology for recruiting participants included an online administration of the survey via the World Wide Web in collaboration with agency leaders, human resources Directors, and Chief Human Capital Officers who encouraged employees to participate. The MSPB selected a representative random sample of full-time employees (total of 74,000) to participate from 24 federal agencies. These participants were sent invitations via e-mail messages with an accompanying link to the survey website. Where employees did not have easily configurable web or e-mail access, paper invitations and survey packets were sent via postal mail. A total of 36,926 employees completed the survey resulting in a response rate of approximately 50 percent (USMSPB 2005a: 2).

The 2005 MSPB survey questionnaire comprises 69 primarily closed-ended questions organized according to themes, with 59 to be answered by all employees and 10 to be answered only by supervisory employees. The questions focus on the following themes or topics:

- agency
- job
- work unit
- job performance

- pay and rewards
- fairness
- employee's supervisor
- training
- career plans
- supervisory status
- management perspective
- employment facts
- demographics

Importantly, in the section on fairness the 2005 MPS questionnaire contains a direct question measuring respondent's decision to formally blow the whistle on wrongdoing. Specifically, question number 23 of the questionnaire asks: "In the past 2 years, have you made any formal disclosure of fraud, waste, abuse, or unlawful behavior at work?" Responses to this question are used to operationalize the dependent variable or main outcome of the quantitative aspect of this study. The next chapter, which presents the statistical analysis and results, will detail how the specific survey questions were re-coded and transformed, including the construction of multi-item scales (and their reliabilities) to measure the key theoretical constructs in the explanatory model of whistleblowing.

In order to check whether the 2005 working sample is substantially different from the original sample in terms of the distribution of some key demographic variables, data

from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) was used as a reference for comparison<sup>10</sup>. The data was retrieved from the Federal Employment Statistics webpage. Specifically, the data was downloaded from the Fact Book descriptive statistical information publication for the year 2005 (OPM 2005). This publication contains statistics on employee demographics; compensation, payroll, and work years; performance management and the Senior Executive Service (SES); retirement and insurance programs; and student employment programs.

**Table 2.1** compares the working sample to the original sample in terms of individual characteristics. As we can see from Table 2.1, women and total minorities are somewhat underrepresented, while educated respondents somewhat overrepresented in the working sample, compared to the actual federal workforce data for 2005. As well, in terms of average age of respondents, the average age is higher in the working sample than that of the actual workforce data for 2005. And, in terms of average length of service, the average length of service is higher in the working sample than that of the actual workforce data for 2005.

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<sup>10</sup> U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Data Analysis and Documentation, Fact Book, Available at <http://www.opm.gov/feddata/factbook/index.asp#2005> Accessed May 20, 2012

**Table 2.1** Comparison of Individual Characteristics (USOPM/USMSPB 2005)

<b>Individual Characteristics</b>	<b>USOPM data 2005</b>	<b>USMSPB survey 2005</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Men	56%	61%
Women	44%	39%
<b>Race</b>		
White	69%	72%
Total Minorities	31%	28%
<b>Education (Bachelor's Degree or higher)</b>	42%	65.7%
<b>Average Age</b>	46.8	49.3
<b>Average Length of Service</b>	16.6	19.8

Note: USOPM data for 2005 retrieved from Federal Workforce Statistics Fact Book 2005. USMSPB data for the Merit Principles Survey for 2005 is the working sample information.

***Advantages and Limitations.*** Kiecolt and Nathan (1985:11) suggest the following advantages of using existing secondary survey data for analysis. First, secondary survey analysis requires less money, less time and fewer personnel and is therefore attractive when the funds available for research are limited or uncertain. Second, secondary analysis circumvents data collection problems allowing for accessing a representative sample. Moreover, exploring secondary survey data “can uncover aspects of a research problem that require elaboration, groups that need to be oversampled, grounds for hypothesis revision, and the need to refine and improve existing measures” (Kiecolt and Nathan 1985: 11).

Limitations of secondary data analysis include problems that are intrinsic to the survey method for data collection. First, the data availability, as the USMSPB required a FOIA request form to disclose the survey waves of interest and there was an extensive



amount of time involved in acquiring the data sets. Second, the data file provided needs to be complete and accurate containing a codebook that sequentially lists the variables in the data file to allow for proper variable operationalization. This was available from the data providers, for the 2005 wave of the Merit Principles Survey (USMSPB). Third, as data was collected by the USMSPB and not by the primary investigator of this study, “errors made in original surveys often are no longer visible and it is impossible to differentiate interviewing, coding and keypunching errors” (Kiecolt and Nathan 1985: 13). Kiecolt and Nathan (1985: 13) consider “the survey procedures that were followed may not have been sufficiently documented to enable secondary analysts to appraise errors in data. Trivial sources of error, such as that from sampling design, may be magnified when survey is put to other than its original use, and such errors may be compounded by combining surveys.” Fourth, the authors point to invalidity as a concern for secondary data analysis “to the extent that survey items are imprecise measures of the concepts a secondary analyst has in mind or that the variables have been poorly operationalized” (Kiecolt and Nathan 1985: 14). Finally, it is important to note that this dataset has not been previously used for the purpose of analyzing the individual and organizational determinants of whistleblowing behavior, allowing for increased creativity in the scope of this dissertation research.

### **Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis**

The literature on organizational behavior of federal employees has not paid sufficient attention to the interpretation of what whistleblowing means in the context of public service, the value choices at stake when judging the ethics of abuses at the workplace, and the responses received from the workplace context, for those workers

who directly or indirectly experience whistleblowing. Therefore, this study employs qualitative interviews of federal employees working in big federal agencies who self-identified themselves as having blown the whistle in their professional lives to learn about “people’s interior experiences ... what people perceived and how they interpreted their perceptions ... how events affected their thoughts and feelings ... the meanings to them of their relationships, their families, their work and their selves” (Weiss 1994:1).

***Participant Eligibility.*** This study gathered original interview data on federal workers who had direct experience (whistleblowers) with reporting wrongdoing in U.S. federal agencies. Participants were recruited using a purposeful sample of subject-participants. In order to be eligible to participate in the study, participants had to be present or former federal employees who had reported wrongdoing in their professional lives. Advocacy organizations and social networks collaborated in the recruitment of subject-participants. Permissions to collect qualitative data from individuals and sites were obtained using Rutgers Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participants received a copy of the project narrative together with the IRB approval number and signed an informed consent form prior to the interview.

***Sampling Technique.*** Since experiences with whistleblowing tend to be rare, it was impossible to draw a random sample of whistleblowers for conducting in-depth interviews (Glazer and Glazer 1989). Thus, this study followed two recruitment alternatives. First, participants were recruited through a purposeful snowball sampling technique (Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2007a: 112-113; Maxwell 2005:88). According to Berg (2009: 51) “snowballing is sometimes the best way to locate subjects with certain attributes or characteristics necessary in the study...[and] are particularly popular among

researchers interested in studying various classes of deviance, sensitive topics, or difficult-to-reach populations.” This involved contacting existing whistleblower advocacy organizations to recruit potential subject-participants who had identified themselves as federal whistleblowers. The IRB approval required letters from the contacted whistleblower advocacy organizations. The following organizations were contacted: Government Accountability Project (GAP), National Whistleblower Center (NWC), WhistleWatch (WW), Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), and Project on Government Oversight (POGO). The Appendix at the end of the Dissertation shows the letters of approval received from GAP and WW organizations. Each organization sent out an email advising members of this dissertation project and stating the required contact information to participate in the study together with the project narrative. Responses were obtained from a total of 20 subject participants that were contacted to schedule an interview appointment.

Second, the researcher used a purposive sampling scheme or voluntary sampling (Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2007a; Remler and Van Ryzin 2011) to recruiting participants through a “call for volunteers” email sent out to members of GovLoop<sup>11</sup>, a social network for government, and LinkedIn government related groups. The Appendix at the end of the dissertation shows the IRB approved recruitment notice posted on each social network’s website. Using this approach, responses were obtained from only one subject participant that was contacted to schedule an interview appointment.

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<sup>11</sup> GovLoop Knowledge Network for Government, Available at <http://www.govloop.com> Accessed September 5, 2012.

**Table 2.2** summarizes the total number of interviews conducted according to each sampling alternative. A total of 18 federal employees participated in the semi-structured interviews, all of which were whistleblowers.

**Table 2.2** Qualitative Data Collection: Sample Characteristics

<b>Data Collection</b>	<b>Average length of audio recordings (Hours)</b>	<b>Number of interviewees</b>
Advocacy Organizations	34	17
Social Networks	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>18</b>

***Sampling Limitations.*** It is important to note that voluntary sampling has been associated with a form of nonresponse bias called volunteer bias, “that refers to the fact that volunteers may differ from a more representative sample of a population in ways that influence the findings of the study” (Remler and Van Ryzin 2011: 154). The researcher followed the steps suggested by Remler and Van Ryzin (2011: 154) to assess volunteer bias when recruiting participants: 1) carefully define the population of interest in the study; then 2) identify who volunteers for the study and who does not, assess any systematic differences, and determine whether the propensity to volunteer is related to what the study is measuring. The researcher reflected upon these issues while selecting the sample for conducting semi-structured interviews (Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2007b).

An important assumption of this research is that individuals participating in the qualitative phase of the design will have had direct experiences reporting wrongdoing within their agencies, and that they are willing to discuss their experiences fully and honestly with the researcher. According to Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007b: 242) “if the goal is not to generalize to a population but to obtain insights into a phenomenon,

individuals, or events ... then the qualitative researcher purposefully selects individuals, groups, and settings for this phase that increases understanding of phenomena.” In choosing the sampling strategies, the researcher followed recommendations by Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007a: 118) for deciding on the appropriate sample size. The authors contend that “researchers should consider identifying a corpus of interpretative studies that used the same design as in the proposed study and wherein data saturation was reached. The researcher then could examine the sample sizes used in these studies with a view to selecting a sample size that is within the range used in these investigations.” Previous studies on whistleblowing have interviewed between 12 (Alford 2001) to 64 (Glazer and Glazer 1989) subjects over time. These studies note the impossibility of choosing randomly an amount of whistleblowers to interview given the sensitivity of whistleblowing phenomena. Data saturation was also observed following Guest et al. (2006).

***Protecting Subject-Participants.*** It is important to be aware of the potential ethical issues involved in the study of whistleblowing. This study involves interactions in the form of interviews with recruited subject-participants. In order to protect participants’ welfare, safety, and to ensure their informed consent to participate, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is required for research studies involving human subjects. IRB boards generally require the completion of their approval request form for research projects, along with the following types of documents: a summary overview of the entire project along with a description of instruments to be used, a copy of the experiment protocol, a copy of the interview protocol, a participant invitation letter which serves as a consent form to be used for participants, and supplementary information on

confidentiality/anonymity assurances for the interview process. The researcher submitted a proposal for exempt IRB approval of the instruments used during data collection that might expose subject participants' feelings and privacy (interview schedule of questions). See Appendix at the end of the Dissertation showing the Institutional Review Board Certification obtained as of February 18, 2010. This study obtained IRB approval as of July 17, 2012.

Each participant was provided with an explanation of the topic and purpose of the research, the nature and consequences of their participation and a statement acknowledging that their participation is entirely voluntary. Demographic characteristics of participant information remain confidential and are kept separately from the interview files. Audio recordings were assigned a randomly chosen identification number to protect subject-participant privacy and avoid breaches of confidentiality of participant responses. Tapes are saved in an electronic format in the principal investigator's personal computer.

***Interview Protocol and Procedures.*** It is important to note that the qualitative interview data was collected in person, by telephone and using Skype. According to Remler and Van Ryzin (2011: 66), "in-person interviews are generally favored as they show respect, establish rapport, allow for visuals or hand-outs, and capture body language and voice tone." In reference to telephone interviews, Berg (2009: 123) contends this is a method "by which the investigator can easily monitor ongoing interviews to assure quality and avoid interviewer bias ... [while] reaching widespread geographic areas at an economical cost." Similarly, Berg (2009: 126) refers to e-interviews as being "similar to face-to-face interaction insofar as they provide a mechanism for back-and-forth exchange of questions and answers in what is almost real

time ... and video cameras can be used to allow researcher and respondent to actually see one another.” Thus, electronic interviews can be compared to face-to-face interviews in terms of the spontaneity that can be achieved during the interview. Telephone interviews might face the disadvantage of subject-participants having the ability to screen calls and avoid talking to the researcher and “lacks the ability for the interviewer and interviewee to use full channels of communication and communicate visual cues” (Berg 2009: 123).

For this study, the researcher collected textual data using a semi-structured interview protocol containing open-ended questions with no predetermined response categories or scales. The Appendix at the end of the Dissertation shows the semi-structured interview guide for those participants manifesting a direct experience with reporting wrongdoing in federal government (whistleblower). Once the researcher interviewed subject-participants using the interview protocol guide and collected audio data in audiotapes, the audio data was selectively transcribed for textual analysis as the intent was to “quote respondents’ comments in the data analysis section” (Weiss 1994: 54).

According to Berg (2009:116) “the most serious problem of asking questions is how to be certain the intentions of the questions have been adequately communicated. Researchers must always be sure they have clearly communicated to the subjects what they want to know.” Thus, the language of the instrument was simplified to minimize potential communication problems with interviewees (Leech 2002). Moreover, the interview protocol was pre-tested and revised after initial pre-testing (Weiss 1994: 82). The instrument was assessed using Chadwick, Bahr and Albrecht’s (1984: 120 in Berg 2009: 119) list of questions to assess interview protocols. These include: (1) Has the

researcher included all of the questions necessary to list the research hypotheses? (2) Do the questions elicit the type of response that was anticipated? (3) Is the language of the research instrument meaningful to the respondents? (4) Are there other problems with the questions such as double meaning or multiple issues embedded in a single question? (5) Finally, does the interview guide, as developed, help to motivate respondents to participate in the study?

Subject-participants were asked for permission to audio-tape the interview process using the IRB approved informed consent form. The data was stored in an electronic audio format as well as written format for the case of the selectively transcribed segments, and annotated interview memos were kept on the researcher's personal computer (McLellan et al. 2003). The interviews took place at the convenient time and medium (in-person, telephone or skype) of the subject participants.

*Advantages and Limitations of Analysis.* Though textual data has the potential for providing an in-depth depiction of the meaning of whistleblowing in the views of those federal employees' daily experiences at the workplace, Weiss (1994: 212) points out to several potential biases contained in the interview interpretation process. The author maintains "biased interviewing occurs when we encourage respondents to provide material supportive of our thesis" (Weiss 1994: 212). In line with the author's suggestion this study guards against bias while conducting the interviews "by establishing a research partnership in which the respondent understands that what we need is a full and accurate report, by obtaining detailed, concrete material rather than context-dependent generalizations, and by fashioning a substantive frame for our study that effectively captures the complexities of whatever it is we are studying" (Weiss 1994: 212; Leech



2002). As well, a copy of the interview protocol containing the study's purpose, concerns and issues to be explored was made available for subject-participants to view prior to the interview.

In terms of interpretation and reporting of qualitative analysis results, the procedures of semi-structured interviews as well as verbal analysis techniques for the transcribed texts are especially vulnerable to the introduction of bias. Bias might occur in the form of treating comments that support our view as gospel, subjecting to skeptical scrutiny those that don't, by reporting material we like and disdaining the rest (Weiss 1994: 213), or engaging in evidence blindness (Hawkesworth 2006: 121). Evidence blindness occurs either when the researcher fails to collect and analyze the "true voices" of the interviewees. To these potentials for bias, this study adopted Weiss' (1994) and Hawkesworth's (2006) advice. Weiss (1994: 213) suggests "to discipline ourselves to deal fully and fairly with all the evidence and to report everything we've learned about an issue, absolutely everything, including cases that don't fit out theories as well as cases that do," while engaging in intellectual honesty "to capture, with scrupulous honesty, the way things are." Hawkesworth (2006) suggests engaging in reflexivity throughout the research process to avoid evidence blindness. This would mean paying attention "to value-laden presuppositions that structure perception and cognition, but which are open to interrogation, critical reflection, and change" (Hawkesworth 2006: 123).

### **Merging Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analyses**

Jehn and Jonsen (2010) state the inherent difficulties involved in the study of sensitive issues such as "conflict, lying, deceit, and personal health," within organizations given the complexity and elusiveness these involve. This study assumes people are

willing to talk about direct experiences with whistleblowing. However, it might be that whistleblowing is not something federal employees are willing to talk about making it difficult to obtain reliable information for analysis. Thus, following Jehn and Jonsen (2010), sensitive organizational issues are investigated using a mixed methods approach, based on “triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods with an equal status design” (Jehn and Jonsen 2010: 314). According to the researchers a multimethod comparison technique allows for a more accurate and thorough understanding of sensitive organizational issues when mixed methods are used and compared in a systematic manner. Thus, this study will give equal status to the quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis procedures.

***Validity.*** Potential validity threats to data collection, data analysis and interpretation that might compromise the merging or connecting of the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study and the conclusions drawn from the combination have been addressed by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011: 239). Threats to the proposed mixed methods study might include “selecting inappropriate individuals, obtaining unequal sample sizes for the qualitative and quantitative data collection, and introducing potential bias through one data collection on the other data collection” (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011: 240). To these issues the suggested strategy is to draw quantitative and qualitative samples from the same population to make data comparable, using a large sample for quantitative and a small sample for qualitative data collection, and addressing the same topics in both quantitative and qualitative data collection. This dissertation uses a random sample of federal employees for the quantitative data analysis (Merit Principles Survey 2005) and a purposeful sample of federal employees for the qualitative data analysis.

Validity threats might also include using inadequate approaches to converge the data, making illogical comparisons of the two results of analysis, using inadequate data transformation approaches and using inappropriate statistics to analyze results. Following Creswell and Plano Clark (2011: 240) displays with quantitative statistical data and qualitative themes are presented and procedures to enhance validity and reliability of data transformation approaches are specified. Finally, in terms of interpretation, the quantitative and qualitative data sets were individually interpreted and later merged to answer this study's research question in order to avoid any bias in the logical sequence designed for data analysis (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). To avoid giving more weight to one form of data than another, a joint display presenting both results is offered in the Chapter 5.

The next chapter presents the results for the empirical exploration of the individual and organizational factors influencing the likelihood of federal employees blowing the whistle using quantitative sources of data.

### **Chapter 3. Quantitative Data Analysis and Results**

As explained in the previous chapter, this study uses secondary survey data collected by the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) to explore the model of individual and organizational determinants of the decision to report wrongdoing in the federal government. This chapter reports the results of the quantitative analysis of these data. The chapter begins with the operational definitions and descriptive statistics for the key variables. Next, a series of logistic regression models of whistleblowing are estimated and evaluated. This is followed by a supplemental analysis exploring how the predictors in the model vary for different subgroups within the federal workforce. These findings are discussed, implications drawn followed by an analysis of model predictions to ease the application of results to possible contextual scenarios. Limitations of these quantitative findings are discussed at the end of the chapter.

#### **Key Variables and Descriptive Statistics**

***Dependent variable.*** For the purposes of this study, the dependent or main outcome variable refers to the decision to blow the whistle on wrongdoing in the workplace. As discussed in Chapter 1, whistleblowing is theoretically defined as “disclosure by organization members (former or current) of illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers to persons or organizations that may be able to effect action” (Near and Miceli 1985: 6). Though this might encompass a broad understanding of wrongdoing, the focus is on the practices judged by federal employees as illegal, immoral, or illegitimate that resulted in a formal disclosure or actual whistleblowing. This dissertation understands actual whistleblowing as an outcome in

line with the legal definition of information disclosure within federal government agencies as stated in the Whistleblower Protection Act (WPA 1989). The WPA considers information disclosure on prohibited personnel practices “any disclosure of information by an employee or applicant which the employee or applicant reasonably believes evidences (i) a violation of any law, rule, or regulation, or (ii) gross mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety” (WPA 1989, 5 U.S.C. § 2302(b)(8)). Thus, the type of wrongdoing that is formally disclosed by federal employees refers to the items mentioned in the WPA (1989).

Fortunately, the 2005 MPS questionnaire contains a direct question measuring respondent’s decision to formally blow the whistle or exercise whistleblowing behavior (question number 23 under the “fairness” section). This question states: “In the past 2 years, have you made any formal disclosure of fraud, waste, abuse, or unlawful behavior at work?” Responses to this question, which are either yes or no, are used to operationalize the dependent variable or main outcome (whistleblowing). An answer ‘yes’ to this question indicates that a formal action was made by the respondent to report wrongdoing within the organization. The dependent variable is a dichotomous variables coded “1” for respondents answering “yes,” and “0” for respondents answering “no”. **Table 3.1** shows the percentages indicating “yes” to having formally disclosed fraud, waste, abuse or unlawful behavior by agency, as well as overall across the federal government. It can be seen that the reporting of wrongdoing among federal employees is a rare event, representing only 5.6% of the cases, but that it varies by agency. According to the survey, whistleblowing in the federal government is more frequent in the following

agencies: Department of Housing and Urban Development (12.9%), Homeland Security (9.7%), State Department (8.4%), Department of Interior (7.0%), Department of Defense (6.7%), Veterans Affairs (6.5%), Department of Transportation (6.1%) and Navy (5.8%). All of these agencies show a percentage of whistleblowing cases above the total average of 5.6%.

**Table 3.1** Percentage of Whistleblowing Cases by Agency. USMSPB 2005

<b>Agency</b>	<b>Whistleblowing cases (%)</b>
Housing and Urban Development	12.89
Homeland Security	9.69
State Department	8.35
Interior	6.95
Department of Defense	6.70
Veterans Affairs	6.48
Transportation	6.10
Navy	5.82
Agriculture	5.63
Health and Human Services	5.59
National Aeronautics	5.45
General Services Administration	5.36
Army	5.27
Justice	5.22
Labor	4.85
Social Security Admin	4.70
Department of Education	4.65
Was not specified	4.56
Treasury	4.50
Environmental Protection	4.07
Air Force	4.02
Department of Energy	3.98
Commerce	3.50
Office of Personnel Management	2.92
Federal Deposit Insurance	2.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.63</b>

Source: Merit Principles Survey, USMSPB (2005b).

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (12.9%) and Homeland Security (9.7%) have the highest incidence of whistleblowing, while the Office of Personnel Management (2.9%) and the Federal Deposit Insurance (2.8%) are among the agencies with much lower incidences of whistleblowing.

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (DHUD) is a big federal agency focused on creating “strong, sustainable, inclusive communities and quality affordable homes for all” (DHUD website, Accessed December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012). The CATO Institute shows a summary of financial abuse and dubious project spending on some of the Department’s programs (CATO 2009). According to the online report “auditing investigators found more than \$100 million in improper or questionable spending” as well as the vulnerability of such a big federal agency to fraud, waste and abuse related to improper spending cases across community development block grants (*The Washington Post*, June 30, 2006: A5). Likewise the agency’s inspector general reported that in just two and a half years of investigations the community building development grants program had “indicted 159 individuals, caused administrative actions against 143 individuals, had 5 civil actions, 39 personnel actions, and over \$120 million in recoveries” (Donohue 2006: 4). The inspector general found that there were “repeated” problems with the program, including the improper use of funds, grantee inability to account for funds, and a lack of monitoring. It seems possible that this setting had long been observed by some federal employees working at the DHUD, and that observing actions contrary to the agency’s mission influenced those more motivated to serving the public, thus feeling responsible for acting on wrongdoing while increasing the incidence of whistleblowing in that agency.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was launched in March 2003 to comply with the U.S. intelligence operations policy<sup>12</sup>. It is important to mention that by the time the MSPB 2005 survey data was collected, the Department of Homeland Security was undergoing a major restructuring. As evidenced from news reports at the time, the DHS faced a “realignment of agencies that secure the nation’s skies and police its borders,” replacing or reassigning duties of 3 out of 5 undersecretaries and “emphasizing missions such as increasing national preparedness and screening people and cargo before they entered the nation” (*The Washington Post* July 13, 2005). Such realignment comprised grouping together the following former agencies: Transportation Security Administration, Custom and Border Patrol Protections, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Secret Services and Air Marshalls Program. With this realignment the DHS constitutes a big federal agency representing three times the size of the FBI. It might be that the restructuring of the DHS influenced highly motivated employees to be inclined to report wrongdoing as after 2005 this agency resumed different public service missions into a very powerful structure. Likewise, the uniqueness of the DHS mission and the power to enforce this mission given the newly restructured agency might have influenced highly motivated federal employees coming from different work environments and cultures to increase formal reporting of wrongdoing.

Another possible explanation for the high incidence of whistleblowing across agencies might be that those agencies where whistleblowing is more likely (DHHS, DHS, etc.) are agencies that highly encourage the reporting of wrongdoing and offer strong

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.dhs.gov/our-mission> Accessed December 27th, 2012



legal protections for employees, evidencing a higher propensity of employees blowing the whistle on observed wrongdoing.

***Independent variables.*** Based on theory and the related conceptual model introduced in Chapter 1, several independent (explanatory) variables possibly associated with actual whistleblowing decisions were operationalized from the available survey questions. The Merit Principles Survey 2005 is divided into different sections that contain a short series of questions (items) about work and work environment (USMSPB 2005). These sections include the following: agency, job, work unit, job performance, pay and rewards, fairness, supervisor, training, career plans, supervisory status, management perspective, employment facts, demographics and some open ended questions (mission, performance, employee hiring). Separately, respondents were asked how strongly their perceptions were about their agency, job, work unit, job performance, pay and rewards, fairness, supervisor, training, career plans, supervisory status, management perspective, employment facts, demographics and some open ended questions (mission, performance, employee hiring). The independent variables in the conceptual model, presented in Chapter 1, were created using selected series of questions on federal employees' perceptions in the following areas: agency, job, work unit, fairness, and supervisor.

**Table 3.2** (see Appendix at the end of this chapter) shows the item wording for each of the series of survey questions identified as potential measures for the independent variables in the model. In the original questionnaire, agreement or disagreement with the statements could be expressed using five presented (ordinal) categories: strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree. However, the publicly available data reduced the responses to 3 ordinal categories by collapsing agree and

strongly agree (important/very important, considerable extent/very great extent), as well as disagree and strongly disagree (unimportant/very important, no extent/little extent). Thus, the analyses that follow rely on this reduced, three-category (ordinal) response scale for each item, with the data transformed so that 1=strongly disagree (very unimportant, no extent), 2=neither agree nor disagree (neither important nor unimportant, some extent), and 3=strongly agree (very important, very great extent).

For each question series, exploratory factor analysis was conducted to investigate the underlying dimensions of the data (Kim and Mueller 1978) and reliability analysis was used to select items and evaluate the scales. The steps in the exploratory factor analysis comprised running a principal-component factoring (pcf) analysis in Stata, analyzing the covariance matrix and factor loadings, rotating the solution (orthogonal rotation using the varimax criterion), and deciding on the number of common factors to be retained based on the eigenvalue criterion (values greater than 1) as well as conceptual considerations. Following the factor analysis, factor-based scales were created and reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha) was used to assess scale reliability. Finally, the factor-based scales were standardized to make the coefficients comparable and to better deal with missing data on the items.

The exploratory factor analysis of the 11 items in the **question 1** series resulted in a two-factor solution. For theoretical reasons, 3 items related to respondents' understanding, importance and contribution to the agency's mission were retained to create a *mission valence scale*. **Table 3.3** shows the retained items comprising the different dimensions, the rotated factor loadings, and the internal reliability of the *mission valence scale*.

**Table 3.3** Standardized *mission valence scale*. Retained question items, minimum and maximum values (in std deviation units), rotated factor loadings, and scale internal reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha).

Retained question items (Scale dimensions, 3 items in the scale)	Rotated factor loadings
"I understand my agency's mission"	0.83
"My agency's mission is important to me"	0.76
"I understand how I contribute to my agency's mission"	0.79
<i>Mission Valence Scale</i>	
Average inter-item correlation	0.50
Scale minimum	-6.83
Scale maximum	0.26
Scale reliability coefficient	0.75

Note: Factor analysis used principal-component factoring and varimax rotation. Scales are standardized representing standard deviation units.

Exploratory factor analysis of the 13 items in the **question 2** series resulted in a three-factor solution, and for theoretical reasons 7 items related to respondents' perceptions of respect and flexibility in the work setting were retained to create a *respect and openness scale*. **Table 3.4** shows the retained items comprising the different dimensions, the rotated factor loadings, and the internal reliability of the *respect and openness scale*.

**Table 3.4** Standardized *respect and openness scale*. Retained question items (Scale dimensions), minimum and maximum values (in std deviation units), Rotated factor loadings, and scale internal reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha).

Retained question items (Scale dimensions, 7 items in the scale)	Rotated factor loadings
"I am treated with respect at work"	0.78
"I am able to openly express concerns at work"	0.78
"My opinions count at work"	0.82
"I know what is expected of me on the job"	0.59
"My job makes good use of my skills and abilities"	0.71
"Creativity and innovation are rewarded"	0.69
"The work I do is meaningful to me"	0.50
<i>Respect and Openness Scale</i>	
Average inter-item correlation	0.44
Scale minimum	-2.59
Scale maximum	0.64
Scale reliability coefficient	0.84

Note: Factor analysis used principal-component factoring and varimax rotation. Scales are standardized representing standard deviation units.

Exploratory factor analysis on of the 8 items in the **question 5** series resulted in a one-factor solution, and for theoretical reasons 4 items related to respondents' perceptions of cooperativeness and flexibility in the work unit were retained to create a *cooperativeness and flexibility scale*. **Table 3.5** shows the retained items comprising the different dimensions, the rotated factor loadings, and the internal reliability of the *cooperativeness and flexibility scale*.

**Table 3.5** Standardized *cooperativeness and flexibility scale*. Retained question items (Scale dimensions), minimum and maximum values (in std deviation units), Rotated factor loadings, and scale internal reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha).

Retained question items (Scale dimensions, 4 items in the scale)	Rotated factor loadings
"Information is shared freely in my work unit"	0.77
"A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my work unit"	0.82
"A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists between my work unit and other work units"	0.73
"My work unit responds flexibly to changing conditions"	0.72
<i>Cooperativeness and Flexibility Scale</i>	
Average inter-item correlation	0.55
Scale minimum	-2.18
Scale maximum	0.70
Scale reliability coefficient	0.83

Note: Factor analysis used principal-component factoring and varimax rotation. Scales are standardized representing standard deviation units.

Exploratory factor analysis of the 12 items in the **question 16** series resulted in a two-factor solution forcing the eigenvalue criterion to values greater than 1. The analysis suggested retaining 6 items to create a *rational work motives scale* and 6 items to create a *norm-based and affective work motives scale*, shown in **Table 3.6** and **Table 3.7**, respectively. For creating these scales the researcher followed the early theoretical conceptualization of work motives in *The Motivational Bases of Public Service* elaborated by Perry and Wise (1990). The authors elaborate on rational work motives stating these refer to "actions grounded in individual utility maximization," such as "participation in the process of policy formulation, commitment to a public program because of personal identification, and advocacy for a special or private interest" (Perry and Wise 1990: 368). According to the authors, norm-based work motives refer to "actions generated by efforts to conform to norms," such as "a desire to serve the public interest, loyalty to duty and to the government as a whole, and social equity" (Perry and Wise 1990: 368). Affective work motives refer to "triggers of behavior that are grounded

in emotional responses to various social contexts,” such as “commitment to a program from a genuine conviction about its social importance, and patriotism of benevolence” (Perry and Wise 1990: 368).

**Table 3.6** Standardized *rational work motives scale*. Retained question items, minimum and maximum values (in std deviation units), rotated factor loadings, and scale internal reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s alpha).

Retained question items (Scale dimensions, 6 items in the scale)	Rotated factor loadings
“A cash award of \$100”	0.66
“A cash award of \$1,000”	0.61
“Desire for a good performance rating”	0.41
“Increased chances for promotion”	0.44
“A time off reward of 8 hours”	0.63
“Non-cash recognition (e.g., letter of appreciation, plaque)”	0.50
<i>Rational Work Motives Scale</i>	
Average inter-item correlation	0.32
Scale minimum	-2.15
Scale maximum	1.27
Scale reliability coefficient	0.74

Note: Factor analysis used principal-component factoring and varimax rotation. Scales are standardized representing standard deviation units.

**Table 3.7** Standardized *norm-based and affective work motives scale*. Retained question items (Scale dimensions), minimum and maximum values (in std deviation units), Rotated factor loadings, and scale internal reliability coefficient (Cronbach’s alpha).

Retained question items (Scale dimensions, 6 items in the scale)	Rotated factor loadings
“Desire not to let my supervisor down”	0.54
“Desire not to let my coworkers down”	0.63
“Recognition from my coworkers”	0.39
“My duty as a public employee”	0.39
“Desire to help my work unit meet its goals”	0.57
“Personal pride or satisfaction in my work”	0.37
<i>Norm-based and Affective Work Motives Scale</i>	
Average inter-item correlation	0.24
Scale minimum	-5.98
Scale maximum	0.42
Scale reliability coefficient	0.66

Note: Factor analysis used principal-component factoring and varimax rotation. Scales are standardized representing standard deviation units.

Exploratory factor analysis on of the 7 items in the **question 22** series resulted in a one-factor solution, and for theoretical reasons 4 items related to respondents' perceptions of fair treatment were retained to create a *fair treatment scale*. **Table 3.8** shows the retained items comprising the different dimensions, the rotated factor loadings, and the internal reliability of the *fair treatment scale*.

**Table 3.8** Standardized *fair treatment scale*. Retained question items (Scale dimensions), minimum and maximum values (in std deviation units), Rotated factor loadings, and scale internal reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha).

Retained question items (Scale dimensions, 4 items in the scale)	Rotated factor loadings
"Training"	0.69
"Performance appraisals"	0.77
"Job assignments"	0.78
"Discipline"	0.67
<i>Fair Treatment Scale</i>	
Average inter-item correlation	0.46
Scale minimum	-1.91
Scale maximum	0.98
Scale reliability coefficient	0.77

Note: Factor analysis used principal-component factoring and varimax rotation. Scales are standardized representing standard deviation units.

Exploratory factor analysis of the 8 items in the **question 33** series resulted in a one-factor solution, and for theoretical reasons 4 items related to respondents' perceptions of trust in the supervisor were retained to create a *trust in supervisor scale*.

**Table 3.9** shows the retained items comprising the different dimensions, the rotated factor loadings, and the internal reliability of the *trust in supervisor scale*.

**Table 3.9** Standardized *trust in supervisor scale*. Retained question items (Scale dimensions), minimum and maximum values (in std deviation units), Rotated factor loadings, and scale internal reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha).

Retained question items (Scale dimensions, 8 items in the scale)	Rotated factor loadings
"Fairly assess my performance and contributions"	0.85
"Support me in pay and award discussions with upper management"	0.83
"Listen fairly to my concerns"	0.88
"Apply discipline fairly and only when justified"	0.85
"Clearly communicate conduct expectations"	0.82
"Act with integrity"	0.87
"Refrain from favoritism"	0.85
"Keep me informed"	0.83
<i>Trust in Supervisor Scale</i>	
Average inter-item correlation	0.67
Scale minimum	-2.31
Scale maximum	0.72
Scale reliability coefficient	0.94

Note: Factor analysis used principal-component factoring and varimax rotation. Scales are standardized representing standard deviation units.

Finally, a single dummy variable was created using just one item from the **question 2** series, asking about overall job satisfaction: "In general, I am satisfied with my job". The variable was recoded into a binary variable, coded "1" for respondents agreeing and strongly agreeing on being satisfied and "0" for respondents strongly disagreeing.

**Table 3.10** shows a summary of the descriptive statistics for all of these independent variables, as well as for the control variables included in the analysis of this study. The constructed scales used as independent variables have moderate to strong reliability, ranging from 0.74 to 0.94. In terms of demographic characteristics of the sample, respondents are on average 49 years, have spent 20 years working in civil service, earn \$84,000 on average annually, are mostly male (60%), of white ethnicity



(74%), have more than a high school diploma level of education (67%) and are highly satisfied with their jobs.

**Table 3.10** Descriptive Statistics for Analytical Variables

<b>Variable name (items)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Alpha</b>
<i>Independent variables</i>					
Mission valence scale (3)	0.001	0.82	-6.83	0.26	0.75
Rational work motives scale (6)	-0.002	0.66	-2.15	0.97	0.74
Norm-based & affective work motives scale (6)	0.006	0.59	-5.98	0.42	0.66
Respect and openness scale (7)	0.006	0.72	-2.57	0.64	0.84
Cooperativeness and flexibility scale (4)	0.006	0.82	-2.18	0.66	0.83
Fair treatment scale (4)	0.005	0.77	-1.76	0.98	0.77
Trust in supervisor scale (5)	0.005	0.85	-2.23	0.65	0.94
<i>Control variables (continuous)</i>					
Age	49.04	8.74	19	80	
Years in Civil Service	19.65	9.77	0	82	
Annual salary	84.28	41.49	1	991	
<i>Independent variable (categorical)</i>					
Job satisfaction	<b>Freq.</b> 31,481	<b>%</b> 88.79	<b>Min.</b> 0	<b>Max.</b> 1	
<i>Control variables (categorical)</i>					
Gender (Women)	11,887	40.25	0	1	
Education (>HS)	19,905	67.39	0	1	
Ethnicity (Non White)	7,760	26.27	0	1	
n=29,535					

Note: Scales are standardized representing standard deviation units.

**Control variables.** The following demographic characteristics which might influence both respondents' disclosure decisions and perceptions of the situation and organization are included as controls: age, sex, ethnicity, education, years in civil service and salary level. To begin with, age is included as a control variable as previous research has indicated the difficulty of predicting whether younger members will be more or less likely to blow the whistle or there might be differences across generations on the identification of the type of wrongdoing prior to reporting as well as on the knowledge of existing reporting channels. This difference might affect the discovery of a triggering

event and the potential whistleblower's assessment and choice of action intervening in determining the likelihood of blowing the whistle (Miceli and Near 1992). Age might also interfere in how federal workers view their careers in civil service making younger employees more likely to comply with the status quo and less likely to report wrongdoing than senior employees. On average the sample of the federal employees surveyed under the 2005 MSPB survey were 49 years old (see demographic description of the sample in Chapter 2). Previous studies on whistleblowing have hypothesized that men would be more likely to blow the whistle than women (Near and Miceli 1985). However, further developments have suggested this association is not clear given that gender might interact on other perceptions when observing, assessing and reporting wrongdoing (Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran 2005; Vadera et al. 2009). Thus, men and women might view whistleblowing differently in terms of its meaning, effectiveness and consequences, quantitatively and qualitatively affecting the likelihood of reporting wrongdoing in different ways. On average the sample of the federal employees in the 2005 MSPB survey comprised 61% male (see demographic description of the sample in Chapter 2). Ethnicity also may play a part in the likelihood of federal employees blowing the whistle, as diverse ethnic groups might see wrongdoing as a question of justice in ways that influence their propensity to blow the whistle (Miceli and Near 1992). The sample of the federal employees in the 2005 MSPB survey comprised 71% federal employees of a white ethnicity (again see demographic description of the sample in Chapter 2).

Similarly the educational level of federal employees might increase individual's recognition and assessment of wrongdoing as well as the perceived responsibility for action, and willingness to bring about change (Parmelee et al. 1982). Higher levels of

education might also affect the level of knowledge of legal, professional or other standards of conduct, making those who are highly educated more prone to identify wrong when it occurs given their prior education, experience in other jobs, professional training and technical expertise. Next, the number of years in civil service is included as a control variable because experience in working in the federal government may be a factor influencing both organizational perceptions and the propensity to blow the whistle. On average, the sample of the federal employees in the 2005 MSPB survey have spent 20 years working for federal civil service (see demographic description of the sample in Chapter 2). Annual salary is included as well as an indicator of the position of power held by survey respondents, which may influence the opinions respondents have of various aspects of their organizations as well as their decisions to report wrongdoing.

To provide additional statistical control, models are estimated with and without a set of dummy variables representing the federal agencies (see Tables 3.11 and 3.12, results sub-section), which capture unobserved agency effects on whistleblowing. Thus, controlling for these demographic and job characteristics, as well as agency effects, provides a more rigorous test of the main hypothesized relationships. However, including these control variables does not fully address the possibility of reverse causation, or the problem of omitted variables that were not measured in the survey.

### **Logistic Regression Model**

This study uses a logistic regression model to examine the individual and organizational factors associated with the likelihood of blowing the whistle in federal government (Menard 2002; Hoffman 2004; Long and Freese 2006; Pampel 2000). The logistic regression model is appropriate for the analysis of dichotomous dependent

variables (Menard 2002: 101), and as mentioned the dependent variable in this study is a dichotomous measure of whether or not an individual decided to formally disclose wrongdoing. According to Hoffman (2004:47) the logistic regression model is suitable for modeling “binary dependent variables.”

The logistic regression model is generally represented by the following equation:

$$Y = g(X) = \ln \pi(X) / 1 - \pi(X) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 \dots + \beta_j X_j$$

The dependent variable is the likelihood of reporting waste, fraud and abuse, or unlawful behavior in the workplace ( $Y=1$ ). In the above equations,  $g(X)$  refers to the logit function of some given predictor  $X$ ,  $\ln$  denotes the natural logarithm,  $\pi(X)$  is the probability of being a case,  $\beta_0$  is the intercept from the linear regression equation (the value of the criterion when the predictors are all equal to zero),  $\beta_1 X_1$  to  $\beta_j X_j$  represent the various independent (and control) variables in the model and their estimated coefficients. The logistic regression equation illustrates that the probability of the outcome (whistleblowing) is equal to the odds of the exponential function of the linear regression equation. This shows that the input of the logistic regression equation (the linear regression equation) can vary from negative to positive infinity and yet, after exponentiating the odds of the equation, the output will vary between zero and one. The odd of the outcome (whistleblowing) is equivalent to the exponential function of the linear regression equation, showing how the logit function serves as a link function between the odds and the linear regression equation.

The logistic regressions were estimated by maximum likelihood techniques using Stata 12. Before running the model, data was screened for missing values. As discussed (see Table 3.10), the independent variables in the model include the following: mission

valence scale, job satisfaction, rational work motives scale, norm-based and affective work motives scale, respect/openness scale, cooperativeness/flexibility scale, fair treatment scale, and trust in the supervisor scale. The control variables in the model include respondents' age, salary, years of service, education level, gender and ethnicity.

***Diagnostics.*** As part of the logistic regression analysis diagnostics were run to look for the following problematic effects<sup>13</sup>: biased coefficients, inefficient estimates, or invalid statistical inferences (Long and Freese 2006). In order for the analysis to be valid, the proposed model has to satisfy the assumptions of logistic regression. When the assumptions of logistic regression analysis are not met, biased coefficient estimates or very large standard errors for the logistic regression coefficients might lead to invalid statistical inferences. The data was inspected prior to conducting the logistic regression analysis to check that the model fits sufficiently well and for influential observations with high leverage on the estimates of the coefficients.

First, checks for specification error were performed to identify whether the model was properly specified. If so, no additional predictors that are statistically significant should result from this test other than those that occur by chance. The specification error checks show that meaningful predictors were chosen to be included in the model. Next, a goodness-of-fit check was performed to diagnose the overall fitness of the logistic regression model (see Tables 3.11 and 3.12, results sub-section). A log likelihood

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<sup>13</sup> In the case of the logistic regression model, bias refers to the “existence of a systematic tendency for the estimated logistic regression coefficients to be too high or too low, too far from zero or too close to zero compared to the true values of the coefficients” (Menard 2002: 67). Inefficiency refers “to the tendency of the coefficients to have large standard errors relative to the size of the coefficient ... [making it] more difficult to reject the null hypothesis even when the null hypothesis is false” (Menard 2002: 67). And invalid statistical inference, “refers to the situation in which the calculated statistical significance of the logistic regression coefficients is inaccurate” (Menard 2002: 67).

criterion was used to test for statistical and substantive significance (Menard 2002: 21). To evaluate the statistical significance of the contribution of an independent variable, the likelihood ratio statistics are presented. The model was also run using robust standard errors. The reported overall model fit is given by the likelihood ratio chi-square of LR  $\chi^2(14)=744.89$  with a  $p$ -value=0.000, which tells us that this model as a whole fits significantly better than an empty model (with no predictors). The Pseudo  $R^2$  is 0.06 and represents a proportion in terms of log likelihood. The Wald chi-square statistic indicates this model's fit is significant with a  $p$ -value lower than 0.001. The following model fitness indicators are reported: Count  $R^2$  is 0.94, McFadden's  $R^2$  is 0.058, McKelvey and Zavonia's  $R^2$  is 0.099, and Nagelkerke is 0.071. The log-likelihood of the full model is -6018.176. As multicollinearity might occur when two or more independent variables in the model are approximately determined by a linear combination of other independent variables, multicollinearity diagnostics were performed after running the logistic regression models. Variance inflation factor and tolerance measures show no causes for concern about multicollinearity among the independent variables, with tolerances of 0.1 or less (equivalently VIF of 10 or greater). Finally, the data were screened in search of influential observations using Pearson residuals and deviance residuals<sup>14</sup>. The purpose of this check focused on measuring the disagreement between the maxima of the observed and the fitted log likelihood functions. Since logistic regression uses the maximal likelihood principle, the goal in logistic regression is to minimize the sum of the deviance

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<sup>14</sup> Pearson residuals are defined to be the standardized difference between the observed frequency and the predicted frequency to measure the relative deviations between the observed and fitted values. Deviance residuals "compare a given model with a model that has one parameter for each observation so that the model reproduces the observed data perfectly" (Long and Freese 2006: 109).

residuals. The results were plotted against the predicted probabilities showing no extreme influential observations might influence the model results.

## Results

**Table 3.11** reports the logistic regression results of the whistleblowing model applied to the full sample without agency fixed effects. **Table 3.12** shows the model with the inclusion of the agency dummy variables (agency fixed effects). Tables 3.11 and 3.12 also show the coefficients, standard errors and odds ratio to facilitate comparison of the strength of relationships. Significance tests are based on the default standard errors in Stata 12 (the MSPB 2005 survey data involved independently sampled employees).

To help interpret substantive significance, the exponentiated coefficients or odds ratios in the model are presented and will be the main focus of discussion below. Because the independent variables are all standardized, the odds ratios for these variables represent the number by which we would multiply the odds of being a whistleblower for each standard deviation increase in the independent variable. An odds ratio greater than 1 indicates the likelihood of blowing the whistle will increase when the independent variable increases, and an odds ratio of less than 1 indicates the likelihood of blowing the whistle will decrease when the independent variable increases. According to Menard (2002: 57) “it is important to emphasize that the odds ratio is not a separate measure of the relationship between the dependent variables and independent variables ... the odds ratio will provide exactly the same information as the logistic regression coefficient in a different way.”

This study asks what are the individual characteristics and organizational factors (work environment and work values/culture) that encourage or discourage

whistleblowing in the federal government. In terms of *individual* characteristics, **Table 3.11** (model without agency dummies) shows that reporting of wrongdoing in the federal government is significantly associated with employee *job satisfaction* (at 0.01 level), and *norm-based and affective work motives* (at 0.01 level).

**Table 3.11** Logistic Regression Analysis of the relationship between perceived individual motives and organizational context, and whistleblowing (Coefficients, significance levels, robust standard errors, and odds ratio. Model overall significance and goodness of fit statistics).

LOGIT				
WB Reporting	Coefficients		Robust Std. errors	Odds ratio
<b>Main predictors</b>				
<i>Individual motives</i>				
Mission valence scale	0.03		0.03	1.03
Job satisfaction (high)	-0.35	***	0.08	0.71
Rational work motives scale	-0.04		0.04	0.96
Norm-based & affective work motives scale	0.15	***	0.05	1.17
<i>Organizational work environment, values/culture</i>				
Respect and openness scale	-0.25	***	0.05	0.78
Cooperativeness and flexibility scale	-0.10	***	0.04	0.90
Fair treatment scale	-0.26	***	0.04	0.77
Trust in supervisor scale	-0.23	***	0.04	0.79
<b>Control variables</b>				
Gender (women)	-0.17	***	0.06	0.84
Age	0.01	***	0.003	1.01
Education (>HS)	-0.17	***	0.06	0.84
Ethnicity (Non White)	0.06		0.06	1.07
Years in Civil Service	-0.004		0.003	0.99
Annual salary	0.001	***	0.001	1.00
<b>Model significance</b>				
Log-Likelihood full model	-6018.176			
LR chi2(14)	744.892	****		
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.058			
Count R <sup>2</sup>	0.944			
McKelvey &Zavonia	0.099			
McFadden's R <sup>2</sup>	0.058			
Nagelkerke	0.071			
N=29,428				

Note: Significance levels are indicated by the following notation \* p<.10 \*\*p<.05 \*\*\*p<.01 \*\*\*\*p<.001



First, referred to *job satisfaction*, this significant association represents a negative relationship with the expected outcome (whistleblowing). In terms of magnitude, a one standard deviation increase in respondent's *job satisfaction* is associated with a decrease in the odds of being a whistleblower by 29%. Thus, there is a strong negative association between job satisfaction and the incidence of whistleblowing in the federal government, meaning that more satisfied employees are less likely blow the whistle on waste, fraud and abuse in the federal government. These results showing a negative effect of job satisfaction on whistleblowing can have different interpretations that will be developed on the next chapter (qualitative findings).

Second, in terms of *norm-based and affective work motives*, findings show these are significantly associated with wrongdoing reporting in the federal government. This significant association represents a positive relation with the outcome (whistleblowing). In terms of magnitude, a one standard deviation increase in *norm-based and affective work motives* increases the odds of being a whistleblower by 17%. Thus, there is a moderately strong positive association between norm-based and affective work motives and the incidence of whistleblowing in the federal government, meaning that norm-based and affectively motivated employees are more likely to blow the whistle on waste, fraud and abuse in the federal government.

Finally, results related to individual motives evidence no significant association between mission valence and rational work motives and blowing the whistle in the federal government. This means that for the USMSPB (2005) data, this study found that perceiving the agency's mission as important and being rationally motivated to do the job are not significantly related to whistleblowing in the federal government.

In terms of the *organizational context variables*, Table 3.11 also shows reporting of wrongdoing is significantly associated with *respect and openness* (at 0.01 level), *cooperativeness and flexibility* (at 0.01 level), *fair treatment* (at 0.01 level), and *trust in the supervisor* (at 0.01 level) as organizational work environment and values/culture characteristics predicting whistleblowing in the federal government. First, in terms of *respect and openness*, this significant association represents a negative relationship with the outcome (whistleblowing). Regarding magnitude, a one standard deviation increase in respondent's *perception of a respectful work environment* decreases the odds of being a whistleblower by 22%. Findings from the model evidence a moderate negative association between federal employee's perception of a respectful and open work environment and the incidence of whistleblowing in the federal government. This indicates that an employee perceiving an open and respectful work environment is less likely to blow the whistle on waste, fraud, abuse, or unlawful behavior in the federal government.

Second, in terms of *cooperativeness and flexibility*, this significant association represents a negative relationship with the outcome (whistleblowing). Regarding magnitude, a one standard deviation increase in respondent's *perception of a cooperative and flexible organization* decreases the odds of being a whistleblower by 10%. Results from the model show there is a moderate negative association between federal employee's perception of a cooperative and flexible work environment and the incidence of whistleblowing in the federal government. This indicates that an employee perceiving a cooperative and flexible work environment is less likely to blow the whistle on waste, fraud, abuse, or unlawful behavior in the federal government.

Third, in terms of *fair treatment*, this significant association represents a negative relationship with the outcome (whistleblowing). Regarding magnitude, a one standard deviation increase in respondent's *perception of a fair treatment* in the organization decreases the odds of being a whistleblower by 23%. Results from the model imply there is a moderate negative association between federal employee's perception of a cooperative and flexible work environment and the incidence of whistleblowing in the federal government. This signals that an employee perceiving a fair treatment in the organizational work environment is less likely to blow the whistle on waste, fraud and abuse in the federal government.

Fourth, in terms of *trust in the supervisor*, this significant association represents a negative relationship with the outcome (whistleblowing). Regarding magnitude, a one standard deviation increase in respondent's perception of *trust in the supervisor* decreases the odds of being a whistleblower by 21%. Results from the model reflect a moderate negative association between federal employee's perception of a trustful supervisor and the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government. This result manifests that an employee perceiving a work environment with a trustful supervisory authority is less likely blow the whistle on waste, fraud, abuse or unlawful behavior in the federal government.

Concerning the organizational values and culture factors, an interpretation for these results will be further developed on the next chapter (qualitative findings) as the negative effect of respect and openness, cooperativeness and flexibility, fair treatment and trust in the supervisor (organizational factors) can have different interpretations that are captured by in-depth qualitative data and analysis.

Overall, this study found a significant association between job satisfaction, norm-based and affective work motives, respect and openness, cooperativeness and flexibility, fair treatment and trust in the supervisor and the likelihood of blowing the whistle in the federal government. While norm-based and affective work motives increase the likelihood of blowing the whistle in the federal government, job satisfaction, respect and openness, cooperativeness and flexibility, fair treatment and trust in the supervisor decrease it. According to the presented findings, the strongest positive effect is given by employee norm-based and affective work motives. And the strongest negative effect is given by perceiving fair treatment followed by perceiving respect and openness in the work environment.

***Agencies.*** As mentioned, the logistic regression analysis was conducted with and without agency dummy variables in order to compare the effects when fixing the agency type. Deviation coding was used to perform this logistic regression analysis, to compare the effect of each agency with the grand mean across all agencies. According to Menard (2002: 58) this is “analogous to comparing the means (not weighted by number of cases) for the three categories in regression or analysis of variance,” giving a “comparison to an “average” effect instead of a reference category.”

After fixing the effect of the agency type (Table 3.12), public sector workers who manifest a high norm-based and affective work motive are more likely to report waste, fraud or illegal behavior, but less likely to do so if they express job satisfaction, a respectful and open job setting, a cooperative and flexible work unit, fair treatment and trust in their supervisor. With 99% confidence (at 0.01 level), whistleblowing reporting (formal disclosure of waste, fraud and abuse in the workplace) is significantly associated

with job satisfaction, norm-based and affective work motives, a respectful and open job setting, a cooperative and flexible work unit, fair treatment at work, and trust towards the supervisor. No changes in significance and direction of these relationships are observed after fixing the effect of agency type.

**Table 3.12** shows agencies with significant model results in the reported directions include: Air Force (significant at .10 level), Commerce (significant at .01 level), Education (significant at .10 level), Energy (significant at .10 level), Federal Deposit Insurance (significant at .01 level), Homeland Security (significant at .01 level), Housing and Urban Development (significant at .01 level), Office of Personnel Management (significant at .05 level), and State Department and Treasury (significant at .01 level). Agencies where the model is not significant include the following: Army, Defense, Environmental Protection Agency, General Services Administration, Health and Human Services, Interior, Justice, Labor, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Navy, Social Security Administration, Transportation, Treasury and Veterans Affairs.

**Table 3.12** Logistic Regression Analysis of the relationship between perceived individual motives and organizational context, and whistleblowing across agencies (Coefficients, significance levels, robust standard errors, and odds ratio. Model overall significance and goodness of fit statistics).

WB Reporting	LOGIT			
	Coefficients		Robust Std. errors	Odds ratio
<b>Main predictors</b>				
<i>Individual motives</i>				
Mission valence scale	0.04		0.03	1.04
Job satisfaction (high)	-0.35	***	0.08	0.70
Rational work motives scale	-0.03		0.04	0.97
Norm-based & affective work motives scale	0.14	***	0.05	1.15
<i>Organizational work environment values/culture</i>				
Respect and openness scale	-0.25	***	0.05	0.78
Cooperativeness and flexibility scale	-0.10	***	0.04	0.90
Fair treatment scale	-0.25	***	0.04	0.78
Trust in supervisor scale	-0.23	***	0.04	0.79
<b>Agency Dummies</b>	<b>Deviation coding</b>			
Air Force	-0.45	*	0.26	0.64
Commerce	-0.54	***	0.14	0.58
Education	-0.42	*	0.23	0.65
Energy	-0.45	*	0.24	0.64
Federal Deposit Insurance	-0.84	***	0.28	0.43
Homeland Security	0.45	***	0.11	1.57
Housing and Urban Development	0.89	***	0.20	2.43
Office of Personnel Management	-0.77	**	0.30	0.46
State Department	0.53	***	0.20	1.70
<b>Model significance</b>				
Log-Likelihood full model	-5945.097			
LR chi2(38)	891.05	****		
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.070			
Count R <sup>2</sup>	0.944			
McKelvey & Zavonia	0.121			
McFadden's R <sup>2</sup>	0.070			
Nagelkerke	0.085			
N=29,428				

Note: Significance levels are indicated by the following notation \*  $p < .10$  \*\*  $p < .05$  \*\*\*  $p < .01$  The model controls for sex (women), age, education (more than a high school diploma), ethnicity (non-white), years in civil service and annual salary. For agency dummies, only those significant in the model were included in the table.

**Model summary.** Table 3.13 shows a summary of quantitative findings. For individual factors, job satisfaction resulted in a negative and statistically significant association with the likelihood of blowing the whistle in the federal government, while norm-based and affective work motives resulted in a positive and statistically significant association. Regarding the organizational culture/values as work environment antecedents of the likelihood of blowing the whistle in the federal government, perceptions of respect and openness, cooperativeness and flexibility, fair treatment at work and trust in the supervisor, resulted in a negative and statistically significant association with the likelihood of reporting wrongdoing among federal employees. These relationships are maintained after fixing the effect of agency type in the model.

**Table 3.13** Summary of Logistic Regression Model Results showing the percentage change in the odds ratio of being a whistleblower per standard deviation increase in the significant independent variables.

<b>WB Reporting</b>	<b>LOGIT without agency dummies</b>	<b>LOGIT with agency dummies</b>
<b>Main predictors</b>		
<i>Individual motives</i>		
Mission valence scale	Not significant	Not significant
Job satisfaction (high)	-29%	-30%
Rational work motives scale	Not significant	Not significant
Norm-based & affective work motives scale	17%	15%
<i>Organizational work environment values/culture</i>		
Respect and openness scale	-22%	-22%
Cooperativeness and flexibility scale	-10%	-10%
Fair treatment scale	-23%	-22%
Trust in supervisor scale	-21%	-21%

Note: The non-significant variables include mission valence scale and rational work motives scale, both results are omitted on this table.

***Supplemental analysis.*** To supplement the testing of the model, especially given the large sample available in MSPB survey, subgroup analysis was conducted with the following subsamples of federal employees: women, supervisors, GS pay level, self-reported high performers, and employees located in field offices. These supplemental analyses used the same logistic regression models and procedures applied to the full sample, as discussed above.

**Table 3.14** shows a summary of the percentage changes in the odds of being a whistleblower among the different sub-groups studied. For a detailed analysis of results by subgroups see the Appendix at the end of this chapter. In line with previous model results based on the whole sample, the strongest positive effect is given by norm-based and affective work motives of federal employees and the strongest negative effect is given by being satisfied with the job. Moreover, two organizational context scales were also consistently related to whistleblowing in the various subgroups: respect and openness, and fair treatment in the workplace.



**Table 3.14** Summary of Supplemental Analysis of the sub-group of women, supervisors, GS pay level, high performers and field employees.

<b>WB Reporting</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Supervisory status</b>	<b>GS pay level</b>	<b>High performers</b>	<b>Field employees</b>
<b>Main predictors</b>					
<i>Individual motives</i>					
Mission valence scale	9%	-	-	-	-
Job satisfaction (high)	-20%	-28%	-25%	-24%	-27%
Rational work motives scale	-	-	-	-	-
Norm-based & affective work motives scale	16%	37%	14%	19%	17%
<i>Organizational work environment values/culture</i>					
Respect and openness scale	-32%	-27%	-23%	-26%	-24%
Cooperativeness and flexibility scale	-	-24%	-9%	-8%	-12%
Fair treatment scale	-34%	-16%	-24%	-21%	-21%
Trust in supervisor scale	-15%	-15%	-19%	-21%	-21%

Note: The table shows the percentage change in the odds ratio of being a whistleblower per standard deviation increase in the significant independent variables. The non-significant variable in the sub-group analysis includes the rational work motives scale, values omitted on this table.

In terms of individual characteristics, for all of the analyzed sub-groups the strongest positive effect is given by norm-based and affective work motives of federal employees. This effect is strongest among the sub-group of supervisors, where a one standard deviation increase in norm-based and affective work motives increases the odds of being a whistleblower by 37%. Job satisfaction was negatively and significantly associated with whistleblowing among all sub-groups and had its strongest effect among the sub-group of supervisors. A one standard deviation increase in job satisfaction among supervisors decreases the odds of being a whistleblower by 28%. Mission valence was only a significant predictor of the likelihood of blowing the whistle among women in the federal government, where a one standard deviation increase in mission valence increases the odds of being a whistleblower by a modest 9%.

Of the organizational work environment characteristics, perceptions of respect and openness, and cooperativeness and flexibility resulted in a negative association with whistleblowing. Of the organizational work environment factors, what was strongest after fixing the effect of agency type, adding control variables, and reinforced by the subgroup analysis of women, supervisors, GS employees, high performers, and field employees is that federal employees working in a work setting characterized by respect, cooperativeness, fairness and trust in the supervisor are less likely to formally report wrongdoing or be a whistleblower. Overall, the strongest negative effect in all subgroups is observed for two organizational context scales: respect and openness and fair treatment in the workplace. Respect and openness is negative and strongest among the subgroup of women and supervisors. A one standard deviation increase in the respect and openness scale decreases the odds of being a whistleblower by 32% among women and 27% among supervisors. Fair treatment is negative and strongest among women and GS pay level employees. A one standard deviation increase in the fair treatment scale decreases the odds of being a whistleblower by 34% among women and 24% among GS employees.

### **Discussion and Implications**

The findings on this chapter suggest that the likelihood of an employee reporting wrongdoing in the federal government is a function of both individual and organizational factors. This sub-section discusses the findings from the quantitative data analysis and draws several implications for further research developments. Hopefully these findings will help shed light on the importance of understanding whistleblowing behavior within

public organizations and the implications for managing organizational change towards more ethical work environments.

Though whistleblowing is a rare event within federal agencies, with only 5.6% of employees having formally reported wrongdoing (see Table 3.1), results demonstrate that a federal employee with a sense of norm-based and affective work motives, is more likely to formally report wrongdoing or be a whistleblower. However, an employee satisfied with his/her job, working in a work environment and organizational culture characterized by a perceived respect and openness in the job setting, cooperativeness and flexibility in the work unit, fair treatment, and trust in the supervisor, is less likely to formally report wrongdoing or be a whistleblower.

***Individual Factors.*** In terms of the individual motivations associated with the likelihood of blowing the whistle in the federal government, the data does provide enough evidence to suggest an association between job satisfaction and the incidence of this individual perception on whistleblowing in the federal government. The data shows a negative and strong association between job satisfaction among federal employees and individual proneness to blowing the whistle. Though existing theoretical approaches predict individual job satisfaction increases the likelihood of certain types of prosocial behavior (Miceli and Near 1992), earlier research suggests mixed results concerning the relationship between job satisfaction and the likelihood of whistleblowing (Mesmer-Magnus and Viswevaran 2005). These mixed results refer to the fact that job satisfaction might at times predict whistleblowing intent, rather than actual whistleblowing. One possible explanation is that highly satisfied workers are more inclined to protect their job status avoiding any action against their individual position in the organization or the

organization at large. Here, job satisfaction might be signaling a response to being individually focused on personal career advancement in the organization, or loyal to the self and to maintaining a good reputation for the organization rather than sacrificing the job security and the image of the organization in society. Alternatively, it is possible that more satisfied workers are in better-run, more ethical organizations that do not have as much wrong doing to report to begin with and therefore will less likely report wrongdoing. As well this finding might point towards the idea that disgruntled employees are those more likely to ‘sound an alarm’ on observed wrongdoing through blowing the whistle. However, results from the supplemental analysis shows this negative association persists among the subgroup of federal employees who have a high self-reported level of performance. Further quantitative data will be needed to establish a clearer causal link between job satisfaction and levels of whistleblowing across agencies as well as a wider set of dimensions capturing an improved measure of job satisfaction among federal employees. Though this finding will be explored in chapter 4 using evidence from in-depth interviews to federal whistleblowers, data from the MSPB 2010 survey on whistleblowing will be analyzed in a future stage of this study.

Employees manifesting a higher level of norm-based and affective work motives are more likely to blow the whistle in the federal government. Findings suggest norm-based and affective work motives (both motivational bases for public service in Perry and Wise 1990) are positively and significantly associated with an increased likelihood of reporting abuse, fraud, waste or unlawful behavior within federal government. In line with previous research findings, public sector workers imbued with a public service ethic are more prone to formally disclose waste, fraud, abuse or unlawful behavior in the

federal government. This might indicate commitment to public service, loyalty to the duty and the government as a whole matters for identifying and ultimately redressing wrongdoing in the federal government agencies studied. Likewise, this finding suggests that individuals who are committed to certain values manage to act according to a certain sense of obligation in the public interest even when “there are strong organizational and situational pressures to the contrary” (Jos et al. 1989: 557). Another possibility is that higher levels of norm-based and affective work motives signal higher commitment to principled levels of moral judgment. This means that those individuals who are highly motivated to public service are more inclined to be aware of and assess wrongdoing when they see it, as wrongdoing appears as contrary to the norm and affectively adverse to safeguarding citizens. Given that higher levels of moral judgment are associated with more altruistic behaviors, this association might increase the observer’s propensity to feel responsible for reporting increasing the likelihood of formally reporting wrongdoing. Moreover, of the individual factors, being norm-based and affectively motivated to public service is the strongest significant factor associated with a higher likelihood of whistleblowing after fixing the effect of agency type, adding control variables, and reinforced by the sub-group analysis of women, supervisors, GS employees, high performers and field employees. It seems that public service motivation (particularly the norm-based and affective aspects of work motives) is an individual characteristic associated with the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government across individual demographics, agencies, and individual job characteristics within agencies. No matter what the personal characteristics anteceding the individual and the job situation, those employees who are highly motivated to public services in terms of norm-based and

affective motives are more likely to report wrongdoing in the federal government.

Though this finding captures the idea of loyalty to public service and the oath of office, affective commitment and responsibility for acting towards the common good, as factors increasing the likelihood of whistleblowing, it is possible that the measurement used to capture these dimensions was incomplete. Thus, further developments of this study will attempt to capture the subtleties of the public service motivation construct through incorporating an improved instrument to test the outcome of interest. It is also possible that individual norm-based and work motives are affected by the characteristics of the wrongdoing (seriousness, nature and type, prevalence overtime) which the individual evaluates prior to deciding whether to report or not to report wrongdoing, intervening in increasing the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government. The MSPB 2005 survey does not allow for incorporating these conditions into a quantitative analysis, therefore this possible intervention will be examined in chapter 4 using qualitative data from interviews to federal whistleblower. Another possibility is that individual values and beliefs interact with demographic and on the job characteristics making it impossible to distinguish between values that are developed in primary socialization stages from those developed in secondary stages. Further instruments (quantitative and qualitative) need to be developed to test the confounding effect of socialization processes on higher levels of public service motivation and the increased likelihood of whistleblowing among federal employees.

Unfortunately, the data does not provide enough evidence for predicting an association between those employees who manifest a higher level of mission valence and an increased level of wrongdoing reporting. After conducting a supplemental analysis,

results for agency mission valence are significant only within the sub-group of women and as a predictor of whistleblowing might signal that the internalization of agency values in the federal government occurs above and beyond the organization. If certain federal employees (women) value the agency's goal over other employees in the organization, this might mean those employees who highly value the agency's mission sometimes need to go around people who are causing trouble in order to disclose fraud, waste, abuse or unlawful behavior occurring within the agency. Previous research has evidenced mixed results in terms of a gender effect on the likelihood of reporting wrongdoing (Miceli, Near and Dworkin 2008). This study has found evidence for an existing association among women between agency mission valence and an increased likelihood of blowing the whistle. Though in the next chapter this association will be explored using qualitative data, it will be interesting to quantitatively test this gender effect even further as well as explore the causality link between mission valence and the likelihood of whistleblowing.

Likewise there is not enough evidence in the data for predicting that those employees who are inclined to rational work motives will less likely engage in whistleblowing in the federal government. Again, supplemental data of personality characteristics could provide more evidence for predicting an association between manifesting rational work motives and an inclination towards blowing the whistle on wrongdoing. As a caveat, rational work motives here were measured as a self-reported inclination to prefer monetary rewards over other more affective rewards for doing the job. Though this study has not found evidence for such association it will be interesting to test this relationship further through either incorporating more data (quantitative and

qualitative) on individual inclination for preferring rewards when blowing the whistle or analyzing the interaction of a better measurement of a rational personality/motivation with a better measurement of individual pay or grade level. This non-significant finding will be explored further with qualitative data (next chapter).

***Organizational factors.*** In terms of organizational work environment and organizational culture characteristics the data does provide enough evidence to suggest an association between work environment characteristics and the incidence of these on the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government. It is important to note that the discussion of these findings pertains only to situational characteristics related to federal employees' immediate social or work environment. The data shows that, interestingly, whistleblowing is negatively associated with an open and respectful job setting, cooperative and flexible work unit, fair treatment within the organization, and trusting supervisor. These findings suggest several possible interpretations. To begin with, perceptions of a more respectful, cooperative, fair work environment and trustful supervisor might act as diffusers of responsibility among public employees who observe wrongdoing but expect certain group recognition of the moral imperative to report it. Thus, it is possible that such environments are more prone to lower levels of individual whistleblowing. Given that a more respectful, cooperative, fair work environment and trustful supervisor are conditions that might interact with the power of the group in defining which wrongdoing is reported and enforcing the prevalence of collective vs. individual whistleblowing the strength of such group norms might produce or inhibit the likelihood of whistleblowing. Thus, federal employees perceiving a respectful, cooperative and fair work environment, and a trustful supervisors seem to act in line with



the prevalent or existing group norms. And it is possible that in such environments few federal employees feel individually responsible to report wrongdoing as the work environment operates as a diffuser of responsibility for intervention. If there is respect, cooperativeness, fairness in the work environment and trust in the supervisor, the expectation and enforced group norm will be that the group as a whole is responsible, inhibiting the individual proneness to blowing the whistle in the federal government.

Another possible explanation for the negative association between perceptions of a respectful, cooperative, fair work environment and the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government is that such organizational climates and cultures are either less prone to the occurrence of wrongdoing or more likely to support wrongdoing reporting as a way of handling conflict within the organization. For example, more respectful, cooperative and fair organizations might more clearly communicate the meaning of wrongdoing among employees, the prevalent and accepted formal procedures triggered when wrongdoing occurs, and the accepted organizational responses to observing wrongdoing (clearer sanctioning and reporting structures). Thus, it is possible that such organizational climate and culture conditions operate to produce lower levels of wrongdoing and consequently lower levels of whistleblowing. This negative association might also affect the type of outcome as organizational climate and culture conditions might operate to increase internal whistleblowing while decreasing external whistleblowing (Congress, media, advocacy organizations). Unfortunately, the MSPB 2005 survey data does not allow for this distinction in the type of outcome (internal vs. external whistleblowing). A possible explanation might be found by further exploring the MSPB 2010 survey data to better analyze the influence of perceptions of work

environment culture and employee-supervisor relationships on the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government. In order to better understand the influence of perceptions of work environment and organizational culture on the likelihood of whistleblowing, qualitative data in the form of face-to-face interviews was collected and results from this analysis are presented in chapter 4. The next chapter will explore other situational characteristics concerning the type of wrongdoing, organization signals related to most likely reactions to whistleblowing and other organizational and environmental factors intervening in the proneness to report wrongdoing in the federal government that were not captured by the quantitative data measures and analysis. The expectation is that the use of both qualitative and quantitative data would allow for the inclusion of more details to understanding work environment and organizational culture factors influencing the likelihood of whistleblowing.

It has also been suggested that employees' perceptions of the work environment as respectful, cooperative, fair, and trustful supervisory authority might not necessarily be connected to a quantitative effect on the reporting of wrongdoing. It is possible that some organizations might be more tolerant of wrongdoing and less tolerant of whistleblowers, intervening through work environment characteristics to inhibit disclosures of wrongdoing among employees. Thus, fear of retaliation or consequences of reporting wrongdoing might intervene with federal employees' perceptions of the work environment as respectful, cooperative, fair, and trustful to reduce the likelihood of whistleblowing in such environments.

Likewise, these findings might suggest whistleblowing might be an outcome of a malfunctioning organizational work environment and organizational culture characterized

by *lower levels* of respect and openness in the job setting, cooperativeness and flexibility in the work units, general fair treatment of employees, and trust towards the supervisors. It is possible that such work environments and organizational culture activate employees' voice against wrongdoing occurring within federal agencies. The observance of wrongdoing in a malfunctioning work setting might increase the likelihood of employees' expressions of concerns about wrongdoing as employees associate such conditions as evidence of organizational decline of some sort. Thus, in fear of a greater moral decline of an organization that allows for thriving conflict, federal employees respond through blowing the whistle. As well it is possible that such malfunctioning environments lack the sanctioning and reporting structures for protecting potential whistleblowers. As a consequence of a non-operational (chaotic) work climate and culture, potential whistleblowers might be more inclined to report wrongdoing outside the organization. Unfortunately, this is indistinguishable from the quantitative data analyzed. Again, further evidence is needed in order to better understand whether whistleblowing is an outcome of organizational work environments and work cultures characterized by *lower levels* of respect and openness in the job setting, cooperativeness and flexibility in the work units, general fair treatment of employees, and trust towards the supervisors using qualitative data within and across federal agencies. This will be further explored in chapter 4 with evidence from conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews with whistleblowers. The following question could be raised: Are federal employees norm-based and affectively motivated public servants working in malfunctioning work settings fighting against the organization to do "good"? Moreover, these questions will be

explored across agencies by interviewing individuals from agencies that score high on individual willingness to report wrongdoing.

Though the negative association between perceiving a trustful supervisor and the likelihood of wrongdoing reporting has been previously discussed it is important to suggest a separate explanation for this organizational factor. Findings evidence that perceiving a trustful supervisor negatively affects individual proneness to report abuse, fraud, waste or unlawful behavior within federal government. It might be that trusting the supervisor impedes one's decision to formally disclose waste, fraud and abuse in the federal government functioning as a value that inhibits behaviors required to actually blow the whistle. Likewise, those employees perceiving a trustful supervisor might be less likely to formally report wrongdoing for other reasons, such as fearing reprisals from colleagues or other authorities, or willingness to maintain the status quo in line with organizational survival. Again, this might also mean that the organizational ethical climate through the role of the supervisor allows for lower wrongdoing occurring and lower likelihood of reporting, or for higher levels of employee silence. This implies attention should be given to the supervisory role in present or future ethical programs designed to facilitate rather than inhibit wrongdoing reporting within public organizations. Though a power analysis (focused on understanding the link between the existing code of ethics and the enforcing power of ethics authorities within and across agencies) is beyond the scope of this study the next chapter aims at exploring whether a perceived trustful supervisor encourages or discourages whistleblowing in the federal government. Again, exploring the ethical climates and norms operating to influence individual reporting decisions and its relationship to individual perceptions of a trustful

supervisor will be developed in a further quantitative phase of this study through the use of an improved survey instrument or quasi-experimental design (Highhouse 2007; Margetts 2011). Hopefully evidence from the qualitative data analysis will provide for a more detailed account of the relationship between perceiving a trusting supervisory authority, and either remaining silent or blowing the whistle when wrongdoing occurs in the workplace.

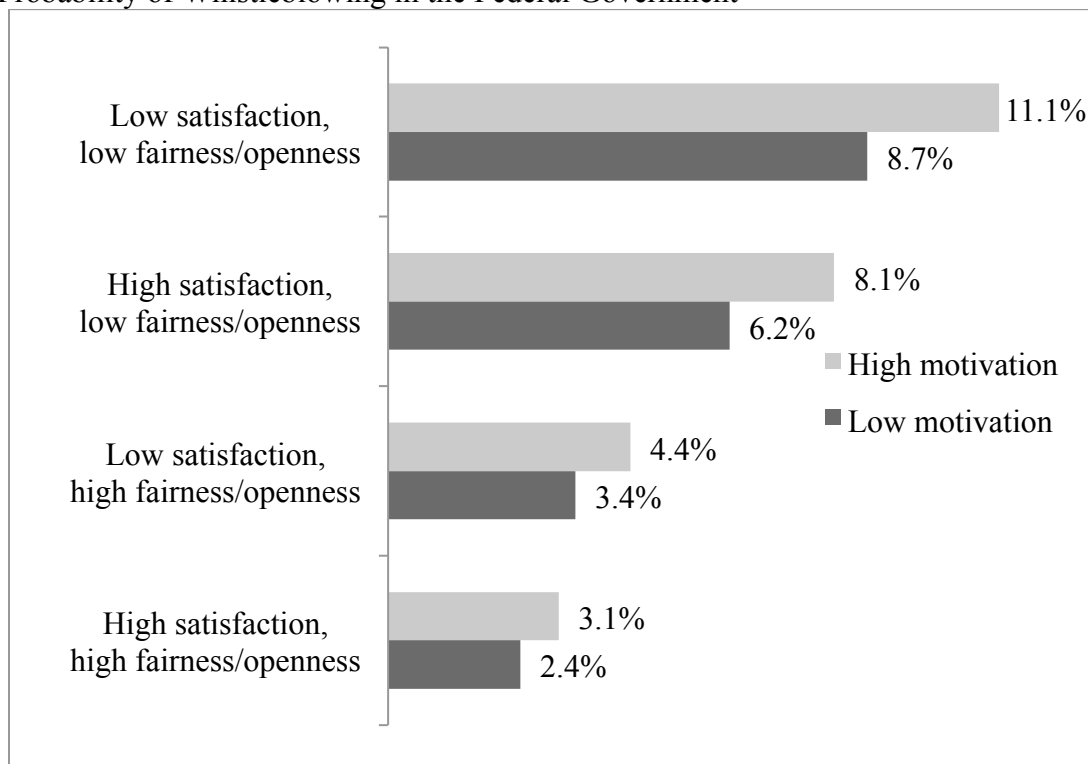
***Predicted Probabilities.*** In order to present a sense of the magnitude of these effects on the likelihood of whistleblowing, it is useful to generate some predictions combining the strongest individual and organizational factors (independent variables). Using the agency fixed effects model, results from this sub-section show the predicted probabilities for different combinations of the independent variables. These predictions are intended simply to illustrate the substantive and practical significance of the effects of such factors in an attempt to answer how much difference would the strongest individual and organizational factors (independent variables) make to the likelihood of reporting wrongdoing in the federal government.

With 95% confidence, the predicted probability of blowing the whistle in the federal government is 0.05 when holding all the predictor variables (individual and organizational factors) at their mean. For an average federal employee, going from a minimum to a maximum level of job satisfaction decreases the probability of blowing the whistle by 0.018. And, going from a minimum to a maximum level of perceived norm-based and affective work motives increases the probability of blowing the whistle by 0.03. Regarding average work environment effects, going from a minimum to a maximum level of respect and openness, cooperativeness and flexibility, fair treatment

and trust in the supervisor decreases the probability of blowing the whistle by 0.05, 0.01, 0.04, and 0.04 respectively.

**Figure 3.1** presents the results from the predicted probabilities of a federal employee blowing the whistle given different combinations of the independent variables. It is important to note these scenarios used the agency fixed effects model and are based on the coefficients on Table 3.12 (model results with agency dummies).

**Figure 3.1** Scenarios Combining Different Independent Variables Showing the Predicted Probability of Whistleblowing in the Federal Government



Note: Predicted probabilities estimation used agency fixed effects model. Scenarios are based on low (one standard deviation below the mean) and high (one standard deviation above the mean) levels of the independent variables included in the predictions.

The independent variables that resulted in the strongest model predictors of whistleblowing in the federal government were explored: job satisfaction, work motivation (norm-based and affective work motives), fair treatment and respect and

openness in the work environment. First, in a scenario where job satisfaction (individual characteristic), fair treatment, respect and openness are low (work environment characteristics), but where norm-based and affective work motives are high (individual characteristic), we would expect the likelihood of reporting wrongdoing among federal employees to be 11%. When comparing this scenario where job satisfaction, fair treatment, respect and openness are low, but where norm-based and affective work motives are low, we would expect a lower likelihood of reporting wrongdoing among federal employees (8.7%). This means that in a scenario where employees report lower levels of job satisfaction and perceive lower levels of work environment characteristics (related to fair treatment and respect and openness), norm-based and affective work motives make a difference in the likelihood of employees blowing the whistle. This pattern is repeated across scenarios.

Second, in a scenario where fair treatment, respect and openness are low (work environment), but where job satisfaction and norm-based and affective work motives are high (individual characteristics), we would expect the likelihood of reporting wrongdoing among federal employees to be 8.1%. When comparing this scenario where fair treatment, respect and openness are low (work environment characteristics) and job satisfaction is high, but where norm-based and affective work motives are low (individual characteristics), we would expect an even lower likelihood of reporting wrongdoing among federal employees (6.2%). This means that in a scenario where employees report higher levels of job satisfaction and perceive lower levels of work environment characteristics (related to fair treatment and respect and openness), norm-based and

affective work motives combined with employee job satisfaction make a difference in the likelihood of employees blowing the whistle.

Third, in a scenario where job satisfaction is low (individual characteristic), and where fair treatment, respect and openness are high (work environment), but where norm-based and affective work motives are high (individual characteristic), we would expect the likelihood of reporting wrongdoing among federal employees to be 4.3%. When comparing this scenario to one where norm-based and affective work motives are low (individual characteristic), we would expect an even lower likelihood of reporting wrongdoing among federal employees (3.4%). This means that in a scenario where employees report lower levels of job satisfaction and perceive higher levels of work environment characteristics (related to fair treatment and respect and openness), higher levels of norm-based and affective work motives combined with higher levels of perceived work environment characteristics still make a difference in the likelihood of employees blowing the whistle.

Fourth, in a scenario where job satisfaction (individual characteristic), fair treatment, respect and openness are high (work environment), where norm-based and affective work motives are high (individual characteristic), we would expect the likelihood of reporting wrongdoing among federal employees to be 3.1%. When comparing this scenario to one where norm-based and affective work motives are low (individual characteristic), we would expect an even lower likelihood of reporting wrongdoing among federal employees (2.4%). This means that in a scenario where employees report higher levels of job satisfaction and perceive higher levels of work environment characteristics (related to fair treatment and respect and openness), higher



levels of norm-based and affective work motives combined with higher levels of perceived work environment characteristics still make a difference in the likelihood of employees blowing the whistle.

Overall, the strongest effect on the likelihood of wrongdoing reporting across scenarios is given individual characteristics in terms of scenarios with higher levels of norm-based and affective work motives.

### **Limitations**

This chapter has presented the findings from a logistic regression analysis of the individual and organizational antecedents of whistleblowing in federal agencies in an attempt to shed light on what are the individual motivations and organizational work environment and organizational culture context influencing federal employee value choices in the interest to protect the public by formally reporting waste, fraud, abuse or unlawful behavior in the workplace. Though findings suggest the likelihood of blowing the whistle is positively associated with a person's identification with the agency's mission (sub-group of women), norm-based and affective work motives, but negatively associated with job satisfaction, and perceptions of a supportive work environment (satisfaction, respect, cooperativeness, fairness, and trust in the supervisor), this study has some limitations that need to be acknowledged.

The use of secondary data analysis includes problems that are intrinsic to the survey method for data collection. This means that if errors were made in the original survey these might no longer be visible in the provided data file making it impossible to differentiate sampling design, coding or other errors (Kiecolt and Nathan 1985: 13). And, as Kiecolt and Nathan (1985: 14) point out, survey items might be imprecise measures of

the concepts a secondary analyst has in mind, or represent a poor operationalization of the variables used in the study. Unfortunately, the Merit Principles Survey for 2005 has only one question that could be operationalized to measure the dependent variable (decision to formally report waste, fraud, abuse or unlawful behavior). However, the operationalized dependent variable captures actions by employees of formal disclosures on wrongdoing (in the form of waste, fraud, abuse or unlawful behavior) for a two-year period and is precise for not referring to hypothetical contexts for individual willingness to blow the whistle.

Second, treatment selection bias might occur to the extent that the independent variables to be included in the model are influenced by other factors that are also related to the dependent variable. Threats of treatment selection bias were accounted for by including control variables (gender, age, education level, ethnicity, annual salary, number of years in civil service and agency type) in the logistic regression model. However, some unobserved variables that might be important determinants of actual whistleblowing, such as individual role responsibility, type of wrongdoing reporting, history of responses to whistleblowing within the organizations, employees distrust of the organization's response to whistleblowing, existing disclosure mechanisms, structural agency factors, etc. could not be included in the analysis, with the result that some part of the relationship between the individual and organizational factors and the likelihood of whistleblowing could still be spurious.

As well, non-responsive bias might be inherent in the way the sampling methodology has been used when administering the Merit Principles Survey (2005) under

use for this study limiting the extent to which inferences from the sample can be extended to the population of federal employees.

For the quantitative data analysis, issues of validity concern “the crucial relationship between the concept and the indicator” (Carmines and Zeller 1979: 12). In this sense, it seems important to assess whether the scores received from participants are meaningful indicators of the construct being measured using the Merit Principles Surveys. To overcome issues of validity in quantitative methods, researchers look for evidence of content validity (whether the items or questions are representative of possible items), criterion related validity (whether the scores relate to some external standard such as scores on a similar instrument) or construct validity (whether they measure what they intent to measure) in the instrument used (Carmines and Zeller 1979: 17-26; Dellinger and Leech 2007: 310). In line with Cronbach (1971: 447 in Carmines and Zeller 1979: 17) what was validated for this study is “an interpretation of data arising from a specified procedure.” To reduce the data, and look for the underlying dimensions of individual and organizational context predictors of whistleblowing as seen by federal employees, the researcher ran an exploratory factor analysis on different questions using principal component and varimax rotation.

Internal<sup>15</sup> validity (Campbell and Stanley 1963) is a concern for this study as treatment selection bias might occur in that the independent variables to be included in the model are influenced by other factors that are also related to the dependent variable. According to Dellinger and Leech (2007:311), “internal validity could be established by

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<sup>15</sup> Internal validity is the extent to which the investigator can conclude that there is a cause and effect relationship among variables. The researcher can only draw correct cause and effect inferences if threats, such as participant attrition, selection bias, and maturation of participants are accounted for in the design.

controlling for particular threats that might supply alternative explanations for studied outcomes.” For this study, threats of treatment selection bias were accounted for, at least in part, by using control variable in the logistic regression model.

External validity<sup>16</sup> is a major advantage when using secondary survey data. According to Dellinger and Leech (2007: 311), “external validity reflects the degree to which study results could generalize to different places or persons.” However, nonresponsive bias might be inherent in the way the sampling methodology has been used when administering the Merit Principles Survey (2005) limiting the extent to which inferences from the sample can be extended to the population of federal employees. Chapter 2 contains an analysis of the representativeness of the sample as well as states the data collection and sampling procedures used by the Merit Systems Protection Board.

Though the measurement of any phenomenon always contains a certain amount of chance error, this study considered the particular properties of indicators to address the extent to which these are reliable -- provide consistent results across repeated measurements (Carmines and Zeller 1979: 11). Following Carmines and Zeller (1979: 44) the reliability of the empirical measurements was established before assessing their validity using statistical procedures of internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha for scale construction).

Referring to the limitations of the logistic regression model, Menard (2002: 69) warns that “omitted variable bias may occur because available theories have failed to

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<sup>16</sup> External validity is the extent to which the investigator can conclude that the results apply to a larger population, which is usually of highest concern in survey designs. This means that correct inferences can only be drawn to other persons, settings, and past and future situations if the investigator has used procedures such as selecting a representative sample.

identify all of the relevant predictors or causes of a dependent variable, or because theoretically relevant variables have been omitted.” Omitted variable bias also refers to the failure to control for a common cause, which was addressed by including the same set of controls when running the different analyses and also exploring the findings across agencies and within different sub-groups (women, supervisors, GS employees, high self-reported performers and field employees). Limitations of the quantitative data analysis were addressed when checking for violations of logistic regression assumptions and methods for detecting and correcting such violations were employed. Also outlier cases, high leverage cases, and influential cases were examined as well as collinearity diagnostics performed (Menard 2002: 67).

In order to address the limitations of the quantitative data analysis, this study’s research design includes qualitative data collection and analysis of face-to-face interviews to federal employees. The limitations of the qualitative data analysis will be addressed in the last sub-section of chapter 4.

However, it is important to note that these methodological limitations suggest that managerial implications from this study should be taken with caution, and that more research examining the complexities involved in whistleblowing actions, including studies that make use of strong natural or quasi experiments and semi-structured interviews comparing whistleblowers to non-whistleblowers should be done. Still, this study has provided evidence for understanding what motivates public sector employees to blow the whistle on wrongdoing. Knowledge on the factors anteceding the decision to report wrongdoing in federal government is crucial for achieving a better understanding of how behavioral ethics develops in federal government. Moreover, a better

understanding of the antecedents of whistleblowing decision-making would inform human resources departments (federal workers, co-workers, supervisors, managers) and external policy makers on the organizational values at stake when individuals decide to report wrongdoing. This will ultimately lead to improved management strategies for channeling protected employee disclosure practices and addressing/redressing wrongdoing within the organization as part of the organizational learning process in federal government.

Related to individual motives, the finding that employees' importance given to an agency's mission increases the likelihood of reporting unethical behavior among the subgroup of women implies the agency's mission matters for motivating employees to disclose wrongful acts within federal government. Careful attention to federal agencies' values as expressed in mission statements should be accounted for as part of ethics and integrity programs designed to enhance ethical climates for wrongdoing reporting in government. Second, results show norm-based and affective work motives matter and are specifically related to the relationship between public service motivation and ethical behavior in federal government.

In terms of organizational values, the importance of how employees view their supervisor, related to how trustful this authority results to employees and how this inhibits the likelihood of whistleblowing, is interesting. This suggests how important is the role of the supervisor in maintaining an environment that allows for increased employee trust toward authorities and feeling of a supportive work environment for blowing the whistle (where supervisors refrain from favoritism and act with integrity). Also, the results provide further empirical evidence linking organizational values of

respect, cooperativeness and fairness to a lower likelihood of blowing the whistle in public agencies. These findings, though perplexing might be signaling that though employees perceive the organizational setting as respectful, cooperative, and fair certain structural and contextual conditions related to the organizational norms and responses to past and present whistleblowing might operate to inhibit employee reporting of wrongdoing. This study constitutes an important first step for examining these issues more closely, as more knowledge is needed on how a malfunctioning work environment and organizational culture might operate against whistleblowers.

In terms of practice, findings suggests that managers willing to create an ethical environment in organizations, will need to have an understanding of the individual and organizational factors that affect the likelihood of employee disclosures of wrongdoing within federal government. In line with the pre-existing research, this study sheds light on the individual and organizational value context anteceding the decision to report wrongdoing in federal government. Results from this study might help clarify and point towards potential strategies for enhancing conditions that increase behavior that is ethical within public organizations as well as improve workplace environment and culture toward achieving whistleblowing effectiveness (Johnson and Kraft 1990). For example, managers should enhance a culture supporting communication, developing and making available multiple channels for the reporting of employee concerns. This will hopefully stimulate the development of guidelines to institutionalize ethical behavior in the form of whistleblowing and the subsequent protections intended to benefit organizations and individuals.

The next chapter presents the results for the exploration of the individual motives, work environment and organizational culture characteristics influencing the likelihood of federal employees blowing the whistle using qualitative sources of data.



## Appendix

**Table 3.2** Independent Variables Construction based on the USMPSB 2005 Survey Questionnaire

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**Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements about agency (1: Strongly agree, 2: Agree, 3: Neither agree nor disagree, 4: Disagree, 5: Strongly disagree)**

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***Agency section of the questionnaire, question 1, “mission valence” measure***

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- “I understand my agency’s mission”
  - “My agency’s mission is important to me”
  - “I understand how I contribute to my agency’s mission”
  - “The workforce has the job-relevant knowledge and skills necessary to accomplish organizational goals”
  - “I am given a real opportunity to improve my skills in my organization”
  - “My agency produces high quality products and services”
  - “During the last two years, my agency’s organizational structure has been stable”
  - “My agency is successful in accomplishing its mission”
  - “I would recommend my agency as a place to work”
  - “I would recommend the Government as a place to work”
- 

***Job section of the questionnaire, question 2, “respect and openness” measure***

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- “I am treated with respect at work”
  - “I am able to openly express concerns at work”
  - “My opinions count at work”
  - “I know what is expected of me on the job”
  - “I receive the training I need to perform my job”
  - “I need more training to perform my job effectively”
  - “My job makes good use of my skills and abilities”
  - “Creativity and innovation are rewarded”
  - “There are private sector jobs which require the same skills and abilities as my job”
  - “I have resources to do my job well”
  - “The work I do is meaningful to me”
  - “My job is secure”
  - “In general, I am satisfied with my job”
- 

***Work unit section of the questionnaire, question 5, “cooperativeness and flexibility” measure***

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- “My work unit is able to recruit people with the right skills”
  - “Information is shared freely in my work unit”
  - “A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists in my work unit”
  - “A spirit of cooperation and teamwork exists between my work unit & other work units”
  - “My work unit responds flexibly to changing conditions”
  - “My work unit produces high quality products and services”
  - “In my work unit, performance ratings accurately reflect job performance”
  - “Recognition and rewards are based on performance in my work unit”
-

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**How important are each of the following in motivating you to do a good job?  
(1:Strongly agree, 2: Agree, 3: Neither agree nor disagree, 4: Disagree, 5: Strongly disagree)**

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***Pay and rewards section of the questionnaire, question 16, “rational, norm-based and affective work motives” measures***

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“A cash award of \$100”

“A cash award of \$1000”

“Desire not to let my supervisor down”

“Desire not to let my coworkers down”

“Recognition from my coworkers”

“Desire for a good performance rating”

“My duty as a public employee”

“Increased chances for promotion”

“Desire to help my work unit meet its goals”

“Personal pride or satisfaction in my work”

“A time off reward of 8 hours”

“Non-cash recognition (e.g. letter of appreciation, plaque)”

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**In the past 2 years, to what extent do you believe you have been treated fairly regarding the following? (1:Very great extent, 2: Considerable extent, 3: Some extent, 4: Little extent, 5: No extent)**

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***Fairness section of the questionnaire, question 22, “fair treatment” measure***

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Career advancement

Awards

Training

Performance appraisals

Job assignments

Discipline

Pay

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**Please answer the following questions about your supervisor and agency leadership (1:Strongly agree, 2: Agree, 3: Neither agree nor disagree, 4: Disagree, 5: Strongly disagree).**

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***Supervisor section of the questionnaire, question 33, “supervisor trust” measure***

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***I trust my supervisor to:***

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“Fairly assess my performance and contributions”

“Support me in pay and award discussions with upper management”

“Listen fairly to my concerns”

“Apply discipline fairly and only when justified”

“Clearly communicate conduct expectations”

“Act with integrity”

“Refrain from favoritism”

“Keep me informed”

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## Supplemental Analysis

**Women.** Table 3.15 shows the logistic regression analysis of the relationship between perceived individual motives and organizational work environment and culture, and whistleblowing actions for the sub-group of women. With 99% confidence (at 0.01 level), whistleblowing is significantly associated with mission valence, overall job satisfaction, norm-based and affective work motives, a respectful and open job setting, fair treatment at work, and trust towards the supervisor.

In terms of individual motives, reporting of wrongdoing among female federal employees is positively associated with respondents' value given to the agency's mission (mission valence) and norm-based and affective work motives, and negatively associated with respondent's job satisfaction. A one standard deviation increase in respondent's perception of mission valence increases the odds of being a whistleblower by 9%. Regarding work motives, a one standard deviation increase in respondent's perception of being norm-based and affectively motivated to the job increases the odds of being a whistleblower by 16%. Regarding job satisfaction, a one standard deviation increase in respondent's perception of being satisfied with the job decreases the odds of being a whistleblower by 20%. Results do not show a significant association among women between rational work motives and whistleblowing.

In terms of the organizational context variables, reporting of wrongdoing by female federal employees is significantly but negatively associated with respondents' feeling of the existence of a respectful and open job setting in the organization, fair treatment in the organization, and trust in their supervisor. The odds ratio column on Table 3.15 shows that a one standard deviation increase in respondent's perception of a

respectful work environment, fair treatment and trust in the supervisor decreases the odds of being a whistleblower by 32%, 34%, and 15%, respectively.

**Table 3.15** Logistic Regression Analysis of the relationship between perceived individual motives and organizational values/culture and whistleblowing actions for the sub-group of women (Coefficients, significance levels, and odds ratio. Model overall significance and goodness of fit).

<b>Sub-group: Women</b>		<b>LOGIT</b>		
<b>WB Reporting</b>	<b>Coefficients</b>		<b>Robust Std. errors</b>	<b>Odds ratio</b>
<b>Main predictors</b>				
<i>Individual motives</i>				
Mission valence scale	0.08	*	0.05	1.09
Job satisfaction (high)	-0.24	**	0.13	0.79
Rational work motives scale	0.02		0.08	1.02
Norm-based and Affective work motives scale	0.15	**	0.08	1.16
<i>Organizational work environment values/culture</i>				
Respect and openness scale	-0.38	***	0.08	0.68
Cooperativeness and flexibility scale	-0.07		0.06	0.94
Fair treatment scale	-0.41	***	0.07	0.66
Trust in supervisor scale	-0.16	***	0.06	0.85
<b>Model significance</b>				
Log-Likelihood full model	-2266.556			
LR chi2(13)	349.144			
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.072			
Count R <sup>2</sup>	0.947			
McKelvey & Zavonia	0.120			
McFadden's R <sup>2</sup>	0.072			
Nagelkerke	0.086			
N=11,846				

Note: Significance levels are indicated by the following notation \*  $p < .10$  \*\*  $p < .05$  \*\*\*  $p < .01$  All models control for age, education (more than a high school diploma), ethnicity (non-white), years in civil service and annual salary.

**Supervisors.** Table 3.16 shows the logistic regression analysis of the relationship between perceived individual motives and organizational work environment and culture, and whistleblowing actions for the sub-group of federal supervisors. With 99% confidence (at 0.01 level), whistleblowing among the supervisors is significantly

associated with overall job satisfaction, norm-based and affective work motives, a respectful and open job setting, and cooperative and flexible work unit. With 95% confidence (at 0.05 level), whistleblowing among the federal supervisors is significantly associated with fair treatment at work and trust towards the supervisor.

In terms of individual motives, reporting of wrongdoing by federal supervisors is negatively associated with respondents' job satisfaction and positively associated with norm-based and affective work motives. A one standard deviation increase in a supervisor's perception of being satisfied with the job produces a decrease in the odds of being a whistleblower of 28%. Regarding norm-based and affective work motives, a one standard deviation increase in supervisors' norm-based and affective work motives increases the odds of being a whistleblower by 37%. Results do not show a significant association among supervisors of mission valence and rational work motives, and whistleblowing in the federal government.

In terms of the organizational context variables, reporting of wrongdoing by supervisors is significantly but negatively associated with their perceptions of a respectful and open work environment, a cooperative and flexible work unit, fair treatment, and trust in their own supervisors. The odds ratio column on Table 3.16 shows that a one standard deviation increase in respondent's perception of a respectful work environment, a cooperative and flexible organization, fair treatment and trust in the supervisor decreases the odds of being a whistleblower by 27%, 24%, 16%, and 15%, respectively.

**Table 3.16** Logistic Regression Analysis of the relationship between perceived individual motives and organizational values/culture and whistleblowing actions for the sub-group of supervisors (Coefficients, significance levels, and odds ratio. Model overall significance and goodness of fit).

<b>Sub-group: Supervisors</b> <b>WB Reporting</b>	<b>LOGIT</b>			
	<b>Coefficients</b>		<b>Robust Std. errors</b>	<b>Odds ratio</b>
<b>Main predictors</b>				
<i>Individual motives</i>				
Mission valence scale	-0.05		0.05	0.95
Job satisfaction (high)	-0.33	**	0.15	0.72
Rational work motives scale	-0.01		0.08	0.99
Norm-based and Affective work motives scale	0.32	***	0.11	1.37
<i>Organizational work environment values/culture</i>				
Respect and openness scale	-0.31	***	0.10	0.73
Cooperativeness and flexibility scale	-0.28	***	0.07	0.76
Fair treatment scale	-0.17	**	0.08	0.84
Trust in supervisor scale	-0.16	**	0.07	0.85
<b>Model significance</b>				
Log-Likelihood full model	-1638.371			
LR chi2(14)	264.48			
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.0747			
Count R <sup>2</sup>	0.941			
McKelvey & Zavonia	0.120			
McFadden's R <sup>2</sup>	0.075			
Nagelkerke	0.091			
N=7,940				

Note: Significance levels are indicated by the following notation \* p<.10 \*\*p<.05 \*\*\*p<.01 All models control for age, education (more than a high school diploma), ethnicity (non-white), years in civil service and annual salary.

**GS pay level.** Table 3.17 shows the logistic regression analysis of the relationship between perceived individual motives and organizational work environment and culture, and whistleblowing actions for the sub-group of GS employees. GS employees are U.S. federal civil service employees under the general schedule in the pay scale. These are generally white-collar professional, technical, administrative, and clerical positions. With 99% confidence (at 0.01 level), whistleblowing reporting (formal disclosure of waste,

fraud and abuse in the workplace) among the sub-group of GS employees is significantly associated with overall job satisfaction, norm-based and affective commitment, a respectful and open job setting, and a fair treatment at work. With 95% confidence (at 0.05 level), whistleblowing reporting among the sub-group of GS employees is significantly associated with a cooperative and flexible work unit and trust towards the supervisor.

In terms of individual motives, reporting of wrongdoing among GS employees is negatively associated with respondents' job satisfaction and positively associated with norm-based and affective work motives. A one standard deviation increase in satisfaction with the job decreases the odds of being a whistleblower by 25%. Regarding norm-based and affective work motives, a one standard deviation increase in norm-based and affective commitment increases the odds of being a whistleblower by 14%. Findings from this supplemental analysis do not show a significant association among GS employees of mission valence and rational work motives, and whistleblowing in the federal government.

In terms of the organizational context variables, reporting of wrongdoing among GS employees is negatively associated with respondents' feeling of the existence of a respectful and open job setting in the organization, a cooperative and flexible work unit in the organization, fair treatment in the organization, and with respondents' trust in their supervisor. The odds ratio column on Table 3.17 shows that a one standard deviation increase in respondents' perceptions of a respectful and open work environment, a cooperative and flexible organization, fair treatment, and trust in the supervisor decreases the odds of being a whistleblower by 23%, 9%, 24%, and 19%, respectively.

**Table 3.17** Logistic Regression Analysis of the relationship between perceived individual motives and organizational values/culture and whistleblowing actions for the sub-group of GS federal employees (Coefficients, significance levels, and odds ratio. Model overall significance and goodness of fit).

<b>Sub-group: GS federal employees</b>		<b>LOGIT</b>		
<b>WB Reporting</b>	<b>Coefficients</b>		<b>Robust Std. errors</b>	<b>Odds ratio</b>
<b>Main predictors</b>				
<i>Individual motives</i>				
Mission valence scale	0.03		0.03	1.03
Job satisfaction (high)	-0.29	***	0.09	0.75
Rational work motives scale	-0.05		0.05	0.95
Norm-based and Affective work motives scale	0.13	***	0.05	1.14
<i>Organizational work environment values/culture</i>				
Respect and openness scale	-0.26	***	0.06	0.77
Cooperativeness and flexibility scale	-0.09	***	0.04	0.91
Fair treatment scale	-0.27	***	0.05	0.76
Trust in supervisor scale	-0.21	***	0.04	0.81
<b>Model significance</b>				
Log-Likelihood full model	-4800.804			
LR chi2(13)	551.68			
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.0543			
Count R <sup>2</sup>	0.945			
McKelvey & Zavonia	0.095			
McFadden's R <sup>2</sup>	0.054			
Nagelkerke	0.066			
N=23,835				

Note: Significance levels are indicated by the following notation \* p<.10 \*\*p<.05 \*\*\*p<.01 All models control for women, age, education (more than a high school diploma), ethnicity (non-white), and years in civil service.

**Performance.** Table 3.18 shows the logistic regression analysis of the relationship between perceived individual motives and work environment and culture, and whistleblowing actions for the sub-group of self-reported high performers. With 99% confidence (at 0.01 level), whistleblowing reporting (formal disclosure of waste, fraud and abuse in the workplace) among the sub-group of self-reported high performers is significantly associated with overall job satisfaction, norm-based and affective work



motives, a respectful and open job setting, a fair treatment at work, and trust towards the supervisor. With 95% confidence (at 0.05 level), whistleblowing reporting among the sub-group of self-reported high performers is significantly associated with a cooperative and flexible work unit.

In terms of individual motives, reporting of wrongdoing among high-performing federal employees is negatively associated with respondents' job satisfaction and positively associated norm-based and affective work motives. A one standard deviation increase in job satisfaction decreases the odds of being a whistleblower by 24%. Regarding work motives, a one standard deviation increase in norm-based and affective work motives increases the odds of being a whistleblower by 19%. Findings do not show a significant association among self-reported high performers of mission valence and rational work motives, and whistleblowing in the federal government.

In terms of the organizational context variables, reporting of wrongdoing by high-performing federal employees is significantly but negatively associated with respondents' feeling of the existence of a respectful and open job setting in the organization, a cooperative and flexible work unit in the organization, fair treatment in the organization, and with respondents' trust in their supervisor. The odds ratio column on Table 3.18 shows that a one standard deviation increase in respondent's perception of a respectful work environment, a cooperative and flexible organization, fair treatment and trust in the supervisor decreases the odds of being a whistleblower by 26%, 8%, 21%, and 21%, respectively.

**Table 3.18** Logistic Regression Analysis of the relationship between perceived individual motives and organizational values/culture and whistleblowing actions for the sub-group of high self-reported performers (Coefficients, significance levels, and odds ratio. Model overall significance and goodness of fit).

<b>Sub-group: High Self-Reported Performers</b>		<b>LOGIT</b>		
<b>WB Reporting</b>	<b>Coefficients</b>		<b>Robust Std. errors</b>	<b>Odds ratio</b>
<b>Main predictors</b>				
<i>Individual motives</i>				
Mission valence scale	0.04		0.03	1.05
Job satisfaction (high)	-0.27	***	0.09	0.76
Rational work motives scale	-0.05		0.05	0.95
Norm-based and Affective work motive scale	0.17	***	0.05	1.19
<i>Organizational work environment values/culture</i>				
Respect and openness scale	-0.29	***	0.06	0.74
Cooperativeness and flexibility scale	-0.08	**	0.04	0.92
Fair treatment scale	-0.23	***	0.05	0.79
Trust in supervisor scale	-0.24	***	0.04	0.79
<b>Model significance</b>				
Log-Likelihood full model	-4650.67			
LR chi2(14)	536.65			
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.055			
Count R <sup>2</sup>	0.940			
McKelvey &Zavonia	0.092			
McFadden's R <sup>2</sup>	0.055			
Nagelkerke	0.067			
N=21,600				

Note: Significance levels are indicated by the following notation \* p<.10 \*\*p<.05 \*\*\*p<.01 All models control for women, age, education (more than a high school diploma), ethnicity (non-white), years in civil service and annual salary.

**Field.** Table 3.19 shows the logistic regression analysis of the relationship between perceived individual motives and work environment and culture, and whistleblowing actions for the sub-group of employees working in field offices. With 99% confidence (at 0.01 level), whistleblowing by employees working in field offices is significantly associated with overall job satisfaction, norm-based and affective work

motives, a respectful and open job setting, a cooperative and flexible work unit, fair treatment at work, and trust towards the supervisor.

In terms of individual motives, reporting of wrongdoing by federal employees in field offices is negatively associated with respondents' job satisfaction and positively associated with norm-based and affective work motives. A one standard deviation increase in job satisfaction decreases the odds of being a whistleblower by 27%. Regarding work motives, a one standard deviation increase in norm-based and affective work motives increases the odds of being a whistleblower by 17%. Findings from this supplemental analysis do not show a significant association among employees working in field offices of mission valence and rational work motives, and whistleblowing in the federal government.

In terms of the organizational context variables, reporting of wrongdoing by federal employees in field offices is significantly but negatively associated with respondents' feeling of the existence of a respectful and open job setting in the organization, a cooperative and flexible work unit in the organization, fair treatment in the organization, and with respondents' trust in their supervisor. The odds ratio column on Table 3.19 shows that a one standard deviation increase in respondent's perception of a respectful work environment, a cooperative and flexible organization, fair treatment and trust in the supervisor decreases the odds of being a whistleblower by 24%, 12%, 21%, and 21%, respectively.

**Table 3.19** Logistic Regression Analysis of the relationship between perceived individual motives and organizational values/culture and whistleblowing actions for the sub-group of field employees (Coefficients, significance levels, and odds ratio. Model overall significance and goodness of fit).

Sub-group: Field Employees	LOGIT			
WB Reporting	Coefficients		Robust Std. errors	Odds ratio
<b>Main predictors</b>				
<i>Individual motives</i>				
Mission valence scale	0.03		0.03	1.03
Job satisfaction (high)	-0.31	***	0.09	0.73
Rational work motives scale	-0.07		0.05	0.92
Norm-based and Affective work motives scale	0.16	***	0.05	1.17
<i>Organizational work environment values/culture</i>				
Respect and openness scale	-0.28	***	0.06	0.76
Cooperativeness and flexibility scale	-0.12	***	0.04	0.88
Fair treatment scale	-0.24	***	0.05	0.79
Trust in supervisor scale	-0.23	***	0.04	0.79
<b>Model significance</b>				
Log-Likelihood full model	-4626.807			
LR chi2(14)	586.67			
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.059			
Count R <sup>2</sup>	0.940			
McKelvey &Zavonia	0.101			
McFadden's R <sup>2</sup>	0.060			
Nagelkerke	0.073			
N=21,752				

Note: Significance levels are indicated by the following notation \* p<.10 \*\*p<.05 \*\*\*p<.01 All models control for women, age, education (more than a high school diploma), ethnicity (non-white), years in civil service and annual salary.

## **Chapter 4. Qualitative Data Analysis and Results**

This chapter reports the results of the in-depth qualitative interviews that were conducted as part of the mixed-methods approach to answering the research question about the individual and organizational antecedents of whistleblowing in the federal government. The chapter begins with a description of the interviewees, all of whom are federal employees who have blown the whistle on wrongdoing in their agencies. Next, the data analysis scheme and methodological approach to the interpretive analysis of the interviews are presented. The remaining and most extensive parts of the chapter are devoted to a detailed presentation and interpretation of the contents of the interviews, that is, what interviewees had to say about the individual, organizational and other factors that influence the decisions to report wrongdoing in the federal government.

### **Interviewee Recruitment and Characteristics**

The qualitative component of this study encompassed 18 in-depth interviews with federal employees from a range of federal agencies who had direct experiences with formally reporting wrongdoing in the federal government. The interview process sought to elicit individual and organizational work environment factors intervening in the decision to report wrongdoing in the federal government. Participants were recruited through advocacy organizations that demonstrated a willingness to participate in this study. Letters requesting help with recruitment were sent to the following organizations: Government Accountability Project (GAP), Project on Government Oversight (POGO), Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER), and Whistle Watch (WW). Two formal letters indicating support were obtained from the Government Accountability

Project and Whistle Watch Organizations. A purposive sample of employees to be interviewed for this study was invited through these advocacy organizations via e-mail. The invitation email was sent by these organizations to their contact lists of identified whistleblowers on behalf of the principal investigator in this study. As an attachment to those emails, a project narrative explaining the interview goals and process, as it appeared on the IRB approval form, was sent to potential participants.

**Table 4.1** shows a summary of the mode and dates of the interviews. Once the potential participants responded to the introductory email, an interview was scheduled at the participant's convenience. The interviewing process was conducted between July and October 2012. One day prior to the scheduled interview, an informed consent form was sent out to each participant allowing for interviewees to consent on the interview procedures. Most of the interviews were conducted on the phone, fewer using Skype and only one face-to-face. Each interview began with an introduction, explaining the study's purpose and the terms of the interview consent form, and concluded with the opportunity for interviewees to express some final thoughts on the topic of the interview, as well as a quick overview of some background information on the interviewees. The interview protocol is provided in an appendix at the end of this dissertation.

**Table 4.1** Interview Characteristics

<b>Interview Medium</b>		<b>Interview Dates</b>	
<b>Type</b>		<b>Month</b>	
Phone	14	July, 2012	3
Skype	3	August, 2012	6
Face-to-face	1	September, 2012	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	October, 2012	7
		<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>

**Table 4.2** shows a summary of the demographic characteristics of the 18 interviewees, all federal whistleblowers, who were successfully recruited to participate in the interviewing process. The following agencies were represented among the interviewees: Department of Transportation (4), Department of Health and Human Services (3), Department of Homeland Security (2), Department of Agriculture (2), Department of Defense (2), Not disclosed (2), Air Force (1), Navy (1) and Department of Treasury (1). With regard to the distribution of interview participants by gender and location, men comprise 67% of the interviewed federal employees and 56% of the interviewees worked in offices located at the headquarters of the represented agencies. In terms of tenure in their positions as federal employees, half of the interviewees had been in office for less than 8 years at the time when they decided to formally disclose wrongdoing in the workplace. Finally, 78% of the interviewed federal employees had more than a high school diploma as their education level.

**Table 4.2** Interviewee Characteristics

<b>Agency Type</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
Department of Agriculture	2	11
Air Force	1	6
Department of Defense	2	11
Health and Human Services	3	17
Department Homeland Security	2	11
Navy	1	6
Department of Transportation	4	22
Department of Treasury	1	6
Not disclosed	2	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	12	33
Male	6	67
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Location</b>		
Headquarters	8	56
Field	10	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Years in office</b>		
< 3 years	3	17
4-7 years	6	33
8-11 years	4	22
>=12 years	5	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Education</b>		
Less than HS	4	22
More than HS	14	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>

### Qualitative Data Analysis

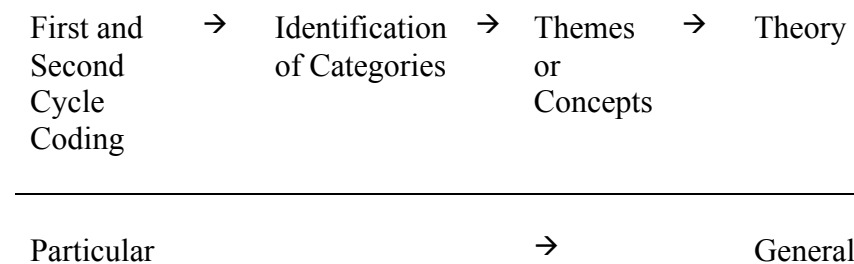
The semi-structured interviews were recorded and transcribed, and both the audio recordings and the transcripts were reviewed several times during the coding process (Weston 2001; Saldaña 2009). The coding process followed Saldaña's (2009) *Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* for preparing the transcribed interviews for data analysis. In line with Saldaña (2009:8) coding is used to "arrange things in a systematic



order, to make something part of a system of classification, to categorize.” By following such a procedure the expectation is to “group, regroup, and rethink” the data “to consolidate meaning and explanation” (Grbich 2007: 24 in Saldaña 2009: 8). The coding process is employed to enable the organization and grouping of similarly marked data into codes, categories and themes or concepts that allow for identifying a pattern of meaning and importance given to the individual and organizational factors influencing the likelihood of whistleblowing. This chapter considers a code “a word or phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña 2009: 3). Codes are streamlined into categories and categories into themes to finally identify patterns of meaning within and across the interview transcripts. A category is understood as a word or phrase describing some segment of data that is explicit, while a theme describes more subtle and tacit processes (Rossman and Rallis 2003 in Saldaña 2009: 13).

**Figure 4.1** shows the data management and analytic process techniques involved in the qualitative data analysis.

**Figure 4.1** Data Management and Analytic Process for Qualitative Analysis



Note: Adapted from Saldaña (2009: 12).

The coding process followed two cycles. In the first cycle coding process, the data in the form of audio tapes was listened to, transcribed and coded manually using

*attribute*<sup>17</sup> coding to describe the profiles of interviewees, *descriptive coding* to assign basic labels to data to allow for an inventory of topics to emerge from the interview data, and *In Vivo coding* to help crystallize meaning in the participants' own words (Saldaña 2009). The goal of first cycle coding was to initially explore the data and develop a general understanding of the database, recording initial thoughts in the margins of transcripts (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). According to Saldaña (2009: 56) "attribute coding provides essential participant information and contexts for analysis and interpretation," while *In Vivo* coding "allows for prioritizing the participant's voice." During this exploratory stage, the entire responses to the questions constituted an explanation from the interviewee's point of view. Thus, the entire response was taken as a segment. Next, the content of each answer to the interview questions was read to identify the major descriptive codes expressed through participants' verbal utterances. From the segmented units, each sentence-sized unit was systematically considered to uncover major topics related to the problem under analysis. The unit of observation of the interview analysis involved the word or phrases capturing the essence of what constitutes whistleblowing as elaborated by the interviewee(s) while answering the pre-tested interview questions.

The second cycle coding involved a second reading of the transcribed excerpts to reconfigure the first cycle codes themselves and the use of *value coding*<sup>18</sup> to "reflect participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her own worldviews"

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<sup>17</sup> According to Saldaña (2009: 55) attribute coding "is the notation of basic descriptive information such as field-work setting, participant characteristics or demographics, time frame and other variables of interest."

<sup>18</sup> Value coding follows Saldaña's (2009: 90) application to "explore cultural values and intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions."

(Saldaña 2009: 89) as well as *process coding*<sup>19</sup> to understand the actions taken by whistleblowers to respond to wrongdoing in particular organizational work environments. The objective of the second cycle coding was to develop a sense of categorical, thematic and theoretical organization from the first cycle coding. The focus was on prioritizing, integrating and conceptualizing the data to gain a better understanding of individual behavior in-depth and in the context of public organizations.

This two stage coding cycle was followed by a process of interweaving the first and second cycle coding that led to the identification of a set of categories refined from within the data and later compared with each other (Rubin and Rubin 1995). The data codes were analyzed to identify a set of categories explicitly expressed in the verbal utterances of the interviewees describing individual motivations and organizational work environment antecedents of the decision to report wrongdoing in the federal government. The unit of analysis for identifying categories focused on several sentences related to the same codes.

The interweaving process of the first and second cycle coding to determine explicit categories was followed by the themeing of the data to describe more subtle and tacit processes in the ideas of the interviewees concerning whistleblowing behavior. After this interweaving process was finalized the coded data was labeled and analyzed using thematic statements rather than shorter codes. Finally, *pattern coding* (Saldaña 2009: 77) was used to explain or infer constructs concerning descriptions of whistleblowing

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<sup>19</sup> Process coding “uses gerunds (“-ing” words) to connote action in the data. Simple observable activity (e.g. reading, playing, watching TV, drinking coffee) and more general conceptual action (e.g. struggling, negotiating, surviving, adapting) can be coded through a process code” (Saldaña 2009: 77).

behavior and explanations for why whistleblowing occurs among interviewees (specifically factors encouraging or discouraging whistleblowing).

Findings are presented through a discussion of categories, identified patterns of concepts (theoretical constructs) and themes and using a distinction between individual and organizational factors linked to whistleblowing as identified in the verbal utterances of interviewees. The next section presents the outcome of coding the data into categories and later into themes summarizing the content of the interviews.

### **Description of Codes and Categories**

This qualitative analysis aims at capturing the essence of the data in an attempt to answer this study's research question. Interview data were analyzed using manual coding to explore, code, extract, and compare patterns of results from the qualitative data with results from the quantitative data in mind. The following qualitative propositions in particular were explored in the qualitative data analysis:

*Proposition 1:* Federal employees are highly oriented towards their mission, highly satisfied with their jobs and more likely to maintain a norm-based and affective motivation towards public service, resulting in an increased likelihood of blowing the whistle.

*Proposition 2:* Federal employees recognize working in a functioning work environment and organizational culture prone to openness and respect, cooperativeness and flexibility, fairness and a trusting supervisor resulting in a decreased likelihood of blowing the whistle.

**Coding Results.** The data collection instrument contained two central sections. The first section of the questionnaire focused on individual characteristics that would most likely encourage or discourage federal employees to blow the whistle, as understood from the viewpoint of the interviewee. The second section of the questionnaire focused on the organizational work environment, culture and structure that would most likely encourage or discourage federal employees to blow the whistle, again as understood from the interviewee's viewpoint. The coding results are presented in two sub-sections: one refers to the section of the questionnaire on the individual and a second one refers to the organization. The coding process searched within and across interview transcripts.

**The individual.** Table 4.3 (see Appendix at the end of this chapter) shows the descriptive and affective (values, beliefs and attitudes) codes that emerged from the first and second cycle coding of the section of the questionnaire focused on the individual. Descriptive coding offered the opportunity of organizing the data and the identification of the main topics addressed by participants (Saldaña 2009). Affective coding in the form of identifying the emerging values, attitudes and beliefs<sup>20</sup> among participants regarding individual motives as antecedents of whistleblowing was intended to construct the meaning given by interviewees to both factors as conditions for engaging in whistleblowing.

When asked about the individual motives to report wrongdoing in the federal government, participants expressed their perspectives on what moved them to blow the

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<sup>20</sup> According to Saldaña (2009: 89) a *value* is the importance we attribute to oneself, another person, thing, or idea. An *attitude* is the way we think and feel about oneself, another person, thing or idea. A *belief* is part of a system that includes our values and attitudes, plus our personal, knowledge, experiences, opinions, prejudices, morals and other interpretative perceptions of the social world.” (Emphasis added by author)

whistle. The **values** that emerged from participants' responses on motivations to report wrongdoing suggest participants attribute importance to the different individual factors triggering their decisions to report wrongdoing. These affective factors include an individual emotional significance given to the oath or commitment to public service, including honesty and righteousness in doing their job. Participants' comments tended to center on the following principles defending truth and a moral code (respect, justice, fairness and kindness), integrity, personal ethics and honoring the profession and the values of their family upbringing. For example, one participant refers to valuing a "law code, integrity, conscience, professionalism, and the ability and experience to know that something is wrong." An example is summarized in this quote by an interviewee who mentioned the value of duty and the oath of office:

It is a duty. You take an oath of office when you enter the service that you would protect the United States from wrongdoers, be they domestic or non-domestic and that you work for the people in the country, you don't work for management.

Likewise another participant stressed the value of morality as an individual factor leading towards reporting of wrongdoing: "Everybody says that I was very brave and courageous, and I did not really quite think of it, I thought of it as an existential moral necessity. I realized I did not have any fear."

The **attitudes** manifested among interviewees when asked about their opinions on whistleblowing suggest they consider acting responsibly to protect citizens, being committed to rectitude and complying with a legal mandate as the key factors moving them to blow the whistle. When thinking about what moved participants as federal employees to report wrongdoing evoking their own case, interviewees mention observing wrongdoing and feeling committed to "act responsible, as civil servants." Such

responsibility comprises in this view a desire to “protect citizens, care and love human beings, work for the weak, the poor and the disadvantaged, and advocate for voiceless victims.” Also, a thought one interviewee expressed is a sense of allegiance to rectitude in terms of feeling compelled to “spot corruption, refuse to do wrong and push others’ agenda, dislike tyranny, not let mistakes be neglected, voice out inaccuracies, and maintain standards of righteousness.” A quote from an interviewee illustrates this sense of responsibility that many saw attached to public service:

When you realize that you are in a position that changes the lives of several individuals, you know there is going to be some kind of thought coming out of you, telling you there is something that you are going to have to do.

Though less frequent some of the viewpoints that emerged concern, as one interviewee put it, “compliance with a mandate of protecting the public and saving lives and a sense of allegiance to their reference group or colleagues.” Broadly, the following quote from another interviewee illustrates the value given to responsibility, ethics and justice: “You understand that you have to work for the public good, you have been paid by the taxpayer, it is your responsibility to do your job, do it right and then proceed.”

With regard to the **beliefs** underlying the individual motives to report wrongdoing as these appeared in the responses to the interview, interviewees hold a strong view on upholding the Constitution, and were motivated to report wrongdoing by their loyalty to the principles it expressed, as well as practicing an “ethics mandate, justice and its safeguard, openness and transparency, defending civil rights and the well-being of citizens/clients.” Interviewees also expressed a strong belief in preserving a code of honor and service through “protecting the rules and performing their duty ethically.” For

example, one interviewee stressed the beliefs involved among those federal employees who decide to blow the whistle:

They do it, because they have a belief system, you might call it morals you might not, but it is a belief system that puts the principle of proper spending of tax money first, and proper action to safeguard security of the nation as the first priority. That's why they do it.

Protecting citizens in the form of “caring for, protecting individuals, public safety, preferring loyalty to citizens over loyalty to protecting the agency’s actions, self-sacrifice and heroism” was considered a factor moving these people to report wrongdoing. One interviewee explained that, “personally it was just something I had to do, either quit the job or blow the whistle and save lives, and of course I chose the latter.” Another belief that emerged from the interviewees’ responses was a conviction to principles such as “moral decision making, professional duty to citizens.” In addition, they espoused a desire to change or redress wrongdoing, especially given “the devastating consequences associated with wrongdoing on citizens, the possible impact of individual work on others, the responsible authority recognizing mistakes, and the duty to change the lives of individuals.” Another interviewee talked about how whistleblowers often believe that redressing the observed wrongdoing will lead to organizational change:

They believe that once they get the truth out there, that changes are going to be made, that is the ultimate reason for blowing the whistle, because they really believe that once they get the story out there to the right people, out to the media, that change is what it takes. The thing is whistleblowers are reformers. When someone blows the whistle it is about reforming. It is about making changes. That is the only thing and that is what it was all about for me. It is all about changing the agency.

Interviewees were also asked about what **individual affective factors** would likely discourage the majority of federal workers to report wrongdoing. Most responses



referred to “fear of retaliation or reprisals” as an intervening factor as well as an “evaluation of the magnitude of the impact on the self of reporting on someone else, the organization or the image of the organization.” For example, the following quote illustrates this concern:

Fear, is the primary factor for not reporting. In our case, ... they took it and published it internally [in the agency] so that the whole workforce can see it, and it was used as a way to intimidate, if you talk up that is what we do here, that is what they are doing, they are trying to intimidate people.

In addition lack of knowledge or training on how to identify wrongdoing and deal with it was frequently mentioned as a deterrent to reporting. An interviewee recalled:

There is a lack of knowledge, the legislation is there, most employees are former military, including the supervisors, so they have a tendency to continue to follow the military rules and regulations rather than applying the civil service regulations that they fall under.

It is important to consider individual **personality** because in the view of most interviewees, this factor seems to point towards a difference between selfish (“focused in career survival”) and altruistic (“committed to public service”) motives for blowing the whistle. The former was associated with not reporting, while the latter was seen as a quality or personality attribute of those who chose to report wrongdoing in the federal government. These views on motivations associated with different personalities among federal government workers is illustrated by the following quote:

I think being a whistleblower relates to values. That is what it works down to. If you view your job, as your job in federal government is to advance in your career, then when you see wrongdoing you think in terms of, ok, well I am trying to maintain my career. If you see your job in the federal government based on the mission of your organization, I see my job is to protect the public, so to me that is the key distinction. The people that are blowing the whistle in the federal government, they are doing it because they believe they are on the side of the people. And the people who don’t blow the whistle, they are looking out for their

careers.

The next sub-section refers to the coding results for the responses concerning the organizational work environment, culture and structure that encourage or discourage decisions to blow the whistle in the federal government.

***The organization.*** Table 4.4 (see Appendix at the end of this chapter) shows the descriptive and process codes that emerged from the first and second cycle coding of the section of the questionnaire focused on the organizational factors that may encourage or discourage whistleblowing in the federal government. Process coding in lieu of value coding was used for this section of responses. Process coding is appropriate when searching for “ongoing action/interaction/emotion taken in response to situations, or problems, often with the purpose of reaching a goal or handling a problem” (Corbin and Strauss 2008: 96-7 in Saldaña 2009: 77).

When asked about the work environment, cultural and structural conditions that would encourage or discourage federal employees to report wrongdoing in the federal government, interviewees expressed their perspectives on how related situational, cultural and structural factors encouraged them to blow the whistle. The **organizational working context and culture** that emerged in many of the interviews was one characterized by a threatening environment (aggressiveness), prone to rationalizing, ignoring and silencing wrongdoing (cronyism, favoritism), abusive power dynamics, inclined towards bullying, discrimination and fierce attacks towards whistleblowers (mistreatment, hostility, harassment, treason and conspiracy accusations).

Interviewees identify *abusive power dynamics* within the organization related to silencing whistleblowers while at the same time presenting a public image of being open

to those willing to report wrongdoing. This might create a contradictory work setting for federal employees willing to report wrongdoing. The following quote illustrates the perception of this kind of unsupportive work setting:

Publicly, within the organization, they say that when you see wrongdoing you should report it, they say that you must uphold the Constitution. Unfortunately they are abused, my report was buried, as long as enough corrupt people are around to protect each other in the government, the truth never quite comes out. And that is the problem. The processes are there, so the people running the processes are more eager to go along with their superiors and with colleagues in organizations and investigations, so that it ends up being totally corrupt.

Most of the interviewees mentioned a process of good working relationships that changed after the individual formally reported wrongdoing. These changes point towards a *disrespectful and inflexible work setting* according to interviewees that when faced with whistleblowing awakens an unexpected agency reaction towards the individual employee. The following quote evidences this change in terms of the relationship with the employee's supervisor:

Things started to go sour when I reported and then I had a new supervisor and that started the downtrend even if there was making of some false reports. They would do whatever to discredit you and make you look like you don't know what you are talking about, that is how they defend themselves against whistleblowers they destroy you personally and professionally. They circle the wagons, they protect the guilty and they go after the innocent.

Likewise, interviewees talked about an organizational culture that *discriminates and threatens* individuals and is particular to certain federal agencies. When asked about the existing organizational culture, an interviewee described an agency that is "notorious for its lack of enforcement of civil and human rights," summarizing this setting as a "good old boys culture" operating to enhance cronyism and favoritism. Likewise, the following quote shows how the organizational culture influences the process of blowing

the whistle, in terms of the relationship with colleagues and managers, and the level of threats received as a response to blowing the whistle:

You may be surprised to find out that there was a really good working relationship, a professional relationship between colleagues. We had great respect for each other and shared the same set of values, the Constitution and doing what is right for the American people. That served to keep us psychologically healthy or strong. After the government invaded our homes we were all considered conspirators. They threatened us with indictment and prosecution.

Finally, some interviewees mentioned a *gender effect* of reporting in the work setting that might discourage whistleblowing in relation to the hostile work environment that is triggered when women in particular report wrongdoing. For example, a female interviewee explained it this way:

Well, I think that gender matters. My boss and the rest of my professional colleagues were males. The males reported problems and did not get the kind of hostile action that I did. Their observations were ignored but they were not vanished from doing further work as I was. I think there was a gender discrimination element to it.

This *gender effect* is also evident in the work setting as women tend to be discriminated against on a regular basis within the organization, and this only gets worse once they decide to blow the whistle. The following quote from a female interviewee sheds light on this gender effect in the work environment and in relationships with colleagues and supervisors:

Before I reported wrongdoing my relationship with my colleagues and supervisors was difficult, partly because of the gender issue. I was routinely treated as inferior even though I had better qualifications than other people on staff. My boss referred to another whistleblower as a “traitor” to the agency. We had other female employees who had reported sexual harassment.

The interviews also highlighted several cultural factors, in terms of values and norms within the workplace context that would encourage whistleblowing. First,

interviewees commented on the *contradiction* between *values* written on paper or formally professed by the agencies and the reality of observed and experienced values in the daily life of the organization (formal vs. informal rules). One interviewee explained:

The organization did not make any effort to encourage moral decision-making or even address the subject. They provided gender discrimination training in my career, but I did not see that implemented as intended by those who required it. The agency has its own code of ethics, a fairly prioritized set of considerations. I was shocked to see such a blatant disregard, that they were pushed by political considerations.

Most interviewees pointed to a culture of *normalized wrongdoing* (corruption, waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement) and *systemic abuse of employees* as opposed to what is being prescribed in the code of ethics of agencies. For example, when asked about the organizational values that would encourage whistleblowing within a federal agency, one interviewee recalled:

I came into the organization thinking that I had to superimpose my own values into the organization. Because if you look at it, you are not supposed to lie, cheat or steal, you have a code of ethics, you are supposed to take care of the [citizen/client] you are not supposed to take money, you are supposed to do the right thing. So I was shocked at how they started operating. They were broke, it was the first time in my life that I had experienced personally someone who was not on my side. I could not believe it I thought the agency was there on my side to preserve the employees. They are there to preserve the management system, so it was a lesson.

In line with this described culture of normalized wrongdoing, some interviewees also suggested an existing *dysfunctionality of the people* in the organization. For example, compared the dynamics of such a work culture to a dysfunctional family:

It is a personal dynamic issue. It is like, an analogy of a family, you have a mother, father and children and the structure of the family ideally would be one where there is mutual respect, the family members work together to support each other in various ways in the roles they have. Now, there is nothing wrong with the structure, but the father drinks, the mother verbally abuses the children, and there

you have dysfunction. The structure of the family is not the problem. It is the dynamics of the individuals, the personality of the individuals that creates the dysfunctional family. It is a culture that is acceptable and is encouraged against reporting wrongdoing.

Some interviewees related this dysfunctionality to how people are managed, and a work culture and leadership style that either fosters or hinders whistleblowing. For example, one interviewee explained it this way:

It really goes back to the people again, how the style that a manager uses is critical here, if I set the tone that I am open to suggestions, and open to criticism, and open to things that are kind of ugly, and I want to hear about them, I want to help the organization work through them, I am probably more likely to foster an environment where people are more comfortable. This did not happen in my agency.

Second, interviewees mention *differing cultures at two different levels*. At one level, interviewees referred to clashing cultures interacting within agencies in terms of the application of norms. These are the military culture in opposition to the civilian culture and how each follows different normative prescriptions. From the perspective of interviewees, it seems that when the military norms are employed in a civilian context this triggers a maladaptive work culture. At another level, socialization processes under military values imply a high appreciation given to groupthink and the following of orders in response to a hierarchical line of command, discouraging autonomous moral decision-making. However, this often conflicts with civil service socialization processes that emphasize public service values and bureaucratic discretion as a characteristic of a bureaucratic decision-making culture.

The following quote shows respondents' perceptions of the cultural propensity to think as a group and tolerate cheating as a norm or value within the organization:

You cannot imagine the hours that I have spent wondering what is going wrong in our nation, why is there such willingness to break laws, inside the government. It is the people in management who are allowing the wrongdoing to be done. Why are we culturally cheating so much? That is really perplexing. So it has gotten to such a point with so many people growing up with no strong principles, no conscience, there is a willingness to go along with your superiors, with the group, even if what the group is doing is wrong. Because the human being has a desire to go along with the group.

In relation to the clash between *civilian and military norms and values*, the following quotes capture how group-think operates to silence wrongdoing within organizations rather than encourage reporting. The following quote represents the perceptions of the prevalence of military values that operate to reinforce an esprit de corps to silence wrongdoing as it represents embarrassment to the collective:

All the values are already there, in the uniform. You can pass as many laws as you want for the psychological pressure against whistleblowers is always going to be there. The values [of being in the military] are instilled from the first day. One I will never forget is that you are never compelled to follow an order that you know to be illegal, and illegal would mean an order that would bring harm to the fellow military colleagues or a unit.

For example, another interviewee mentions how the use of a uniform, that characterizes the work culture, operates to allow for wrongdoing to occur and discourages whistleblowing:

In the [agency], when you are wearing a uniform, it is about respect, but for a lot of people, my co-workers, who wear a uniform, it is about power. They had the power to perpetuate wrongdoing. But again, I always thought it is just about respect versus power. It is nothing about power to me.

When asked about how *norms and values* existing in the organization could encourage or discourage whistleblowing, an interviewee pointed out that groupthink impedes knowledge sharing within the organization, discouraging whistleblowing:

The value system of the agency ... I refer to it as the Borg collective. Are you familiar with the Star Trek Series? They all share one brain cell, they all share a synaptic pattern, therefore they can't have an individual thought. Everybody follows that one brain cell that is the management, they get cloned. They are incapable of sharing knowledge. So that is the philosophy of this management, Borg collective. When you get knowledge you keep it and use it to leverage inside, to get to the top positions in the organization.

When referring to **structural conditions** within the federal government that would encourage whistleblowing, interviewees pointed to a structure *allowing for silencing the wrongdoing and keeping secrecy* around disclosed issues. Moreover, interviewees cited how the networked structure operates to allow wrongdoing and manipulation of evidence to discredit and blame whistleblowers, as well as reinforce rather than redress/address agency failures. The following opinion illustrates this point:

Specifically about the [agency], part of its uniqueness is its preponderance, especially the higher you go in the agency, are the [minorities] themselves. There is a lot of discrimination, racial discrimination, between minorities and non minorities, among minorities. They have a close inner network that knows who is being disciplined, who is the problem child, and they can use that to not let you move on, once you are on the [black] list you are going to be known across the board.

Likewise, interviewees talked about how the reporting and bureaucratic structures reinforce a kind of conspiracy against those federal employees who decide to report wrongdoing in the federal government. On the reporting structure, an interviewee states:

It is like the chicken in the hen house. There is no chicken, it does not work, it is not set up to work, it is set up to cover, to placate the wrongdoing and never really address it. There is no obvious concern to solve it.

On the bureaucratic structure, another participant explains:

The federal government is worse, because the bureaucracy has gotten big, and I do not know how many layers there are between myself and my team and the head of the [agency]. There is no way that I can get the information to the top,



because they don't want to deal with these issues. Instead of looking at where the failures were and putting the blame on specific managers and programs, they throw more money, billions and billions of dollars, to reinforce the failure based mentality in the federal government.

Finally, in terms of structure, some interviewees mentioned a conflicting cohabitation of civilian and military power dynamics that manifests itself in conflictive jurisdictions and structures for solving conflicts within agencies. The following quote illustrates this point:

There is a lack of knowledge, most employees are former military, including the supervisors, so they have a tendency to continue to follow the military rules rather than applying civil service regulations that they fall under. The military and civil service structures communicate but don't follow proper procedures. This is really a problem.

The next sub-section discusses the categorization stage of the qualitative data analysis, that is, moving from codes to categories and from categories to themes in the analysis of the interviews.

### **Emerging Themes or Concepts**

According to Saldaña (2009: 139) a theme “is a phrase or sentence identifying a unit of data or what it means. At a minimum it describes and organizes possible observations and at a maximum it interprets aspects of the phenomenon.” From the in-depth reflection on the content of these categories, the key themes surfacing through the qualitative data express participants’ meanings of blowing the whistle in the federal government through a reference to values, attitudes and beliefs concerning the individual motivations (public service work motives) as well as contextual characteristics (people, relationships, culture-norms and values- and structure) recalled to discourage or encourage reporting of wrongdoing in the participants own experiences.

After themeing the data and using pattern coding to infer constructs on the meaning of whistleblowing within and across interviews, the following themes or concepts emerged: intrinsic individual motives, historical and situational influences on intrinsic motives, maladapted work setting and organizational culture, and unsuited responses to reporting and handling of wrongdoing.

**Table 4.5** presents a summary of the identified themes resulting from themeing the data and pattern coding of the interviews that are related to the individual motives associated with whistleblowing as expressed by interviewees.

**Table 4.5** Themes Related to Individual Factors Associated with Whistleblowing

<b>Individual Factors</b>		
<b>Patterns</b>		<b>Themes</b>
Normative aspects of public service	Public service motivation	Intrinsic individual motives
Affective aspects of public service		
Value given to agency goals and activities	Mission valence	
Family values	Family upbringing	Historical and situational influences on intrinsic motives
Observation of the magnitude and fear of the effect of wrongdoing on citizens	Type of wrongdoing	
Focused on performance and maintaining the standards of the profession	Job satisfaction	

### ***Intrinsic individual motives***

Across interviews one of the key emergent themes was that of motives that are intrinsic to an individual and result in an inclination to disclose wrongdoing in the federal government. These include strongly held values of public service, an attitude to follow the rules, and a sense of responsibility of public servants as guardians of the public good.

When comparing perspectives across interviews, recurring topics in the data focused on the ethical behavior of public officials as an important quality defining the type of personality inclined to public service, a commitment to public interest and service as a duty or obligation (normative aspects), and an empathy for the suffering of others (affective aspects). Mission valence as an intrinsic motive also emerged as a theme within some interviews.

In line with this individual motive theme, the analysis of distinctive patterns of values, beliefs and attitudes within and across interviews showed interviewees who experienced reporting wrongdoing tended to emphasize certain *public service motivation* characteristics in their comments on what triggered their reporting decisions.

***Public service motivation as an intrinsic motive.*** The *normative aspect* of public service motivation (Perry 1996) was a pattern of response that surfaced among interviewees in discussions of what moves federal employees to blow the whistle. Interviewees' comments tended to center on how being *committed to public service and civic duty* (oath of office) influenced their decisions to blow the whistle and actually report waste, fraud, mismanagement, or abuse in the federal government.

For example, one interviewee noted that *commitment* to the public interest (citizen/client) came before commitment to superiors (manager/agency). The following quote summarizes this view:

The reason I did that is ... if you go by the code of ethics your patient is not the hospital, your loyalty is to the patient not to the hospital, even though the hospital pays you your salary, you have got to stay with the patient.

Similarly, another interviewee explained that the decision to report wrongdoing was triggered by a “philosophical” determination of choosing between the individual’s *loyalty* to the public over being loyal to the employer, institution, or agency. The following quote illustrates these attitudes of loyalty to the public in relation to the decision to blow the whistle:

Things are not necessarily black and white, they are philosophical. It depends on the institution where your loyalties are, if your loyalties are with the institution versus the public, then you are loyal and you should do whatever it takes to protect the institution. If your loyalties are with the public at large, you do what it takes to protect the interest of the public at large. And that dynamics plays out in public service everyday. No matter what public service it is, whether you are a police officer, a teacher, whether you are in the federal government, in no matter what area, the question is where your loyalties lie. Are your loyalties to protect the institution, the agency you work for ... or your loyalty is to protect the overall good of the country?

On the issue of altruism or expressing a value, attitude and engrained belief towards unselfishly contributing to the common good, an identifiable pattern among interviewees referred to how meaningful *serving the public* is at the moment of reporting wrongdoing. This altruistic dimension of a normative public service motivation pattern shows how whistleblowing is referred to as an outcome of being committed to the public interest. The following quotes illustrate this point:

The people that speak out tend to have more empathy and they are thinking, ... they view their jobs as the public trust and they are trying to the work for the government, ... for the people.

The thing at the top of the list was my responsibility to ensure that [my trainees] were safe ... and then if they were safe and trained then the [citizens] would be. The first motivation was for the love and respect of who I used to be ... I was born at a different time when you had to give up the “me” for the “we.” That is the moral code ... that is the foundation of who you are as a human. I am sure that plays a part in it.

An emergent pattern of *civic duty* and *responsibility* was mentioned as a triggering value in decisions to disclose wrongdoing in the federal government. This responsibility is associated with the civic duty or normative aspect of public service motivation. Such responsibility appears in the sense described by Cooper (2006:6) as an ability “to account for [public servants] conduct to relevant others and the citizenry and justify why specific actions taken resulted in particular consequences.” For example, an interviewee noted:

If you see that someone else is not doing their job, then you have the responsibility to blow the whistle, you have to say something to someone. What happened here is inappropriate and it could have devastating results. I don't think small items, small issues that occur on a regular basis in federal government, it is not a big deal people just look the other way, it is not my concern. But when other issues come out, I can't look the other way, I have to say something to somebody, that is when it reaches the level of blowing the whistle.

In this sense *responsibility* is interpreted among whistleblowers as an inclination to consider it justifiable to report wrongdoing by standing up for “the government and the public trust” and taking actions to stop wrongdoing given their inner convictions “as professional guardians of the public good” (Cooper 2006: 6). The following quotes illustrate this notion:

It was my responsibility to act because anytime that anybody sees something, and you are in a position ... I was the rank instituted supervisor, so it was my responsibility as such, when I come out in that uniform, when I carry my weapon, it means respect, but at the same time it is my job.

I was one of the rare people that decided that the agency had great fault and that it needed to get higher and outside of them for the [citizens/clients] for their literal physical safety and wellbeing.

Referring to the notion of civic duty, participants also consider whistleblowing as fulfilling an *obligation* to their fellow citizens and the country. The following quotes exemplify this:

There are ethical principles by which all federal employees are legally bound, and you know that by law by being federal employees, you are required, it is legally mandated, because you are in a position of public trust that you must report fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement and specific dangers to public health and safety. That is a legal obligation.

I have a very strong moral conviction about people's moral right. So I felt very obligated to act and report.

Likewise, this pattern of civic duty adopts the dimension of *protecting* citizens as looking after the wellbeing of the collectivity of citizens. This feeling of putting civil service principles over private matters as being a function of public servants is expressed in the following quotations:

I thought it was a simple case. When I disclosed I thought this is wrong and it would jeopardize other activities down the line. It was actually that it was wrong then and the impact it would have was going to be devastating. So there is nothing you can do after the fact. You need to stop this now.

It was my job to report the problems. And I believed they were important to public safety, and the potential harm to other people was potentially grave. I felt the duty both to public and to my employer who hired me. I mean the agency who hired me.

In general, interviewees also referred to the *moral commitment* aspect of a normative motivation to protect the public, an obligation to look after others who are less well off and to honor the oath of office. Most participants recorded feeling “that morally and legally” blowing the whistle was “the right thing to do” for protecting citizens’ wellbeing. The following quotes illustrate this idea:

I think I happened to be the *one* that was finally making the moral and willing decision to stand out from people and actually report it. I had seen and decided that the agency just won’t change.

My professional moral duty as a human being, that [citizens/clients] have the right to the most safest environment as possible. And when agencies by virtue of their own corruption and internal problems are unwilling to care for [them] then

someone else needs to know that and make very serious changes.

The civic duty dimension of the normative aspect of public service motivation also evidences an inclination of interviewees to relate reporting of wrongdoing to taking an *oath of office* and feeling emotionally bound to the *duty* and *honor* of upholding such promise. The following quotes demonstrate this point of view:

I am obligated by my oath of office to do something about wrongdoing ... when I took this oath of office, to abide by the Constitution, most people don't even read the Constitution.

When you first enter the service, when you are hired as a federal employee. They give you a Bible, they put your hand on it and you swear that you will uphold the Constitution and protect the country, from the enemy, foreign and domestic.

You only have one name in life and you don't dirty it, you tell the truth and you be honest. If something is not right you need to disclose it.

Another pattern of comments from interviewees placed particular value on *compassion* as an affective aspect of public service motivation (Perry 1996: 10). One evidence of an inherent patriotism as a motive to report wrongdoing is illustrated by the following quote from an interviewee:

After all, we are supposed to take bullets for each other, we are supposed to do the most dangerous work. And I was alone, ... not afraid of speaking out, and in my case ... it was simply, that somebody was making idiotic moves, putting everybody's life in danger. So, me, it just came natural to report the wrongdoing. I'm the guy that runs into the bus to save you. And when you are issued a gun and a badge and have a million dollars in special training, you just don't sit and let your bosses commit wrongdoing with impunity. We are the guys who run into the fire. When everyone is running away, we are running the opposite way.

In a similar sense other interviewees talk about blowing the whistle as a plight for the defenseless citizens/clients as well as the agency's public goal, for example:

For me it was, years of coming and seeing continuously abused [citizens/clients] return to more abuse because of agency dysfunction, and vice, and illegal processes. To me as a [public servant] providing care to [citizens, clients], it was a build up process, where I finally decided it was the right thing to do, and I was willing to take the risk of agency retaliation, or anything else, because I felt, that morally and legally it was the right thing that I needed to do.

When you see something of intellectual importance, of professional importance and power is being abused by somebody on the wrong side, and you see it and have the information and the reference group you want to be ethically associated with you are their representative in that situation. And I guess until you find yourself in that situation --What do I do? Should I say something, or keep quiet?-- you can't really know who you are.

***Mission valence as a personality related intrinsic motive.*** The importance given to the agency's mission appeared as an emergent theme within some interviews.

Participants refer to the value given to the public service mission of the agency as a value of older generations that might constitute a factor encouraging whistleblowing in those employees who prioritize the agency's mission with an altruistic component. When comparing references made to the agency's mission valence as a factor encouraging whistleblowing in the federal government, the interviews suggested the individual principled personality activates a sense of mission that relates to allegiance to the agency's public service oriented goals and activities. Thus, having an inclination to a principled personality would lead to a higher mission valence that would in turn encourage whistleblowing among federal employees.

The agency's mission and goals emerged at times as a theme among interviewees in relation to their decisions to report wrongdoing. For example, when asked about how the value given to an agency's mission might encourage or discourage whistleblowing, an interviewee talked about how a change within the workplace has occurred in terms of how different generations no longer prioritize agency mission and goals:



I see that [lost sense of mission] in the newer, younger generations. It is not a blank statement, there are good people, but it seems to me that there are more people now, a number of people that are just going to work to collect the check and accepting the security of working for the government, than there were fifteen or twenty years ago. And I don't know, I can't explain that, I think it is a generational issue. They were brought up very differently than I was, and I tried to bring up my children to understand what is important.

Likewise, the following response from another interviewee provides an example of a shift in mission valence occurring within public agencies that might discourage the reporting of wrongdoing:

I told a friend, not long ago, we were discussing values and these changed. Twenty years ago if you were working at the [agency], you asked most people in the United States what is the top priority, they would say the mission of the [agency] is to protect lives, what is the second priority, the organization, loyalty to the organization, and what is the third priority, the self, I want to earn a better living, I want to get ahead of my family so that I can provide a better life. Today, those are reversed. Such that self-promotion is the top priority. Number two is the organization because the organization is the one that can help you or hurt you so you must comply. Number three is the mission, protecting the American people. We are now worshiping not the altar of God, whatever your god is, we are worshiping the altar of the almighty dollar.

In search for a clarifying illustration of how federal employees who highly value the agency's mission might be more prone to report wrongdoing, it seems that the pattern related to mission valence refers to a distinction made by interviewees on two different types of federal workers. These types comprise those who highly value the agency's mission (public service goals), and are therefore more inclined to blow the whistle, as opposed to those who disregard the public service goal of the federal agencies, and are less inclined to blow the whistle. The following quote illustrates one interviewee's thoughts on how "mission valence" highlights two different types of motives and reporting result:

To answer that question you need to know that in broad strokes there are two types of federal employees. There are some people that view their career as rising

through the bureaucracy, that their career is their job. And there are others who don't feel that their job is to play the game or whatever to advance through the agencies. They sincerely feel that they are going to do the mission that the job requires.

***Historical and Situational influences on intrinsic individual motives***

Across interviews, another emergent theme referred to certain historical and situational influences on the previously mentioned intrinsic motives that indirectly trigger the decision to report wrongdoing among the interviewed federal employees. The historical influences are related to family values and upbringing, while the situational influences refer to an overall satisfaction with doing the job properly, the type of wrongdoing observed in terms of the intensity of its effects on citizens (human beings). Both historical and situational characteristics seem to indirectly activate a person's moral principles or personal ethics when observing wrongdoing towards blowing the whistle. A comparison of viewpoints on the triggering factors of whistleblowing decisions among whistleblowers suggests an interaction between family upbringing and values pushing individual intrinsic motives. A similar interaction occurs between the evaluation of wrongdoing by the observer in terms of its magnitude and effects on the collective, and the pushing commitment to ethical principles and moral autonomy of the individual who observes and evaluates the wrongdoing. Likewise, interviewees' perceptions of job satisfaction trigger intrinsic motives (normative and affective aspects) leading them to report or not report wrongdoing depending on the circumstances.

***Family upbringing as a historical influence on intrinsic motives.*** Several interviewees evoked family values and upbringing as a pre-decisional factor in their actual whistleblowing cases. This is evidenced on the following narrative:

It goes back to family upbringing, and values that are right. The institutional teaching [high-school, professional training] all the way we were told to protect the law, make sure the law is being followed, spot corruption, and that kind of things. It was actually my life experiences in growing up that gave me the front principle a moral compass, a decision making compass, to know what to do, and the courage to do it. Because I think it takes courage to do it. I do not want to pat myself on the back, but I was able to find the courage. So I think, you have to be raised, or, ...and I do think it is for being raised, and maybe it comes from the family, be willing to go a little bit more, take the extra mile, take the risk of exposing. It used to be in our society that that was rewarded by society, by school, by family and community. If you reported wrongdoing, it was positively rewarded. Today, in some sub-sections of our culture it would be negative to report anything.

When reflecting about family influences on the individuals' decision to actually report wrongdoing in the federal government, one interviewee narrated the following personal story:

I looked at my past ... you could see it coming from way back then, ... I see the influence of both sides of my family, that we do not like tyranny, that we do not like to be told what to do, we don't like to take advantage of people who are weaker, and that if you find those people you have to help them. And that is what I did, ...most of the time I was protected from all that growing up.

***Type of wrongdoing and its effects on citizens as a situational influence on intrinsic motives.*** The type of wrongdoing and its magnitude in terms of the ultimate effect wrongdoing might have on citizens emerged as a pattern of response in discussions of what motivated individuals to blow the whistle. Interviewees considered *how bad* certain situations of waste, fraud and abuse looked like within the agency contradicting their job responsibilities and normative and affective aspects of their work. Thus, the characteristics of what was wrong within the agency triggered their obligation to the oath of office, their commitment to behave as public servants (normative aspect), and their benevolence for those at risk (affective aspect) by blowing the whistle on wrongdoing. One interviewee mentioned “not tolerating anything that is wrong” for being committed

to law enforcement. Likewise, another interviewee considered how the type of wrongdoing would encourage more people to speak out and blow the whistle, especially when wrongdoing is evaluated by the observer as a “matter of life and death.” The following quote further illustrates this point:

I did it because it was an issue that was dangerous, there were a number of things going on that I thought needed to be disclosed because they were about safety. I was a Safety Inspector. When you start jeopardizing safety, I thought there was no choice, I had to disclose.

Thus, in a number of interviews, the type of observed wrongdoing was associated with protecting citizens from certain unethical agency practices that had consequences for citizens. For example, one interviewee finds whistleblowing means reacting towards wrongdoing in line with the normative and affectively expected public service goals. The following quotes show this idea:

I think they finally are fed up with a bad situation, I think that most of the time they see illegal, or immoral things happen or fraud or corruption, and they principally feel someone needs to address it, it is not being addressed, it is been hidden and covered up.

In my case it got to the point where I was being required to allow certain things to happen that I knew were wrong, that could cause ... people being killed because of maintenance that I was required to leave uncorrected.

***Job Satisfaction as a situational influence on intrinsic motives.*** Related to job satisfaction and the importance federal whistleblowers give to their jobs, it is important to mention that none of the interviewees manifested straightforwardly being satisfied with doing their jobs. However, most interviewees seemed highly committed to doing their jobs and also referred to themselves as being interested in maintaining a high level of

performance at their tasks. The following quote shows interviewees' opinion about whistleblowing in relation to being a federal employee:

It has to do with your caring for others, caring for your job, caring for your country, and government. You have to do the job properly, and when you are forced into a position where you have to work in a sub-standard manner, then that begins to reflect on everyone involved. I want to put the best quality product I can.

Some of them manifested having received awards as employees for their performance, being considered *star* performers by the agency. And others recalled enjoying their job prior to blowing the whistle on wrongdoing. The following quote illustrates this feeling:

I had a very good working relationship with my supervisor. We both respected each other's talents and abilities. I was comfortable with the job I did. I was comfortable working for the supervisor I was assigned to.

**Table 4.6** presents a summary of the identified themes resulting from themeing the data and pattern coding of the interviews that are related to the organizational factors associated with whistleblowing as expressed by interviewees.

**Table 4.6** Themes Related to Organizational Factors Associated with Whistleblowing

<b>Organizational Factors</b>		
<b>Patterns</b>		<b>Themes</b>
Disrespectful and closed work setting (disrespect, silencing, ignoring wrongdoing, closeness, punishing reporting)	Prevalence of unethical (disruptive) values and norms	Maladapted work setting and organizational culture
Uncooperative and inflexible work setting (no information sharing, inflexible response to change, manipulating individuals' performance appraisals)		
Unfair treatment (career suicide, fabrication of evidence, harassment, fluctuating job assignments)	Unjust actions towards the people in the organization	
Distrustful supervisor (unfair performance assessment, unfair and unjustified disciplining, lack of integrity, favoritism, isolation from reporting channels, stigmatization of whistleblowers, normalization of wrongdoing)	Unsupportive hierarchy and power dynamics within the immediate work setting	
Reprisals and retaliation effects on whistleblowers	Effects of observing and reporting wrongdoing	Unsuited responses to reporting and handling of wrongdoing
Personal consequences of whistleblowing		
Effect of whistleblowing on the internal agency functioning		

### ***Maladapted work setting and organizational culture***

The analysis of distinctive patterns of values, beliefs and attitudes within and across interviews revealed interviewees who experienced reporting wrongdoing tended to emphasize the existence of *maladapted work setting and organizational culture* in their responses to what organizational characteristics triggered their reporting decisions. This unsuited work setting and organizational culture was interpreted by interviewees as typically related to the discouragement of whistleblowing in the federal government. The pattern of this recurrent topic includes the following strongly held values of the work

setting and organizational culture more likely to discourage whistleblowing: a disrespectful and closed, uncooperative and inflexible work setting, an unfair treatment of the people within the agency and distrustful relationships within the agency given the unsupportive hierarchy and unethical power dynamics operating between employees and supervisors.

When comparing perspectives across interviews, the following topics prevailed in the data that are related to the existence of an unethical work environment, culture and structure as elements in deciding whether to blow the whistle or not in the federal government. First, an emergent topic refers to the prevalence of a *disrespectful and closed work environment* where silencing and ignoring of wrongdoing occurs within the work environment and the punishing of whistleblowers is prevalent. A comparison of viewpoints on the triggering factors of whistleblowing decisions in relation to the situational context suggests an unethical workplace linked to actions of ignoring the wrongdoing and mistreating the whistleblowers. These seem to be pre-existent to the whistleblowing outcome, though at times intensified after reporting occurs.

Second, another emergent topic related to the existence of an *uncooperative and inflexible work setting* was the identification by interviewees of a chronic lack of information sharing, inflexible responses to organizational change, and a culture resistant to a collective solution to waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement of the agency. When comparing interviewee responses to the processes emerging from group interactions within the work environment, the actions referenced acknowledge an individualistic group dynamic for addressing or redressing wrongdoing in the context of the federal

government. Both topics signaled the prevalence of unethical values and norms in the federal government.

Third, and related to an identified pattern of response –*unjust actions towards people* –what surfaced in many of the interviews was the unfair treatment of whistleblowers, often seen as an expression of the preexisting culture of cronyism, favoritism, etc. Such unfair treatment is described through actions representing abuse, manipulation of performance appraisals, disciplining, fluctuating job assignments, discrimination, bullying, mistreatment, etc. on behalf of the agency authorities (supervisors, managers, etc.).

Finally, when exploring the relationship between whistleblowers, colleagues and supervisors across interviews, a recurrent pattern of response –*unsupportive hierarchy and power dynamics* –manifested a general distrust towards the agency hierarchy and power relationship with supervisors and managers. Interviewees mentioned receiving unfair performance assessments and unfair and unjustified disciplining, and being ignored each time they were signaling wrongdoing, by supervisors and managers. Thus, interviewees felt supervisors were unsupportive in their responses to employees particularly to those signaling wrongdoing within the agency while repeatedly ignoring wrongdoing. These perceptions contributed to generating among interviewees the feeling of a distrustful supervisor lacking integrity and prone to favoritism. This image of a distrustful supervisor recurred as a pattern of response identified by interviewees as discouraging whistleblowing.

***Unethical Work Environment and Culture as organizational triggering factors.***

The influence of the perceived ***work environment*** on the likelihood of federal employees’



formal disclosures of wrongdoing (whistleblowing) was a pattern of response that surfaced among interviewees in discussions about what characteristics of the work environment (organizational activities and goals, relationships with co-workers, supervisors, and managers) would encourage federal employees to blow the whistle. Interviewees' comments tended to center around a negative response to perceiving the work environment as encouraging whistleblowing. Overall, participants agreed the existing organizational work environment is more likely to discourage whistleblowing in the federal government.

In line with this, interviewees relate their whistleblowing decisions to an *unethical work environment* evident in the work setting and intensified once the individual spotted wrongdoing in the agency. This unethical context is described as work settings where authorities ignore illegal activities and pursue selfish goals, and observers of wrongdoing receive reprisals from supervisors and managers and are often ignored by colleagues. Though this characterization of the work environment emerges sometimes as an organizational factor pre-existing the whistleblowing cases of federal employees, at other times it appears it is intensified after the whistleblowing case occurs. This means some interviewees acknowledge a work environment where illegal activities and goals are pursued systematically over a period of time and where there seems to be a good relationship between co-workers and the subsequent chain of command prior to their whistleblowing. While other interviewees suggest their observation of wrongdoing and actual whistleblowing over a period of time uncovered an unethical work setting where illegal activities and goals are silenced, covered-up by the organization, or ignored in a way that they are taken as normal and where their co-workers and the subsequent chain

of command responded with reprisal contrary to the whistleblowers' expectation. For example, the following quote evidences the unethical characteristics of the work setting prior to the actual whistleblowing, evidencing a pre-existent *lack of integrity* in the agency activities and goals:

The other directors, my colleagues, were concerned, thought about it, that I probably would face very serious consequences from the agency. They also said that the problems that I was documenting in my location were the same or similar problems that they had. So that they were not surprised about the level of dysfunction in child abuse, child sexual abuse, how it was epidemic and a public health hazard, the same way that I was documenting in my [location], they all thought that it probably needed to be done. They also informed me in their own different way they probably won't be writing a document like mine or won't bring it forward for fear of losing their job. They knew the agency was vindictive they could not really successfully bring this kind of information forward. They were glad that I did but also very fearful. They were all afraid saying they themselves will never do that at their [locations].

Likewise, the following quote shows how the work environment was viewed as *politically corrupt, unsupportive and unfriendly*, and *hostile* towards whistleblowers on a day-to-day basis:

The environment in terms of your co-workers, and supervisors and all the working structure wasn't very supportive. There were some attempts, there was an attempt by one management person to get to the bottom of everything and get my co-workers to stop mistreating me and get other management to get in line and to do something about what I was reporting but she was fired. And, so when she was fired I really had no protection. You have to understand that the agency, we are talking about is one of the largest cabinet level agencies of the federal government, the largest grant making agency in the federal government, and it is a very unfriendly place if you are a whistleblower. And there are many, many cases. And it is a horrible place. It is politically corrupt, and very very susceptible to political influence and it is not all federal agencies. And there isn't a single federal agency that I can tell you ... has a lot of happy employees. But the federal government is not good when it comes to protecting their own.

Regarding a shift in work environment characteristics given the whistleblowing event, the following quote evidences how work setting conditions *change* once the federal employee blows the whistle. Thus, interviewees describe how an unethical work

setting prevails even after they blow the whistle in the espoused values and norms of the organization in the form of *retaliation through isolation*. Thus, rather than managing wrongdoing once it is exposed, the organization responds by reacting even more unethically through isolating whistleblowers and intimidating the rest of the employees, *setting an example* for those who intend to blow the whistle in the future. Whistleblowing cases are used for silencing or ignoring the existing wrongdoing within the agency, and reducing the likelihood of any future whistleblowing case. As described by one interviewee, there is a threat posed to colleagues resulting in tightened relationships among employees and questioning of loyalty:

Everybody who was below the management level supported me. But very few would say that vocally other than very privately, because they knew that if they said it louder that they would be associated to a pariah and their loyalty would be questioned. For my colleagues to support me would have jeopardized themselves. And so I did not ask for that and they did not do it. As the punishment grew, my colleagues became more intimidated to speak out. For the most part, everyone around me, even in close proximity always expressed support. There was nothing they could do themselves. All that is human nature, there is no other way to describe it.

Likewise, interviewees consider *lack of ethics* in the work environment in relation to the context of *organizational goals and activities*. Participants understood the work environment as discouraging whistleblowing in that authorities continuously and systematically either ignored the wrongdoing (illegal activities) or pursued selfish goals. This means that for interviewees the daily context of goals and activities performed within the organization was disrupted by the occurrence of wrongdoing in the sense that it was contrary to the ethical functioning of public organizations. Thus, another pattern that surfaced across interviews in terms of the work environment characteristics that would discourage whistleblowing relates to the *disrespectful/closed, uncooperative/*

*inflexible context of activities and goals* of the organization. For example, the following citations reflect this pattern:

There was no flexibility. I had to go outside of the office and the wrongdoings themselves were awesome enough. Because some of the people that were guilty of these things were very much management favored. And the situation still existed even after I did the whistleblowing they never changed anything, they did not address it. My supposition that they would not do anything was accurate. It is going to get covered up. Thinking that I would get results at a higher level was a mistake on my part. It just does not happen. They circle the wagon, they protect the guilty and they go after the innocent.

There was a very hostile work environment. I walked in everyday and there was something. Before I reported they were going over papers in my office and destroying documentation. Before all of this happened, because I was disciplining, I was being a manager, I was telling people, this is the proper way to do this, if you have another way to do it I am more than interested in listening to you, I have an open door policy. But they were aggressive towards management. Moreover, they were conducting illegal activities to the amount of millions of dollars, and I am not joking. I had records proving millions and millions of dollars in fraud. I never met an employee that I had worked with within that group that was honest.

In some cases the lack of ethics in organizational goals and activities got to the point of *expecting employee compliance* with wrongdoing. This expectation of blind loyalty towards the organization often triggered in the federal employee the decision to blow the whistle given that such type of loyalty meant going against their goals and activities of public service and their ethical principles as civil servants. One interviewee finds being pushed towards compliance with wrongdoing an unethical work setting characteristic influencing the decision to blow the whistle as evidenced in the following quotation:

With me, you know, you observe this for a very long time until, you get involved with this personally and you have to choose but this is my situation, this is not true with everybody who blows the whistle. You choose if you are going to push it off or if you are going to accept it. For me, they wanted me to do something that was wrong, they wanted me to extend the contract that was illegal. And if I put my signature, my name, then I would have been personally responsible for the

wrongdoing action, so rather than sign it I prepared all the work and told them I preferred not to sign it. And that was the trigger for me, but you know, they have been doing corrupt things for years, I observed it for years before that.

The influence of the perceived *culture of values and norms* on the likelihood of federal employees' formal disclosures of wrongdoing (whistleblowing) was a theme that emerged among interviewees in discussions about what characteristics of the organizational culture would encourage federal employees to blow the whistle. Interviewees' comments tended to center around a negative response to perceiving the existing culture of values and norms of the organization as discouraging whistleblowing. Overall, participants agree the norms and values prevalent in the organization are more likely to discourage whistleblowing in the federal government. This discouragement is related to what interviewees observe as a persistent *network of influences holding unethical values and norms* and operating against those willing to report wrongdoing and comply with public service.

Yes, you report to the wrong guy and his network turns around to destroy you, to discredit you. There is a lot more wrongdoing that is going on. And people are more likely to look the other way because definitely you don't want to be the one to stick your head out, because there is this culture... the reason that stops you.

Likewise, interviewees think of the norms and values of the organization as having historically evolved from a history of uncivil relationships within government agencies that followed corrupt networking patterns to perpetuate power. This *ill-conceived networking history* helped reproduce a culture of favoritism, lack of integrity, closeness and unfair treatment within the organization that activates whistleblowing intentions. The following quote expresses the pattern of values and norms that persist in the federal government according to one interviewee:

Because of the relationship that the agency has to have with county officials and because of the history in America, it goes back to at least 30 years ago, they tried to fight that up, but during that period, the good old boys run a mob so to speak, and what happened is that even when you get political, the bureaucrats are still there, the bureaucracy is the same even when political leadership changes. The agency is notorious for its lack of enforcement of civil and human rights. The structure is what we talk about when we say good old boys culture, where a lot of the people in the agency were friends with the administrators and the regulators at the agency. So it is a very powerful organization. There is this network within the bureaucracy, where these people say “I scratch your back, you’ll scratch my back.” This agency happens to have one of the worse cultures in the federal government.

Another pattern that emerged in the interviews relates to the *contradiction between a written and unwritten culture of values and norms*. Participants manifest being caught in this contradiction when deciding whether to blow the whistle or not. The following quotes express this contradiction:

The agency has a code of ethics and a code of conduct, and they hold typically the lower level employees to this, like when you travel on government expense, there is a whole rule book to make sure that you don’t abuse the government. So on paper, there is a lot of things, like training, but it doesn’t particularly work at the higher level, it does not mean anything, they are obligated to go to these courses of ethics but it is all a joke.

In this sense, the contradicting meaning of values and norms becomes a factor of ethical resistance (Glazer and Glazer 1989) for federal employees. The following quote illustrates how an interviewee makes sense of *whistleblowing as resisting the existing set of unethical values and norms* in the organization through deciding to go outside of this cultural contradiction:

I think the federal government, most of these large agencies, are invested to keep their own business going, so their own internal view, what is wrong or right and their own unwritten culture, what you can say and not say is very clear and firm most of the time. And when you decide to go outside of that, I think you are forever outside of that.

Related to how interviewees give meaning to the organizational culture in relation to whistleblowing decisions, a pattern that emerged in the interviews relates to the *normalization of an unethical culture of values and norms*. Participants manifest observing a process where an unethical culture of values and norms is perpetuated and operates against their intent to transform the culture through blowing the whistle. For example, the following quote expresses in what ways have these unprincipled values being *normalized*:

Every agency has the policy that if you see wrongdoing you are supposed to report it, [the see something say something policy], they have that on paper, but the reality is that people are definitely afraid to report wrongdoing including waste, fraud and stuff like that because of the fear of retaliation. Most likely from the very same manager that you are reporting, he has the authority to come back to you and retaliate against you, the whole system is corrupt, it simply does not work, it is designed to perpetuate itself, and the people up the chain of command are there to play this bureaucratic game, they do not threaten the system and they do not threaten the entire bureaucracy. The agency actually had the policy on the books that the managers would be fired if they engaged in retaliation, but there is no mechanism in the agency to even have the agency investigate. The whole thing is a joke. It is a corrupt joke costing taxpayers money, that has been wasted and in my case not only wasted but a lot of people died.

Across interviews, there is a persistent reference to the existence of a maladapted set of values and norms (culture) in the federal government. Most interviewees consider the organization is prone to *override public service values*. The following quotation shows this pattern:

They don't encourage you to report wrongdoing, they discourage you to report wrongdoing. [The organization in itself is not loyal to its own values.] It is nothing but words.

This means, interviewees see the agency as following a set of values and norms that contradict what is expected from public organizations, valuing the public over the self to the extreme of committing illegal actions towards federal employees. In this sense,

interviewees consider that through persistently devaluing employees, silencing the wrongdoing and unfairly disciplining or turning against the whistleblower, the organization overrides the maintenance of public service values, discouraging whistleblowing. The following quote describes this meaning:

There is an agency and its regions. The culture was -different in all regions. And I always referred to them as independently owned and managed franchises. I was shocked about the culture, about what the managers said because they are notorious, that they were going to tear me apart, “because you know what you are doing.” When you are with resistance people, or inexperienced people, or people that are there for the wrong reasons, or people that are in power because it is all predicated on fear, no amount of explanation will ever make them understand. When I reported there was a culture of cronyism and retaliation and bullying.

Overall, in terms of work environment and culture factors discouraging whistleblowing, interviewees mentioned the prevalence of an unethical work environment and a set of values and norms that contradict the expected role of the federal government. Most interviewees characterized this unethical work context and culture as being disrespectful and closed, uncooperative and inflexible towards federal employees, either actual or potential whistleblowers. In line with this pattern, a disrespectful and closed work environment is described as a setting where there is disrespect towards the whistleblower in the form of silencing and ignoring the wrongdoing, and punishment and isolation of the whistleblower. Interviewees described an uncooperative and inflexible work culture where there is no information sharing, and inflexible responses to changes oriented to redressing wrongdoing persist, operating to discourage the whistleblowing process among federal employees.

***Unjust actions towards the people in the organization.*** Related to the existence of a maladapted work setting and culture, interviewees gave meaning to the prevalence of unjust actions towards people in the organization. Across interviews, these unjust actions



were understood as actions where retaliation adopts an unethical response by the organization that engages in blaming the employee for the wrongdoing rather than redressing the wrongdoing. The following quote illustrates this point:

I was the one causing the problem. They said that I abused the authority of a manager by terminating those three employees. This is the kind of corruption. I found out through my internal contacts that this was going on behind my back, they were planning and plotting against me. These people are destructive, disruptive, the union does not follow their own rules, and here is my ultimate question. I reported a discrepancy, I did not terminate the employee. They blamed me for wrongful termination of those employees. Even though they were terminated correctly.

This means, the agency engages in a process against the whistleblower that involves an unfair treatment by the fabricating evidence against the employee and punishing the whistleblower for signaling and reporting wrongdoing, and devaluing ethical behavior when it occurs. Thus, such retaliation criminalizes the whistleblowing case and operates to discourage future whistleblowing attempts by other federal employees. For example, the following quote describes this process:

They retaliated, they wrote it all down and said yes, and the next thing you know is that you are no longer an outstanding employee, all of a sudden you should do nothing right and they develop a paper trail to fire you. And that is what all of the federal agencies do when you report the wrongdoing. Well with me what they did was that the things that were good they no longer considered, the things that were at one point of value, now they become something that is not a value.

In line with this notion of rendering the whistleblowing case or the whistleblower as no longer legitimate within the agency through the fabrication of evidence (manipulation of performance appraisals) against federal employees who report wrongdoing, one interviewee describes the following process:

I was an honored guest at an office luncheon and was presented with the second highest award in the agency for “my accomplishments.” Then they had the emergency situation. They came in and asked for my documentation and wanted copies of this. Then the manager realized that I had told them what I had been

trying to tell the region for 3.5 years. I was a star performer, [then the emergency situation happened] they later called me in with the labor relations manager for a meeting, they called me a poor performer, they spitted on me, they yelled at me, they told me that if I continued to do my job they would terminate me, they would deny me a union representative being called into the meeting, they told me I needed to meet with my supervisor every Friday. Every day they would call me and asked me what I had done that day. And they methodically were taking me apart. I finally crawled out of my office and that is the last day I ever worked. By the time I got to the psychiatrists office I was diagnosed with a severe emotional injury because I had been so beaten up for my technical ability, when I asked for examples of my poor performance, the director screamed at me “we don’t have to give you examples of your poor performance, if there is a perception of your poor performance that is all we need. If you continue to communicate with the client you will be terminated, if you continue to do any job activity without approval, you will be terminated. You are going to be placed on an employee counsel moratorium that will last for 6 days, 6 weeks, 6 months or 6 years.” And that program did not exist. So what they did is tear me apart with such retaliation, there is no program of counsel moratorium. That event put me in the psychiatrist and I have a pending case on harassment now.

Likewise, another interviewee refers to the criminalization of whistleblowing, which in the mind of the whistleblower means conveying with ethical standards, and compares whistleblowing to other forms of criminality within the agency that go unpunished and are considered legitimate. The following quotation shows how evidence is fabricated to render whistleblowing illegitimate through the prevalence of a maladapted organizational culture in terms of the exercise of unjust and unfair actions towards the people in the organization:

When people say you can’t fire a federal employee, that is a joke. They would, I mean in my own instance, when we did the discovery for my case, they happened to get some documents of an employee who probably for years sat and watched pornography all day on in his computer for years. And, you know he was simply allowed to transfer to another federal agency. Well that’s a crime. But he was treated much better than I was. And, you know, I never prior to my whistleblowing had a single negative thing in my personnel file. But what agencies would do, is you can have a perfect track record for years and then when you are trying to identify some serious wrong, and very serious danger to public health and safety, well you know, it is a culture, it is a mentality. There are books and manuals, personnel manuals that they have written about what to do with a whistleblower and a big part of it is to suddenly you know pressure co-workers

and people to complaint about the whistleblower and, start writing a series of not good performance reviews and letters of counseling or reprimand, so that they can build a case to fire an employee.

***Unsupportive hierarchy and ill-conceived power dynamics as an organizational triggering factor.*** In terms of the relationships with *colleagues, supervisors and managers* interviewees consider both an unsupportive structure and ill-conceived power dynamics prevail within organizations reinforcing the existence of a maladapted work setting and culture of values and norms in the federal government. Thus, the structure of relationships between the people in the organization is considered *hostile* to those employees signaling wrongdoing. According to interviewees, supervisors and managers often ignore claims of those who observe wrongdoing. In this sense, interviewees feel they are being avoided over time to perpetuate an existing hostile work culture where cronyism, bullying and resistance to change persist and are allowed by supervisors. For example, the following quotation illustrates the meaning an interviewee gives to the relationship with the supervisor in relation to whistleblowing:

Nobody blamed me, they ignored me for 3.5 years. It is interesting even for me even to look back and think everybody, and everybody in my chain in command, did not choose to understand, did not have the knowledge to understand, that is frightening, the first in command, the supervisor, then the second in charge, 4 different levels of management. So they ignored me for 2 reasons: because they were [favoring the wrongdoing], and because they had been working on this regulatory certificate for 2 years before I got there which was part of the problem. Real people would have been saying thank you so much we are going to fix it but they smuggled me so that they wouldn't be found out.

Thus, when asked about whether they would consider a trustful supervisor as a factor influencing their actual whistleblowing decision, most interviewees refer to *unsupportive reactions by supervisors* in discussions with managers or in not listening to employees concerns. The following example shows this pattern:

But in the situations where I had been where the supervisor tended to be temperamental, authoritative, saying this was the way, was not able to listen, did not have good management skills then the likelihood of reporting was tight, because the culture with somebody who is not creating an environment where people feel, kind of fuzzy stuff, you have to bond with people, affirm their humanity and skills, find the ways they can grow. It is not an easy task being a manager but at the same time it is totally up to the managers to encourage transparency and creating a positive work culture, respect.

Moreover, interviewees tended to express distrust towards supervisors for their unfair and unjustified disciplining against them, as well as their integrity, and proneness to favoritism in relation to the daily organizational processes. The following example describes this process:

Well, initially when you have a good relationship with the supervisor you can take anything to the supervisor and, they would act upon it. Over a period, I noticed that they were no longer acting, that the problems I was showing to them, that that needed to be worked on. They started treating me as an inconvenience rather than a valued employee. And it got to the point where I could bring something I knew was wrong and I got no answer back. And that was the first indication that something is wrong. When no one answers the question. They started lowering my appraisals and ignoring what I was bringing to their attention, ignoring me.

For example, supervisors are described as responsible for being involved in retaliation towards whistleblowers promoting a distrustful work environment and maintaining an unsupportive hierarchy for reporting wrongdoing in the federal government:

You know they are not my peers, they begin to accuse you of being mentally unstable, you know they start shifting you around, transferring you, the big thing that they normally do is reassign your work. They will take the meaningful work from you and start giving you menial work and then begin to say that that work is not adequate. So for example, the supervisor she wanted me to do clerical work and then when I would make changes to the clerical work, she would change it again and say you did not change it right. Just harassing kind of thing, that is normally what they do, most of the time they will take away all your work and make you sit in the corner and do nothing. Or they would relocate you, which is what they did to one friend of mine into an unsafe location. For instance in a room full of asbestos, one person I know they put her in a room and turned her desk downwards so that she could do no work, you know it is typical torture, they will

put you in a room, which is either too cold or too hot or difficult to breath in, they have various tactics.

In line with the existence of an unsupportive hierarchy, another emerging pattern suggests the hierarchical *structure* across federal agencies operates to discourage whistleblowing through *promoting groupthink or unitary relationships* as well as individualism and selfishness of supervisors. For example, the following quotations illustrate this point:

That was the whole thing about the Borg collective, they wanted to strictly follow the structure that existed and you were supposed to report the knowledge or what you discovered up the line, your line in that structure so that they could get credit all the way up, you see. That permeates everything they did. [The structure would not encourage you to report].

My opinion of my supervisor was that he protected his job and he protected his job by keeping the people above him happy, and keeping what he did as obscure as possible. The Head of my agency had no idea of what my Office did. He made no efforts to educate himself. There seemed to be a set of fiefdoms. As long as the fiefdom was not creating any problem in terms of the organization of the law, they could do anything.

Interviewed federal employees were asked about whether they considered the existing *power dynamics* to encourage whistleblowing in the federal government. One of the patterns that surfaced across responses relates to how the *power dynamics* operates to discourage whistleblowing through promoting a structure where there is lack of knowledge on the reporting channels and lack of communication of the information on the reporting procedures. As one interviewee explained:

They used us as examples of what would happen to you. So in that sense I don't care what channels they have, the control of the population inside the building is far more dictatorial, far more fearsome.

Another interviewee refers to the power dynamics inherent in the *group socialization processes* that operates as a pressure to silence whistleblowing within the

agency as it represents a threat to the unity of the collective and embarrassment. The following quotation exemplifies this point:

It is extremely strong, power discourages any sort of reporting that could embarrass a fellow [colleague], the organization, everything should be handled within. [And you are socialized to this in your professional life], you learn the value of unit cohesion, you learn the value of loyalty from the very beginning. And that is how the whole organization functions it is good order and discipline, so you are brought up in that culture you learn it in the classroom and you practice it everyday. There is a tremendous peer pressure.

***Unsuited (non-adaptive) responses to reporting and handling of wrongdoing***

Federal employees were asked about their opinions on the responses of their reporting as well as how the agency handled their reactions towards the whistleblower and the wrongdoing. An emergent pattern within and across interviews relates these opinions to the devastating effects of observing and reporting wrongdoing within the federal government. Topics mentioned by interviewees include actions of reprisals and retaliation towards whistleblowers and a description of the devastating effects of these on the individual as well as on the internal agency functioning. Most interviewees mentioned how the reporting of wrongdoing in the federal government affected them personally, their morality and feelings as well as their place in the context of the organization and society at large. Also, most interviewees referred to how whistleblowing demonstrates the fact that federal employees can get fired for working in the federal government while trying to prevent harm. Likewise interviewees stressed how observing and reporting wrongdoing has changed their “molecular structure” and functioning among other people and even within society.

***Unexpected reaction from the agency as discouraging whistleblowing.*** Most interviewees recognized unexpected responses towards themselves in terms of

experienced retaliation and reprisals for blowing the whistle, as well as in the handling of the wrongdoing by either ignoring the wrongdoing or blaming the whistleblower for the reported wrongdoing. In the view of interviewees this unexpected reactions from the organization represent organizational strategies operating to discourage whistleblowing in the federal government. This *unresponsiveness strategy* towards the wrongdoing is clarified by the following quote:

My expectation was that if higher headquarters, other federal agencies were involved, that I was hoping that there would be an internal investigation, or even potential for federal charges brought on people. In the agency, I was reprimanded, threatened, administratively disciplined, removed from my position, transferred to another location, restricted from all electronic communications and from doing my job [seeing clients]. Almost until this day they have not responded to the content of my whistleblowing. They have not talked about the dysfunction, or illegal activities. The agency has clearly retaliated in a very concerted effort, trying basically to make sure that I would not have a job in the agency again and try to force me out of the agency.

Another unexpected organizational response towards the reporting and handling wrongdoing is what interviewees called the covering-up of wrongdoing. The following quote illustrates this notion:

They covered it up. They did not do anything. I got a letter back saying they investigated and did not find anything. That is typical government, “we are not doing this.” It is very difficult for the government to admit wrong. The wrongdoing was pushed under the rug and then there was their effort to encourage me to move on. I was not a favorite employee after that. Even though I had the highest work load in the office.

However, most interviewees expressed that by *ignoring* the wrongdoing and the whistleblowing, the organization triggered in some interviewees the reporting of wrongdoing. This unexpected response to the signaling of the wrongdoing by the whistleblower seems to reinforce the whistleblowers’ intentions of getting the job done

and trying to fix the situation through blowing the whistle. The following quote illustrates this point:

The response was to ignore but more so to cover it up and by preserving the status quo that would effectively cover up what happened. So as soon as that happened I received formal counseling about the terrible things I was doing. Then I realized, we still have a problem, nothing is being fixed. But of course I was “persona non grata” everyone knew who had done it. The most offensive thing I had done is that I associated bureaucratic behavior with the lost lives, which was the truth and that was the truth that I intended to present. Within hours of my sending out the draft presentation my supervisor was approached by many other throughout the agency, and they said, you have to order him to seize and desist and destroy this presentation, it can never be shown. And the supervisor told me I was not allowed to give that presentation and that I should destroy it.

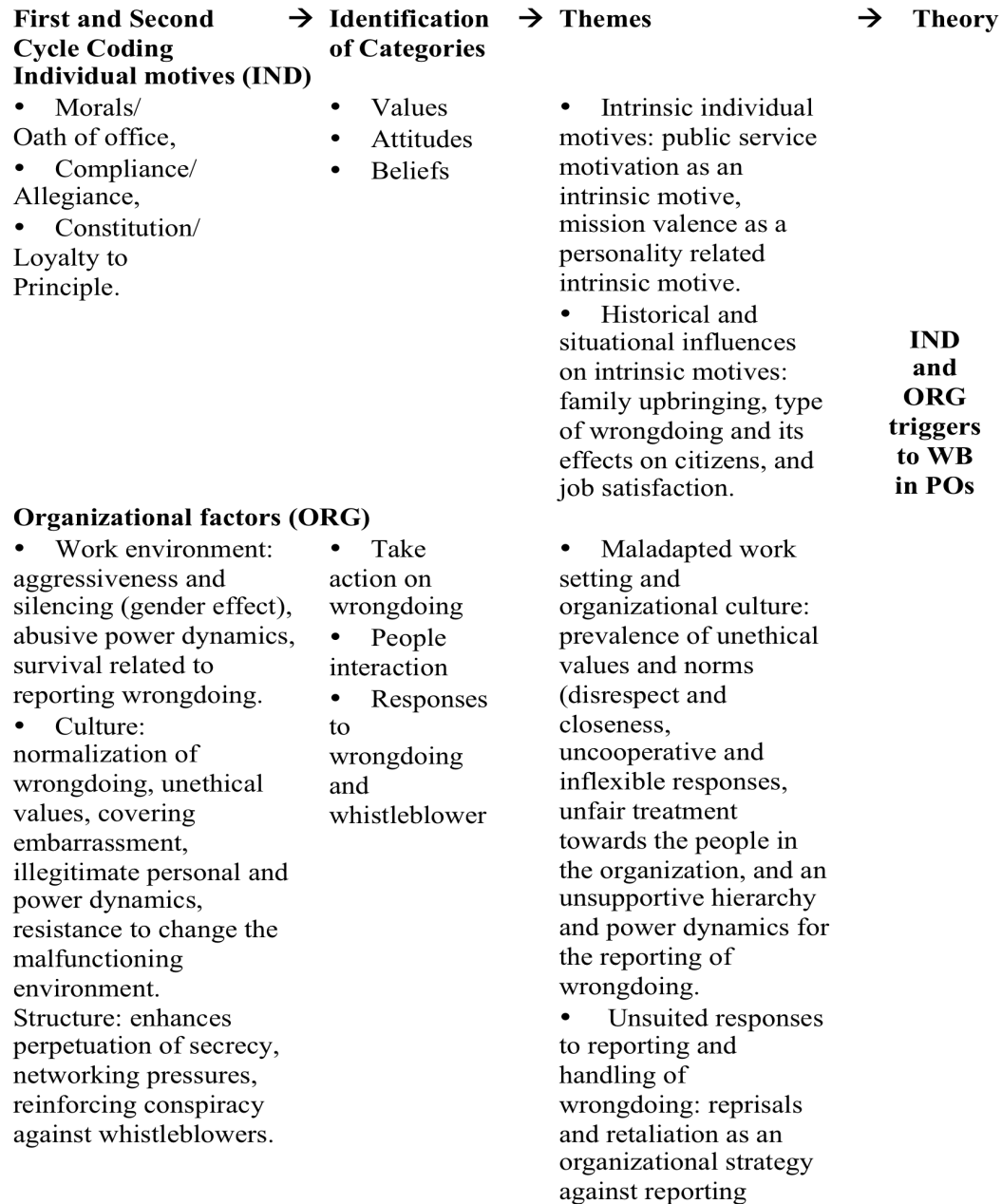
The next section discusses the main findings from the qualitative data analysis summarizing and suggesting explanations for the patterns that emerged from the analysis of verbal interview data.

### **Discussion and Implications**

The findings on this chapter suggest that the likelihood of an employee reporting wrongdoing in the federal government is related to a complex combination of personal and situational characteristics. This sub-section discusses the findings from the qualitative data analysis and draws some implications for further research. The expectation is that these findings will help broaden the results of the quantitative analysis as well as suggest future lines for theory development and testing.

**Figure 4.2** presents a summary of the findings from the 18 in-depth interviews of federal whistleblowers.



**Figure 4.2** Summary of Qualitative Data Analysis

As the figure suggests, there seems to be no unique factor that predominately encourages or discourages whistleblowing in the federal government but rather an interweaving of individual and contextual conditions operating across cases. The analysis of the in-depth interviews of federal whistleblowers suggests a combination of individual

and organizational context factors are involved in deciding whether to blow the whistle or not. It seems that this combination is not unilaterally driven and is contingent upon types of individuals, types of wrongdoings, and agency contexts. However, several themes surfaced that are common within and across interviewees as will be discussed next.

Overall results show a strong pattern of federal employees recalling normative and affective aspects of public service motivation as intrinsic individual factors moving their decision to blow the whistle in the federal government. First, the finding that public service motivation plays an important role in whistleblowing in the federal government is in line with what Alford (2001: 40) calls the “choiceless choice” narrative. Alford (2001: 42) refers to the “narrative of choiceless choice” manifested in the explanation of whistleblowing as an inescapable surrendering to principle. For interviewees, being motivated to blow the whistle means being loyal to principles and oath of office as an intrinsic individual characteristic, and choosing to report wrongdoing given the inner normative and affective impulses towards complying with the mandate of public service.

Second, when asked about what motivated them to blow the whistle, most interviewees explained their choice in terms of preserving the ethics of public service. This resonates with Alford’s (2001: 64) observation that “whistleblowers believe they have acted ethically in an objective sense.” According to Alford (2001) this ethical behavior is expressed in different stories that reveal the following narratives: an imagination for consequences, a sense of historical moment, identification with the victim, and having a sense of shame. Alford (2006: 63) considers how all of these narratives help explain why whistleblowers report wrongdoing and build into a “whistleblower ethics.” Likewise, the interviews reveal this “whistleblower ethics”

operates as a motive that increases the likelihood of someone reporting wrongdoing in the federal government. This ethic relates to an empathic connection with the consequences of wrongdoing (voice is more important than silence), an identification with the victims of wrongdoing over the agency or authority, and a felt obligation to reporting wrongdoing rooted in their own ethical sensibility. So, in line with previous studies based on whistleblower narratives, this study finds that when deciding whether or not to report wrongdoing, whistleblowers are concerned with meeting their standards of righteousness that are close to the ideal standards of public service (Alford 2001).

The interview findings imply that individual motives relate to a normative and affective relationship of individuals to public service and to an increased likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government. However, further analysis is needed to understand the personal motives at stake when deciding to blow the whistle in the federal government. For example, further interviews could be conducted to include not only whistleblowers but also non-whistleblowers in order to examine the multiplicity of motives across the different cases. At this point we can only assume about the intentions and ideas of non-whistleblowers based on the whistleblowers' observations and statements about co-workers' behavior. These explanations must have some of sort of function in the whistleblowers' attempt to make sense of what happened. Interviews with non-whistleblowers/co-workers could help increase the knowledge we have on their decisions for not blowing the whistle or support the whistleblower and indirectly contribute to the knowledge we have on the organizational factors that influence people to blow the whistle or not in the federal government. As well, the different detailed explanations of public service motives could serve as items for constructing scales for

measuring public service motivation quantitatively and in relation to whistleblowing in the federal government.

Though less repeatedly, interviewees refer to the importance given to the agency's mission as both a generational and personality related individual intrinsic motive. This finding was unexpected and it will need to be further explored using quasi-experimental tools of data collection analysis. Through conducting a quasi-experiment on the importance given to the agency mission and certain personality attributes, and the effect of these on whistleblowing decisions, a better understanding of these relationships could be achieved. This quasi-experimental study could be supplemented with in-depth interviews of experiment subjects to help shed light on the role of mission valence as a factor encouraging whistleblowing in the federal government (Highhouse 2007; Margetts 2011).

A second theme emerging from the interview findings suggests several historical and situational factors operate to influence intrinsic motives. These include family upbringing, the type of wrongdoing and its effects on citizens, and federal employees' overall job satisfaction. This unexpected finding might be signaling that these historical and situational factors might pre-exist or contribute to individual socialization into public service. Though it was not possible to incorporate these kind of factors into the quantitative analysis of this study, a further whistleblowing study should incorporate measures of family socialization and the type and magnitude of wrongdoing into the analysis. As well, findings from the qualitative analysis point towards the need to improve the way in which the notion of job satisfaction is constructed given that qualitative findings have indicated it dynamically influences the likelihood of

whistleblowing in the federal government. This means variations across contexts and situations might affect reported employee job satisfaction, and this effect might in turn operate to encourage or discourage whistleblowing in the federal government. Further studies are needed to explore these emergent historical and situational influencing patterns.

Related to the work environment, work culture and structure characteristics that would encourage or discourage federal employees to blow the whistle the emergent patterns within and across interviews present a maladaptive organizational condition operating in the federal government. This maladaptive organizational condition is characterized within and across interviews for the prevalence of unethical values, unjust actions toward the people in the organization, unsupportive hierarchies and power dynamics in most whistleblowers' experiences.

First, throughout the totality of conducted interviews the organizational norms and values are characterized as unethical and leading towards normalizing wrongdoing rather than legitimizing whistleblowing reporting. In the experience of interviewees, this *normalization of wrongdoing* seems to operate as a factor discouraging whistleblowing in the federal government. Moreover, the prevalence of disruptive and contradictory values and norms encountered by federal whistleblowers reduces the likelihood of whistleblowing. Second, in terms of the relationships between the people in the organization that would encourage or discourage whistleblowing, interviewees' experiences show the prevalence of unjust and unfair actions that tend to discourage wrongdoing reporting in the federal government. Third, findings suggest an unsupportive hierarchy and power dynamics in the federal government that operates to discourage

reporting of wrongdoing. Interview findings have helped develop an in-depth characterization of this maladapted work setting and organizational culture that discourages whistleblowing in the federal government. This maladapted work setting and organizational culture could be summarized in interviewees' manifestation of the existence of a disrespectful and closed environment (disrespect towards the whistleblower, silencing, ignoring wrongdoing, closeness, punishing reporting), an uncooperative and inflexible environment where there is no information sharing, inflexible response to changes, an unfair treatment in terms of persistent manipulation of individuals' performance appraisals and unfair disciplining, and an unsupportive employee-supervisor relationship. However, the richness in interviewee narratives could inform further studies in developing an improved construct of the organizational characteristics associated with the likelihood of whistleblowing.

These findings imply that organizational work setting conditions, work values and structure of relationships, hierarchy and power dynamics within federal agencies, characterized as maladaptive work setting and organizational culture factors relate to a decreased likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government. However, further analysis is needed to better understand how this unethical work setting and culture develop across agencies and in relation to the likelihood of blowing the whistle in the federal government. This could be achieved through conducting case studies on agencies where whistleblowing has occurred or is more likely to occur (as informed by existing quantitative data) and also using participant observation to get a deeper knowledge about how the work environment operates to encourage or discourage whistleblowing in the federal government. It is also possible to inquire about the influence of the work

environment quantitatively through testing different hypotheses and developing a quantitative instrument (survey or experiment) that would specifically refer to the occurrence of wrongdoing and the contextual/situational conditions of whistleblowing circumstances in the federal government.

Another interesting finding that repeatedly appeared within and across interviews refers to the organizational strategies against the reporting and handling of wrongdoing across federal agencies. Though it was not possible to test this factor quantitatively, further whistleblowing studies should incorporate measures of organizational strategies for solving whistleblowing cases into the study of whistleblowing in the federal government.

The next sub-section presents some of the limitations related to the results from the qualitative data analysis.

### **Limitations**

The qualitative data analysis poses several limitations to the presented results. In terms of validity and reliability of the data, these limitations concern whether the accounts provided by the researcher and the participants are accurate, can be trusted and are credible (Creswell and Plano Clark 2011). Maxwell (2005: 108) discusses two broad types of threats to validity that are often raised in relation to qualitative studies: researcher bias and the effect of the researcher on the individual studied, or reactivity. Thus, qualitative validity comes from the analysis procedures of the researcher, based on information collected while interviewing with participants, and from external reviewers (peers, experts). Qualitative validation means assessing whether the information obtained through the qualitative data collection is accurate as well as avoiding the negative

consequences of “particular researcher’s values and expectations that might influence the conduct and conclusions of the study” (Maxwell 2005: 108). Moreover, though trying to eliminate the researcher’s influence is impossible in a qualitative study, understanding the researcher’s actual influence might shed some light on the validity of findings accepting that “what is important is to understand how you are influencing what the information says, and how this affects the validity of the inferences you can draw from the interview” (Maxwell 2005: 109).

Following the strategies available to determine validity of the qualitative data, this study used more than one of the following procedures. First, in terms of the instruments for qualitative data collection, the interview protocol was pretested. According to Kvale (1996: 145) some of the best practices frequently recommended in methodological literature for judging the quality of an interview include: “the extent of spontaneous, rich, specific, and relevant answers from the interviewee; ... the degree to which the interviewer follows up and clarifies the meanings of the relevant aspects of the answers; ... the interviewer attempts to verify his or her interpretations of the subjects’ answers in the course of the interview; and the interview is ‘self-communicating’ ... a story contained in itself that hardly requires much extra descriptions and explanations.” Kvale’s (1996) suggestions were followed during instrument pretest and reflected upon during the interviewing stage.

Second, once the interviews were transcribed, the researcher planned to take summaries of the major themes back to the subject-participants in the study and ask them whether the findings represented accurate reflection of their experiences. This procedure is known as “respondent validation” which refers to “systematically soliciting feedback



about your data and conclusions from people you are studying”(Maxwell 2005: 111).

This would have ruled out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective of the researcher on what is going on, as well as help to identify researcher bias. However, it was not possible to use the procedure. Alternatively the researcher shared the coding process and analysis with colleagues to get feedback about the qualitative analysis and interpretation. Several follow-up exchanges occurred between interviewees when clarification about interview responses was necessary.

Maxwell (2005: 115) states qualitative studies focus on a single setting, using theoretical or purposeful rather than probability sampling, and are rarely explicit about claims on the generalizability of their accounts. The author maintains, in qualitative research “internal generalizability refers to the generalizability of a conclusion within the setting or group studied, while external generalizability refers to its generalizability beyond the setting or group” (Maxwell 2005: 115). As this study’s theoretical validity might be threatened if the sampling procedures are not made explicit, it is important to note that a purposive sampling procedure was used for the qualitative data collection. Thus, the qualitative data results cannot be extrapolated to define whistleblowing behavior in the population. The value of this qualitative data is given by its lack of external generalizability and the fact that it is intended to provide an in-depth account of the “ideal type” of whistleblowing behavior in public organizations.

The next chapter attempts to integrate the qualitative findings from the in-depth interviews (presented in this chapter) with the quantitative findings from the analysis of the MSPB survey (presented in the last chapter) in order to draw some overall theoretical

conclusions about the antecedents of whistleblowing in the federal government, as well as to draw implications for public policy and administrative practice.

## Appendix

**Table 4.3** First and Second Cycle Coding for Individual Motives

<b>Descriptive Coding</b>	<b>Values Coding</b>
Higher ethics and morality Code of conduct Oath of office Mandate	Values (V): uphold Constitution, abide by oath, honesty Attitudes (A): do right, obligation, save lives Beliefs (B): defend people
Refused to follow gang orders Family upbringing to be at best Trust others to do what is right	V: best behavior A: trust right doing B: consequences associated with wrongdoing
Observed wrongdoing and dishonesty Obligation to protect and speak out Duties and ability to protect public	V: truth and honesty A: be a good civil servant, protect public B: Constitution, honor code, service code
Need to voice abuse Sense of entitlement Lack of integrity contrary to program goals Self-confident Allegiance to reference group	V: open access to accurate information, personal views, integrity A: voice out inaccuracies, allegiance to reference group (science) B: productive relationship between science and policy making
Character factor	V: honesty and integrity A: felt responsible B: small town values, protecting individuals
Job, duty done ethically Saw potential harm to people Strong moral code	V: moral code, honesty, respect A: commitment to responsibility B: public safety and protecting safety of citizens
Job done	V: right doing, law, family upbringing, integrity A: spot corruption B: moral decision making, principles procedures
Observing wrong and corruption Took oath seriously Duty, oath, work for citizens Saw law ignored Refused to go along with wrong	V: doing right, morals A: care love and protect citizens, not do wrong B: system, Constitution, loyalty to protect individual matters more than loyalty to protect institution

Observing wrong and discrimination Unfair treatment Personality Ethics violations against honesty	V: honesty A: not push others agenda, not tolerate bullying B: ethics mandate, justice, safeguarding justice, openness and transparency, civil rights
Saw unfair treatment Harm of patients Family history (follow justice) Selfish boss, unsupportive Ethics ignored, loyalty to boss	V: ethics, justice A: protect weak, help poor, dislike tyranny B: loyalty to patients not to hospital, code of ethics, commitment to social work
Years observing abuse and neglect Conscience Professional duty and moral duty as human being Strong moral conviction	V: doing right, family values, commitment to professional oath A: advocate for voiceless victims B: wellbeing of the client, professional duty to patients
Position to report, aware of wrong Family values Fed up of mistreatment to women Witnessed wrong over years Moral upbringing, look after the weak and elders	V: right doing, fairness, kindness A: tenacity and courage B: duty to protect other women, change lives of individuals
Loss of lives due to preventable failures Intolerance for malfunctions Evidence Commitment to group	V: human life, commitment to job A: took responsibility as civil servant B: self-sacrifice, heroism, Marine Corps
Job Safety issue Guilt Commitment to group	V: safety, commitment, responsibility A: do job, save colleagues B: allegiance to citizens, public
Unaddressed Consequences Safety Job Honor	V: truth, honesty A: maintain standards of protecting citizens B: impact of individual work on others
Public Service See job as meaningful	V: public service, family values, protect public, morals A: protect people, do not neglect mistakes B: authority recognizing mistakes
Work for taxpayers Saw abuses to public health and safety Legal mandate to oversee Intolerance for wrong	V: morality, conscience, truth, honesty A: abide to legal mandate, take oath seriously, work for the

	disadvantaged B: conviction of working for the disadvantaged, belief in the protection of rules
Family upbringing Duty to repel wrong Commitment to self: if wrong seen again must do something	V: Fairness, Right A: Protect other minorities B: Making changes
Do best given the responsibility of civil service Fearless Responsible for the group No different from others	V: Honor the group A: Protect colleagues from wrong (lives at risk given vehicle failure) B: Protect human beings, redress wrong
Different from others: broad sense of experience and knowledge of job Responsibility to ensure safety and training	V: Knowledge, safety A: Ensure safety and training B: Learning from past failures, overcoming lack of knowledge
Do right Look myself in mirror For devastating effects	V: Right A: Doing right, setting examples and standards of ethical behavior B: Honesty and truth
Personal decision making when something does not fit the mold Responsibility to not neglect mistakes See job as important and meaningful	V: Responsibility, on the side of people A: Disapprove wrongdoing B: Authority doing right
Responsibility evident from the law Job description: routine procedures and federal law Different from others: experienced, confident in being right, feel an authority on the subject, strong moral code, honesty. Compelled: by agency's tendency to work around the edges, incident and its cover-up, saw something that could no longer go inadvertent	V: Confident, moral code, honesty A: treat others with respect B: Responsibility
Compelled: seeing waste, unjustified path, no good planning principles Different from others: no fear of reprisals, family values, spot corruption and follow the law	V: Integrity and honesty A: Show the right path B: Obligation to report wrong
Compelled by seeing the law ignored, cronyism, and money wasted Refused to go along with corrupt practices	V: loyalty to public A: protect the people B: law
Ethics mandate Personal sense of justice	V: justice, fairness, civil rights A: intolerance for bullying B: fairness and transparency

Different from others: being the one making the moral and willing decision to stand out and report, saw the need to report wrong. Responsibility: obligation to advocate for patients and report alleged abuse, nepotism.	V: professional oath A: Obligated to act B: professional moral duty and duty as a human being
Responsible to protect citizens	V: Honesty and integrity A: refuse to comply with wrongdoing B: responsibility to protect
Responsibility to do the job with integrity	V: allegiance to reference group A: voice out B: social values
Lost pride in agency Responsibility to truth	V: Honor A: Protect the public, stop impunity B: Constitution
Responsibility to report: not allow illegality to foster or grow	V: Integrity A: Do right B: response from managers, change
Military and professional training Fear of consequences Uncomfortable with blind eye and substandard oversights Partial responsibility	V: training and trust in others A: Unwilling to comply with wrongdoing B: standing out to corruption
Compelled by the complaint being ignored No big personal dilemma	V: ethics, morals A: do job right B: uncovering problems is part of the job

Note: first cycle coding here involved attribute coding, descriptive coding and *In Vivo* coding. Second cycle coding here involved value coding into values (V), attitudes (A), and beliefs (B).

**Table 4.4** First and Second Cycle Coding for Organizational Elements

<b>Organizational Element: Work Environment</b>	
<b>Descriptive Coding</b>	<b>Process Coding</b>
Willingness to break the laws (cheating) Corruption (no principles, allowing wrongdoing, no morality) Groupthink	Breaking rules Allowing immorality
Misuse of power (disrespect) Abuse of power Difference across regions	Abusing power
Inflexibility	Going against whistleblower
Pushed towards committing illegality and corruption	
Unsupportive environment, hostility Corruption, susceptibility to political influence Difference across regions Conspiracy between managers and legal department to ignore and retaliate	Going against whistleblower Ignoring wrongdoing
Intimidating environment Clash between military and civilian code of conduct, different expectations Psychological pressure of uniform, honor code, <i>esprit de corps</i>	Threatening
Job encourages certain personalities to flourish (introverts, scientific, technical, judgmental) Supervisors are political, ingratiate the organization Cordial co-workers, associated with each other, shared values	Clashing personalities for the job
Gender discrimination, hostility against minorities, mistreatment, sexual harassment Difficult relationship with colleagues and supervisors Not receptive to safety or addressing complaints Reporters treated as traitors	Discriminating Forcing women Disregarding reporting Mistreating whistleblowers
Fear, silenced for complaining	Silencing Threatening
Historical corruption based on “good old boys culture” Lack of enforcement of civic and human rights Cronyism Uneducated Management	Discriminating
Authoritative supervisor, bully Lacking managerial skills Unsupportive for reporting	Bullying
Threats, bullying Inexperienced and resistance culture Differences across regions Cronyism Favoritism	Threatening Bullying Favoring illegality

Retaliation by management Corruption, perpetuated bureaucratic game Paper policy different from reality Unsupportive to those reporting, ignoring wrongdoing at all levels	Retaliating
Few good colleagues and supervisors Most colleagues doing minimum work, shortcuts Threats, ignoring wrongdoing and reporting, reprisals	Threatening
Hostility, insults, harassment, aggressive relationships, threats, favoritism, illegal favors to friends, fraud, dishonesty Elimination of evidence	Threatening Favoring fraud
Thankful rank and file and supervisors Supportive colleagues Unsupportive structure (no legal or organizational provisions to address case and redress wrongdoing)	Not addressing wrongdoing
Good leaders, excellent work environment Friends and mentors Appreciative professional environment	
Distrustful, not like family Shocking broken protections Bullying	Shocking Preserving management
Reasoned cheating No moral compass Mentality of rationalizing wrong behavior Culture worshipping money The group got together to present the complaint, colleagues had working and professional relationship, great respect, shared values Considered conspirators by agency	Cheating Rationalizing, Normalizing wrongdoing Threatening



<b>Organizational Element: Organizational Culture</b>	
<b>Descriptive Coding</b>	<b>Process Coding</b>
Illegality (not following law) Discrimination and Harassment Code of ethics on paper	Lying, cheating, harassing
Commitment to science Accountability Lots of communication and support Civilized and collegial work culture Valued and followed protecting the organization's mission	
Code of ethics on paper, no real reference Dysfunctionality: stigmatizing, victimizing agency, ignoring, unaddressing wrong Side stepping the law, using previous cases as scapegoats	Stigmatizing (malfunction)
Excluding minorities Retaliation at all levels Witch-hunt, class issues Ignoring rights, aggressiveness, black listing, system abuse, conspiracy	Retaliating Abusing
Leadership made a big difference in identifying hazards and addressing wrong	Misleading, Mismanaging
Code of ethics on paper only applicable to lower level employees No accountability Clashing cultures (lower level employees following rules, law and ethics, rocking the boat vs. managers not abiding to law, playing the bureaucratic game)	Clashing cultures
Uniforms valuing unity and cohesion Strong values of not following illegal orders	Honoring codes
Ignoring, spying, illegal retaliation, modified performance appraisals False documentation, fabrication of evidence against whistleblowers Dysfunctionality, mistreatment (criminalizing) Reprimands, writing up, building a case to fire employees	Mistreating (malfunction)
Organization disloyal to values Discouraging culture for reporting Dysfunctional dynamics of individuals and personality, accepted, perpetuated and encouraged, no rule following Reporters not functional to perpetuating corruption	Discouraging reporting (malfunction)
Disregard for wrong, discouraging wrong Rewards for going along with corrupt culture but not for following conscience Use of power against employees Dreadful climate, bullying managers Nepotism, cronyism, corruption, favoritism	Harassing Rewarding corruption

Military culture vs. civil service, harassment, no training on cultural diversity	
Managerial style matters for good culture values, no managerial tolerance for reporting Public discourse of upholding Constitution and reporting but abused processes Dictatorial fearsome culture, strong intimidation, eagerness to go along with superiors' corruption, protect each others' corruption Burial and manipulation of evidence Intimidation, name calling Managers use previous whistleblowing cases as scapegoats Discrimination	Mismanaging Discriminating Abusing processes
Friendships with industry, unclear who is the overseen/customer	
Strong taboos, conflict between military and civilian bureaucracy Inability to admit wrong Group focus, groupthink, esprit de corps Fear of embarrassment made leaders react Agency affected by external pressures Silence to not compromise loyalty	Group-thinking Silencing
Exclusion of minorities, class action, discrimination Favoritism discouraging whistleblowing Prevalence of distinctive and discrediting networks	Discriminating Discrediting Networking for favoritism
Invested in keeping the business as usual Exclusion of those who voice out Retaliation Unwritten culture in terms of what is right and wrong	Ignoring Silencing Normalizing wrongdoing
Cronyism Discourage moral decision making or addressing wrong Ignored public interest, no loyalty to citizens Poor management Unethical, selfish tribe Blatant disregard to ethics and commitment Pushed by political considerations Unhelpful ethics officers	Thieving Mismanaging
Value system, collective sharing a brain and following a pattern of thought Culture not promoting better good Secrecy, not sharing knowledge Managers focused on race to top, resistance to information sharing Supportive colleagues, shared values	Discouraging good Not sharing information and knowledge

<b>Organizational Element: Structure</b>	
<b>Descriptive Coding</b>	<b>Process Coding</b>
Maintains secrecy Discourages reporting	Keeping secrets
Focused on keeping job and wrongdoing in silence Unsupportive reporting structure	Silencing
Hierarchy reflects dysfunctional culture of favors and favoritism Uniqueness of predominating minorities with powerful networks Discriminating and manipulating through powerful networking structure of favors	Malfunctioning Networking Manipulating
Ineffective Clash between military and civilian management Not intended to placate wrongdoing Geared to cover up No concern to address wrong	Allowing wrongdoing
Military background Follow the orders logic that can't apply to federal employees	Following orders
Power matters to discourage group reporting Good order and discipline culture Peer pressure to silence and not get out of the lane	Discouraging reporting Silencing
Failure based mentality Big bureaucracy, many layers, reinforced failure and blame others for failing	Reinforcing failure Blaming
No feedback loops for reporting Lack of communication channels	Not communicating
Failed reporting structure Allows for aggressiveness and targeting	Allowing wrongdoing
Civilian rule vs. military rule Conflict of jurisdictions and structures for conflict solving Not following appropriate procedures	Conflicting problem solving

Note: first cycle coding here involved attribute coding, descriptive coding and *In Vivo* coding. Second cycle coding here involved process coding.

## **Chapter 5. Conclusion**

This concluding chapter begins with the patterns that are general to both the quantitative and qualitative data. This is meant to emphasize the link between the findings common to both strands of data to allow for a more integrated approach and explanation of results. Then, the chapter proceeds to highlight the connection of these integrated findings to this study's conceptual framework (see Chapter 1). Next, a discussion on the importance of this research to the field of public administration is presented. The chapter concludes with an identification of potential ideas for further research as well as policy implications of this study's findings.

### **Integrated Research Results**

Using existing quantitative data and original qualitative data, this study examined whether certain individual and organizational factors are more likely to encourage or discourage whistleblowing in the federal government. After analyzing the quantitative survey data (Chapter 3) and the in-depth qualitative interviews (Chapter 4), some initial discussion and implications were presented. This sub-section, however, aims at integrating findings that are common to both the quantitative and qualitative parts of the study.

The conceptual framework developed in Chapter 1 pointed out that certain individual and organizational factors could be associated to the likelihood of blowing the whistle in the federal government.

**Table 5.1** shows a summary of common findings resulting from the analysis of both sources of data on the individual factors associated with the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government.

**Table 5.1** Key Findings, Quantitative and Qualitative Data: Individual Factors

<b>Individual Factors</b>	
<b>Quantitative Analysis</b>	<b>Qualitative Analysis</b>
Positive relationship: Norm-based and Affective Work Motives: loyalty to co-workers and supervisors, duty as a public employee, desire to help the organization meet its goals, personal pride and satisfaction in own work.	Intrinsic individual motives: Norm-based work motives: loyalty to the oath of office, duty, obligation, ethical behavior as a quality defining a personality prone to commitment, guarding the public good. Affective work motives: loyalty to citizens, empathy for those affected by the wrongdoing. Historical and situational influences on intrinsic individual motives: Family upbringing, Type of wrongdoing and intensity, Job satisfaction.
Negative relationship: Job satisfaction (overall job satisfaction)	No specific reference to job satisfaction as a determinant of blowing the whistle: Job satisfaction is prior to the decision of blowing the whistle though not always evident, After blowing the whistle, job dissatisfaction often occurs, Job satisfaction as a situational influence on intrinsic individual motives.
No relationship (overall model): Mission valence Positive relationship (supplemental analysis- gender difference): Mission valence among women	Some reference to mission valence as a determinant of blowing the whistle: Personality related intrinsic motive, Generational order of priorities (senior employees prioritize the mission more than junior employees).

**Individual factors.** Findings show *norm-based and affective work motives* are associated with whistleblowing in the federal government. The results of the MSPB survey found a positive association between federal employees' expressed norm-based

and affective work motives and the odds of a federal employee blowing the whistle across federal agencies. The qualitative data analysis confirms and adds depth into this association, broadening the possibility of interpretation for this finding. This is given by the richness of themes emerging within federal whistleblowers' remarks as well as the surfacing of patterns across interviews. First, a number of interviewees commented on being moved by commitment to the public interest, loyalty to civic duty, and a strong compassion for citizens in need. Findings from quantitative and qualitative data shed light on the existence of an association between individual factors and the odds of whistleblowing in the federal government.

According to the quantitative data this relationship resulted in a strong and positive link to the outcome, while the qualitative data adds detail to the dimensions of the construct of norm-based and affective work motives explored using a logistic regression model. Interviewees mentioned different values, attitudes and beliefs involved in their motivations to blow the whistle. When asked about what were their motivations to blow the whistle, most interviewees mentioned the value of truthfulness, the moral necessity of public service, the imperative to advocate for citizens and respect them, the importance of upholding the US Constitution, and a recognition of the direct impact of their work on others. In the qualitative interviews, whistleblowers pointed to different themes triggering intrinsic individual motives to report wrongdoing that help reinforce the idea that the existence of certain aspects of public service motivation among federal employees were a factor in their decisions (Bowman 1980; Jos et al. 1991; Brewer and Selden 1998).

From the qualitative interviews, it was possible to identify the existence of *intrinsic individual motives, and historical and situational influences on intrinsic motives* as themes underlying the decision to report wrongdoing. These themes add a new aspect to the quantitative survey findings. In the qualitative interviews, people recalled an inner conviction of aiming at guarding the public as well as an ethical behavioral quality of being committed to duty, obligation and oath as intrinsic individual motives triggering their whistleblowing actions. Moreover, though not explored quantitatively, the qualitative data showed an emergent theme related to the historical and situational influences on intrinsic motives for whistleblowing in the federal government. It might be interesting to consider, in future research, the possibility that the evaluation of the observer of wrongdoing of the type of wrong and the intensity/magnitude of its effect on citizens interacts with a commitment to ethical principles (intrinsic motives). Across the qualitative interviews, the emergent pattern reinforced Alford's (2001) notion of "choiceless choice narrative" as interviewees expressed that their motivation for blowing the whistle was a strong empathy with citizens in terms of the expected effects of wrongdoing on the public as well as a compliance with an inner normative and affective belief in public service. The qualitative analysis helped strengthen the notion that a positive association exists between federal employees akin to a public service ethics and the likelihood of blowing the whistle. This is in line with Brewer and Selden's (1998: 420) research, which finds that "many whistleblowers willingly put themselves at risk to preserve the common good and further the public interest--motives closely associated with PSM." Likewise, Glazer and Glazer's (1989:11, 69) research is supported by these findings in that federal employees who "have a strong belief that something could be

done to rectify illegal or unethical situations, have taken the ideology of their professions most seriously, have developed a strong commitment to upholding professional values that emphasize the significance of making decisions on the basis of their expertise and with primary responsibility to their constituents,” are those more likely to blow the whistle or be “ethical resisters.”

Overall, the use of quantitative and qualitative data allowed for identifying a *positive association* between *norm-based and affective work motives* and the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government. The quantitative data measured and tested the norm-based and affective work motives construct comprising the following dimensions: not letting co-workers and supervisors down, a sense of duty as a public employee, recognition from co-workers, a desire to help the work unit meet its goals, and personal pride and satisfaction in work. Furthermore, the qualitative data improved and broadened the understanding of these features of motivation as intrinsic individual work motives associated with the odds of whistleblowing in the federal government. Thus, the qualitative data provided for the possibility of separating norm-based from affective work motives for future construct development and measurement, and thickening the qualitative study of narratives, as evident from the variety of subjective meanings to such motives verbally expressed by interviewees.

However, the quantitative data also showed a *negative relationship* between overall *job satisfaction* and the likelihood of blowing the whistle across the federal agencies included in the sample. Interestingly, this negative association was reinforced through the supplemental analysis among the sample of federal employees with supervisory status. The quantitative data seemed to suggest the possibility of a reverse



causation pattern in that whistleblowers become less happy with their job after reporting wrongdoing. Another possible interpretation is that job satisfaction and whistleblowing are both determined by the work environment, such that a just/ethical work environment makes people happier on the job and less likely to blow the whistle. However, based on the qualitative data analysis, there are several possible interpretations for this. During the qualitative interviews, job satisfaction emerged as a situational influence on intrinsic motives. Though the majority of respondents did not mention overall job satisfaction as a specific factor influencing their whistleblowing behavior, most respondents expressed a strong commitment to doing their job well and seemed pleased (honored) about performing their job. The qualitative data added the following aspects to be considered in further analyses on job satisfaction and its link to whistleblowing. First, there is a question of timing, as it might be that job satisfaction is an antecedent condition to the decision of blowing the whistle. Second, though interviewees generally did not mention job satisfaction as a triggering factor of whistleblowing, they did mention job dissatisfaction as an issue after blowing the whistle. Findings from the quantitative analysis indicate that employees who are more satisfied with their job are less likely to blow the whistle. Moreover, the qualitative results seem to strongly indicate that job satisfaction changes drastically after whistleblowing, suggesting it should perhaps not be considered a predictor or antecedent of whistleblowing. Further studies focusing on job satisfaction as a situational factor influencing intrinsic individual motives for blowing the whistle in the federal government should examine the different dimensions comprised in an improved measure of the job satisfaction construct. Alternatively future research might

also wish to not consider job satisfaction as a predictor/antecedent of whistleblowing, especially in cross-sectional surveys.

The quantitative analysis showed *no relationship between employee mission valence and the likelihood of reporting wrongdoing* in the federal government. Only after conducting a supplemental analysis on the sub-group of female federal employees, did the analysis resulted in a positive relationship between mission valence and the likelihood of whistleblowing. This might imply that women perceive certain work motives differently than their male counterparts in the federal government. Women may give more importance to mission values and goals when deciding to report wrongdoing in the workplace. Moreover, though the quantitative data shows that mission valence among female employees is associated with an increased likelihood of wrongdoing reporting, the qualitative data points toward a stronger concern for female citizens among interviewed female whistleblowers. This might suggest a link between theories of representative bureaucracy (Saltztein 1979; Riccucci and Meyers 2004) and whistleblowing behavior. It will be interesting to further study these findings through a comparative case study analysis of female and male federal whistleblowers, as research so far has been inconclusive in capturing these gender differences among whistleblowers. Using the conceptual framework provided by the representative bureaucracy theory further studies could ask whether ascribed characteristics of federal employees (e.i. gender) help predict ethical behavior in the form of whistleblowing or achieve certain policy outcomes to redress wrongdoing in organizations. Likewise, the qualitative analysis conveyed a new dimension to the understanding of mission as an individual factor related to whistleblowing. According to the interview analysis two distinctive patterns emerged.

First, mission valence was referred to in relation to an individual's personality. Thus, an individual who is more likely to have a personality inclined to follow principles as universal goals would be more inclined to identify with the organization's mission and blow the whistle in the federal government. Second, mission valence was associated with a pattern of generational order of priorities within and across interviews. In this sense, different generations seem more likely to prioritize the agency's mission over other agency goals and activities. In turn interviewees explained that senior employees prioritized the mission more often than junior employees, and thus they were more likely to blow the whistle in the federal government. Thus, quantitative and qualitative data suggest that a higher understanding, importance and contribution assigned to the agency's mission will be associated with an increased likelihood of blowing the whistle on wrongdoing among women (quantitative finding) and senior employees (qualitative finding). Again, an improved explanation of how both gender and generational differences influence the likelihood of whistleblowing would require future research.

Finally, in terms of intrinsic individual motives, certain characteristics emerged through the qualitative interviews that went beyond those considered in the quantitative survey analysis. This is the case of family upbringing as a characteristic recalled by interviewees as triggering an individual motivation to blow the whistle in the federal government. The quantitative data did not allow for investigating whether values infused during the person's family upbringing or primary socialization process were associated with an increased or decreased likelihood of wrongdoing reporting. However, some interviewees mentioned the infusion of certain moral and ethical values from their individual family upbringing related to their commitment to certain norm-based and

affective work motives that emerged as inner convictions to follow when blowing the whistle on wrongdoing.

**Table 5.2** shows a summary of common findings resulting from the analysis of both sources of data on the organizational factors associated with the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government.

**Table 5.2** Key Findings, Quantitative and Qualitative Data: Organizational Factors

<b>Organizational Factors</b>	
<b>Quantitative Analysis</b>	<b>Qualitative Analysis</b>
<p>Negative relationship:</p> <p>Respect and Openness (being treated with respect at work, openly express concerns, and opinions, knowledge of work expectations, good use of skills and abilities on the job, rewarded creativity and innovation, doing meaningful work)</p> <p>Cooperativeness and Flexibility (free information sharing, spirit of cooperation and teamwork in the work unit and when working with other units, flexible response to changing conditions)</p> <p>Fair treatment (in terms of training, performance appraisals, job assignment, and discipline)</p> <p>Trust in the supervisor (in terms of fair performance assessment, support in pay and rewards discussions with management, listening to employee concerns, applying discipline fairly and when justified, clearly communicating conduct expectations, acting with integrity, refraining from favoritism and keeping employees informed)</p>	<p>Maladapted work setting and organizational culture (discourages whistleblowing):</p> <p>Prevalence of unethical values and norms (disrespect, silencing, ignoring wrongdoing, closeness, punishing reporting, no information sharing, inflexible response to change, manipulation of individual's performance appraisals)</p> <p>Unjust actions towards the people in the organization (career suicide, disciplining, manipulation of evidence on whistleblowing cases, harassment, name-calling, ostracism, threats, blame, fluctuating job assignments)</p> <p>Unsupportive hierarchy and power dynamics within the immediate work setting (stigmatization of whistleblowers, normalization of wrongdoing, unfair performance assessment, unfair and unjustified disciplining, favoritism, isolation from reporting channels or redressing of wrongdoing)</p>
<p>Responses to reporting:</p> <p>Not tested using quantitative data</p>	<p>Unsuited responses to reporting/handling of wrongdoing:</p> <p>Reprisals and retaliation effects on whistleblowers</p> <p>Personal consequences of whistleblowing</p> <p>Effect of whistleblowing on the internal agency functioning</p>

**Organizational factors.** Findings from the quantitative data evidenced the existence of a *negative association between federal employees' perceptions of respect and openness, cooperativeness and flexibility, fair treatment in the work setting and trust in the supervisor, and the likelihood of a federal employee blowing the whistle* across federal agencies. According to these findings, perceptions of respect and openness within the organization's work setting and culture are associated with a decreased likelihood of blowing the whistle on wrongdoing in the federal government. Likewise, perceptions of cooperativeness and flexibility within the organization's work setting and culture are associated with a decreased likelihood of blowing the whistle in the federal government. The quantitative data also revealed a negative association between the existence of fair treatment and trust in the supervisor in the work environment, norms and values, and the likelihood of blowing the whistle.

Though the quantitative data evidenced a *negative association between all the work setting and organizational culture* characteristics and the likelihood of whistleblowing, the interviews help illuminate a possible pattern of association between these organizational factors and the outcome. Through the emerging themes and patterns within and across interviews, it is possible to find an alternative explanation to these negative findings. From the analysis of the qualitative data, it appears that the existence of unethical values and norms, unjust actions towards the people in the organization, an unsupportive hierarchy and power dynamics within the immediate work setting operate to discourage whistleblowing in the federal government.

The qualitative data allows for understanding the context of these organizational factors associated with the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government. It is

important to mention here that the qualitative data presents a more dynamic, fluctuating process occurring within and across agencies that, according to interviewees, is more likely to discourage whistleblowing. Thus, the emergent patterns and identified themes from the interview analysis suggest the existence of multiple dynamics operating to produce a *maladapted work setting and organizational culture* that seem more likely to discourage whistleblowing in the federal government. Thus, the characteristics defining this maladapted work setting and organizational culture seem to occur in a plurality of dynamic combinations within and across interviews to negatively influence decisions to blow the whistle in the federal government.

The dominant emergent patterns concerning the processes in place related to organizational factors that trigger whistleblowing relate to the theme of a maladapted work setting and organizational culture where unethical values and norms, unjust actions towards the people in the organization, and an unsupportive hierarchy and power dynamics dominate the immediate work setting. Thus, within and across interviews, a disrespectful and closed, uncooperative and inflexible work environment was a prevalent theme. This work setting and organizational culture are also characterized by the persistence of unjust actions towards whistleblowers as well as by an unsupportive power dynamics often operating to stigmatize the whistleblower and normalize wrongdoing in the federal government.

First, the existence of an unethical work environment and culture as an organizational factor associated with whistleblowing suggests an immediate work context where illegal activities are systematically ignored and thus ultimately taken as normal within the agency. So, in line with previous research, silencing as well as reprisals

operate as an organizational strategy to accept wrongdoing in such a way that it becomes part of the daily organizational structures and processes and is viewed by employees as legitimate behavior (Bok 1982; Ashforth and Anand 2003). Thus, the qualitative findings might shed some light on how an unethical work environment and culture, rather than an ethical one (where whistleblowing is rewarded or at least not discouraged), might become normalized in public organizations. Likewise, the qualitative data provides evidence for the existence of organizational work settings and values where retaliation through isolation and reprisals occur to those federal employees who decide to behave ethically and blow the whistle on wrongdoing. In these kinds of settings, there is often an expectation of employee compliance with wrongdoing, and an ill-conceived culture of networking that allows for the institutionalization of illegal activities. As described by interviewees, an organizational culture where a contradiction exists between the agency's public image of openness and flexibility to the reporting of wrongdoing and the daily reality of closeness and inflexibility towards employees seems to characterize the work setting when a whistleblowing case occurs. For interviewees, the culture across agencies is that of normalized wrongdoing and systemic abuse, one that is more likely to discourage whistleblowing in the federal government. The qualitative data has provided in-depth evidence for understanding an aspect of how the organizational culture operates at the level of the application of norms (military vs. civilian application of norms, silencing) and the socialization processes involving the consolidation of values in the organization (lying, secrecy, groupthink pressures to avoid embarrassment, uniform as a symbol of power and reminder of loyalty to the organization) to discourage whistleblowing in the federal government.

However, it might be interesting in future research to examine the influence of such settings in which wrongdoing and unethical values have become normalized (prone to rewarding unethical behavior) on the likelihood of whistleblowing (expected ethical behavior) in the federal government. For example, it would be useful to study the processes that lead to the normalization of unethical rather than ethical behavior in the context of federal agencies. Such a study might examine how unethical work values become institutionalized and rationalized among public servants. Another question for future research concerns the ways in which federal employees become socialized into unethical work values and norms that in turn affect their future inclination to report wrongdoing. Thus, more specific investigation into the development of these unethical work settings and culture over a period of time, as well as how these are linked to the history of whistleblowing cases in each agency, is needed to arrive at a more conclusive explanation of the existing organizational factors and processes associated with whistleblowing in the federal government. Further research should also incorporate temporal considerations into the analysis, especially when considering the organizational factors under study as well as the historical occurrence of whistleblowing cases in public organizations. This means the possibility of analyzing whether differences exist in the description of the work environment and organizational culture characteristics before and after federal employees have blown the whistle on wrongdoing. Likewise, further research might help clarify whether public values within federal government reversed after whistleblowing cases occurred, and if so how and why this reversal occurs.

Second, the existence of a *unjust actions towards the people in the organization* as an organizational factor associated with whistleblowing suggests an immediate work



context where the organization tends to respond punitively to those individuals signaling wrongdoing through retaliation in the form of blaming rather than supporting, and reprimanding rather than rewarding the whistleblower. In relation to this organizational response, interviewees point to an unfair treatment among people within the organization as associated with the decision to blow the whistle in the federal government. The qualitative interviews also show how this unfair treatment within federal agencies relates to an existing negative dynamic of people's management and leadership style that, by maintaining secrecy and disregarding the application of norms, discourages federal employees from reporting wrongdoing. It appears that whistleblowing decisions awaken an agency reaction towards individual employees that is characterized by the criminalization of those employees blowing the whistle or by seeking to portray the whistleblowing case as illegitimate (Miceli and Near 1994). Again, it is possible that this reaction or organizational strategy in relation to whistleblowers either existed prior to the emergence of a whistleblowing case or as a consequence of an employee blowing the whistle in the federal government. This before-and-after difference would be a fruitful avenue for further exploration. The qualitative data shows a gender difference associated with how perceptions of an unfair treatment are associated with the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government that was not evident from the quantitative findings. This gender difference comprises a repeated reference by female interviewees to how hostility towards women employees in the form of discrimination, disrespect, threats, and routine mistreatment, operated to discourage whistleblowing among female federal whistleblowers. However, interviewed female whistleblowers expressed feeling committed to blowing the whistle if they observed such situations occurring to female

citizens or clients in particular. Further exploration is needed in relation to gender differences among federal employees of perceived organizational fairness factors and the likelihood of whistleblowing. As suggested by the integrated findings on this research, the link between active representation and the likelihood of whistleblowing among bureaucracy would require additional analysis. Other research tools, such as the use of a quasi-experimental design would be helpful in testing this gender effect differences in terms of fairness on the likelihood of whistleblowing among public servants.

Third, the identification of an *unsupportive hierarchy and ill-conceived power dynamics* in federal government is mentioned by interviewees as an organizational factor associated with whistleblowing. Interviewees point towards an immediate work context where the organizational structure tends to respond unethically through hostility, manipulative supervisory pressures and power dynamics, and strong group socialization processes against those individuals reporting wrongdoing. This unsupportive hierarchy emerged as a theme associated with the organizational factors motivating whistleblowing in the federal government. According to the qualitative interviews, the existing hierarchical structure in the federal government allows for perpetuating silencing, manipulation of evidence against whistleblowers, and the reinforcement of agency failures. Thus, such an unsupportive structure, particularly evidenced in the existence of unsupportive supervisors, affects the federal employee within and outside the agency and is more likely to discourage whistleblowing in the federal government. Similarly, the qualitative data allowed for uncovering the existence of an ill-conceived power dynamic as an organizational factor associated with whistleblowing in the federal government. This ill-conceived power dynamic operates to discourage whistleblowing through

stigmatization of whistleblowers, promotion of ignorance on the existing reporting channels and normalization of an unethical work environment and culture across agencies. This qualitative finding helps draw some policy implications that will be developed later on in this chapter and refer to laws and decisions that focus on protections against retaliation of whistleblowers.

Another set of emergent patterns concerning the processes in place related to organizational factors that trigger whistleblowing touch on the theme of *unsuited responses to the reporting and handling of wrongdoing* where reprisals and retaliation affect current whistleblowers, prospective whistleblowers and the internal agency functioning in relation to redressing wrongdoing and rewarding ethical behavior (whistleblowing effectiveness) (Miceli and Near 2002). Across many of the qualitative interviews, people talked about the consequences of whistleblowing in terms of reprisals and retaliation and its effect on them personally as well as on the agency (morality and embarrassment). The qualitative data allowed for identifying an organizational strategy of *unresponsiveness*, seen as an unexpected reaction by interviewees and associated with whistleblowing in the federal government. Again, this unresponsiveness seems to lead to the normalization of wrongdoing within the organization as well as creating a history of “examples” of how agencies deal with whistleblower cases or wrongdoing, which might negatively influence potential whistleblowers. However, further evidence is needed to understand what organizational strategies in relation to the management of ethical behavior in federal organizations are associated with whistleblowing.

Overall, the qualitative data allowed for identifying the different dimensions of a maladapted work environment and organizational culture of norms and values that, in

line with the quantitative findings, suggest the existence of a disrespectful and closed work environment, an uncooperative and inflexible work setting, prone to unfair treatment of federal employees and unsupportive supervisors (thriving in favoritism and lack of integrity). This unethical work context and organizational culture seems more likely to discourage whistleblowing in the federal government. Coincidentally with the quantitative data, a negative pattern emerged within and across interviews concerning the organizational factors encouraging whistleblowing in the federal government.

Moreover, the maladapted work environment and organizational culture operates at different levels within the organization and in relation to whistleblowing actions. First, in terms of the support given to federal employees who observe wrongdoing, this emerged in the interviews as a factor discouraging whistleblowing. Agencies are described as unfriendly places to be a whistleblower given their susceptibility to political influence and their tendency to ignore illegality, pursuing selfish goals and perpetuating reprisals against those who report wrongdoing. Second, maladaptation is described in terms of the context of the agency's goals and activities. Interviewees understood the disruptive work setting and organizational culture as factors discouraging whistleblowing given the continuous and systematic ignorance of public service goals and activities and the expectation of compliance with wrongdoing by the people in the organization (colleagues, supervisors, managers). Third, the inappropriateness of the work environment and organizational culture of the federal government emerged as related to the management of people and relationships within the agency. Interviewees often talked about how supervisors and managers were unsupportive, oriented towards building evidence against them, used unfair and unjustified disciplining, and were prone to

favoritism. Fourth, merged results seem to suggest that maladapted/unethical workplaces try to discourage whistleblowing but that this does not work, especially among ethically and public-service motivated employees. Importantly, all of the interviewees in this study blew the whistle even if they were intimidated or threatened to do so. Fifth, interviewees referred to the culture of values and norms that are legitimized within the agency as unfitting for public organizations, thus functioning to normalize wrongdoing, stigmatize ethical behavior and discourage whistleblowing in the federal government. In this case, the existence of a network of influences holding and reinforcing unethical norms and values within agencies as well as the rewards given to employees putting loyalty to this unethical culture over loyalty to the public, both operate to discourage whistleblowing. Sixth, regarding the power dynamics and hierarchical structure discouraging whistleblowing, interviewees consider power pressures; group socialization and the hierarchical structure are negative influences for those deciding to blow the whistle. The existing power dynamics seems to promote a structure where the lack of knowledge on reporting channels and lack of communications of the information on reporting procedures is legitimized within agencies. This perverse power dynamic combined with a structural groupthink focused on understanding whistleblowing as a threat to the unity of the collective and as an embarrassment of the agency, emerged as a pattern impeding whistleblowing in the federal government. Seventh, another important interpretation to add is that maladaptive/unethical work places probably are more likely to be engaged in wrongdoing in the first place (hence the defensive strategies). In contrast, good/ethical work places have less to hide, presumably, and thus less wrongdoing to report. Finally, interviewees pointed to the non-adaptive responses to reporting and handling of

wrongdoing within the agency (unexpected retaliation, silencing, cover-up) as governing to discourage whistleblowing in the federal government. This means the qualitative data evidences different dynamics operating within and across agencies that appear unethical to federal employees interested in reporting wrongdoing in the federal government and contradictory with the objectives, goals and activities of public organizations' expected work setting and culture, that remain a negative influence to those who have decided to blow the whistle. Thus, the qualitative findings helped reinforce and provide depth to results from the quantitative analysis.

### **Links to Previous Studies and Implications for Public Administration**

This research uses Perry and colleagues' (1990, 1993, 1996, 2000, 2008, 2010) theory on the motivational bases for a public service ethics, and Miceli, Near and Dworkin's (2008) theory on whistleblowing behavior in organizations as the main conceptual framework to answer the question about what individual and organizational characteristics encourage or discourage federal employees to blow the whistle on wrongdoing in the federal government. Using existing quantitative data, this study explored the antecedents of whistleblowing for those observers of wrongdoing who are at the stage of deciding whether it is their responsibility to act on wrongdoing and whether any reporting action is available to them. Additional evidence was gathered using 18 in-depth interviews with federal whistleblowers to elaborate a better understanding on the tested model results. Throughout the quantitative data analysis, some of the components of the framework were operationalized to construct variables measured and analyzed using a logistic regression model. The constructs included individual and organizational factors affecting the likelihood of whistleblowing. The individual factors included in the

model comprised measures of mission valence, rational work motives, norm-based and affective work motives and job satisfaction. The organizational factors included in the model comprised measures of respect and openness, cooperativeness and flexibility, fair treatment and trust in the supervisor as situational characteristics of the values and structure components of the organizational work environment. Results showed a positive association between norm-based and affective work motives (individual factor) and the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government. Quantitative findings also showed a negative association between job satisfaction (individual factor), respect and openness, cooperativeness and flexibility, fair treatment at work, and trust in the supervisor (organizational factors) and the expected outcome.

The qualitative data analysis revealed in-depth characteristics of the individual and organizational factors related to whistleblowing in the federal government. Interviewees thoroughly discussed the following themes: public service motivation and mission valence as individual intrinsic motives, and family upbringing, characteristics of the wrongdoing and job satisfaction as historical and situational influences on intrinsic motives as factors encouraging whistleblowing. Interviewees also presented a negative perspective of the organizational factors associated to whistleblowing in the federal government through examining the following themes: the prevalence of a maladapted work setting and organizational culture as well as unsuited responses to the reporting and handling of wrongdoing in the federal government context.

With respect to the model of the whistleblowing process developed by Miceli, Near and Dworkin (2008), this study has focused on the stage when the employee recognizes the wrongdoing occurring within the organization, assesses whether to act or

not, considers whether she/he is responsible for acting, and finally chooses to act (or not act) in response to the identified wrongdoing. Accordingly, this study found that certain individual and organizational factors move employees to actually blow the whistle in the federal government.

***Individual factors.*** Evidence from quantitative and qualitative data on self-reported federal whistleblowing cases confirms an association between norm-based and affective motivation (individual intrinsic work motives) and work environment and organizational culture variables (maladapted work values, norms, power dynamics and structure) and the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government. This evidence can be integrated with a theory on pro-social organizational behavior in organizations (Miceli, Near and Dworkin 2008) to provide a deepened theoretical model for predicting the likelihood of whistleblowing in the context of public organizations.

In line with previous findings, this study provides evidence for a positive association between individual intrinsic work motives factors and the likelihood of blowing the whistle. This finding is relevant for the field of public administration in that it points towards the importance of reinforcing professional values and ethical decision making skills to either encourage or maintain an ethical conduct in the federal government (Cooper 2006). First, this study's findings are in line with previous public service motivation theories (Perry and Wise 1990; Crewson 1997; Brewer 2003; Pandey et al. 2008; Perry et al. 2010) suggesting public service motivation shapes individual attitudes and behaviors that in this case relate to maintaining a responsible conduct or ethical behavior through blowing the whistle.



Accordingly, this finding is of scholarly importance to the field of public administration because it contributes to a broader understanding and improvement of ethics management in public organizations. Evidence for a positive association between individual intrinsic work motives factors and the likelihood of blowing the whistle suggests the idea that if public service motivation was encouraged and maintained among public servants, this would help generate or sustain an ethical context in organizations that would advance public service values. Moreover, public servants' inclination to norm-based and affective work motives does not seem to prevent them from behaving ethically and resist wrongdoing by blowing the whistle in the federal government. This study has presented integrated quantitative and qualitative evidence consistent with the idea of an existing intrinsic motivation as an individual attribute leading public servants to report wrongdoing in the federal government.

Thus, findings reassert the importance of norm-based and affective work motives (public service motivation) in understanding why federal employees blow the whistle. Second, it is possible to conclude that norm-based and affective work motives (public service motivation) foster desirable role-based attitudes, individual attributes moving federal employees to a responsible conduct that ultimately advance a public service ethics (Crewson 1997).

***Organizational factors.*** This study provides evidence for a negative association between organizational factors and the likelihood of blowing the whistle. This finding is significant for the field of public administration in that it points toward the importance of strengthening the role of leaders (supervisors, managers, etc.) and human resources professionals in public organizations to either develop or enhance ethical management

skills toward rewarding responsible conduct in the federal government. First, these study's findings are consistent with the notion that certain characteristics of the organization work environment and organizational culture are associated with the likelihood of whistleblowing (Miceli, Near and Dworkin 2008). Evidence from this study suggests that certain work environment and organizational culture factors result in a negative association with the likelihood of whistleblowing and might be predicting external whistleblowing rather than a decreased likelihood of whistleblowing. This would be in line with the alternative notion that a more threatening work environment and organizational culture leads to external rather than lower whistleblowing behavior (Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran 2005). Though impossible to test using the MSPB 2005 survey, integrated findings from the quantitative and qualitative data help distinguish predictors of whistleblowing behavior that lead to reporting wrongdoing outside of the organization.

Second, the findings of this study are also significant for the field of public administration as they relate to theories of organizational behavior and ethics management within the public sector. In line with previous studies, integrated results from this study show the existence of an unethical work environment and organizational culture prone to the normalization of wrongdoing and the stigmatization of behavior consistent with serving the public and society at large (Ashforth and Anand 2005). Thus, the integrated quantitative and qualitative evidence presented in this study can contribute to theories of organizational ethics and management to encourage behavior consistent with public service goals and activities aimed at achieving organizational change. This implies findings from this study might help advance knowledge on ethics management,

leadership values and legal protections required to address the conflicting role and responsibility context, normalization of wrongdoing and stigmatization of ethical behavior that seems to exist in the federal government. Likewise, findings from this study might inform an improved ethics management theory for public service, one that incorporates an understanding of the existence of a public service ethics that positively influences the likelihood of whistleblowing behavior, and the normalization and stigmatization processes going on within organizations that negatively influence the likelihood of whistleblowing behavior. Incorporating these findings into discussions of ethical management and the legitimation of behavior that is in line with public service values (whistleblowing) might result in the development of guidelines for human resources managers within public service willing to lead ethical organizations. Finally, ethical decision making in the form of whistleblowing requires individuals to engage in a process of examining and questioning assumptions and standards underlying administrative decisions. And, such process is carried out independently by individuals that engage in understanding the morality of society and taking a stance to protect the public interest (Denhardt 1988). Thus, findings from this study might aid public servants in the process of examining and questioning wrongdoing within the federal government, and ultimately lead managers and employees to take an active part in building a responsible and ethical administrative conduct.

Findings from this study revealed several organizational strategies that emerge as unethical responses to employees who challenge abuses at work by blowing the whistle on wrongdoing. Devine (1997: 28) refers to “organizational strategies to target troublemakers and neutralize dissent,” in the form of illustrations of this silencing

through tactics of retaliation against whistleblowers. Alford (2001: 32) highlights “the key organizational strategy is to transform an act of whistleblowing from an issue of policy and principle into an act of private disobedience and psychological disturbance.” In line with previous research, findings from this study have shown the organizational context is critical for understanding administrative ethics as the organization imposes obligations, pressures (posing ethical dilemmas alleging a conflict of loyalties) and constraints (decision-making structure and values) on individual whistleblowing decisions (Denhardt 1988). Hence, this study might be of help for future whistleblowing studies suggesting these should focus both on the individuals facing conflicting pressures upon integrity and ethical decision making and the organizational value context where wrongdoing occurs.

### **Implications for Future Research and for Public Policy and Management**

***Future research.*** There are a number of future research directions suggested by this study’s findings. In terms of individual factors, it would be desirable to test the interaction between personality characteristics and intrinsic individual motives in relation to whistleblowing in the federal government to ensure personality is not an intervening variable in the model. A possible research question might focus on asking why are some people so strongly committed to broader social goals? And, how is this commitment related to a personality characteristics ultimately leading to whistleblowing in professional life? Second, it would be interesting to consider evaluating the effect of the seriousness of wrongdoing through testing the influence of the type and magnitude of the wrongdoing that is reported on the individual intrinsic motives to blow the whistle in the federal government. Unfortunately, this information was not available on the MSPB 2005

survey and was indirectly signaled by the interview data. A further line of research for answering this question might use the MSPB 2010 data, which recently became available and which allows for specifying these conditions to test for interaction effects.

Third, findings in terms of the association between job satisfaction and the likelihood of whistleblowing would require further inquiry. It would seem from the qualitative findings, however, that job satisfaction changes often in profound ways after an employee blows the whistle on wrongdoing. As a result, variation in job satisfaction may be more of a result of whistleblowing rather than a cause. Though the qualitative data on this study added the need to consider job satisfaction in-depth, an improved, retrospective measure is required for quantitatively exploring its association with whistleblowing in the federal government. This could be done perhaps by using a panel study, if possible, or by developing a survey to specifically focus on the relationship between job satisfaction and whistleblowing occurrence in the federal government.

Fourth, the finding related to mission valence and its significance as an individual intrinsic motive among female federal workers (quantitative) and senior employees (qualitative data) needs further inquiry. This could be done through quasi-experimental research combined with comparative case study analysis with the aim of arriving at a better explanation of how both gender and generational differences influence the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government (representative bureaucracy).

Fifth, the relationship between early socialization processes (family upbringing and education) and their influence on secondary socialization processes (professional or on the job training) would require further analysis. It might be possible that family upbringing and education, as evident from this study's interviews, might influence the

inclination or reinforcement of a public service ethics among those federal employees who ultimately decide to blow the whistle in the federal government. Some of the future possible research questions focusing on a study of socialization processes (education and family upbringing) that build the basis for the development of public service ethics (norm-based and affective work motives) include: how do people get to be motivated by a public service ethics that leads to increased levels of altruism and prosocial behavior within public organizations? What is it in people's education and family upbringing that leads them to end up being whistleblowers?

In terms of organizational factors, it would be desirable to further inquire on the particularities of work environment and organizational culture characteristics associated with increasing ethical behavior in the form of whistleblowing in the federal government.

First, further scholarly work would comprise conducting observational studies within those agencies that according to this study's findings show a higher percentage of whistleblowing cases. This might allow for better evidence on how these organizational factors lead towards an increased or decreased level of whistleblowing in the federal government.

Second, this study found the existence of unethical work settings and culture associated with the likelihood of whistleblowing. This could be further explored by using case studies to gather more specific data on the development of these unethical work settings and culture over time and how these are linked to the history of whistleblowing cases in specific public organizations (within and across agencies). This might help clarify the following research questions: how is ethical behavior legitimized in public organizations? In what ways does the work environment and organizational culture

produce group norms that operate to reinforce silence rather than to report wrongdoing? Do such environments trigger more or less responsibility for reporting on individuals or the group?

Third, it is possible that normalization of wrongdoing and stigmatization of whistleblowers as organizational factors associated with whistleblowing either existed prior to the emergence of a whistleblowing case or as a consequence of an employee blowing the whistle in the federal government. These processes would require further analysis through exploring these differences using either longitudinal data or focus groups to capture how normalization and stigmatization, both processes evident in an unethical work environment and organizational culture, influence the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government. Likewise, future studies might ask how fear of retaliation (developed through normalization of wrongdoing and stigmatization of whistleblowers) intervenes to reduce the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government.

Fourth, more evidence is needed to understand gender differences among federal employees of perceived organizational fairness and the likelihood of whistleblowing. Comparative studies on the relationship between perceptions of fairness (organizational factor) and the likelihood of whistleblowing among a sample of female and male employees could provide evidence for these gender differences. Moreover, further studies on representative bureaucracy or the incidence of active representation (e.i. being a woman) on the likelihood of whistleblowing could shed light on the relationship between gender and compliance with ethical behavior (whistleblowing).

Fifth, in terms of the institutional responses towards whistleblowers revealed by this study's findings, further inquiry into strategies for managing ethical behavior in public organizations associated with whistleblowing occurrence in the federal government is required. This could be done through analyzing formal and informal practices within agencies in relation to punishing or rewarding ethical behavior of federal employees. Likewise, a study assessing the stage of implementation of legal protections of whistleblowers could address this issue (using official documents and reports from official enforcing agencies, whistleblower advocacy organizations, whistleblower groups, etc.). For such purposes, a qualitative research design would be more suitable.

***Policy and management implications.*** There are a number of implications of practical importance suggested by this study's findings. First, cultivating public service motivation among current or prospective federal employees may be a way to avoid the negative effects of wrongdoing and advance towards ethical behavior in public organizations. Findings show norm-based and affective work motives associated with a public service ethic and in line with public service, prosocial, altruistic motives in organizations shape individual attitudes and behaviors. This study has provided evidence on the organizational and social significance of public service motives associated with an increased likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government. Though this presumption of direct causation between intrinsic individual norm-based and affective work motives would need further analysis, it sheds light on policy developments oriented towards improving human resource management of public servants. Some suggested policy development lines could increase public service motivation towards an increased likelihood of reporting of wrongdoing in the federal government through: developing



personnel selection policies targeted towards ethical behavior, providing ethical training of current public servants, rewarding ethical actions within public service (such as those performed by whistleblowers when reporting wrongdoing), improving reporting channels as an incentive for observers of wrongdoing to report (guaranteeing transparency of the process and legal protections) and ensuring leadership infuses a legitimate shared meaning among public servants on the ethical value of blowing the whistle in the federal government. Moreover, given that public service motives won't prevent public servants from behaving ethically, managers would need to develop strategies to deal with whistleblower cases in a way that is functional towards achieving a responsible conduct in public service. Second, encouraging public service motivation among current or prospective federal employees through rewarding ethical conduct may contribute to reducing the occurrence of wrongdoing and advancing towards ethical behavior in public organizations. Though previous research has found the use of rewards for engaging in socially responsible or ethical conduct to be applicable successfully to private organizations, a recent report by the USMSPB (2012) recommends the use of rewards to increase public service engagement and motivation. The use of rewards for increasing public service motivation might have an indirect impact on increasing public employee proneness to engage in ethical behavior thus increasing the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government. However, more knowledge is needed into what is the direct or indirect effect, if any, of such rewards for increasing the likelihood of whistleblowing in the federal government.

As a caveat, it is important to note that acquiring training on professional ethics and ethical decision-making does not necessarily translate into more ethical attitudes and

committed behavior among public servants. Findings from this study do not suggest traditional solutions within the field of public administration such as the separation between public administrative and citizenship roles. As interviews have shown, public servants other than whistleblowers seem to confuse loyalty to the organization with duty to uphold the public interest, this confusion translates into the notion that following superiors' orders means fulfilling the duty of public servants. In doing so, most public servants engage in the normalization of wrongdoing as evident from this study's research findings. Thus, in line with Cooper (2006: 62) this study points towards the position that "the notion of the public interest, which public administrators are charged to uphold, involves this concern for inclusiveness, a fundamental obligation of citizenship in a democracy, having this role implies, assessing the situation, considering the full range of values at stake and then act in proportion to these interests." This implies that understanding that public servants are not politically neutral beings that they often deal with conflicting roles, is vital for finding strategies to manage administrative responsibility. Given that both objective and subjective responsibility appear to be a part of the normative and affective aspects of public service motivation, the complexity of whistleblowing as ethical behavior in the federal government needs to be acknowledged. And in turn, the complexity of managing such role-conflicting situations needs to be addressed before prescribing traditional and generalized policy interventions across the federal government without accounting for particularities within contexts.

In terms of organizational management of public organizations, several policy developments could be suggested in line with this study's findings. First, managers should find ways of assessing levels of wrongdoing within organizations to make sure

these do not become normalized over a period of time. As suggested by Cooper (2006: 196) public organization leaders need to “develop reformed arrangements that deal with individuals and organizations simultaneously,” in order to achieve responsible conduct in public service. Second, once a maladapted work environment and organizational culture are recognized and addressed as illegitimate, managers need to focus on how wrongdoing will be handled internally using legitimate institutional channels. This could be done by communicating, practicing and enforcing the legal protections already in place concerning whistleblowers (Whistleblowers Enhancement Protection Act 2012) in the federal government. It is true that legislation in itself is not enough, but managers should make sure they work within the legal framework to legitimate public disclosures in a way that it protects federal employees as well as recognizes their role in maintaining an ethical culture within the federal government. Again, as noted by Cooper (2006: 198) “we can hire the best individuals but if they work in a structure discouraging ethical acts,” we are probably using the wrong approach. Public managers willing to enhance ethics in public service should ask and discuss why whistleblowing, a positive response to negative behavior, should be either encouraged or discouraged in the federal government. Thus, communicating and practicing an ethical environment within organizations requires recognizing the existence of unethical work environments and organizational cultures, assessing the consequences of such factors on the practices of ethical public service and working towards the legitimation of whistleblowing and legal protections for those employees that engage in putting public service values first.

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## Appendices

### Legal and Institutional Context

Legal protections of employees who blow the whistle are a consequence of congressionally created exceptions enacted to protect employees from the employment-at-will doctrine by which employees were discharged for whistleblowing (Miceli and Near 1992; Malin 1983). Later, the focus of such protections has centered on retaliation allowing for whistleblowers to be protected by the anti-retaliation provisions of federal and state legal approaches to whistleblowing. Retaliation can take many forms, including being fired, demoted, and denied advancement, harassed or otherwise harmed (Feerick 1991). Thus, legal protections are necessary not only because it makes it more difficult for agencies to fire whistleblowers but also because adverse retaliatory action against an employee who blows the whistle is most likely to occur (ERC 2010).

**Federal labor laws.** At the federal level, the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 (NLRA) was the first legislation protecting employees engaging in union-related activities, who testified or filed charges concerning illegal unfair labor practices. Though it is important to note that employee protections under this legislation is narrowly circumscribed to a particular area or group covered by the act, the type of whistleblowing activity is broadly based<sup>21</sup>. Under the NLRA, whistleblowers do not enjoy generalized federal protection in the reporting of wrongdoing, leading to the idea that whistleblowing is valued only if it pertains to certain activities (Miceli and Near 1992; Malin 1983). The NLRA established a precedent for federal whistleblower protection by providing an administrative procedure to handle whistleblower complaints and determine remedies. In procedural terms, the “whistleblower who has suffered retaliation files a complaint with the Secretary of Labor, who investigates the charges and, if a violation is found, orders corrective measures” (Miceli and Near 1992: 235). The main remedies provided to whistleblowers under the federal acts have included reinstatement and lost wages, recovery of costs of bringing claims, awarding of compensatory damages, and in some cases exemplary damages.

From an institutional perspective, the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970 established the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). The OSH Act prohibits employers from discriminating against their employees for exercising their rights under the OSH Act. These rights include filing an OSHA complaint, participating in an inspection or talking to an inspector, seeking access to employer exposure and injury records, and raising a safety or health complaint with the employer. The OSHA administers the filing of discrimination complaints to the employer, other agencies regulating workplace safety, and the retention of counsel to rectify unsafe working conditions. If workers have been retaliated or discriminated against for exercising their rights, they must file a complaint with OSHA within 30 days of the alleged adverse

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<sup>21</sup> An even broader protection is the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) which protects all persons, not just employees from retaliation, “as long as the employee entertains an objectively reasonable, good faith belief that the employer is violating the act” (Malin 1983: 300).



action. A whistleblower's claim begins by contacting OSHA with an allegation of discrimination for engaging in a protected activity (e.i. reporting health violation). Next, investigators screen complaints for *prima facie*<sup>22</sup> elements and, if warranted, conduct an investigation (USGAO 2009). If the investigation results in a non-merit finding, the case is dismissed. If the investigation finds merit, OSHA issues a preliminary order, which might include reinstatement to the employee's previous position and back pay. Since passage of the OSH Act in 1970, Congress has expanded OSHA's whistleblower authority<sup>23</sup> to protect workers from discrimination under twenty-one federal laws<sup>24</sup>. Complaints must be reported to OSHA within set timeframes following the discriminatory action, as prescribed by each law. These laws containing anti-retaliation provisions are: environmental and nuclear safety laws, transportation industry laws, and consumer and investor protection laws<sup>25</sup>. Employees who believe they have been retaliated against for engaging in protected conduct may file a complaint with the Secretary of Labor for an investigation by the Whistleblower Protection Program (USGAO 2010).

**Federal civil service.** The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (CSRA) protects employees under the merit system by prohibiting certain adverse personnel practices by agencies against employees for whistleblowing disclosures to any recipient. The law created three agencies: The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to manage the civil service system, the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) to hear due process administrative appeals of personnel actions, and the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) to protect employees who allege prohibited personnel practices. According to Devine (1997: 117) the CSRA was an effort to strengthen employee rights, though it "has deprived federal employees to access to the courts and a jury trial to defend their basic constitutional rights." Instead civil servants are provided with an agency, the OSC, and an

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<sup>22</sup> The *prima facie* elements of a violation comprise the following: "the employer knew about the protected activity, that the employer-or respondent- subjected the whistleblower to an adverse action (such as being fired), and the protected activity contributed to the adverse action" (USGAO 2009: 10).

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.whistleblowers.gov/index.html> Accessed May 6, 2012.

<sup>24</sup> The 21 whistleblower statutes enforced by OSHA include: Section 11(c) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act; Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act; International Safe Container Act; Surface Transportation Assistance Act; Clean Air Act; Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act; Federal Water Pollution Control Act; Safe Drinking Water Act; Solid Waste Disposal Act; Toxic Substances Control Act; Energy Reorganization Act; Wendell H. Ford Aviation Investment and Reform Act for the 21st Century; Corporate and Criminal Fraud Accountability Act, Title VIII of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act; Pipeline Safety Improvement Act; Federal Railroad Safety Act; National Transit Systems Security Act; Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act; Affordable Care Act; Consumer Financial Protection Act of 2010, Section 1057 of the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010; Seaman's Protection Act, as amended by Section 611 of the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2010; and the Food and Drug Administration's Food Safety Modernization Act.

<sup>25</sup> [http://www.whistleblowers.gov/statutes\\_page.html](http://www.whistleblowers.gov/statutes_page.html) Accessed May 22, 2012.

administrative law forum, the MSPB. In 1983, the Supreme Court removed the courts from the process of handling federal employment disputes on constitutional rights (*Bush v. Lucas*). Moreover, the role of the OSC is key to understanding the limitations of the law as it was created as a watchdog to protect the merit system and the rights of federal employees. Both the MSPB and the OSC constitute an external channel for resolving whistleblower complaints through an administrative civil service court system. An employee challenging a termination, demotion or suspension decisions due to whistleblowing, can file at the MSPB for “a contested evidentiary hearing with the agency before an administrative judge” (GAP 2002: 48). If the personnel action is less severe than termination, demotion or suspension of greater than two weeks, the employee must file first with the OSC. Despite its broad mandate to advocate for whistleblowers, “once the OSC decides to investigate a case, it then takes months and often years before it is ready to litigate to a whistleblower, ... the odds of getting “saved” by this agency are remote” (GAP 2002: 49). Moreover, according to Devine (1997: 119) the OSC failed to use its broad mandate to serve whistleblowers, as “for the first decade after its creation, the OSC turned down 99 percent of whistleblower cases without attempting disciplinary or corrective action, [and] only pursued litigation through one corrective action hearing to restore a whistleblower’s job” (also see USGAO 1993).

Thus, the CSRA was expanded and strengthened with the passing of the Whistleblower Protection Act of 1989 and 1994 amendments (WPA). The WPA refers to whistleblowing as the act involving the disclosure of information that an employee reasonably believes evidences prohibited personnel practices. Such practices include: (1) a violation of law, rule, or regulation; (2) gross mismanagement; (3) gross waste of funds; (4) an abuse of authority; or (5) a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety (Price 1992; Whitaker 2007). Further, the disclosure must be specific and detailed, not vague recollections of wrongdoing regarding broad or imprecise matters. As a general rule, reporting wrongdoing to the wrongdoer does not constitute whistleblowing<sup>26</sup>. Protected disclosures are only the following: (1) disclosures made as part of an employee’s normal duties outside of normal channels, e.g., the Office of Special Counsel or the Office of Inspector General; or, (2) disclosures made outside of an employee’s assigned duties to persons in a position to correct the alleged abuse.

The WPA (1989) can be summarized as encompassing the following major provisions (Devine 1997: 125-7):

- enforces the government employees’ code of ethics,
- protects any whistleblowing disclosure if the contents are significant and reasonable,

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<sup>26</sup> The Whistleblower Protection Act (1989) exists among federal employees but does not apply to federal workers employed by the Postal Service or the Postal Rate Commission, the Government Accountability Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Imagery and Mapping Agency, the National Security Agency, and any other executive entity that the President determines primarily conducts foreign intelligence or counter-intelligence activities.

obliges the OSC to provide status reports to employees seeking help as well as refrain from disclosing the identity of an employee making a whistleblowing disclosure without consent,

gives whistleblowers control of cases through allowing them an evidentiary hearing at the MSPB (or filing an Individual Right of Action),

eliminates the need to prove that the agency had retaliatory motives,

eases the necessary burden of proof to proving that the employee's protected whistleblowing disclosures are a "contributing factor,"

provides an interim relief to whistleblowers by allowing them to return to their job during the appeal process,

allows winning whistleblowers to receive placement preference for a new job,

strengthens disclosure channels by including the whistleblower's critique in all public releases and files, and protects alternative statutory remedies.

Though the WPA (1989) constituted an attempt by Congress to "shield federal civil servants from retaliation for reporting misconduct," it does not protect employees for: "doing their job by administering the law, expressing reasonable scientific conclusions, or adhering to professional ethical standards" (GAP 2002: 46-7). The 1994 amendments to the WPA addressed a weakness in the original act in which the agencies responsible for the Act's implementation were sometimes unwilling to enforce it<sup>27</sup> (USGAO 2000b). First, the 1994 amendments included legal protection for federal workers covered by collective bargaining agreements through arbitration hearings, allowing employees to choose the arbitrator who decides their case and also seek immediate relief through a legal action to temporarily stop the adverse personnel action. Second, the amendments require the MSPB to refer managers for disciplinary investigations whenever there is a finding that reprisal was a contributing factor, reinforcing the power to sanction agency managers who retaliate against whistleblowers. Though the 1994 amendments introduced important advances, the legislation reauthorized the OSC procedures. According to the OSC's performance accountability report for 2011, "the unit received 928 disclosures, processing and closing 870 cases, while referring a record level of 47 disclosures to agency heads for investigation and reporting" (USOSC 2011).

The most recent piece of legislation intended to protect whistleblowers in the federal government is the Whistleblower Enhancement Protections Act (WPEA). At the time of this writing, President Obama signed the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act (WPEA) into law (November 13, 2012). The WPEA<sup>28</sup> means an accomplishment for

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<sup>27</sup> Discussions on WPEA available at <http://whistleblower.org/component/taxonomy/term/summary/22/101?start=35> Accessed May 30, 2012.

<sup>28</sup> See <http://www.whistleblower.org/press/press-release-archive/2012/2379-president-signs-whistleblower-protection-enhancement-act-wpea-> Accessed February 13, 2013. And for the history of WPEA advocacy <http://www.whistleblower.org/program->

advocacy organizations and whistleblowers as it represents several changes of the legislative protections for potential disclosures: expands the scope of freedom of speech rights (for internal disclosures by Intelligence Community employees), expands coverage and due process rights (intra-agency due process standards, appeal of agency rulings, restore MSPB authority over actions related to clearances; due process regulations for new IC rights), and expands remedies and resources for disciplinary action.

**Federal statutes.** Federal statutes are also directed towards encouraging whistleblowers through incentives. The federal False Claims Act (FCA) was enacted in 1863 and revised in 1986 to make monetary recoveries for whistleblowers easier and more generous, and as a way of encouraging more whistleblowing regarding government contractor fraud (Dworkin 2010: 43). The FCA provides rewards to whistleblowers who prosecute successful suits in the name of the US government against individuals or companies who have fraudulently claimed federal funds (Callahan and Dworkin 2000: 101). The law is considered an effective anti-fraud mechanism with special whistleblower provisions. Any person can file a claim on behalf of the US Treasury (*qui tam suit*), and the claimant can recover a portion of damages (15-30%). This recovery of damages is called the Whistleblower Bounty Statute (GAP 2002). Moreover, the FCA provides a district court remedy with double back pay and compensatory damages for those employees who suffer retaliation. According to Dworkin (2010: 44) the law values information over motive and “is much more effective than merely protecting the whistleblower from retaliation.” Under this legislation, the whistleblower files a suit with the Department of Justice on behalf of the US government; however, whistleblowers still face agency lags in processing claims (USGAO 1999).

Though the Constitution provides federal employees with speech protection<sup>29</sup>, in 2006 the Court decision favored the government employer against the whistleblower (*Garcetti v. Ceballos*). According to Dworkin (2010: 47) “the majority refused to protect a prosecutor who wrote a memo asking whether a sheriff’s deputy had lied in an affidavit to get a search warrant, ... [finding] that when public employees make statements pursuant to their official duties, the employees are not speaking as citizens, and thus are not constitutionally protected from employer sanctions.” After this decision there was a move to reform the WPA to include broader coverage of what constitutes retaliation to include national security employees and government contractors.

More recently, the Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (NO FEAR) requires federal agencies to give annual reports to Congress, the attorney general and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) on

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areas/legislation/wpea Accessed February 13, 2013. And, <http://www.whistleblower.org/program-areas/legislation/current-legislation/top-20-benefits-of-s-372> Accessed May 17, 2012. Also see, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/senate-passes-whistleblower-protections--again/2012/05/09/gIQAL7b4DU\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/senate-passes-whistleblower-protections--again/2012/05/09/gIQAL7b4DU_story.html) Accessed May 17, 2012.

<sup>29</sup> First and Fourteen Amendments to the U.S. Constitution as reported by the National Whistleblower Center, [http://www.whistleblowers.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=816&Itemid=129](http://www.whistleblowers.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=816&Itemid=129) Accessed May 9, 2012.

disciplinary actions taken for conduct by employees (Dworkin 2010: 48). Moreover, the OPM is required to conduct a “comprehensive study in the executive branch to identify best practices for taking appropriate disciplinary actions for conduct that is inconsistent with federal whistleblower protection laws and issue advisory guidelines for the agencies” (Miceli, Near and Dworkin 2008: 167). On the private sector side, the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 (SOX) calls for companies to establish a code of ethics and whistleblowing procedures that applies to top corporate officers. Wrongdoing under this Act includes mail, wire, bank, and securities fraud. According to Miceli, Near and Dworkin (2008: 157) “companies responded by outsourcing the whistleblowing to independently run hotlines.” The SOX specifies different report recipients for employees who decide to either report internally or externally. An internal report must go to someone with “supervisory authority over the employee or to someone working for the employer who has the authority to investigate, discover, or terminate the wrongdoing” (Miceli, Near and Dworkin 2008: 158). Externally, reports of suspected fraud go to a federal regulatory or law enforcement agency, or to any member or committee of Congress. Moreover, the SOX anti-retaliation provisions apply to publicly traded companies but also to contractors, subcontractors and agents of those companies and comprise criminal penalties (fine and/or imprisonment of up to ten years) as a unique characteristic of whistleblowing legislation.

**State law.** In the 1980s, the focus of whistleblower protection shifted to the state arena. Callahan and Dworkin (2000: 108) review the state laws specifically focused on whistleblowing to conclude “state legislatures continue to embrace whistleblower anti-retaliation measures as a mechanism for deterring and uncovering wrongful conduct.” While state laws contain anti-retaliation provisions, they vary greatly in the type of wrongdoing protected, the appropriate recipient of the report of wrongdoing, the subject of protected whistleblowing, the motive of the whistleblower, the quality of evidence of wrongdoing required and the remedies provided to the employee suffering retaliation. Under state legislation public employees are to be protected at a minimum, though there is no agreement as to how the protection for or from retaliation ought to be structured. Moreover, few states have statutory protections for one or more groups of public employees. As of 2006, only 16 states<sup>30</sup> protect whistleblowers under the False Claims Act, covering different types of violations and requiring different standards (Miceli, Near and Dworkin 2008: 178).

The American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) adopted a policy statement in 1979, entitled “Whistleblowing: A Time to Listen ... A Time to Hear,” calling for a more comprehensive organizational approach that would define the limits of administrative loyalty and responsible response (Cooper 2006: 242). Specifically, ASPA (1979: 3) recommends that federal, state and local governments “establish and enforce policies and procedures for internally reporting, investigating, assessing, and acting on allegations of illegality mismanagement waste or unethical behavior, ... create and support dissent channels to permit contrary or alternative views on policy issues to be

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<sup>30</sup> State False Claims Act as of 2006 comprised the following states: “Arkansas, California, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.” (Miceli, Near and Dworkin 2008: 179-181).

reviewed at a higher level” (ASPA 1979: 3-4). This evidences the attempts through a professional organization to discuss within the discipline of public administration the complexity of whistleblowing as well as point out recommendations on managing employee integrity at the managerial level (Bowman 1980).

Apart from the federal and state legislation that provide a governance structure for protecting government employees, other channels of employee disclosures include federal hotlines, corporate voluntary disclosure programs, incentives or awards programs, inspectors general, OSC, Congress, the news media, and advocacy organizations (employee organizations, public interest groups, employees support organizations) (Devine 1997: 50-103).

**Hotlines.** The first hotline was established in 1979 by the Department of Defense as a channel for the Inspector General’s office to learn of potential wrongdoing or mismanagement. Most federal agencies and departments have a toll-free hotline<sup>31</sup> which operates under the standards set by the President’s Council on Integrity and Efficiency (PCIE). However, according to Devine (1997: 51) “even the best hotlines, ... investigate less than 20 percent or fewer cases within a year of the complaint, and substantiate or purport to take any corrective action on less than 10 percent.” The main shortcomings of the hotline systems is related to the fact that investigations into alleged misconduct are compromised by conflicts of interest when an institution investigates itself, the hotline procedure for receiving and processing complaints (case follow-up) and maintaining confidentiality is not standardized. Similarly, the private sector provides voluntary disclosure programs to address illegal activities of corporations (bribing, political contributions). However, these programs that are intended to allow employees to identify, disclose and correct institutional responsibilities are vulnerable to conflict of interests.

**Inspectors General Office.** According to the Inspector General Act of 1978, each agency has an Office of Inspector General in charge of investigating and reporting on alleged misconduct by the agency or its employees. When considering to disclose wrongdoing to an Inspector General (IG) employees are advised to be knowledgeable about whether an Inspector general is under a statutory (nominated and dismissed only by the President) or non-statutory (hired and fired by the agency chief) condition. A non-statutory position holds a potential for conflict of interests compromising employee vulnerability to retaliation (GAP 2002). According to GAP (2002: 20) though the IG’s primary purpose is to investigate reports of internal fraud, waste or abuse, employees should be aware that IG reports, “have no power, do not guarantee confidentiality, do not have deadlines to investigate, tend to avoid controversy, can turn on the complainant, and can be used to retaliate against whistleblowers.”

**Office of Special Counsel.** The OSC has the duty to defend federal employees against personnel practices that violate the merit system. The OSC offers a process for federal employees to report waste, fraud or abuse. First, the employee files a disclosure with OSC detailing the wrongdoing. OSC has fifteen days to review the information and determine whether further investigation is necessary. If the OSC finds evidence of a violation, the OSC informs the head of the appropriate agency of the matter. Next, the

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<sup>31</sup> Federal Agencies’ numbers are available at <http://www.usa.gov/About/FEDINFO.shtml> Accessed May 7, 2012.

agency head is required to conduct the investigation and report back to the OSC on the disclosed matter (deadline of sixty days). Once OSC receives the agency's report, it transmits this together with any comments added by the whistleblower, other OSC comments and recommendations to the President, congressional leadership and the congressional committee(s) holding jurisdiction over the agency (GAP 2002). In procedural terms, the OSC has 15 days to "screen whistleblowing disclosures from federal employees, applicants or former employees before deciding whether to order agency chiefs to investigate those challenges that have merit, [and] may refer for agency investigation any disclosure that reflects a "reasonable belief" of illegality, gross waste, gross mismanagement, abuse of authority or a substantial or specific danger to public health or safety" (Devine 1997: 66). Unfortunately, the OSC has not been protective of employee disclosures. Evidence from previous research (Jos et al. 1989; Cooper 2006) suggests the OSC might not constitute a safe channel for whistleblowing disclosures. According to Devine (1999: 534) "the OSC taught courses to agency leaders on how to fire whistleblowers with impunity, ... regularly served as a source of free "discovery" by sharing with agencies the evidence from aggrieved whistleblowers seeking help, and by conducting and sharing with agencies the results from investigations of the complainants who sought OSC assistance" (also see Devine and Alpin 1986).

**Advocacy Organizations.** Non-profit advocacy organizations with experience in working directly with whistleblowers include: the Government Accountability Project (GAP), the National Whistleblowers Center (NWC), the Project on Government Oversight (POGO), and the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER). The Government Accountability Project (GAP) is a public interest group founded in 1977 to protect and advocate for whistleblowers<sup>32</sup>. This organization provides legal advice for those whistleblowers that decide to externally report wrongdoing. It has also been responsible for training and education of potential whistleblowers. The National Whistleblowers Center<sup>33</sup> (NWC) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization dedicated to protecting employees' lawful disclosure of waste, fraud, and abuse. The NWC sponsors several educational and assistance programs, including an online resource center on whistleblower rights, a speakers bureau of national experts and former whistleblowers, and a national attorney referral service run by the NWC's sister group the National Whistleblower Legal Defense and Education Fund (NWLDEF). Founded in 1981, the Project On Government Oversight<sup>34</sup> (POGO) is a nonpartisan independent watchdog that champions good government reforms. POGO works as an investigative organization to identify systemic corruption or misconduct in federal government using sources inside the government and whistleblowers to document evidence of corruption, waste, fraud, or abuse and launch independent investigations. Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility<sup>35</sup> (PEER) is a national alliance of local state and federal resource professionals, which organizes a base of support among employees within local, state and federal resource management agencies. Among its objectives, PEER states it aims at defending and strengthening the legal rights of public employees who speak out about

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.whistleblower.org> Accessed May 8, 2012.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.whistleblowers.org/index.php> Accessed May 9, 2012.

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.pogo.org/> Accessed May 8, 2012.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.peer.org/> Accessed May 8, 2012.

issues concerning natural resource management and environmental protection by providing free legal assistance if and when necessary.

The presented legal and institutional context is considered to provide a complex governance structure for addressing cases of federal employee disclosures of wrongdoing. The combination of laws and institutions in place seem to provide an array of guarantees that should protect federal employees who report wrongdoing from discrimination while setting the ethical standards for public agency operations in the following way. Federal employees can voice-out wrongdoing internally, or externally while at the same time build support from within the organization (colleagues, supervisor, federal agencies) or from without (advocacy groups, media, Congress) before the formal disclosure is done. Feerick (1991) maintains that while whistleblower laws operate to protect those who take steps to combat dishonesty, without the legitimacy of such laws the message conveyed to society would condone dishonesty. In other words, if a situation in which an employee who calls attention to wrongdoing is left without a remedy because of the absence of a legal protection, and then there will be no encouragement at all in society to tell the truth, suggesting that misconduct is something that must be tolerated. Thus, whistleblowing laws express fundamental notions of what is fair, of what is moral, of what kind of ethical development we want to stimulate in society, and of how we feel about civic duty. Moreover, Feerick (1991) states whistleblowing laws challenge the acceptability of allowing employers to fire employees who see something they believe is wrong and take steps to call it to the attention of a supervisor, or some investigative body that has jurisdiction in the area. In this sense, the existing legal framework can increase public confidence that government misconduct will be reported. As, in protecting whistleblowers that are federal employees, these also protect the public providing an additional check and balance that insures government integrity, and prevents government corruption.

However, certain loopholes in the presented legislative framework might offer an opportunity for managing wrongdoing disclosures through looking at how federal employees could be protected from within the workplace while encouraged to be willing to formally report wrongdoing to their immediate chain-of-command. Dworkin (2010) explores why the whistleblowing laws are so often ineffective in achieving their goals contending few decisions on whistleblowing cases turned on the merits of the whistleblower's retaliation claim. According to Dworkin (2010) for the case of the SOX Act, most whistleblowing claims have failed due to the procedural complexity of the cases and to misinterpretations of what constitutes burden of proof. While assessing the administrative effectiveness of the Whistleblower Protection Program at the OSHA, a study done by the US Government Accountability Office (USGAO 2009) set out to investigate OSHA's complaint processing times, the outcomes and challenges faced by the program. Results from GAO's assessment show OSHA "lacks reliable information on processing time, an effective mechanism to ensure that the data are accurately recorded in its data base, and completion of an investigation took longer than the prescribed statutory time frame" (USGAO 2009: 4). In terms of the whistleblower program's outcome, whistleblowers received a favorable outcome in 21 percent of complaints-nearly all settled through a separate agreement involving the whistleblower and the employer, rather than through a decision rendered by OSHA. According to the GAO report, the key challenges faced by OSHA comprise "the lack of a mechanism to adequately ensure



quality and consistency of investigations and the lack of resources to administer the complaints” (USGAO 2009: 4).

A similar analysis by Dworkin (2010: 44) on the FCA, states “agency problems make the law much less effective for whistleblowers ... [as] there is a significant time lag between the time the employee files a retaliation claim and the time she or he can receive anything.”

These inefficiencies in the administration of the legislative and institutional framework in place, directly affect the individual who is exposed to retaliation for a longer period of time, and contribute to an increased embarrassment for the agency (Jos 1991). So, it is expected that such deficiencies would open up an opportunity to look into what is going on at the organizational (agency) level to respond to ethics management within federal government. Whistleblowing implies costs and benefits to the organization. According to Jos (1991), though whistleblowers can make an important contribution to accountability, federal employees are still legally vulnerable to reprisals. As stated by GAP (2002: 19), under the existing court rulings, “disclosures to supervisors or other disclosures within the employee’s professional responsibilities are not protected under federal whistleblower laws.” However, research shows that employees are most likely to blow the whistle when they know how to do it and what their rights are (Miceli et al. 2009: 379). In this sense, knowledge of the existing governance structure by federal employees seems fundamental for providing the necessary information on procedures (internal and external reporting channels) and consequences for employees to decide to approach potentially contentious employment situations (GAP 2002).

As noted by Dworkin (2010: 48) “reluctant courts, and/or overwhelmed or resistant agencies, can negate the impact of laws so that there is an illusion of protection ... without remedies to achieve it.” Thus, advancing knowledge on what happens with the individual at the agency level when deciding to report an observed wrongdoing seems fundamental. Moreover, social science research indicates that an observer of wrongdoing is more likely to report it if she or he thinks it will succeed in changing the wrongdoing (Miceli et al. 2008). By gaining in depth insights on federal employees’ direct or indirect experiences with wrongdoing we will begin to better understand whether there is a support (counseling) system in place for educating employees on whistleblowing at the agency level. And, whether there is an internal reporting system in place that ensures reporters will not suffer retaliation.

From the presented policy context we can conclude that the legal and institutional framework, while broad, fails to provide a comprehensive account on how employees decide to report wrongdoing, or address what are the value choices at stake when reporting wrongdoing in a public service context. What is more, the existing legislative and institutional protections do not inform us about how federal employees are helped or hindered through their ethical decision making process, nor do these present the strategies taken by organizations to internally deal with wrongdoing and whistleblowers. Official documents show laws and institutions are not enough, opening an avenue for research aimed at improving the existing ethics management strategies within federal government.

## IRB Approval

**RUTGERS UNIVERSITY**  
**Office of Research and Sponsored Programs**  
**ASB III, 3 Rutgers Plaza, Cook Campus**  
**New Brunswick, NJ 08901**

July 17, 2012

**P.I. Name:** Lavena  
**Protocol #:** 12-846M

Cecilia Florencia Lavena  
 School of Public Affairs and Administration  
 111 Washington Street - Newark Campus

Dear Cecilia Lavena:

↓  
 ( Initial / Amendment / Continuation / Continuation w/ Amendment )

**Protocol Title:** "Whistleblowing: Individual and Organizational Antecedents of the Decision to Report Wrongdoing in Federal Government"

This is to advise you that the above-referenced study has been presented to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, and the following action was taken subject to the conditions and explanations provided below:

<b>Approval Date:</b>	7/4/2012	<b>Expiration Date:</b>	7/3/2013
<b>Expedited Category:</b>	7	<b>Approved # of Subject(s):</b>	30

This approval is based on the assumption that the materials you submitted to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) contain a complete and accurate description of the ways in which human subjects are involved in your research. The following conditions apply:

- **This Approval-**The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that was submitted. **This approval is valid ONLY for the dates listed above;**
- **Reporting-**ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems that arise, in the course of your research;
- **Modifications-**Any proposed changes **MUST** be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and approval prior to implementation;
- **Consent Form(s)-**Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research;
- **Continuing Review-**You should receive a courtesy e-mail renewal notice for a Request for Continuing Review before the expiration of this project's approval. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that an application for continuing review has been submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to the expiration date to extend the approval period;

**Additional Condition:** Authorization from the following research site must be forwarded to the IRB prior to commencement of study procedures at the sites: Government Accountability Project, Project on Government Oversight, PEER

**Additional Notes:** Expedited Approval per 45 CFR 46.110

**Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval.**

Please note that the IRB has the authority to observe, or have a third party observe, the consent process or the research itself. The Federal-wide Assurance (FWA) number for the Rutgers University IRB is FWA00003913; this number may be requested on funding applications or by collaborators.

Respectfully yours,

  
 Sheryl Goldberg  
 Director of Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
 gibel@grants.rutgers.edu

cc: Gregg Van Ryzin

## Letters of Approval by Advocacy Organizations



July 31, 2012

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
3 Rutgers Plaza  
New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901

Dear Members of the Rutgers University Institutional Review Board (IRB):

This letter is to confirm that the Brown Center for Public Policy aka WhistleWatch.org has received a copy of the narrative of Cecilia Lavena's IRB proposal, and understand the procedures she will be using to voluntarily recruit participants for the study of whistleblowing in the federal government. We also understand that Mrs. Lavena will guarantee the anonymity of participants and not collect data in a manner that will allow the interviews to be linked to participants' names or identities.

It is our pleasure to assist Ms. Lavena in her efforts to recruit voluntary participants for the Rutgers study of this very important topic. We look forward to receiving a copy of the study when completed.

Sincerely,

/s// electronically signed

Evelynn Brown, J.D., LL.M  
Chief Executive Officer

c: Rutgers Dissertation

**GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT**

1612 K Street, NW, Suite #1100  
Washington, DC 20006  
(202) 457-0034 | [info@whistleblower.org](mailto:info@whistleblower.org)

August 3, 2012

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
3 Rutgers Plaza  
New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901

Dear members of the Rutgers University Institutional Review Board (IRB):

This letter is to confirm that the Government Accountability Project (GAP) has received a copy of the narrative of Cecilia Lavena's IRB proposal (attached) and understands the procedures that she will be using to voluntarily recruit participants for her study of whistleblowing in the federal government. We also understand that Mrs. Lavena will guarantee the anonymity of participants in her study and not collect data in a manner that will allow the interviews to be linked to participants' names or identities.

We look forward to assisting Ms. Lavena in her efforts to recruit voluntary participants for her study of this very important topic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Louis Clark', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Louis Clark, President

## **Interview Questions for federal employees with direct reporting experience**

Whistleblowing: Individual and Organizational Antecedents of the Decision to Report Wrongdoing in Federal Government

Principal Investigator Cecilia Lavena

Co-Investigator Gregg G. Van Ryzin

Date of the interview: -----

Participant's Location:-----

Interview Medium: -----

Pseudonym:-----

### **PART I: Format and Purpose.**

Thank you for participating in this interview today. I have chosen to interview you because of your experience in working within government. I'd like to ask you about your experience with whistleblowing.

My research project focuses on understanding people's direct or indirect experience with whistleblowing in public organizations. My study does not aim to evaluate your experiences. Rather, I am trying to find out more about what motivates public sector employees to blow the whistle, and hopefully learn about organizational characteristics that help improve employees' work and work environment within public agencies.

To facilitate my note-taking, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. The information you provide in this interview will be held in strict confidence. The collected comments, experience and suggestions from our conversation will be used for data collection and analyses in my dissertation. Specifically, my dissertation's objective is to learn about the meaning of 'whistleblowing' in U.S. public agencies through exploring federal employees' experience.

Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable. If you have questions at any time about the interview or the procedures involved in it please feel free to ask me.

I have emailed you as an attachment the informed consent form. I would need for you to read and sign the form once you consent to participate on this interview. Please send me back by email a scanned copy with your signature on it.

This interview often takes about an hour, but it could be anywhere between 45 minutes and an hour. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If time begins to run short, it may be necessary to interrupt you in order to push ahead and complete this line of questioning. Now that you understand what's going to happen let's move on to the questions.

Thank you once again for your agreeing to participate.

## PART II: Schedule of questions.

### A. The Individual

#### *Reporting Decision(s) in government*

1. When people working in federal government **see something wrong and don't report it, why does this happen?**
  - How do you feel about this?
2. When federal employees **do report wrongdoing, why do you think they do so?**
  - How do you feel about this?
3. What does **'blowing the whistle'** mean to you?

#### *Direct or Indirect Experience*

4. Have you **ever been in a position of observing wrongdoing and having to decide whether or not to report it** in your professional life?

#### Probe:

Did you observe and report the wrongdoing?

**If YES, then ASK the following questions:**

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#### *Individual factors involved in reporting decision(s) of wrongdoing*

5. What **motivated** you do so?
  - Can you recall any particular characteristics of yourself that would lead you to report wrongdoing?

#### Probes:

Moral development (principles)  
 Family values (responsibility)  
 Commitment to the greater good (society)  
 Loyalty to the public (public interest)

- What do you think are some of the individual factors that would lead someone like you to report wrongdoing?

#### Probes:

Moral development (principles)  
 Family values (responsibility)  
 Commitment to the greater good (society)  
 Loyalty to the public (public interest)

- In what way(s) **did you feel it was compelling** for you to report wrongdoing?

Probes:

Moral development (principles)

Family values (responsibility)

Commitment to the greater good (society)

Loyalty to the public (public interest)

6. In what ways was, it **your responsibility** to act?

-Was an action available to you that you believed would likely stop the wrongdoing?

**B. The Organization**

**If the interviewee recalls a DIRECT experience, then ASK the following questions:**

**Now, about your direct experience with whistleblowing**

Signaling and Demoralization

7. Did you report the wrongdoing to an **authority** that would effect change on this wrongdoing?

- How did the **organization respond**?

Probes:

Organization signaling unresponsiveness

Demoralizing wrongdoing

Organizational factors involved in reporting decision(s)

8. What is it about the **organizational work environment** that encouraged you to report wrongdoing?

-Can you recall any **particular characteristic(s) of the organization** that would lead you to report wrongdoing?

Probes:

Organization's activities

Organization's goals

Organization's values

Work setting

Your relationship with co-workers, with your supervisor, with your manager

9. What is it about the **organizational culture** of values and norms that encouraged you to report wrongdoing?

Probes:

Respect and Openness

Cooperativeness and Flexibility

Fair treatment

10. What is it about the **organizational structure** that encouraged you to report wrongdoing?

Probes:

Communication flow

Hierarchy

Power relationships

#### · **Final opinion**

For someone who has observed wrongdoing and reported it, **what do you think were the costs and benefits of reporting vs. not reporting?**

Well, that's all the questions I have.

Thank you for your time and cooperation on the completion of this interview.

I really appreciate your help.

#### **Background Information**

The following questions will be emailed in a form during participant recruitment:

- How did you get involved in working in government?
- How long had you been in your position at the time you observed wrongdoing and reported it?
- What agency were you working in?
- Where were you working at the headquarters or in the field offices of the agency?
- Briefly describe your main job responsibilities as these relate to this organization.
- What is your highest degree of education? What is your field of study?
- Data on gender will be retrieved from the interview.



## Human Subjects Certification



Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
Administrative Services Building III ♦Cook Campus  
3 Rutgers Way ♦New Brunswick ♦New Jersey 08901  
848/932-0150 ♦fax : 732/932-0163 ♦web: <http://orsp.rutgers.edu>

05/15/2012

Dear Cecilia Lavena

I am pleased to inform you that you have successfully completed the Rutgers University Human Subjects Compliance Program. This educational program includes information on the regulations, history, policies, procedures and ethical practices pertaining to research involving human subjects, which will be helpful to you as you conduct your research.

Your approval date is 02/18/2010. Duration of approval will be based on federal requirements which are not yet determined. Well in advance of the expiration date of your approval period, you will be notified so that you may continue your education regarding the protection of human subjects.

Additional information will also be provided on the IRB list-serve and posted on the human subjects website: <<http://orsp.rutgers.edu/humans/>>

Please retain this letter of certification. It will be required for submitting human subjects protocols, and continuing review forms. When submitting a funding request to NIH, the certification date will be required for inclusion on a different certification letter, which may be requested by contacting the IRB Administrator, by email at <[humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu](mailto:humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu)> or by phone at (848) 932-0150. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Sheryl N. Goldberg".

Sheryl N. Goldberg  
Director  
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

## Call for volunteers

### **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED for a study of whistleblowing in the federal government**

Good Morning!

I am a doctoral student at Rutgers University and would like to **interview current or former federal employees** for my dissertation on whistleblowing in the federal government.

I am interested in talking to people with either **direct** or **indirect experiences of whistleblowing** in their agencies, with a focus on organizational and personal factors that influence the decision to report or not report wrongdoing.

**Interviews** are **confidential** and conducted by **phone** (or **Skype**) and estimated to last 40-60 minutes. The study has been approved by Rutgers Institutional Review Board (IRB) # 12-846M.

**Current or former** mid-level managers, supervisors, and front-line employees at the following agencies **are encouraged** to respond to this call: Housing and Urban Development, Homeland Security (US Customs Office), Department of Defense, Department of Agriculture, Health and Human Services, Department of Treasury, US Air Force, Transportation Security Administration (Federal Air Marshals) and the National Security Agency.

**If you would like to participate**, or need more information about my study or eligibility requirements you can send an email to me at [clavena@pegasus.rutgers.edu](mailto:clavena@pegasus.rutgers.edu)

Thank you!

Cecilia Lavena

## Cecilia Florencia Lavena

### Curriculum Vitae

**Date and Place of Birth:** June 11, 1976, Buenos Aires, Argentina

**Education:**

PhD, Public Administration, School of Public Affairs and Administration, Rutgers University	Newark, New Jersey, 2013
MPA, Public Administration, Graduate School of Public & International Affairs, University of Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 2009
Certificate, Latin American Social and Public Policy, Center for Latin American Studies, University of Pittsburgh	Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 2009
MA, Education Management, School of Education, Universidad de San Andrés	Victoria, Argentina, 2002
BA, Political Science, Political Science Department, Universidad de San Andrés	Victoria, Argentina, 1999

**Principal Occupations:**

Teaching/Graduate Assistant, Rutgers University, School of Public Affairs and Administration	Newark, New Jersey, 2010-2013
Senior Consultant, Ministry of Education	Buenos Aires, Argentina, January-July 2007
Senior Consultant, Chief of Cabinet's Office	Buenos Aires Argentina, July-November 2006
Research Assistant, The World Bank	Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2004-2006
Semi-senior Consultant, Ministry of Education	Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2002-2004
Semi-senior Assistant, Government and Society Foundation	Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2001-2002

**Publications:**

Villoria, M., Van Ryzin, G. G., & Lavena, C. 2013. Social and political consequences of administrative corruption: A study of public perceptions in Spain. *Public Administration Review* 73(1): 85-94.

Lavena, C. and Norma M. Riccucci. 2012. Exploring Gender Mainstreaming in the European Union. *International Journal of Public Administration* 35(2): 122–136.