

WHEN TO CALL THE POLICE?: HOW CRIME
TYPE AND CONTEXTUAL FACTORS
IMPACT CRIME REPORTING

by

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ABSTRACT

Crime reporting is vital for community safety, yet many crimes are not reported to police. What factors impact a citizen's decision whether or not to report crime? Extant literature has focused on between-person likelihood to report a single, abstract crime. This body of research has found that crime reporting varies across racial groups and by a persons' views of police. Yet, it is not clear how contextual factors impact within-person variation in likelihood to report crime. Using a survey-embedded experiment with a national sample (n=1900), I examine factors that impact within-person variance in likelihood to report crimes across series of scenarios. These scenarios vary on crime type, police response, and community reaction to create 72 possible combinations. Each participant was presented with a series crime pairs and was asked which scenario they would be more likely to report to police in each pair. Participants were then prompted to elaborate on the reasons behind their choice in an open-ended response that I coded for analysis. Results indicate that the contextual factors of crime type, police response, and community reaction were influential in the decision to report a crime scenario.

Keywords: crime reporting, police, race, community norms

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all of the people that supported me in the process of writing my thesis. I would never be here without the unwavering support of my parents, my siblings, my professors, and friends.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Underreporting criminal behavior has long been an issue in the United States, and evidence suggests that reporting rates vary by crime type (Langton, Berzofsky, Krebs, & Smiley-McDonald, 2012). Along with variation in reporting based on crime type, there is variation in crime reporting between individuals and groups (Desmond, Papachristos, & Kirk, 2016; Langton et al., 2012; Wehrman & De Angelis, 2011). While the differences between people and their willingness to report a crime has been demonstrated, there may also be variation in reporting within-individuals. For example, an individual could decide to report a suspected break-in, yet ignore someone vandalizing a building later the same day.

Previous literature consistently finds that a few factors influence citizen willingness to cooperate with police: police legitimacy, procedural justice, community norms, and race (Merry, 1979; Murphy et al., 2008; Tyler, 1990; Wehrman & De Angelis, 2011). While a robust literature has examined between-person differences in crime reporting, we know far less about within-person variation. The current study examines one specific question related to crime reporting: Why would an individual choose to report one crime and not another? This question will be addressed with data from a survey-embedded experiment using a national sample of adults in the United States.

In this paper, I will first address the previous literature on cooperation with police, police legitimacy, procedural justice, community norms and reporting, race and reporting, and crime severity and reporting. Then, I will explain the measures and procedure for the current study.

Following this, I would outline the results of the study will be shared. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion of the results, recommendations for future research, and policy implications.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cooperation with Police

Cooperation between citizens and police officers is imperative to effectively manage crime. Previous literature provides multiple factors that influence citizens' willingness to cooperate with police. A few factors that are argued to influence cooperation are: citizen perceptions of police, treatment of citizens by police, police efficacy, shared values with the police, and whether citizens view police to be legitimate (Johnson, Wilson, Maguire, & Lowrey-Kinberg, 2017; Skogan, 1984; Tyler & Fagan, 2008; Tyler & Huo, 2002). Cooperation has been measured in many studies, where the operationalization of cooperation has varied (Murphy, 2015; Tyler, 2005; Tyler & Fagan, 2008). Although there are often distinct ways of measuring cooperation, there are a few reoccurring components. Cooperation with police has been measured with these factors: providing information to police, supporting the police, and reporting crime (Hamm, Trinkner, & Carr, 2017; Reisig, Bratton, & Gertz, 2007; Tyler, 2005). Participant willingness to provide information to police officers is included in a few studies and is measured in different ways. A few measurements of willingness to provide information to police include: coming forward to police with information that an individual has about a crime (Hamm et al., 2017), a willingness to help police find a suspect (Reisig et al., 2007; Tyler, 2005), and a willingness to identify a person that committed a crime or appear in court as a witness (Hamm et al., 2017). Additionally, supporting the police in general has been used as a measure of cooperation, albeit rarely. Hamm et al. (2017) included donating time and money to the

police, defending the police, and voting for increased funding of police as measurements of police support. Finally, willingness to report a crime was the seemingly most popular component included in measurements of citizen cooperation with police. Previous studies asked about willingness to report a crime in the respondent's neighborhood (Tyler, 2005), willingness to call the police to report an accident (Reisig et al., 2007), and willingness to report suspicious activity near their home (Hamm et al., 2017).

Overall, previous studies have generally asked about cooperation and crime reporting in the abstract. Respondents are typically asked if they would be willing to cooperate, rather than actually observing their cooperative behavior. To date, there is little research that has considered how situational factors impact willingness to cooperate, there is some research on how this varies across demographic factors, and minimal research on within-person variation, if any.

Police Legitimacy and Debates Around the Term

While the concept of police legitimacy is present in a great deal of literature, the true definition is debated. The definition of police legitimacy has been debated amongst scholars for decades and continues to be researched. As of the present, there is no singular, universal definition or operationalization of police legitimacy. However, there are four main perspectives that are typically evaluated.

Tom Tyler's operationalization and definition of police legitimacy, especially, has evolved over a few decades. Tyler has previously operationalized police legitimacy as: the felt obligation to obey police, then as trust in the police, and then later on as moral alignment with the police (Tyler, 1990; Tyler & Huo, 2002; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003b). In this perspective, police effectiveness and police fairness are two separate factors that could influence the legitimacy of police (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003a), which may mean there are different impacts of

respectful and effective police behaviors. As a concept, Tyler (1990) stated that police legitimacy is important because it is the key precondition to the effectiveness of authorities and impacts the degree to which people comply with the law. In congruence with Tyler's perspective on police legitimacy, Tyler and Fagan (2008) found that people who viewed the police as legitimate were more willing to cooperate with police and to report crime. Procedural justice, which is typically measured by quality of treatment and quality of decision making by the police, is the main antecedent to police legitimacy (Murphy et al., 2008).

Bottoms and Tankebe (2012) drew from political science by theorizing on the meaning of legitimacy more broadly—beyond just law enforcement. They postulated that for an audience to find the power-holder to be legitimate, at minimum, the requirements are: perceived legality, procedural justice, and effectiveness (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012). Similarly, Tankebe (2013) strayed from Tyler (1990)'s definition by claiming that the components of police legitimacy are: 1) police lawfulness, 2) police distributive justice, 3) police procedural justice, and 4) police effectiveness.

Police lawfulness refers to the police upholding the written law as well as the moral values of the community. The law and moral values need to be reflected in police behavior to be evaluated and perceived as legitimate (Tankebe, 2013). Distributive justice depends on the perception that people receive fair outcomes from the police and that people receive the same outcomes in similar situations regardless of individual differences (Tankebe, 2013). Procedural fairness refers to the fairness of the procedures and rules that the police follow, the decisions made by police are based on facts and not personal opinions and can be corrected, the police explaining their actions to the people they interact with, and the police treating citizens with respects in all situations (Tankebe, 2013). Finally, police effectiveness was described as the

performance of police on tackling crime, both generally and specifically, as well as solving problems that the community or citizens may have (Tankebe, 2013). Interestingly, Johnson, Maguire & Kuhns (2014) found that distributive justice and procedural fairness yielded the same result, effectively pointing out that they are the same. Contrary to Tyler (1990), Tankebe (2013) argued that obligation to obey the police is separate from the definition of legitimacy, because legitimacy is claimed to have its own, independent effects on cooperation. Therefore, these two definitions are at odds with each other.

A third perspective on the conceptualization of legitimacy is based on the idea that people accept the police officers' right to dictate appropriate behavior, not only when they feel an obligation to obey officers, but also when they believe that the institution acts according to a shared moral purpose with society (Jackson et al., 2012). Moral alignment, shared beliefs, and shared values between the public and police have been supported by multiple studies (Jackson & Bradford, 2009; Jackson et al., 2012; Jackson & Sunshine, 2006), but this perspective has been scarce in some other definitions of legitimacy. Shared values between the police and citizens are considered to be vital in the evaluation and reputation of police, where stronger identification with the police has a positive influence on interactions with police and support for them (Jackson & Bradford, 2009; Jackson & Sunshine, 2006).

Obligation to obey is not considered a component of legitimacy in this perspective, but is thought to be a part of a broader set of beliefs, ideas, and behaviors that individuals express in relation to those authorities that combine to either produce or negate their legitimacy (Jackson et al., 2012). People comply more fully with the police, cooperate with them more strongly, and empower them more highly when they think the police share their moral values (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003b). Previous to this perspective, Weber (1978) posited that the legal authority holds

power when their claim of power is accepted. A position of power is confirmed when the appropriate attitudes (i.e. acceptance) and behavior (i.e. compliance) are present in the group that one has power over (Weber, 1978). Therefore, one is only an authority figure when those they would be holding authority over accept their power and respond with attitudes and behaviors that demonstrate their acceptance of the authority figure's power. Power is not perceived as legitimate when those that one would rule do not accept them. Beetham (1991) further claims that power is legitimate only to the extent that the rules of power are justified. The rules of power are justified when there is a congruence of beliefs shared by both the power-holder and the subordinate. Therefore, the alignment of norms and beliefs seem to be influential in the formation of the perceived legitimacy of the power-holder by the subordinate. When this is applied to policing, the power-holder, the police officer, would be perceived as legitimate to the extent that there are shared beliefs between them and the public on the evaluation of their authority. The acceptance of police authority would occur when both parties share the same belief of their authority.

Scholars are still currently engaged in a theoretical debate about what *ought* to be considered the components of police legitimacy. Yet, this debate neglects how the public *perceives* police legitimacy. To address this gap, Kearns, Ashooh, and Lowrey-Kinberg (2019) asked members of the public to define police legitimacy and compared these citizen-generated definitions to those debated among scholars. Results show clear discrepancies between the various definitions of legitimacy debated in scholarly literature and the definitions provided from members of the public. When prompted to provide a definition of legitimacy, citizens did not self-generate any of the following components that are core to academic definitions of legitimacy: 1) shared values between citizens and authorities, 2) an obligation to obey, and 3)

trust and confidence in police (Kearns et al., 2018). These components are popular in the definitions formulated by scholars, but were not seen as important for citizens when formulating their own definitions of police legitimacy. A component that was agreed upon by both academic scholars and respondents is that legality is vital for police legitimacy (Kearns et al., 2018). Four other elements that were mentioned by citizens as part of police legitimacy, but less frequently were: the right to govern, fair treatment, moral behavior, police honesty, providing protection, and police effectiveness (Kearns et al., 2018). Surprisingly, no one definition formulated by scholars seemed to fit the definition that the respondents created.

As one can see, there are discrepancies between the definitions that citizens provided and the way police legitimacy has been operationalized in scholarly research. When examining the definitions of legitimacy throughout the literature and studies, there is no universal definition that has been agreed upon, so there may not be one way in which legitimacy has equal meaning to all groups. Although there are conflicting opinions on the optimal operationalization of police legitimacy, it is clear that legitimacy -however measured- is linked to greater compliance, obedience, and cooperation with police officers (Tankebe, 2013; Tyler, 1990; Tyler & Fagan, 2008). No matter how it is conceptualized or measured, there is no debate that stronger views of police legitimacy have positive downstream implications. An individual's perception of police legitimacy could influence cooperation, which could then impact the interactions they have with police in the future.

Murphy et al. (2008) found that perceptions of police legitimacy predict changes in cooperative behavior over time, suggesting that an individual's perception of police legitimacy is not always static. An individual's perception of police legitimacy may change with different interactions, where people who believe that the police are using procedural justice in their

interactions with the public are more likely to perceive the police as legitimate over time. A changing perception of police legitimacy, therefore, may be able to explain why an individual would change their cooperative behavior. For example, choosing to report a crime one day and deciding not to in another situation. The change in an individual's perception of legitimacy, however, seems to be driven by procedurally just practices (Murphy et. al, 2008), which will be discussed in the next section.

Procedural Justice and Cooperation with Police

Procedural justice is often a main component in definitions of police legitimacy. Procedurally just behavior is evaluated by citizens and informed by police interactions (Tyler, 1990). Tyler (1990) defined procedural justice as the quality of decision-making and the quality of treatment by police. In this view, a situation would be procedurally just, for example, when both the treatment and the decision by the police officer was fair to the citizen. Another definition of procedural justice has three components: overall evaluations of procedural fairness, evaluations of the quality of decision-making, as well as evaluations of quality of interpersonal treatment (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003a). A more recent definition of procedural justice by Tyler and Murphy (2011) claims that the four elements of procedural justice are neutrality, respect, trustworthiness, and voice. Neutrality refers to the police remaining neutral when making decisions, respect refers to police treating the citizen with dignity and respect, trustworthiness refers to whether the police convey a sense of trustworthiness with their motives, and voice refers to the police encouraging citizen participation in the interaction (Tyler & Murphy, 2011). Procedural justice can generally be explained as treating citizens in a fair and respectful manner, where numerous studies have included it with variations on their operationalizations.

Citizens' direct experiences with police officers can determine whether they perceive the police as fair or unfair (Pehrson et al., 2017). Both fair and unfair experiences significantly shape post-experience views of police legitimacy, with fair experiences increasing views of legitimacy and unfair experiences lowering views of police legitimacy (Tyler, 2017). If one's interaction with a police officer seems as though they stepped outside the accepted bounds of their authority-i.e. verbal abuse or other negative behavior- then the basis for their legitimacy is undermined (Pehrson et al., 2017). Generally, encounters with police matter and influence perceptions of fairness.

Citizens' perception of police fairness is important because it may impact the way they interact with police officers. People tend to focus on police fairness of procedure in their interactions, where the three aspects considered in the evaluation of police fairness are: their neutrality of decision-making, how polite and respectful the interpersonal treatment is, and whether they provide opportunities for citizens to voice their opinions (Tyler, 2005). Similarly, Skogan (2005) found that citizens were more satisfied with police encounters when the police were helpful, polite, willing to explain what was going on in the interaction, and attentive to what the citizen had to say.

The just and trustworthy behavior shown by legal authorities is important for the way in which citizens view the legal authorities. It is through procedurally just interactions with the public that the police influence their own legitimacy (Tyler & Huo, 2002). On a larger scale, Pehrson et al. (2017) recognized that citizens with positive experiences with police perceived the police as serving wider society, while those with hostile or suspicious encounters with police were not likely to feel as though the police serve wider society.

Procedural justice has often been paired and compared with distributive justice or fairness (Tankebe, 2009, 2013). Distributive justice can best be defined as the perception that the distribution of outcomes and the outcomes people receive are fair (Tankebe, 2013). Outcomes are perceived as fair when police discretion is used correctly, such as arresting someone for a valid reason, rather than giving out an undeserved punishment. The distribution of outcomes is perceived as fair when all groups of people, regardless of race, class, gender, etc. are treated with the same outcome fairness. Therefore, people would need to receive the same outcomes for the same types of situations without other individual characteristics interfering in the outcome received. While some studies have found distributive justice to be significant in the willingness of citizens to cooperate with police, overwhelmingly, procedural justice has been found to be a stronger indicator of willingness to cooperate or a felt obligation to obey police (Murphy et al., 2008; Tankebe, 2013). As procedural justice can vary across interactions and impact future cooperation (Murphy et al., 2008), the quality of the outcome and the treatment that an individual may experience could influence their decision to report a crime to the police.

Victims of crime, specifically, are more concerned with police effectiveness and procedural justice than the favorability of the outcome (Murphy & Barkworth, 2014). Regardless of the outcome of reporting the crime, whether it was in their favor or not, their perception of the procedural justice and police effectiveness of their latest police encounter influenced subsequent willingness to report future crimes to the police (Murphy & Barkworth, 2014). Similarly, Tankebe (2009) found that perceived police effectiveness was the most significant indicator of whether people were willing to cooperate for respondents in Ghana, rather than procedural justice, which was a smaller indicator. This finding indicates that the effectiveness and quality of an individual's latest outcome with police may be more influential for some people over others.

If an individual decided to report a crime and did not perceive the police to be effective, they made decide not to report crimes in the future. This is a possibility, but the literature on cooperation indicates that quality of treatment is more influential than efficacy.

Procedural justice has a positive influence on interactions between citizens and police officers, where people are more willing to cooperate with and have better views of police officers in procedurally just interactions (Hamm, Trinkner, & Carr, 2017; Johnson et al., 2017; Murphy, 2015). In contrast, negative police treatment is a potential obstacle to crime reporting. People are less likely to report crime to the police if they think that police will be biased or that they will not do anything to help to them (Langton et al., 2012). Procedural justice may also interact with crime reporting, as the obstacles to reporting reflect the perception of poor police conduct. In relation to an individual's decision to report a crime, this could be impacted by the most recent encounter that they experienced with a police officer. If an individual typically had positive experiences with police officers and usually would report a crime, but had a poor experience recently, they may be less willing to cooperate and assist than usual. This could potentially account for within-person differences for crime reporting.

Since there is evidence that procedural justice and police effectiveness increase subsequent willingness to report (Murphy & Barkworth, 2014), the first hypothesis of the current study is informed by this. We expect that when police are respectful or effective, respondents will be more likely to cooperate and report a crime. The first hypothesis for the current study is:

H₁: Respondents will be more likely to state police response as a reason they would report a crime when there is a better police response (police are respectful or effective v. disrespectful or ineffective)

Community Norms and Cooperation with Police

The communities and neighborhoods that individuals come from may also influence their perceptions of police and their willingness to cooperate with them. Neighborhood characteristics are important in predicting citizen satisfaction with the police (Wu, Sun, & Triplett, 2009). Individuals may become dissatisfied with their local police force as a result of perceiving their community as lacking in order and social control (Jackson & Bradford, 2009). Disorganized neighborhoods can lead to dissatisfaction with police, but the overall neighborhood class status can also be influential. Neighborhood class status, rather than individual class status, matters more in measuring satisfaction with police, which leans towards a community influence on police perception (Wu et al., 2009).

There is a social value component to the link that people feel to group authorities because the authorities are expected to represent the moral values of the group overall. Those who identify more strongly with their community feel greater solidarity with the police, believing that the police share their values and the values of those in their group (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003b). Citizens look for the police to exercise their powers fairly and to be representative of their community values, where procedural justice is a way in which they demonstrate these values (Jackson & Sunshine, 2006). When people perceive group authorities to represent their values, they identify and cooperate with them (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003b).

Similarly, the more the public feels that the police represent their values, the more confidence in the effectiveness of police that they feel (Jackson & Sunshine, 2006). Confidence in policing and fear of crime may also be a product of their perception of community conditions, as people rely on the police to defend civility, social control and norms (Jackson & Bradford, 2009). Confidence in police can also be a product of observing police actively tackling crime.

Zahnow, Mazerolle, Wickes, and Corcoran (2017) examined the confidence levels that citizens reported they had in the police and found that people who lived in neighborhoods closer in proximity to recent violent events actually reported higher confidence in police because they saw them actively responding to crime.

Community conditions and feelings of identification with police are instrumental in the perception of police, but community norms also play a role as there is a strong normative influence on public support of the police that is distinct from the performance of police (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003b). Antrobus, Bradford, Murphy, and Sargeant (2015) found that the community norms around perceptions of police legitimacy can impact one's own perceptions of police legitimacy. If the community that one belongs to does not perceive the police to be legitimate, then it is likely that the individual would be influenced by this perception and conform to the community's views on police. There are differences in the way that police are viewed across communities, which can be based on the values and perceptions of those around them.

One reason that the crime may not be reported is because the victim dealt with the victimization in another way, such as reporting it to a different official or addressing it privately (Langton et al., 2012). In some communities, police are not given the same legitimacy or power as others, which can be influenced by factors other than general community perception of legitimacy. For example, some tight-knit ethnic communities are more likely to defer to community leaders to act as mediators for their problems than the criminal justice system. Merry (1979) found that communities that were not very tight-knit would often take their situations to court or complain to police about neighbors, but there were some ethnic groups that did not have the same norms. Rather than turning to legal authorities, such as the police, they would handle

issues themselves or with other members of their community (Merry, 1979). Regardless of police performance and legitimacy, there may be people that prefer to handle situations within their own communities.

The literature on community norms indicates that a community's perception of police can influence an individual's perception (Antrobus et al., 2015). When considering an individual's decision to report a crime in relation to their community, community norms are often considered. However, there may also be an influence of neighborhood crime rates. Berg, Slocum, & Loeber (2013) found that residents of high-crime areas were less likely to notify the police when they were victimized. These results indicate that community crime rates were more influential than structural disadvantage when it came to a decision about crime reporting (Berg et al., 2013). Thinking about why an individual would choose to report a crime at one point and not at another, perhaps fluctuations in neighborhood crime rates could influence an individual's willingness to report. There could be a rapid change in the crime rate for a neighborhood generally, or a person could move and experience a higher or lower rate than they are accustomed to. Fluctuations in neighborhood crime could potentially account for why an individual would change their reporting practice along with the response from their neighborhood. Based on the literature about a community's influence on an individual, we expect that respondents will be concerned about the response from their community in crime scenarios. Therefore, the second hypothesis for the current study is:

H₂: Respondents will be more likely to state community response as a reason they would report a crime when there is a better community response (supportive community or anonymous reporting v. community backlash)

Race and Cooperation with Police

Throughout American history, the relationship between police officers and minority groups has been tense. More recently, police brutality against unarmed men of color, specifically Black men, has been frequent in the media. High-profile cases of police misconduct involving Black men contribute to the spread of legal cynicism within Black communities (Kirk & Papachristos, 2011). Although police officers are expected to treat all citizens equally, this expectation has not been met in all situations. The interactions between Black citizens and police officers, specifically, have been noted to be atypical in quality and quantity as compared to citizens of other races (Eller, Abrams, Viki, Imara, & Peerbux, 2007). Eller et al. (2007) found that Black respondents reported higher quantity of contact with police officers, but lower quality of contact. Similarly, Skogan (2005) found that Black respondents were stopped by police the most frequently. Skogan (2005) also found that Hispanic and Black respondents were more likely to feel that they were treated unfairly and that police were less polite. In a Bureau of Justice Statistics report, Langton & Durose (2013) found that White people were less likely to get ticketed and searched than Black and Hispanic citizens. Of those involved in traffic and street stops, Black citizens were less likely to feel that the police behaved properly during the stop than White citizens. More frequent, negative interactions with police have the potential to tarnish one's perception of police officers, which explains why, in some instances, Black respondents report lower trust in the police (Tyler, 2005). Tyler and Huo (2002) found that minority group members were more resistant to accepting decisions of legal authorities because they were more likely to feel as though they did not receive procedural justice and did not trust the motivations of the authorities they were interacting with.

Respondents of color typically have more frequent and less positive interactions with

police officers, however, there is an ongoing debate over whether the tone and frequency of interactions will impact a citizen's willingness to cooperate with police. Skogan (2005) found that English-speaking Hispanic respondents were the most likely to contact the police when compared to Black and White respondents. Alternatively, Wehrman and De Angelis (2011) found that Black respondents were more willing to assist police than White respondents. As the concentration of Black respondents increased in the community, so did the willingness to cooperate with police in general (Wehrman & De Angelis, 2011). Conversely, Tyler (2005) found that White respondents were the most willing to cooperate with police to fight crime. These conflicting findings make it difficult to ascertain whether racial differences influence a citizen's willingness to cooperate one way or another. However, Eller et al. (2007) found that quality of contact significantly mediated the relationship between race and cooperation as well as race and perceived police racism. Better quality of contact between police officers and citizens diminishes perceived police racism and increases cooperation (Eller et al., 2007). Thus, there may be more of an impact of poor quality of contact than racial differences on willingness to cooperate.

When considering the impact of race on an individual level, perceived racism from police interactions may account for a situation where an individual may choose not to report a crime. Within-person differences in crime reporting could, in some instances, be related to procedural justice as well as the perception of racism from the police. If an individual perceives the police to behaving in a racist manner during their interaction, they may choose not report that particular crime and choose to report in another instance.

On a larger scale, Desmond, Papachristos, & Kirk (2016) analyzed the effects of publicized police violence cases on crime reporting. They looked at every 911 call placed in

Milwaukee between March 1, 2004 and December 31, 2010 to examine whether any trends in reporting occurred after major publicized events of police violence against an unarmed Black citizen. It was found that crime reporting significantly decreased after these major events, especially the crime reporting behavior of Black citizens. Citizens in mostly Black neighborhoods significantly altered their crime reporting behavior after these major police violence events, while this change in reporting behavior was not observed for citizens of other races. With the results of significantly lessened crime reports, Desmond et al. (2016) claimed that the police violence cases not only threatened the legitimacy of police, but also made Black communities less safe since they were no longer as willing to report crime after a highly-publicized case of police violence. These between-group results may also be able to account for some within-person variation when considering crime reporting. While Black citizens as a group were less likely to report after major publicized events of police violence, some individuals may have been more affected than others. Publicized cases of police violence could act as an obstacle to reporting for an individual when they were likely to assist the police before the event.

The literature is inconsistent in its findings on race and cooperation, but there seems to be a significant relationship. While there are no clear findings on cooperation and crime reporting between-groups when considering race, there are studies that have found significant results. Due to the inconsistent, yet significant findings, our third hypothesis for the current study is:

H₃: There will be significant differences between the stated reasons that Black and Hispanic participants had to hypothetically report a crime when compared to White participants

Crime Severity

Crime reporting is an essential component of crime management. If the police are not alerted to crimes by citizens, it is not as likely that they will be able to handle the situation. What the current study is concerned with is what motivations individuals have to hypothetically report some crime scenarios over others. Buckley et al. (2016) found that a key determinant of an individual's willingness to report a crime is the severity of the crime. When citizens perceived the crime to be more severe, they were more willing to report it than a crime they saw as less serious (Buckley et al., 2016). Tarling & Morris (2010) also found that the seriousness of the crime, regardless of how it was measured, was the most important factor influencing the decision to report a crime to police. For example, property crime was less likely to be reported than serious violent crime (Tarling & Morris, 2010). In relation to crime severity, a popular reason that victims of crime have not reported stems from the belief that police would feel as though the crime was not important enough (Langton et al., 2012). While more serious crimes, like sexual violence, are sometimes reported less often than property crimes, this may be due to incentives to report. Property crimes allow for insurance claims, which would increase reporting rates, while factors like shame would decrease the reporting rates for sexual victimization (Bowles, Reyes, & Garoupa, 2009). When considering why an individual would choose to report one crime and not another, crime severity is a potential factor that could influence within-person variation. If an individual witnessed a homicide and an instance of vandalism in the same day, it would be likely that the homicide would take a higher priority because of the severity difference. Since people are more likely to report a crime when the crime is more severe (Buckley et al., 2016; Tarling & Morris, 2010), we expect that more severe crimes will be prioritized in the current study. This informs our fourth and final hypothesis is:

H4: Respondents will be more likely to state crime severity as a reason they would report a crime when the crime is more severe

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The data are comprised of a national sample of 1,900 people in the United States. The data were collected during February and April of 2016 through Qualtrics, an online survey distributor. The data come from three samples: Whites (N=650), Blacks (N=624), and Hispanics (N=626). Each sample is approximately reflective of the United States Census from 2014 on gender, race, income, education, age, and region of the country.

Procedure

The survey took participants approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. This study uses a choice-based conjoint experimental design to present participants with crime scenarios that randomly differ on three factors—crime type, police response, and community reaction—which theoretically should impact reporting decisions. Choice-based conjoint designs present participants with two scenarios at a time and ask participants to choose one scenario, in this case which crime they would prefer to report to police. Conjoint designs allow the researcher to identify the effect of each value of each factor on the probability of being preferred due to a randomized presentation of these characteristics (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014). Other benefits of a conjoint experimental design are: the ability to limit the effects of social desirability, the ability to estimate the effects of multiple treatments on one outcome, and it allows researchers to test a large number of causal hypotheses in a single study (Hainmueller, Hopkins, & Yamamoto, 2014).

Each participant was presented with a series of six crime pairs and asked which of the two scenarios they would be more likely to report. In total, each participant evaluated 12 crime scenarios.¹ In each conjoint pair, participants viewed the two crime scenarios and were asked: “If you had to choose, which of these two incidents are you more likely to report to the police?” To probe these decisions, participants were then asked “Why would you be more likely to report that incident?”. This response after each crime pair was in an open-ended format where the respondents stated their own reasons for choosing one crime over another. The stated reasons for reporting one crime scenario over another are what we were concerned with and what we coded for the analyses in the present study.

Measures

We are interested in one key question: Why would an *individual* choose to prioritize reporting one crime over another? Each crime scenario in the conjoint design contained three pieces of information that theoretically should influence the decision to report the incident to police: crime type, police response, and community reaction. Values for each of these three attributes were randomly assigned in each conjoint. Crime type took one of six values: vandalism, break-in, gang activity, domestic violence, terrorism activity, and homicide. Police response took one of four values: respectful, disrespectful, effective, and ineffective. Community reaction was one of three responses: backlash, support, and anonymous. In sum, there were 72 possible combinations. Two crime scenarios were presented at the same time to the participant, where they were prompted to choose a scenario that they were more likely to report from the

¹ Participants also responded to questions about their perceptions of and experience with police and their community norms for handling conflict. These items are not included in the present analyses. All blocks of questions were presented in a random order to control for order effect bias.

pair. Due to randomization, the scenarios varied on crime type, police response, and community reaction, with a possibility of the scenarios being the exact same.

Dependent variables. The outcome we are interested in is *why* an individual chooses to report one crime scenario over another. To create these dependent variables, participants responded to an open-ended question after evaluating each conjoint pair. The written responses from the participants were evaluated and categorized. First, researchers randomly selected a subset of responses to identify common reasons that participants gave for selecting one crime to report. From this, we identified the following 12 categories that are *not* mutually exclusive: more serious crime; more common crime; police response; community response; anonymous reporting; first-hand experience; ensure action about the crime; protection; right thing to do; would report both; not yet a crime; and don't want to get involved. We also created codes—which were not used for analyses—that account for when the participant either did not know why they chose one scenario or responded in a way that did not fit into a broader category.

Next, we completed an inter-rater reliability test. To code the open-ended responses, we then selected another random sample of 30 responses. Two researchers separately coded each response on the 14 categories (12 substantive and two for unsure or unclear responses). For each response, every category could take one of four possible values: 0= no; 1=yes; -999=unclear; and, -888=ambiguous. For example, if someone stated that they reported one crime over another because “it was the right thing to do”, then all categories would be coded as 0, aside from the “right thing to do” category, which would be coded as 1. Interrater reliability for response coding was high ($k=0.91$), which is well above the commonly held threshold of 0.7 (Landis & Koch, 1997). A single researcher coded the remaining responses. To probe why respondents made their decisions, we created a set of 12 binary dependent variables—one for each of the substantive

categories. For each category, unknown and ambiguous responses were collapsed with the “no” responses to create binary variables.

Independent variables. The independent variables in the current study are race, crime type (severity), police response, and community reaction. For the race variable, respondents were asked if they identified as White, Black, or Hispanic. For our analyses, we coded White into “Non-minority” and combined Black and Hispanic to create the “Minority” variable. Non-minority was coded as 0 and Minority was coded as 1. To account for differences between the responses for Black and Hispanic respondents in relation to White respondents, we also created the variables of Black and Hispanic. For the variable Black, White respondents were coded as 0 and Black respondents were coded as 1. Similarly, for the variable Hispanic, White respondents were coded as 0 and Hispanic respondents were coded as 1.

As previously mentioned, each scenario’s crime type was randomly assigned to be one of the following crimes: vandalism, a break-in, gang activity, domestic violence, terrorism activity, or homicide. Crime type was scaled with a focus on the difference of severity between the selected and not selected scenario. The less severe crime types, vandalism and a break-in, were assigned a 1. The mildly severe crime types, domestic violence and gang activity, were assigned a 2. The most severe crime types, homicide and terrorism activity, were assigned a 3. The difference was measured by subtracting the severity of the not chosen incident from the chosen incident’s severity. This ranged from -2 to 2, with -2 indicating that a scenario with a less severe crime type was chosen and 2 indicating that a scenario with a more severe crime type was chosen. For example, a respondent could have chosen Incident A, with a break-in, over Incident B, with a homicide. We would subtract the severity of Incident B, which was 3, from the severity of Incident A, which was 1. This would give us a crime severity score of -2 for this pair.

Police response was randomly assigned to be one of the following: effective, ineffective, respectful, or disrespectful. Two of these options are positive, effective and respectful, while the other two are negative, ineffective and disrespectful. Kearns (2016) found that effective and respectful treatment from police have the same positive impact on crime reporting, just as disrespectful and ineffective treatment from police have the same negative impact. As such, we collapsed disrespectful and ineffective treatment into a single category: negative police response. Similarly, we combined respectful and effective treatment into a single category: positive police response. Negative police responses were scaled as 0, while positive police responses were scaled as 1. To compare the difference in police response between the chosen incident's police response and the police response for the incident that was not chosen, we subtracted the unselected incident from the selected incident. With this method, police response ranged from -1 to 1, with 1 indicating a better police response.

As for community reaction in the crime scenarios, they were randomly assigned to be one of the following: community support, community backlash, or anonymous reporting. In sum, an example scenario would be: a homicide with a respectful police response and backlash from the community for reporting. Community response was sorted into the categories of positive community response and negative community response. The positive community response category included support from the community and anonymous reporting. The negative community response category included backlash from the community. Negative community responses were scaled as 0, while positive community responses were scaled as 1. The variable for community response was measured by the difference between the community response in the selected and not selected scenarios. As with the other variables, the community response of the unselected scenario was subtracted from the community response of the selected scenario.

Community response varied from -1 to 1, with 1 indicating that a scenario with a better community response was chosen.

Control variables. Much of the literature on views of and interactions with police focuses on between-demographic differences. Specifically, age, gender, education, and income have been shown to influence cooperation with police (Murphy, 2015; Murphy & Barkworth, 2014; Murphy et al., 2015; Weitzer, 1999). Thus, we control for these demographic factors in the present study. For the variable of gender, the respondents chose male, female, or other (open-ended). For these analyses, Female was coded as 0 and Male was coded as 1. Age was measured at six different intervals: 18-24 was measured as 1, 25-34 was coded as 2, 35-44 was measured as 3, 45-54 was coded as 4, 55-64 was measured as 5, and 65+ was coded as 5.

Education was measured at five levels. Some high school or less was measured as 1, High school/GED was measured as 2, Some college was measured as 3, College degree was measured as 4, and a Graduate degree was measured as 5. The variable, Income, was measured at five different levels as well. Respondents that made less than \$24,999 were coded as 1, \$25,000-\$49,999 was coded as 2, \$50,000-\$74,999 was measured as 3, \$75,000-\$99,999 was measured as 4, and more than \$100,000 a year was coded as 5. All of the control variables were included as they have been found to be or are expected to influence views of police and crime reporting through the results of various studies (Murphy, 2015; Murphy et al., 2008; Tyler, 2005).

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the stated reasons why individuals would choose to hypothetically report one crime over another. We estimated logistic regression models to examine how situational factors—crime type, police response, and community reaction— influence why a person indicated they would report one crime over another. For all models, standard error was clustered on the participants because each participant evaluated 6 crime pairs. We used logit models because we have binary dependent variables. Odds ratios were used to predict the odds of a respondent stating a reason under various conditions and controls. While we ran 30 logit models, only the first model for each table will be discussed in text because it is the main model for each dependent variable. The other models will not be discussed, but serve as a robustness check for the results.

Descriptive Statistics

As previously mentioned, the three samples used for this study were collected with the intention of resembling the U.S. Census from 2014 on age, race, gender, income, education, and region of the country. As shown in Table 1, the similarities between the three samples and the U.S. population were strong. The three samples were combined to create one sample used for the current study's analyses. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the independent variables, control variables, and dependent variables of the overall sample.

Table 1. Demographic Variables by Race in our Sample v. the U.S. Population

Variable	White		African-American		Hispanic	
	Our Sample	US Pop.	Our Sample	US Pop.	Our Sample	US Pop.
Gender: Male	48.8%	49%	41.8%	48%	43.0%	48%
Gender: Female	51.2%	51%	58.2%	52%	57.0%	52%
Age: 18-34	26.0%	26%	35.7%	35%	44.0%	35%
Age: 35-54	32.8%	33%	38.5%	36%	38.7%	36%
Age: 55+	41.2%	41%	25.8%	29%	16.3%	29%
Education: No college	36.9%	37%	42.2%	48%	52.5%	48%
Education: Some college	63.1%	63%	57.8%	52%	47.5%	52%
Income: Less than \$49,999	41.6%	42%	60.7%	64%	57.2%	64%
Income: \$50,000 or more	58.4%	58%	39.3%	36%	42.1%	36%
Region: Northeast	19.9%	19%	11.9%	10%	13.4%	10%
Region: Midwest	25.7%	27%	14.3%	12%	8.8%	12%
Region: South	35.9%	35%	41.1%	36%	31.8%	36%
Region: West	18.6%	19%	30.8%	42%	46.0%	42%

As seen in Table 2, the frequencies for the dependent variables varied. The frequencies measure the amount that each dependent variable was stated as a reason that a respondent would hypothetically report one crime over another. The most frequently stated reason for reporting was crime severity, which was mentioned in 26.90% of the responses. Police response was the second most frequently stated reason to hypothetically report one crime over another, where it was mentioned in 12.93% of the responses. After crime severity and police response, the most frequently stated reasons for choosing to hypothetically report one crime over another were: right thing to do (10.21%), protection for self and others (8.70%), community response (5.28%), and anonymous reporting (4.61%). As previously mentioned, the categories were not mutually exclusive, so respondents could have multiple stated reasons for their hypothetical choice to report one crime over another.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of IVs, DVs and Controls

Variable	Frequency (N)	Mean (SD)	Range
<i>Control</i>			
Gender: Male	44.58% (N=847)		
Gender: Female	55.42% (N=1,053)		
Income: \$49,999 or less	53.00% (N=1,007)		
Income: \$50,000 or more	47.00% (N=1,173)		
Age: 18-34	35.10% (N=667)		
Age: 35-54	36.95% (N=710)		
Age: 55+	27.95% (N=531)		
Education: HS/GED or less	43.79% (N=832)		
Education: Some college or more	56.21% (N=1,068)		
<i>Independent</i>			
Race: Black	32.84% (N=624)		
Race: Hispanic	32.95% (N=626)		
Race: White	34.21% (N=650)		
Crime severity comparison		0.39 (1.09)	-2 – 2
Community reaction comparison		0.11 (0.66)	-1 – 1
Police response comparison		0.15 (0.69)	-1 – 1
<i>Dependent</i>			
Crime severity	26.90% (N=3,061)		
Police response	12.93% (N=1,472)		
Community response	5.28% (N=601)		
Anonymous reporting	4.61% (N=525)		
Protection for self/others	8.70% (N=990)		
Right thing to do	10.21% (N=1,162)		

Analyses

To address the first hypothesis of the study, that respondents would be more likely to state police response as their motivation for reporting when the police response is better, we examined the results for the dependent variable, police response. As shown in Model 1 under Table 3, respondents were more likely to state police response as their motivation for reporting when there was a better police response, and less likely when the crime was more severe and there was a better community response. Therefore, the first hypothesis of the current study was

supported. As far as individual factors, higher education was associated with an increased likelihood of stating police response as a motivation to report, while older respondents had a decreased likelihood of stating police response.

Although police response seemed to be influential in the decision to report, it was less likely to be stated as a reason when there was a better community response and the crime was more severe. Interestingly, it seems that those two situational factors were more impactful than police response in an individual's decision to hypothetically report. The results for the individual-level factors support findings from previous research. Specifically, Murphy, Sargaeant, & Cherney (2015) found that people with a higher education level were more likely to say that they would cooperate with police, which could potentially explain the importance of police response for this group. As for the results of older respondents being less likely to state police response as a motivation for reporting, Wehrman & De Angelis (2011) found that willingness to work with police decreased as people got older, which may explain the disinterest in police response by the older respondents. Perhaps the difference in interest with police response matters more to people that are more willing to cooperate with them and less to people that are less willing to assist.

The third hypothesis of the current study, that there would be significant differences in the responses for Black and Hispanic participants when compared to White participants, was not supported. In all of the models that were conducted for police response, there were no significant differences when it came to race. As police response seems to be a topic that is studied along with race, it was surprising to find that no group was more or less likely to state police response as a reason for reporting.

Table 3. Report Reason: Police Response

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Minority				0.99 (0.09)	1.00 (0.09)
Black	1.03 (0.10)	1.04 (0.10)			
Hispanic	0.95 (0.10)	0.96 (0.10)			
Crime Is Actually More Severe	0.75*** (0.02)		0.76*** (0.02)	0.76*** (0.02)	
Police Response is Actually Better	2.87*** (0.18)		2.86*** (0.17)	2.87*** (0.18)	
Community Response is Actually Better	0.90* (0.04)		0.91* (0.04)	0.90* (0.04)	
Male	0.95 (0.08)	0.96 (0.08)		0.95 (0.08)	0.96 (0.08)
Age	0.85*** (0.02)	0.86*** (0.02)		0.85*** (0.02)	0.86*** (0.02)
Education	1.11** (0.05)	1.12** (0.46)		1.12** (0.46)	1.12** (0.05)
Income	1.00 (0.04)	1.00 (0.04)		1.00 (0.04)	1.00 (0.04)

Logistic regression models. Constants not reported.

Odds ratios are presented with standard errors clustered by participant in parentheses.

†p < 0.10. *p < 0.05. **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001.

Next, we tested the second hypothesis, that respondents would be more likely to state community response as a motivation to report when the community response was better. As shown in Model 6, under Table 4, respondents were actually more likely to state community response when there was a better community response, which supports the second hypothesis.

Further, respondents were less likely to state community response as a motivation to report when the crime was more severe. This particular finding is interesting, yet unsurprising, as crime severity seems to be the most influential situational factor when deciding to report a crime.

As for individual factors, more educated respondents were more likely to state community response as their motivation to report whereas older respondents had a decreased likelihood of stating it as a reason they would report. While we cannot explain these findings with previous research, perhaps there is a discrepancy between these groups in regard to concern with community opinion. More educated and younger individuals could potentially be more concerned about their reputations in the community than older and less educated individuals, which could explain their inclination to prefer a better community response.

Model 11, under Table 5, depicts the results for what incident-level factors and individual-level factors were influential in the decision to state anonymous reporting as a reason they would report a crime. As previously mentioned, anonymous reporting was collapsed with support from the community to create “a better community response” in this study. Focusing on incident-level factors, results show that when there was a better community response, people were more likely to state that anonymous reporting is why they would report the incident and less likely when the crime was more severe. A potential reason for this is less concern about anonymity when the crime is more severe. As seen in previous literature, a common reason that people choose not to report is because they are concerned that the crime is not important enough (Langton et al., 2012). More severe crimes may be considered as worthier of reporting, which could explain why there is less concern about anonymity when the crime is more severe.

The only significant individual-level factor was gender, where men were less likely to state anonymous reporting as a reason they would report when compared to women. A potential

reason for the gender difference is that women may be more concerned about their safety when compared to men, so they may be more likely to report under the anonymous condition to avoid retaliation. As for the applicability of the third hypothesis to these results, there were no significant differences for White, Hispanic, or Black respondents for community response or anonymous reporting, so the third hypothesis was not supported in these models.

Table 4. Report Reason: Community Response

	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8	Model 9	Model 10
Minority				0.82 [†] (0.10)	0.82 [†] (0.94)
Black	0.85 (0.12)	0.85 (0.11)			
Hispanic	0.79 [†] (0.11)	0.78 [†] (0.11)			
Crime Is Actually More Severe	0.81*** (0.03)		0.82*** (0.03)	0.81*** (0.03)	
Police Response is Actually Better	0.97 (0.06)		0.97 (0.06)	0.97 (0.06)	
Community Response is Actually Better	5.25*** (0.52)		5.30*** (0.53)	5.25*** (0.52)	
Male	0.98 (0.11)	0.98 (0.11)		0.98 (0.11)	0.98 [†] (0.11)
Age	0.86*** (0.03)	0.86*** (0.03)		0.86*** (0.35)	0.86*** (0.04)
Education	1.28*** (0.08)	1.29*** (0.07)		1.28*** (0.08)	1.30*** (0.07)
Income	1.00 (0.05)	1.00 (0.04)		1.00 (0.05)	1.00 (0.04)

Logistic regression models. Constants not reported.

Odds ratios are presented with standard errors clustered by participant in parentheses.

[†]p < 0.10. *p < 0.05. **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001.

Table 5. Report Reason: Anonymous Reporting

	Model 11	Model 12	Model 13	Model 14	Model 15
Minority				1.08 (0.13)	1.06 (0.13)
Black	0.92 (0.13)	0.91 (0.13)			
Hispanic	1.25 (0.18)	1.23 (0.17)			
Crime Is Actually More Severe	0.79*** (0.03)		0.79*** (0.03)	0.79*** (0.03)	
Police Response is Actually Better	0.92 (0.06)		0.93 (0.06)	0.92 (0.06)	
Community Response is Actually Better	2.75*** (0.21)		2.75*** (0.21)	2.75*** (0.21)	
Male	0.59*** (0.07)	0.59*** (0.07)		0.59*** (0.07)	0.60*** (0.07)
Age	0.98 (0.04)	0.99 (0.04)		0.97 (0.04)	0.98 (0.04)
Education	1.11 [†] (0.07)	1.12* (0.07)		1.10 (0.07)	1.12 [†] (0.07)
Income	1.02 (0.05)	1.02 (0.05)		1.03 (0.05)	1.03 (0.05)

Logistic regression models. Constants not reported.

Odds ratios are presented with standard errors clustered by participant in parentheses.

[†]p < 0.10. *p < 0.05. **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001.

Following community response and anonymous reporting, we evaluated the accuracy of the fourth hypothesis of the study, that respondents would be more likely to state crime severity as a motivation to report when the crime was more severe. As shown in Model 11 under Table 5, results indicate that when the crime was actually more severe people were more likely to state that crime severity was the reason they would report the incident, which supports the fourth hypothesis of the current study. Further, respondents were less likely to indicate that either police

response or community reaction mattered when the crime was more severe. As seen in the previous models for police response and community response, crime severity seems to be the most important factor out of the situational factors in the current study. While police response and community response are influential, they seem to matter to respondents less when the crime type is actually more severe.

Turning to individual-level factors, men and people with higher incomes were more likely to indicate that incident severity was the reason why they would report a crime whereas older respondents were less likely to note incident severity as a driver for reporting crime. As for men and people with higher incomes being more likely to state crime severity, there is no clear literature that these findings support, which would be interesting to consider for future research. One explanation for the decreased odds of older respondents to report more severe crimes is that they have been found to report break-ins more than younger people (Boateng, 2018), which was the lower crime type in the current study. Boateng (2018) proposed that older people may be more likely to report break-ins because they have accumulated more valuables over their lives than younger people, so perhaps this is what influenced their odds of reporting a more severe crime.

When considering the third hypothesis of the current study, the results show that it was supported. There were significant differences between the responses for White participants when compared to Hispanic and Black participants in regard to the dependent variable of crime severity. Relative to White participants, both Black and Hispanic participants were less likely to say that incident severity was the reason they would report a crime, which was unexpected. Generally, previous research has shown that citizens are more likely to report a crime when it is more severe. Racial differences in regard to crime severity were unexpected, as with gender and

income differences, so these between-group differences would be interesting to pursue in the future.

Table 6. Report Reason: Crime Severity

	Model 16	Model 17	Model 18	Model 19	Model 20
Minority				0.81** (0.06)	0.80** (0.06)
Black	0.77*** (0.63)	0.77*** (0.06)			
Hispanic	0.85* (0.70)	0.85* (0.68)			
Crime Is Actually More Severe	1.86*** (0.05)		1.86*** (0.05)	1.86*** (0.05)	
Police Response is Actually Better	0.81*** (0.03)		0.81*** (0.03)	0.80*** (0.03)	
Community Response is Actually Better	0.77*** (0.03)		0.78*** (0.03)	0.77*** (0.03)	
Male	1.16* (0.08)	1.14 [†] (0.08)		1.16 * (0.08)	1.14 [†] (0.08)
Age	0.90*** (0.02)	0.91*** (0.02)		0.90*** (0.02)	0.90*** (0.02)
Education	1.04 (0.03)	1.03 (0.03)		1.04 (0.03)	1.03 (0.03)
Income	1.06* (0.03)	1.07* (0.03)		1.06* (0.03)	1.07* (0.03)

Logistic regression models. Constants not reported.

Odds ratios are presented with standard errors clustered by participant in parentheses.

[†]p < 0.10. *p < 0.05. **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001.

To follow up on the third hypothesis, we ran additional analyses to address other between-group differences in responses. Interestingly, we found that there were two dependent variables where race seemed to play a significant role. One dependent variable where race was significant was protection for self and others. As shown in Model 21, under Table 7, Black and Hispanic respondents were more likely to report protection for self and others as a motivation for

reporting when compared to White respondents. Similarly, there were between-group differences in the responses for White, Hispanic, and Black respondents when considering the dependent variable of right thing to do. As demonstrated in Model 26, under Table 8, respondents were more likely to state right thing to do as a reason to report when they were Black or Hispanic, when compared to White respondents. These results indicate that Black and Hispanic respondents were more concerned about seemingly social or moral reasons for reporting than White respondents. This is particularly interesting because there were no significant differences in the models for police response or community response, but there were for crime severity, protection for self and others, and right thing to do. While there were racial differences in the stated reasons that individuals gave to hypothetically report one crime over another, they were not on the topics that one may expect.

Table 7. Report Reason: Protection for Self/Others

	Model 21	Model 22	Model 23	Model 24	Model 25
Minority				1.32* (0.14)	1.31* (0.14)
Black	1.29* (0.16)	1.29* (0.16)			
Hispanic	1.35* (0.17)	1.35* (0.17)			
Crime Is Actually More Severe	0.99 (0.03)		0.98 (0.03)	0.99 (0.03)	
Police Response is Actually Better	0.92 (0.05)		0.91 (0.05)	0.92 (0.05)	
Community Response is Actually Better	1.07 (0.06)		1.06 (0.06)	1.07 (0.06)	
Male	0.92 (0.10)	0.92 (0.10)		0.93 (0.10)	0.92 (0.10)
Age	1.12*** (0.03)	1.11*** (0.03)		1.11** (0.04)	1.11** (0.04)

Education	0.96 (0.05)	0.96 (0.05)		0.96 (0.05)	0.96 (0.05)
Income	0.93 [†] (0.04)	0.93 [†] (0.04)		0.93 [†] (0.04)	0.93 [†] (0.04)

Logistic regression models. Constants not reported.

Odds ratios are presented with standard errors clustered by participant in parentheses.

[†]p < 0.10. *p < 0.05. **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001.

Table 8. Report Reason: Right Thing to Do

	Model 26	Model 27	Model 28	Model 29	Model 30
Minority				1.68*** (0.19)	1.66*** (0.19)
Black	1.69*** (0.22)	1.67*** (0.21)			
Hispanic	1.67*** (0.22)	1.65*** (0.22)			
Crime Is Actually More Severe	1.06* (0.03)		1.05 (0.03)	1.06* (0.03)	
Police Response is Actually Better	1.02 (0.05)		1.02 (0.05)	1.02 (0.05)	
Community Response is Actually Better	0.90* (0.04)		0.89* (0.04)	0.90* (0.04)	
Male	0.93 (0.10)	0.93 (0.10)		0.93 (0.10)	0.93 (0.10)
Age	1.28*** (0.04)	1.28*** (0.04)		1.28*** (0.04)	1.27*** (0.04)
Education	0.85** (0.04)	0.85** (0.04)		0.85** (0.04)	0.85** (0.04)
Income	1.09* (0.05)	1.09* (0.05)		1.09* (0.05)	1.09* (0.05)

Logistic regression models. Constants not reported.

Odds ratios are presented with standard errors clustered by participant in parentheses.

[†]p < 0.10. *p < 0.05. **p < 0.01. ***p < 0.001.

Overall, the current study aimed to explore what factors would influence an individual to hypothetically report one crime over another. From the previous literature, four different

hypotheses on the results emerged. First, we expected that respondents would be more likely to state police response as a reason they would report when the police response was better. This hypothesis was supported by the results. Next, we predicted that respondents would be more likely to state community response as a reason they would report when the community response was better. This hypothesis was also supported by the results of this study. For the third hypothesis, we expected that there would be significant differences in the stated motivations to report for Hispanic and Black respondents when compared to White respondents. In some cases, like police response and community reaction, this hypothesis was not supported. However, there were significant differences found in the results for crime severity, protection for self and others, and right thing to do. Finally, the fourth hypothesis, that people would be more likely to state crime severity as a reason they would report when the crime was actually more severe, was supported. Respondents were far more likely to state crime severity as a reason they would report when the crime type was, in fact, more severe.

Discussion

The objective of this study was to address the question: why would an individual choose to report one crime over another? To examine this question, we presented participants with a series of crime pairs and asked which they would be more likely to report to police and why. We then analyzed participants' open-ended responses to why they chose to hypothetically report one crime over another. While examining these responses, we observed the impact of crime type, police response, and community reaction. Overall, the results indicate that the severity of the crime, the police response, and the reaction from the community are influential in an individual's stated motivation to report one hypothetical crime over another. Respondents were more likely to state that their motivation to hypothetically report was based on a higher crime severity, a better

police response, and a positive community reaction. When comparing the influence of crime severity, police response, and community reaction, crime severity was seemingly the most impactful factor. Respondents were less likely to state either police response or community response as a motivation to report a crime when the crime was more severe. This result supports the findings from previous literature on crime reporting, where more severe crimes were found to be reported at a higher rate than less severe crimes (Buckley et al., 2016; Tarling & Morris, 2010). Similarly, respondents were less likely to state police response mattered when there was a better community response, which suggests that police response was the least influential in the current study from these three factors.

A better police response was an influential factor when respondents decided between hypothetically reporting one of two crime scenarios. Respondents were more likely to state police response as a reason for choosing a crime scenario when the responses were respectful or effective, rather than disrespectful and ineffective. As it has been demonstrated in the previous literature, respondents were more willing to cooperate, in this case to report a crime, when the police were more effective and more respectful (Murphy & Barkworth, 2014; Tankebe, 2009).

As for community response, people were more likely to state that they would report a crime when the community response was positive. For this study, anonymous reporting and support from the community were considered positive community responses. This finding supports the literature on the importance of community norms and cooperation with police. As the literature shows, community norms about police can impact the citizens' subsequent perception of police (Antrobus et al., 2015).

In addition to the impact of these variables, we were interested in how demographic factors influenced an individual's decision to report. When considering demographic factors

overall, they seemed to be influential when it came to which reasons were stated for choosing to hypothetically report one crime over another. Specifically, we were concerned with the impact of race on a respondent's stated reason for reporting one crime scenario over another. This interest was inspired by the inconsistent findings from the previous literature on race and cooperation. While Wehrman and De Angelis (2011) found that Black citizens were more likely to cooperate with police and Skogan (2005) found that Hispanic respondents were most likely to contact the police, Tyler (2005) found that White citizens were the most likely to assist in fighting crime. Our findings, however, did not find a consistent, significant disparity between the responses of White, Black, and Hispanic respondents. Across the different models, there were only a few categories where race seemed to significantly impact the stated reason for reporting and police response was not one of them.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Limitations

The current study aimed to understand what may influence within-person differences in crime reporting. The use of crime scenarios in this study allowed for the observation of decision making and hypothetical crime reporting, but cannot measure up to observing real crime reporting decisions. The current study requested that the respondent choose between reporting two crime scenarios, whereas they may not be likely to report either crime or may choose to report both in reality. However, it would not be ethical to assign participants to witness two real crimes, control for the police response, and assign the community to respond in a certain way to observe reporting behavior. While the study is limited to hypothetical crime scenarios, the scenarios aimed to cover situational factors that could influence an individual's decision in real life.

Another limitation of the study is the restriction of the samples. While the samples were each approximately reflective of the United States Census from 2014 on gender, race, income, education, age, and region of the country, they were not totally inclusive. For example, the samples were restricted to participants that identified as Black, White, or Hispanic. While these groups are the norm for crime reporting and police research, there may have been different results for other groups. Similarly, the online nature of the survey allowed for people across various regions of the United States to access it, but this survey was then limited to English-speakers with internet access.

Future Directions

Crime severity, police response, and community response were all significantly influential in the decision to report a crime scenario, with better responses and higher severity yielding a higher likelihood of being stated as the reason an individual would report. For future research, we recommend the exploration of other contextual factors that could impact crime reporting. A few suggestions that may be interesting to look at are: the target of the crime, the location of the crime, and the offender. While the incident-level factors used in the current study were significant, there may be other factors that could yield different results.

Similarly, we feel that more attention to within-individual differences and crime reporting would be beneficial. While there is a robust literature on crime reporting generally, there is still the potential to research and understand what may influence an individual to report crimes in the future. Understanding the factors that influence crime reporting decisions can inform us on strategies to improve reporting rates and perhaps influence police effectiveness.

Implications

As shown by the results, there are contextual factors that can influence an individual's decision to report a crime. While all of these factors cannot necessarily be controlled (i.e. crime type), there may be other responses that can change. For example, we see in our results that respondents were more likely to state that they would report a crime when there was a positive police response. Police response is malleable, where police training on procedural justice, for example, may encourage more people to cooperate and report crimes when they feel that police are respectful. Murphy et al. (2008) found support for the effectiveness of informal contact between the police and public, where the community's perception of police and behavior toward them was more positive with increased informal contact. Especially for crimes that people may

not feel are as severe, a good relationship with their local police could encourage reporting when an individual may not be as likely to in other circumstances.

Along this track, community response is another factor that can be manipulated by policies or training. As respondents in this study stated that they preferred to report crime scenarios with a better community response, this could be used as a way to improve crime reporting rates. Community policing and programs dedicated to improving police-citizen relationships could positively influence community norms around cooperation with police and crime reporting. Fostering community norms that favor reporting in general would be highly beneficial, especially in areas that typically discourage police involvement. Better relationships between communities and the police, as well as relationships between individuals and the police, could improve reporting and may encourage an individual to report a crime when they may not have before the strengthened relationship. Support for stronger community and police relationships is frequent in previous literature. One example is that Wehrman & De Angelis (2011) found that individuals who knew their local neighborhood officer were more willing to help the police. Therefore, stronger relationships between police officers and the community may increase cooperation, and potentially, crime reporting.

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