

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis:                   REPORTING CRIME TO THE POLICE:  
DOES WHAT THE POLICE DO MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE?

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The purpose of this study was to closely examine the reasons victims call the police. Few studies have explored both satisfaction and crime reporting in the same model with police interactions. Understanding whether legitimacy or the cost-benefit analysis approach is more influential on reporting crime will help inform police policy. The study used a cross-sectional victimization sample (N=4,598) from the 1997 Law Enforcement and Administrative Statistics Survey and the 1998 Criminal Victimization and Perceptions of Community Safety Survey. Findings supported the hypothesis that having direct experiences with police were associated with increased reporting of crimes. Contrary to hypotheses, satisfaction with police had no significant relationship with reporting crime and community policing tactics were negatively related with reporting crime to the police, although this relationship may not be causal. Crime seriousness had the greatest significant association with reporting. Limitations and recommendations for future research are discussed.

REPORTING CRIME TO THE POLICE: DOES WHAT THE POLICE DO  
MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

by

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

Most of the time, the amount and type of crime is only known to the police when citizens decide to report incidents to the police (Skogan, 1984). Unless the police actively see a crime being committed, they are forced to rely on citizen involvement and cooperation. Thus, it is important to understand why citizens choose to call or not to call the police in response to criminal victimization. Many researchers and criminologists have determined that crime reporting is a significant part of the criminal justice process (Levitt, 1998; Skogan, 1984; Slocum et al., 2010).

Explanations of why victims report crime to the police can be separated into two categories – those that focus on general attitudes toward the police (Tankebe, 2013) and those that highlight the situational cost-benefit analysis of the crime (Kaukinen, 2002; Skogan, 1984). The former claims that people who have generally positive attitudes toward the police will report victimization to the police, while those who hold unfavorable views will not report crime. Attitudes impact crime reporting to the police, irrespective of the situational particulars of the crime (Brandl et al., 1994; Skogan, 2005). On the other hand, the situational perspective would say that regardless of their general attitudes toward the police, victims will report a crime to the police if the victimization is serious enough with regard to threat, injury or economic loss (Kaukinen, 2002; Skogan, 1984). Victims just want someone to address the problem at hand and try to solve it.

The current study aims to understand why victims decide to call the police. More specifically, is this decision a result of general attitudes toward the police or a pragmatic situational decision based on cost-benefit analysis? Furthermore, do the types of

interactions with police mediate the decision to report crime? Positive interactions with police lead to a greater satisfaction towards and willingness to report crimes to the police (Reisig & Parks, 2004). This is the assumption underlying programs like community policing. It is assumed that positive collaboration between citizens and the police will lead to higher opinions of each other. When citizens have more confidence, satisfaction and trust in the police, they are more likely to be willing to assist police in their investigations (Felson et al., 2002; Goudriaan et al., 2006). Proponents of the legitimacy argument would say that general attitudes toward the police have the greatest impact on the decision to report and that interactions with police have the greatest impact on general attitudes and on reporting (Tankebe, 2013; Tyler, 2004).

Research has examined the situational determinants of crime reporting (Baumer, 2002; Goudriaan et al., 2004; Slocum et al., 2010) and the influence of general attitudes toward the police on the reporting of crimes (Rosenbaum et al., 2005; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2005), but rarely has there been a direct test of these two competing explanations. The few studies that have looked at the relationship between these two classes of variables used the hypothetical likelihood that citizens would report to the police rather than actual crime reporting data (Goudriaan et al., 2006). Studies that have drawn on data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) used the abundance of information regarding the victimization incident to test the importance of pragmatic decision making and cost/benefit analysis (Slocum, 2018; Xie & Baumer, 2019). However, this survey did not include information on general attitudes toward the police. Additionally, the NCVS was unable to identify specific police jurisdictions and the type of community policing efforts each one implemented in an attempt to improve

general attitudes toward the police (Xie & Baumer, 2019). Conversely, any special surveys that asked citizens to report their attitudes toward police did not include large numbers of victimizations or provide detailed information on the crime incident.

This paper fills a gap in literature by using a unique data collection conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) in twelve cities across the United States along with a Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) survey to address these questions. The BJS special survey includes both specific information about the victimization incident and the respondent's general attitudes toward the police (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998). Furthermore, since the twelve cities in which the survey was conducted were identified, the LEMAS survey could be used to measure the extent and nature of community policing programs that operated within each city jurisdiction (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997). This allows researchers to explore how community policing programs impact reporting crimes to the police. The results of this study will enhance our understanding of how general attitudes about satisfaction with police and types of police interactions affect crime reporting.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

As stated above, citizens' decisions to report crime to the police are vital to the effectiveness of the criminal justice system (Levitt, 1998; Skogan, 1984). The wealth of research on this issue has led to a wide variety of theories being used to explain why victims report. Unfortunately, the majority of research has not included all or even most of the information required to test these competing theories.

### 2.1 Decisions to Call the Police

The vast majority of studies on reporting crime to the police have highlighted the importance of the situational aspects of the crime. Both the degree of loss or threat and the availability of alternate sources of help have been shown to affect a person's decision to report crime to the proper authorities (Xie & Baumer, 2019). In addition, it has been well established that reporting varies across demographic groups, with more disadvantaged groups being less willing to report crime than those who are more advantaged (Baumer, 2002; Goudriaan et al., 2006). Some researchers have used the role of general attitudes toward police to understand why these differences in reporting exist across demographic groups (Brown & Benedict, 2002). Furthermore, type of prior police contact affects future decisions to report crime to the police (Conaway & Lohr, 1994; Weisburd & Eck, 2004; Xie et al., 2006). Residents consider how police acted and what they did during prior interactions when determining whether it is worth reporting a crime to the police.



### 2.1.1 Community Policing

Police can interact with residents in multiple ways. Police attempt to promote positive interactions with citizens through community policing. Community policing strategies attempt to improve citizens' perceptions of police by discussing what crime is in the area and listening to the citizens' problems (Weisburd & McElroy, 1988). When police go out into the community to forge connections, citizens have the chance to communicate their opinions and fears to the police which, in turn, will influence citizen views of police legitimacy in future interactions (Hawdon et al., 2003; Tankebe, 2013).

Community policing was adopted after decades of dissatisfaction with traditional police practices (Weisburd & McElroy, 1988). Prior to community policing, police engaged in a professional model that used reactive strategies to respond to and prevent crime. These strategies focused on preventive patrol and rapid response. However, research revealed that these key tactics had little impact on reducing crime (Kelling, 1974; Spelman & Brown, 1984). Kelling (1974) found that an increase in routine patrolling did not have an effect on crime rates or the public's feeling of safety. Citizens did not notice any change in level of patrol. Furthermore, any change in patrol did not have an effect on reducing crimes that are considered to be preventable by high visibility of police (Kelling, 1974). Also, citizen satisfaction did not change. Similarly, Spelman and Brown (1984) found that rapid response is not effective. In fact, the analysis revealed that the citizen expectation of response times is what matters the most (Spelman & Brown, 1984). If citizens believe that police will get to the scene in two minutes, but it takes them twenty minutes, then they are unsatisfied. If police arrived on scene faster than citizens expected, then the citizens' satisfaction with police increased (Spelman &

Brown, 1984). Researchers also found that if the victim was afraid of retribution or did not think the police cared, then they were less likely to call (Spelman & Brown, 1984). With rapid response, if police do not come unless a crime is reported, then citizens may not want to report crime because there is a strained relationship between the police and the surrounding community (Spelman & Brown, 1984). Both Kelling (1974) and Spelman and Brown (1984) revealed that preventive patrol and rapid response do not work to improve citizen perceptions of the police; therefore, the professional model does not work.

As a result, people began to lose faith in the police and believed that they could do little to affect crime. This issue led to developments such as community policing and problem-oriented policing where the community became central to police function. In community policing, the community was crucial in assisting police with defining problems that police should address (Cordner, 1997). Citizens worked with the police to help ensure public safety. Community policing was not only about improving police and citizen relationships; it also utilized citizens' ability to identify and understand the issues that create crime and disorder. Tactics were developed to help ensure that police officers would be able to engage directly with the community. Foot patrol began to reemerge, community partnerships formed, and hot-spots policing was implemented (Cordner, 1997).

Community policing strategies varied across jurisdictions. Community-oriented policing strategies may be initiated at a unit level, where individual police officers employ different sets of tactics, in specific geographic areas, or by specialized teams within the police department (Weisburd & Eck, 2004). These strategies can also be

implemented at the department level where the entire police force engages in community policing tactics (Weisburd & Eck, 2004). The wide variety of programs makes it difficult to determine whether community policing as a whole is effective, or if it is only a few of the programs or techniques that have an impact. Other challenges that arise in assessing the effectiveness of community-oriented policing include the broad interpretation of its scope and the lack of a clear model or set structure for implementation. The goal of community-oriented policing is to improve the welfare of the community by engaging with citizens to better understand how to more effectively prevent crime in that area (Cordner, 1997).

Strategies and tactics differ across jurisdictions because the mission of each police department is fueled by the community it serves (Gill et al., 2014). The diverse range of strategies often employed under community-oriented policing include problem-oriented policing, foot patrol, school programs, door-to-door surveys, distribution of newsletters, and partnerships with businesses and community members (Weisburd & Eck, 2004). Many of these tactics have not been empirically tested, so it is difficult to know the effectiveness of the different strategies. Weisburd and Eck (2004) conducted a systematic review of community policing studies. Researchers found that different tactics had different effects on the community and crime. Door-to-door visits reduced crime and fear of crime, while community meetings and foot patrol had very little impact on crime rates (Weisburd & Eck, 2004). Another attempt to examine how community policing impacts crime found that an officer-initiated community policing intervention reduced the number of violent and property crimes in the targeted areas. As part of the community policing strategy, officers met with business owners, visited schools, used their own discretion and

authority within their beat, and attempted to solve any underlying problems in the area (Connell et al., 2008). Overall, the intervention was successful in its implementation of the core elements of the community policing model. Although this intervention was successful, the general evidence on how community policing affects crime rates is mixed.

Levitt (1998) looked at the relationship between the number of police officers on the force and the number of crimes reported to the police. When the number of employed police officers increased, the number of crimes that citizens reported to the police increased (Levitt, 1998). The increase in reporting may have simply been a result of having more opportunities to speak with an officer about a crime. When there are more officers patrolling an area, residents have more chances to tell police about victimizations. However, it could be that with more officers in the area, they were more likely to see crime, so residents felt an obligation to report any crime to the police. Moreover, citizens that attend police-community meetings have more confidence in their abilities to solve local problems and view the police more favorably (Graziano et al., 2014). As collaborators, citizens work with the police to help ensure public safety. When citizens feel safer, they are more likely to maintain positive attitudes toward the police and be willing to play their role as crime reporters. Conversely, Schnebly (2008) found that in cities where police engaged in problem solving partnerships with the community, victims were less likely to report crime to the police. Also, in areas with high numbers of community policing officers, a third party was more likely to report crime to police than victims (Schnebly, 2008). With more police officers in the area, residents may have been more aware of the benefits of notifying the police or had an easier time reporting crime because the police had more availability. In cities with greater numbers of community

policing officers, the police may do a good job at connecting residents with non-police resources, which can reduce citizens' reliance on formal controls like the police (Schnebly, 2008).

There is no clear understanding of the effectiveness of community policing strategies. Some evaluations of community policing programs focus on fear of crime and citizen satisfaction with police, while others look at crime rates (Gill et al., 2014; Sherman & Eck, 2002; Weisburd & Eck, 2004). Those that look at crime rates have not revealed consistent findings. The evidence creates some uncertainty about which aspects of community policing actually work. In order to make better use of resources, it is important for researchers to understand exactly which parts of community policing, if any, are effective.

#### 2.1.2 Prior Police Interactions

In addition to community-policing practices that affect how one perceives police-citizen interactions, the type of contact that citizens have with police also plays a role. Some scholars have found that direct experiences of police-citizen interactions affected the probability that citizens would contact the police for services and their overall attitudes toward the police (Hinds, 2009; Nofziger & Williams, 2005; Skogan, 2005), while others emphasized vicarious experiences (Braga et al., 2014; Rosenbaum et al., 2005).

A majority of literature has focused on direct experiences with the police (Hawdon & Ryan, 2011; Hinds, 2009; Skogan, 2005). Gibson et al. (2010) discovered that those who experienced traffic stops were less likely to report problems or contact the police, across all races. These police-initiated encounters often create feelings of

discontent within citizens. Traffic stops may have a negative impact on citizens' perceptions of police because those citizens are in the process of getting in trouble with the law. Even if they are treated fairly, they may feel that the police are being prejudiced towards them for a variety of reasons. Traffic stops represent about half of all police citizen contacts and therefore will have a significant impact on citizens' trust and confidence in police (Gibson et al., 2010). Individuals who experienced more negative citizen-initiated contact with the police held more unfavorable attitudes toward the police while negative police-initiated contacts did not affect their attitudes (Rosenbaum et al., 2005). Citizens may have higher expectations for their interactions with police when they initiate the contact. A smaller study by Peyton et al. (2019) found that a single positive interaction with police can increase citizens' attitudes toward police and their willingness to cooperate with police. During the randomized field experiment, officers went door-to-door to engage in brief non-enforcement contact with residents of New Haven, Connecticut. Even though these interactions were short, the intervention increased citizens' self-reported willingness to cooperate with police in the future, and these effects were still seen 21 days later when researchers followed up (Peyton et al., 2019).

Individuals who engage in neighborhood organizations are more likely to assist the police than those who are not involved, even when perceptions of police legitimacy and social cohesion are controlled for (Hawdon & Ryan, 2011). People already involved in neighborhood organizations are those who care about the welfare of their neighborhood and informal social control. Thus, these citizens would be more willing to assist police than those who have no social ties to neighborhood organizations. Similarly, Hinds (2009) found that youths who saw the police as legitimate were more likely to

assist the police. Moreover, participation in a community policing project increased favorable attitudes toward police and a youth's willingness to collaborate with the police (Hinds, 2009). The community policing project was a positive interaction with the police and it led to a higher likelihood of assisting the police in the future (Hinds, 2009).

Direct contact with police is not the only way attitudes can be formed. Vicarious experiences of others' encounters with police can influence attitudes and satisfaction towards police. Learning that someone else has had a good or bad encounter with police influences their attitudes toward police (Rosenbaum et al., 2005). Braga and colleagues (2014) used videos of real police-citizen encounters to study respondents' opinions of police. Subjects were asked to watch the videos and evaluate the police-citizen interactions. Subjects' perception of the fairness of the stop influenced their perception of police and whether they perceived the encounter positively or negatively (Braga et al., 2014). Expectations about the benefit of reporting and attitudes toward the police can come from the media, witnessing other's police encounters and experiences that friends and families have shared (Weitzer & Tuch, 2005).

Sometimes, police are simply responders to victimizations, so what actions they take in response to crime may affect whether citizens report future crimes. What police do during interactions with citizens is important, especially when those interactions are the result of crime being reported. The relationship between police contact and future reporting may be more intricate than first thought. If the police attempt to investigate, the victim is more likely to report crime to the police the next time he/she is victimized (Conaway & Lohr, 1994; Xie et al., 2006). When the police followed up, searched around, gathered evidence or recovered property from a victimization incident, the

victims were more likely to report future crimes to the police (Conaway & Lohr, 1994; Xie et al. 2006). However, whether police made an arrest did not have an effect on respondents' crime reporting (Xie et al. 2006). As long as police tried, respondents were more willing to cooperate with police and report future crimes, regardless of the outcome of police response (Conaway & Lohr, 1994; Xie et al. 2006). Citizens may care about knowing that police will respond and try more than the results of the investigation. Seeing how the police react to a prior incident will show citizens what to expect in any future encounters and, therefore, will impact future crime reporting decisions.

### 2.1.3 Situational Factors

Factors related to situational attributes of the crime can be separated into two main groups: situational and social context (Goudriaan et al., 2004). Situational factors include what happened at the crime scene and the severity of the crime. Social factors involve characteristics of the community or the social context where the crime occurred (Goudriaan et al., 2004). For instance, crime characteristics such as whether the offender had a weapon or not and whether the victim was injured or not are considered situational factors. Social context includes things like the crime's distance from home, neighborhood disadvantage and the social disorganization of the place in which the crime occurs (Goudriaan et al., 2004).

Within the situational context, crime characteristics play a large role in whether victims' report crime to the police. Many victim decisions to notify police are driven by crime severity (Goudriaan et al. 2006; Skogan 1984; Xie et al. 2006). The more severe the crime, the greater the likelihood of it being reported to the police (Goudriaan et al. 2006; Xie et al. 2006). Victims can ignore lesser crimes but they are more likely to seek



help, if the injury is grave and the loss substantial, simply because they need to get the damage fixed. In fact, many variables that are related to crime reporting, such as variation across demographic groups, have no effect once crime severity is controlled for (Skogan, 1984). Even within crime severity, there are different likelihoods of reporting. For instance, aggravated assaults are more likely to be reported than simple assaults. Also, for property crimes, motor vehicle theft is the most reported while larceny is reported the least (Goudriaan et al., 2006). Violent crimes that involve the victim often have a higher likelihood of being reported than property crimes. However, this is not the case for rape and sexual assault crimes. Rape is considered severe and is listed as a violent crime, but these crimes are some of the least likely to be reported to the police (Felson et al., 2002). Victims of personal crime often report because they believe it should be reported, they want the offender to be arrested, or they want to prevent the crime from reoccurring (Goudriaan et al., 2004). Conversely, most property crime is reported because they feel obligated to for insurance purposes and have a desire to recover any losses. If a citizen believes the crime is not serious enough, he/she is less likely to report it to police (Goudriaan et al., 2004).

Other crime characteristics such as loss, injury, completion of crime and weapon present are associated with crime reporting. Completed crimes are more likely to be reported to police than attempted crimes, along with crimes where weapons are present (Conaway & Lohr, 1994; Skogan, 1984). Rational choice theory can be used to explain why victims base their decision to report on crime characteristics (Kaukinen, 2002). Often, victims will look at the cost-value of reporting and determine whether it is worth making the situation known to the police (Skogan, 1984). If the cost of reporting the

crime is too high, they will be discouraged from reporting. Victims who believe the incident was minor are less likely to engage in crime reporting behaviors (Skogan, 1984). Crimes that resulted in victim injury are more likely to be reported than those with a small injury or no injury (Felson et al., 1999). Victims who were injured may report because they want someone to be held responsible or for insurance purposes. In addition, victims that experience high financial loss had a higher likelihood of reporting crime to the police (Xie et al., 2006). Again, these victims may report for insurance purposes and have a desire to recover any losses incurred during the crime. Victims who believe that the crime is more serious in nature and that the police will take them seriously are more likely to report to police (Felson et al., 2002). Overall, it seems that if the crime type is considered more serious and the value of loss is high, then the majority of victims should report the crime to the police.

The social context of crime is yet another situational attribute. Crimes that happen close to home are more likely to be reported to the police than those that happen far away (Xie et al., 2006). Citizens may feel obligated to report crimes within their neighborhoods for safety and social cohesion reasons (Goudriaan et al., 2004). They may have a desire to prevent crime and protect others within their communities. By reporting crimes that occur close to home, residents will improve their own feeling of safety and contribute towards making the community safer as a whole. If both individuals and neighbors report crimes seen to police, it may lead to improved satisfaction with quality of life and general happiness. To explore the relationship between reporting and social cohesion, Goudriaan and colleagues (2004) looked at the degree to which neighbors knew each other and

interacted with each other. Higher levels of social cohesion were associated with higher levels of crime reporting (Goudriaan et al., 2004).

Another part of the social context of crime are the levels of neighborhood disadvantage and social disorganization. The findings about the relationship between socioeconomic disadvantage and crime reporting are mixed (Baumer, 2002; Goudriaan et al., 2006). Some studies found that areas with a higher degree of racial segregation and a large gap in economic status were more likely to report crime (Baumer, 2002; Xie & Lauritsen, 2012). These areas are considered to have high socioeconomic disadvantage. Conversely, other studies found the inverse was true (Goudriaan et al., 2006; Slocum et al., 2010). Socioeconomic disadvantage had a negative relationship with crime reporting. Citizens who are more impoverished are less willing to help the police fight crime (Reisig & Lloyd, 2009, Wehrman & De Angelis, 2011). Citizens in these areas may be less willing to help the police because they lack resources or they believe that the police do not care about them.

The relationship between crime reporting and economic disadvantage may be more complicated and not a linear relationship. Baumer (2002) used data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) to explore how neighborhood disadvantage impacted crime reporting. When other variables were controlled for, neighborhood disadvantage had no effect on crime reporting in regards to aggravated assault and robbery. On the other hand, neighborhood disadvantage had a significant effect on crime reporting for victims of simple assault (Baumer, 2002). As the neighborhood poverty level increased, so did rates of crime reporting. However, in areas with extremely high poverty (those in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile) crime reporting decreased

(Baumer, 2002). Goudriaan and colleagues (2006) used data from a Dutch victimization survey and found that social cohesion and socioeconomic disadvantage affect crime reporting. Both property and violent crimes were included in this study. Researchers discovered that there was a negative relationship between poverty levels in an area and victim crime reporting. Areas with lower poverty levels reported more crimes to the police (Goudriaan et al., 2006). Those living in the wealthiest and poorest neighborhoods may use other avenues to deal with crime (Baumer, 2002). These two types of neighborhoods often have dense social networks that residents can use when crime occurs (Baumer, 2002). The higher levels of informal social control in these areas render formal social control like police unnecessary. Wealthier areas may have neighborhood watches and most neighbors will look out for each other. Therefore, there may be less crime to report or minor incidents may be handled within the community. Residents of poorer neighborhoods may believe the police cannot do anything about the crime in the area, so they may decide handle it themselves or they may simply be more tolerant of crime (Baumer, 2002).

#### 2.1.4 Individual Factors

Other research has found that gender, age, education, and race all play a role in crime reporting (Felson et al., 1999; Goudriaan et al., 2006; Skogan, 1984; Zaykowski et al., 2019). Studies that find race has a significant effect on reporting suggest that black victims are more likely to call the police than white victims (Felson et al., 1999). Contrary to these findings, Wehrman and De Angelis (2011) found that African Americans reported a greater willingness to work with police on community anti-crime programs than whites. However, other studies have found that race does not have an

effect on reporting when other characteristics are considered (Baumer, 2002; Skogan, 1984). When crime and neighborhood characteristics are controlled for, the race of both the victim and offender did not affect crime reporting for assault crimes. Also, Hispanics often report fewer robberies than non-Hispanics (Baumer, 2002). Thus, type of crime may be a mediating factor between victim race and crime reporting. Slocum (2018) was one of few who used longitudinal data to study how prior police contact affects later crime reporting. Data from a police survey was linked to the NCVS in order to examine the relationship between type of encounter with police and crime reporting behavior. While prior police contact was found to have no effect on subsequent crime reporting of personal crimes, police-initiated contact had a negative impact on African Americans and those who were disadvantaged. Whether police were procedurally fair had an effect, especially when police initiated the contact (Slocum, 2018). African Americans were likely to report crime if they believed prior encounters with the police were just, but those who experienced unjust interactions were some of the least likely to report crime to the police (Slocum, 2018). Police treat citizens differently depending on race and blacks are some of the most likely to be mistreated by the police. Even with advances in police practices, there is still a racial gap when it comes to police-initiated encounters (Tyler et al., 2015). More African Americans encounter police-initiated contact (Tyler et al., 2015). Thus, the type of interaction with police mediates the effect of demographics on crime reporting.

Age and gender are other individual characteristics that affect crime reporting. Women are more likely to report crimes than men (Felson et al., 1999; Zaykowski et al., 2019). Females who lived in areas of economic disadvantage had a higher likelihood of

reporting crime than males (Zaykowski et al., 2019). In addition, older victims are more likely to report crime than younger victims (Ruback et al., 1999; Skogan, 1984). Studies on education and crime reporting have reported mixed findings. Most have found that victims who are less educated are more likely to report crime to the police (Goudriaan et al., 2006). Similarly, individuals with higher education levels view the police as less legitimate than individuals with lower levels of education (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Hinds & Murphy, 2007). People with more education may have access to more alternative avenues of dealing with victimization, like mental health services, and therefore have the option of not relying on the police.

Victims' feelings may influence reporting of crime. If victims are scared or want to protect themselves, there is a stronger chance they will call the police (Felson et al., 2002). However, if victims fear reprisal, retaliation or being blamed, they will be less likely to report crime to the police (Frese et al., 2004; Singer, 1988; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). Singer (1988) found that females who are acquainted with the offender are more likely to state fear of reprisal as the reason for not calling the police. In cases of domestic abuse, victims live with the offender and therefore may be further injured if the crime is reported. Brunson and Wade (2019) found that black men who were residents of high-crime areas reported fewer crimes to the police because they were afraid of retaliation. When citizens fear how others around them will react, they are less likely to cooperate with police (Brunson & Wade, 2019). Fear of others is not the only consideration victims make; they also look at what might affect others' opinions of themselves. For instance, victims of sexual assault or domestic abuse are more likely to feel shame and encounter victim blaming (Frese et al., 2004; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). To avoid these effects,

many of these victims choose not to report the crime to police (Frese et al., 2004). The stigma of being a victim is difficult to get rid of for many individuals and some may feel that it is easier to deal with repeated victimizations than to carry that label with them for the rest of their life. Sometimes how others perceive an individual is more important and overpowers the decision of reporting crime to the police. Characteristics of the crime itself and the individual may be important, but how much influence do they really have on crime reporting when individual attitudes toward crime and police are considered?

#### 2.1.5 Attitudinal Factors

Perceptions and attitudes are enduring and have already been formed before a situation occurs (Sindall et al., 2016). In fact, young adults' views of the police are strongly linked to how their parents view the police (Sindall et al., 2016). This relationship was moderated by personal experience of victimization, but there was still a strong and consistent correlation between the two. If parents had more favorable views toward the police, then their children were more likely to hold positive attitudes toward the police (Sindall et al., 2016). This indicates that attitudes toward police can be formed at a young age and they are lasting beliefs even when an individual is directly victimized. Global perceptions and attitudes may be more influential than specific attitudes that are formed from a single event. These overall attitudes, such as satisfaction with police in general, have significant effects on one's assessment of police during a specific interaction (Brandl et al., 1994). If a resident's global attitude regarding satisfaction with police is favorable, then even if he/she has a single negative interaction with police or hears about one, he/she will still hold a more positive view of the police (Brandl et al., 1994).

Perceptions of community policing and what residents see in their neighborhood can influence attitudes toward the police. Greater levels of physical disorder increase fear of crime (Hinkle & Weisburd, 2008; Lytle & Randa, 2015). One study found that when neighborhood physical disorder was accounted for, fear of crime increased and satisfaction with police decreased (Lytle & Randa, 2015). The physical disorder can represent vicarious experiences because it is something seen rather than a direct interaction with the police. When residents of a community see lots of physical disorder and crime in the area, they may gain less favorable views of the police because they feel as though police do not care or they are not doing enough. There is a significant positive relationship between neighborhood disorder and fear of crime (Hinkle & Weisburd, 2008). Researchers found that higher levels of perceived social and physical disorder within neighborhoods led to more fear of crime. Victims who were in areas with a larger police presence still reported higher levels of fear of crime (Hinkle & Weisburd, 2008). These findings may be a result of police cracking down on areas with higher levels of disorder. When police target an area, citizens may feel unsafe and therefore report higher levels of fear of crime. When police engaged in hot-spots policing to target high crime areas, citizens became more aware of physical disorder (Weisburd et al., 2011). There may have been no increase in levels of physical disorder in the neighborhood. Citizens may have simply become more aware of the disorder because the police brought their attention to it. These findings suggest that residents may not be aware of or affected by order maintenance until police bring it to their attention. It is unclear whether fear of crime stems directly from neighborhood disorder or from the type of police presence in the area.



Additionally, Garduno and Keeling (2021) looked at how perceptions of neighborhood crime affect crime reporting. When more serious neighborhood crimes were seen by residents, the police were less likely to be seen as legitimate. Furthermore, when researchers included satisfaction with police performance, neighborhood perceptions had no significant effect on views of police legitimacy (Garduno & Keeling, 2021). It appears that satisfaction and attitudes toward police mediate the effect of perceived neighborhood crimes on individual's perceptions of police legitimacy.

Previous studies have suggested that community policing will increase citizens' satisfaction and trust in the police (Reisig & Lloyd, 2009; Sherman & Eck, 2002; Weisburd & Eck, 2004). Scholars have suggested that there is a relationship between citizen confidence in police and whether crimes are reported to the police. Researchers found that the more trust that citizens have in police and the legal system, the more willing citizens are to report crimes (Goudriaan et al., 2006). However, when viewed at the neighborhood level, citizen confidence in police effectiveness did not have an effect on whether victims reported crimes to the police (Goudriaan et al., 2006). Additionally, Davis and Henderson (2003) determined that citizens' trust in the police did not increase crime reporting, but rather that a willingness to report crime to the police was related to citizens' desire to engage in social control in the neighborhood. This may indicate that if the community does not have any desire to engage in social control, then the addition of community policing strategies or police attempts to engage in positive interactions with citizens may be ineffective.

Kääriäinen and Sirén (2011) examined the link between trust in the police and generalized trust and how they affected citizens' willingness to report both violent and

property crimes using crime data from Finland. Researchers included measures of whether the crime was reported to the police and whether it was the victim who reported the crime to the police. Results indicated that trust in the police was not linked to the reporting of property crimes, but was in fact inversely linked to citizens' reporting of violent crimes (Kääriäinen & Sirén, 2011). More specifically, citizens who did not trust the police were more willing to report violent crimes than citizens who trusted the police. Other studies have shown that people who believe that the police are untrustworthy, unsympathetic, and unfair are less likely to report crimes and go to police for help with their problems (Felson et al., 2002). When police do not respect citizens and do not try to solve the crime, then trust in the police decreases. Residents need to be able to trust the police and feel as though police are doing their job in order to want to report crime to the police.

Understanding citizens' attitudes toward the police are important, but focus also needs to be placed on comprehending how and why citizens form those attitudes. Brown and Benedict (2002) conducted a review of the literature on perceptions of and attitudes toward police. Age, race, neighborhood, and contact with police were all found to have significant effect on citizens' attitudes toward police (Brown & Benedict, 2002). These variables are important but there are unknown interactive effects between these four variables and others so researchers caution generalizing about attitudes. Thus, it is important to further explore what those interactions are in order to get a more comprehensive understanding of attitudes toward police and, ultimately, how exactly those attitudes affect crime reporting.

## 2.2 Role of Legitimacy

In order for the police to be effective, they need the support of citizens. The goal of community policing is to establish trust between police and communities and to make neighborhoods safer (Cordner, 1997). Without trust and citizens' willingness to cooperate, police will not be able to effectively protect the community and prevent crime. Police interaction with communities is related to reporting through legitimacy. When one works with the community, any contact with the police can impact police legitimacy.

Legitimacy is the belief that authority ought to be obeyed (Tyler, 2004). Public perceptions of police legitimacy are what give the police the authority to do their jobs. Perceptions of legitimacy are subjective and will vary among jurisdictions and within communities. People's perceptions of police legitimacy are more likely to be developed, maintained, and enhanced when decision-making processes are viewed as procedurally fair (Tyler, 2004). There are four components to procedural justice. The first is that people must believe the decision-making process is neutral; there should be no bias in how the police make the decision. The second aspect is that the person of authority must treat people with dignity and respect. Also, the person involved in the police interaction should believe they have a voice in the process. Finally, there should be a notion of trust. That is, the person should believe that the police are to be trusted and will handle the problem to the best of their ability. When people feel they have been treated fairly by the police, they will voluntarily comply with the law and accept the authorities' decision (Tyler & Wakslak, 2004).

Citizens comply with the law because of their belief in police legitimacy, even when there are no police around. Three things that greatly influence police legitimacy are

public trust and confidence, the willingness of residents to report crime and to defer to the law and to police authority, and the belief that police actions are morally justified and appropriate. People who perceive the police as legitimate are more likely to report crime and cooperate with the police (Tyler, 2004). Also, citizens are considered to be the “front end” of the criminal justice system because they are the first people who alert police that a crime has been committed. One way in which the public supports the police is by reporting crimes (Tyler, 2004). The police cannot be everywhere all the time, so police must rely on “widespread, voluntary law-abiding behavior to allow them to concentrate their resources on those people and situations in which compliance is difficult to obtain” (Tyler, 2004, p. 85). Citizens may fail to report crime because they do not trust the police. Therefore, fostering trust in the police through citizen-police interactions and collaborations is important.

Views of legitimacy come from peoples’ belief that they are obligated to obey authority and, therefore, support citizens’ voluntary cooperation with the police. Van Damme et al. (2015) found that trust in the procedural justice of the police affected citizens’ feelings of obligations to obey the police and, therefore, helped to explain citizens’ willingness to cooperate with the police. Kwak et al. (2019) had similar findings that perceived procedural injustice was linked to lower crime reporting. When citizens felt that police treated them unfairly, they were less likely to report crime to the police.

Increased interaction between citizens and police will provide police with the opportunity to foster citizen trust and confidence in police. If citizens feel satisfied with police practices and trust the police, then they will be more willing to report crimes. Citizen satisfaction and views of police legitimacy increase when people feel that they

have a voice (Skogan & Frydl, 2003). Community policing programs allow for citizens to interact with police in informal settings. When police go out into the community to forge connections, citizens have the chance to communicate their opinions and fears to the police which, in turn, will influence citizen views of police legitimacy in future interactions. As citizens experience an increase in positive interactions and encounters with the police, they are more likely to view the police as legitimate (Skogan & Frydl, 2003). Moreover, positive perceptions of community-oriented policing can increase police legitimacy. That is, those who have more positive perceptions of community-oriented policing will view the police as more legitimate (Gill et al., 2014). Higher levels of police legitimacy should lead to more compliance and cooperation with the police, which in turn would lead to a decrease in crime (Hawdon et al., 2003).

In addition, studies have found evidence that positive perceptions of police legitimacy may increase citizen compliance and improve citizen perceptions of safety (Reisig & Parks, 2004; Sunshine and Tyler, 2003). Sunshine and Tyler (2003) examined the connection between police implementation of community policing ideas, the perceptions of police legitimacy, and citizens' belief that they would comply with the police. To measure compliance, researchers asked citizens how likely they would be to call the police and report a crime that occurred in their neighborhood and how likely citizens would be to identify offenders. Positive perceptions of police legitimacy and favorable views of police performance resulted in citizens being more likely to report crime and cooperate with the police (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). Similarly, Reisig and Parks (2004) had citizens rate the job the police were doing in their community and asked citizens how many of their neighbors would be willing to cooperate with the police.

However, this measure is a perception of how others would react instead of a self-report of whether the citizen themselves would feel comfortable cooperating with the police. To measure the level of police-community collaboration, researchers also asked police about the number of citizens who would be willing to work with the police and how many would be likely to provide police with information. When citizens viewed police partnerships and interactions favorably, they perceived neighborhood safety as improving and rated their quality of life more favorably (Reisig & Parks, 2004).

Citizens were also more likely to be willing to collaborate with police officers if they viewed police-citizen interactions positively (Reisig & Parks, 2004). These studies indicate that it is important for citizens to have favorable views of the police and police legitimacy in order for police to be able to rely on citizen cooperation in fighting crime. Overall, there appears to be mixed evidence on the link between citizen-police interactions, trust in the police, and citizens' reporting of crime.

Even though legitimacy has been associated with citizen willingness to cooperate with the police, almost no studies have been done examining the different dimensions of legitimacy and the extent to which legitimacy is independent of or mediated by feelings of obligation to obey police. Tankebe (2013) examined this issue and discovered that legitimacy has both a direct and indirect influence on how citizens' perceived obligations to obey police impacts citizen cooperation with police. Legitimacy has a direct influence on whether citizens cooperate with police, regardless of any belief that police ought to be obeyed (Tankebe, 2013). People's feelings of obligation to obey police also serve as a mediating factor between legitimacy and citizen cooperation with police. The more people believed the police were legitimate, the more willing they were to cooperate with

the police (Tankebe, 2013). This study shows that above all, legitimacy has a strong influence on citizens' willingness to cooperate with police, whether or not they feel obligated to obey the police. Furthermore, perceptions of procedural justice appear to mediate the relationship between crime rates and citizens' intentions to report crimes (Kruger et al., 2016). When citizens feel that they have been treated fairly by the police, their trust in police increases and they are more likely to be willing to report crimes to the police (Kruger et al., 2016). Despite the abundance of studies that look into attitudes toward police and how legitimacy affects crime reporting to police, there are still some gaps that need further research.

### 2.3 Gaps in Literature

Most studies have examined either the situational aspect of the crime or the attitudes toward police, but rarely has there been a study that includes both and has the depth of information to provide an in-depth examination of the two. Previous studies have used a variety of measures to examine the relationship between attitudes and reporting crime to the police. Very few studies examine attitudes measured by actual reporting data. Most studies have measured attitudes by looking at the likelihood or willingness to report crime or that others would report crime (Reisig & Parks, 2004; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). The likelihood or willingness to report is not the same as whether a respondent did report crime to the police. Willingness to report means that if a crime situation were to occur, the respondent would probably report it to police. However, this a measure of potential or hypothesized action, so it is unclear how the citizen would respond if he/she was actually victimized. It would be more beneficial to

use self-reported data when looking at crime reporting. Willingness to report may be different than actual reporting behavior (Slocum, 2018; Xie & Baumer, 2019).

Many studies have looked at crime reporting and crime rates using the NCVS. The survey provides self-report data, but lacks information regarding community and neighborhood attributes and has no indicators of perceptions of police (Slocum, 2018; Xie & Baumer, 2019). Using a dataset that contains similar information as the NCVS and includes neighborhood attributes and perceptions of police would be beneficial to furthering the understanding of how different factors within the crime-police process interact. Kwak et al. (2019) used Anderson's code of the streets to examine how perceptions of police effectiveness and procedural justice as well as internal beliefs in codes of violence impacted the decision to report crime to the police. Perceived code of violence was measured using respondents' perceptions of how they thought others in their neighborhood would feel about certain crime statements (Kwak et al., 2019). This measurement is a perception of others, not actual information on how people felt themselves. People can have opinions of others that may not be true and thus, this measure may not be an accurate description of the real code of violence that exists within the community. Researchers also used a measure of perceived procedural justice that captured how respondents believed police treated others (Kwak et al., 2019). Again, this is a perception measure, not self-reported beliefs or experiences. Procedural injustice was found to have a negative impact on crime reporting (Kwak et al., 2019). The study only looked at residents in Seattle neighborhoods, so it is difficult to generalize these findings to the entire United States population.



The few studies that have examined crime reporting and satisfaction with police have been done separately. There is yet to be a study that includes both aspects and examines the relationship between crime characteristics, victim characteristics, prior police contact, community policing tactics, satisfaction with police and crime reporting. Researchers are starting to explore how interactions with police shape later crime reporting behavior. Some studies looked at how police-citizen interactions influenced perceptions of and attitudes toward reporting crime to the police (Mazerolle et al., 2013). Researchers have mostly focused on prior victimization reporting and how it affects future crime reporting (Conaway & Lohr, 1994; Xie et al., 2006). Looking at the relationship between police-citizen contact and crime reporting has rarely been done (Slocum, 2018). Prior police contact has been linked to future crime reporting behaviors, but only crime-related contact was evaluated. Citizens reported whether they had no contact, they initiated contact with police related to crime reporting, police initiated a traffic stop, or police initiated the contact because the respondent was suspected of a crime (Slocum, 2018). None of these prior police contacts involved community related activities or non-crime related citizen-initiated contact. Citizens will experience other types of police contacts outside of crime-related interactions, so it is important to investigate how those contacts also play a role in crime reporting.

Understanding the relationships between the variables that affect crime reporting is important. If the situation matters more than attitudes, then what police have been doing is wrong. The main goal of community policing and police interacting with citizens is to allow people to feel more comfortable with contacting the police if there is a crime (Cordner, 1997). Without attitudes playing a role in crime reporting, then police might as

well discontinue community policing efforts and concentrate on responding to calls for service. Evidence of crime reporting being situation driven would indicate that the role of legitimacy and other general attitudes toward the police should be reevaluated. If trust, satisfaction and confidence in police are not associated with a willingness to report crime to the police, then most of the legitimacy argument falls apart.

## Chapter 3: The Present Study

### 3.1 Overview and Hypotheses

The current study enhances findings from previous studies by further examining the relationship between citizens' satisfaction with police, situational aspects of crime, community policing tactics, prior police-citizen interactions and reporting crime to the police using representative data collected in 12 United States cities. The goal is to improve the understanding of the crime reporting decisions by testing the relationship between attitudes, crime seriousness, and victim reporting behaviors with data on actual reporting behaviors, while controlling for variables that previous research has shown to influence reporting. The current study empirically deconstructs the complex relationship between satisfaction with police and crime reporting. Besides considering limitations of prior studies, this study aims to further explore the relationship between police satisfaction and reporting by adding different variables to parse out the exact relationship between these variables. The objective is to provide researchers with an in-depth understanding of which factors influence crime reporting. Do attitudes really matter in relation to crime reporting? Or are decisions to report crime based on prior police interactions or the seriousness of the crime itself?

This study uses crime reporting behaviors and satisfaction with police to further improve the literature on legitimacy. In most cases, reporting is seen as citizens viewing police as legitimate and not just as reporting crimes. Some studies have found that attitudes toward police and seriousness of the crime affect crime reporting behaviors (Baumer, 2002; Goudriaan et al., 2004; Slocum et al., 2010). However, it is unclear whether attitudes or crime seriousness has the greater influence on crime reporting. If

attitudes play a greater role in citizens' reporting of crime, then legitimacy research will be supported (Tyler, 2004). If crime seriousness is the greater influence, then attitudinal variables like legitimacy of the police do not matter when it comes to crime reporting, only the attributes of the crime itself and obtaining the most desirable outcome in the situation are important to the victim. This would support findings that crime reporting is a pragmatic decision made based on the situation (Skogan, 1984). The following hypotheses will be tested in the crime reporting model.

Hypothesis 1: The greater the victim's satisfaction with the police, the greater the likelihood that the crime will be reported to the police.

Hypothesis 2: The more serious the crime, the greater the likelihood that the crime will be reported to the police.

Hypothesis 3: Satisfaction with police explains more of the variation in crime reporting than the seriousness of the crime event.

General attitudes are enduring, so most are formed before a person's most recent victimization. This means that they are already influencing whether a person reports crime, net of the attributes of the crime (Brandl et al., 1994).

Hypothesis 4: The greater numbers of community policing tactics in a jurisdiction, the greater the likelihood that a crime will be reported.

Community policing is a self-conscious effort to promote interaction between the police and the public (Cordner, 1997). This interaction builds trust between the citizens and the police. Jurisdictions with aggressive COPS policing programs will promote greater interaction and greater reporting of crime events.

Hypothesis 5: The greater the direct prior contact with the police, the greater the likelihood of reporting victimizations to the police.

### 3.2 Data

The data for this study originate from the 1997 Law Enforcement and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) Sample Survey of Law Enforcement Agencies and the 1998 Criminal Victimization and Perceptions of Community Safety in 12 United States Cities. The 1997 LEMAS survey is a mail survey sent to law enforcement agencies throughout the United States (see Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997). Agencies report data on personnel, salaries, expenditures, equipment, operations, special programs such as community policing, and drug enforcement activities. This version of the survey includes information collected from state police, county police, both state and local special police, municipal police, and sheriff's departments. To be included in the survey, the state or local law enforcement agency needed to be publicly funded and have on payroll at least one full-time or part-time sworn officer who had the power of arrest. In total, 3412 agencies responded to the survey. The dataset provides weights to adjust for potential non-response bias.

The 1998 Criminal Victimization and Perceptions of Community Safety (CVPCS) in 12 United State Cities survey gathers information from citizens concerning criminal victimization, perceptions of community safety and disorder, and satisfaction with the local police (see Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1998). The 12 cities included in the survey were Chicago, IL, Kansas City, MO, Knoxville, TN, Los Angeles, CA, Madison, WI, New York, NY, San Diego, CA, Savannah, GA, Spokane, WA, Springfield, MA, Tucson, AZ, and Washington, DC. About 800 households were contacted in each of the 12 cities. Respondents were contacted through random-digit dialing. The survey used the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) questionnaire and included additional questions that

measured citizen attitudes on community policing and crime in each of the 12 cities. For the NCVS questionnaire, respondents had to be 12 or older to be interviewed. For the supplemental community policing questionnaire, only respondents who were 16 and older and self-responded were interviewed. The additional questions on community policing perceptions and satisfaction with police allow for a more robust understanding of what crimes citizens see in their neighborhoods and cities and their overall feelings about crime and the police in their area. The supplemental questions also provide more specific information about types of interactions with the police and what actions respondents' desire the police participate in.

Survey respondents were asked to only report on incidents that occurred within the last 12 months. Information was collected on violent crimes, household crimes, and personal theft crimes. At the household level, data was collected on the number of household respondents, ages of respondents, size of residence, type of housing, and language spoken in household. Person-level data included information on the respondents' gender, age, education, race, marital status, occupation, victimization experiences, perceptions of neighborhood crime, interactions with police, and satisfaction with the local police agencies. Incident-level data gathered information on the specific details of crimes that respondents were victimized in and the police response to those crimes. Only person-level and incident-level data were used in this study. A total of 18,514 people were interviewed and information on 5,217 incidents was collected.

For the current study, the two datasets were merged based on city code, which included the city and state the agency was located in. Only the 12 cities in the LEMAS survey that corresponded with the 12 cities in the victimization survey were used in this

study. Before merging the datasets, the main police department in each of the 12 cities was determined. The goal was to find a single police agency that held the main jurisdiction over the city population. This resulted in a total of 12 police departments used in the present study (see Table 1). Each of the 12 agencies were police departments that were coded as municipal which means they held the principal jurisdiction over the city population. State police, county police, special police and sheriff departments were excluded because these agencies were responsible for specific areas or populations and were not responsible for responding to the majority of crimes within the cities. After selecting the 12 police departments, the datasets were merged based on city and state.

The LEMAS and the CVPCS datasets are appropriate for this study for a few reasons. The former provides self-reported actions the police took related to community policing. The latter is a victimization survey so it has all the necessary victim, offender, crime, and police satisfaction variables. It asks whether the victim reported a crime to the police and how satisfied the respondent was with the local police. In addition, the survey asks questions about citizen-police interactions and types of police responses to crime. The LEMAS data was used to generate city-level variables while the victimization survey was used to generate individual level variables. All variables for victim, offender, crime characteristics, and citizen reported police interactions come from the victimization survey. Merging the datasets allows researchers to examine how police actions taken the previous year affect future decisions of reporting crimes to the police. This adds the dimension of community policing interactions with the public to the analysis.

The CVPCS is cross-sectional, so it is difficult to determine temporal order and know which variable causes victims to report crime or directly influences satisfaction

with the police. Nevertheless, relationships and interactions between the variables can still be explored using this data. In addition, there were some issues with determining the appropriate sample size. There is a lot of blank and missing data throughout the dataset, both through the survey design and lack of participant response. This study only focuses on those who self-reported victimization experiences. Furthermore, depending on answers to previous questions, other questions were skipped for many of the respondents. For instance, the community policing and satisfaction questions were skipped for those who were not self-responders and were under the age of 16. For other questions, if the answer to the main question was 'no,' then the respondent was not asked specifics about that topic. However, net these issues, this data will be useful in trying to parse out the relationships between different variables that previous research has shown to have an effect on crime reporting.

One overall model was used in the present study. The model focused on predicting reporting crime to the police. This model included only those who reported being victimized (N=4,598).<sup>1</sup> It looked at the relationship between satisfaction with police, contact with the police and crime attributes on crime reporting.

### 3.3 Measures

#### 3.3.1 Dependent Variable

*Crime reporting.* The model uses only respondents who reported a victimization in the past 12 months. The dependent variable is whether the victim reported crime to the police or not. It is measured as a dichotomous variable with reporting crime to the police coded

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<sup>1</sup> Due to missing data throughout the variables, the final sample size was 4,598.



as 1 and not reporting coded as 0. About 40% of those victimized reported crime to the police.<sup>2</sup>

### 3.3.2 Independent Variables

The primary focus of this study is on the relationships between previous interactions with the police, crime seriousness and satisfaction with police. Previous interactions with police include respondents' self-reported interactions with police and law enforcement reported community policing practices.

*Satisfaction with police.* Satisfaction was measured with a single five-item Likert scale used to gauge respondents' satisfaction with the local police who serve their neighborhood. Responses were scaled with 1=very dissatisfied, 2=dissatisfied, 3=no opinion, 4=satisfied and 5=very satisfied. Higher values indicated higher levels of satisfaction with the police. This measurement of attitudes toward the police is a single-item scale. It is a weak measurement because it uses one item to represent a multi-dimensional concept. Attitudes are multi-faceted and satisfaction is only one part. However, this measurement can still be used to indicate a potential relationship between satisfaction and reporting crime to the police.

*Respondent interaction with police.* Respondents' self-reported interactions with the police were broken up into non-enforcement and enforcement interactions. Respondents who said they had been in contact with local police were asked to elaborate and report all

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<sup>2</sup> The NCVS asks who reported the crime to the police and for this study, the focus is on whether the victims reported crime to the police. The crime could also be reported by others. Out of 5,217 people who reported having been a victim of crime, 152 said they didn't know if the crime was reported to police or refused to answer the question, so these people were dropped from the study. Another 26 respondents were proxies and did not self-report. Overall, 5,039 respondents were victims of crime and for those who were victimized, only 2,019 reported the crime to the police.

types of contact with police.<sup>3</sup> Enforcement interactions refer to calls for service in response to criminal victimization and traffic enforcement while non-enforcement activity includes more varied and less traditional reasons for interaction with the police, e.g. help seeking. Non-enforcement activities give the public the opportunity to see the police in a more benevolent context, to see them more as people than authorities. These interactions are both a means to a more trusting relationship as well as evidence of same.

**Non-enforcement.** Non-enforcement interactions included having casual conversations, giving information to police, completing a survey, asking for advice, participating in community-police activities and working with police on specific problems. To create a value for non-enforcement, a simple additive scale was constructed to show how much non-enforcement contact the respondent had with police. The scale ranged from 0 to 5.<sup>4</sup> Higher values indicated more non-enforcement police contact.

**Enforcement.** Enforcement interactions included police responding to calls for service and traffic violations/accidents. These interactions include police doing their job of enforcing the law. Many of the respondents indicated they only experienced one of these interactions so this variable is dichotomous with 1 indicating respondents had some type of enforcement contact with police and 0 indicating no enforcement contact with the police.

*Law enforcement community policing tactics.* The community policing variables provide a jurisdictional-city level variable. Police departments in all 12 cities had either a formal

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<sup>3</sup> Whether the citizen contact involved reporting crime to the police was not included in these variables because the dependent variable is crime reporting.

<sup>4</sup> None of the respondents reported having all six types of nonenforcement contact so the scale only goes to 5.

or informal community policing plan. Community policing activities were measured using two variables. The first was the types of community policing tactics taken by the police and the second was the types of community meetings police held. Both were measured using a simple additive scale.

**Community policing actions.** Departments were asked which of the following community policing actions their agency engaged in: train citizens in community policing, give patrol officers responsibility for specific geographic areas, assign detectives to cases based on geographic area, actively encourage patrol officers to engage in SARA-type problem solving projects, include collaborative problem-solving projects in evaluation criteria of patrol officers, and form problem-solving partnerships with community groups or other agencies through contracts or written agreements. All twelve departments participated in at least one of the community policing tactics. Responses for each type of police action were dichotomous with 1=yes and 0=no. These responses were combined to form an additive scale, with an alpha of .68, suggesting an acceptable internal consistency of the scale. Since the categories were dichotomous a slightly lower alpha value is satisfactory. The scale represents the extent of community policing tactics used by the police. The higher values represent more community policing tactics used. Knowing whether the number of community policing tactics affects satisfaction and crime reporting can influence future policy and goals of community policing.

**Community policing meetings.** Departments were asked which of the following groups their agency met with to address crime-related problems: neighborhood associations, tenants' associations, youth service organizations, advocacy groups,

business groups, religious groups, school and other meetings.<sup>5</sup> All but one police department met with community groups to discuss crime-related problems. Responses for each category were dichotomous with 1=yes and 0=no. These responses were combined to form an additive scale, with an alpha of .88, suggesting high internal consistency of the scale. Higher values represent a higher number of police-community meetings.

Understanding whether having multiple types of community policing meetings are related to crime reporting is important. If police know whether having more meetings affect whether a victim reports crime to the police, then policy can be adapted to encourage more community meetings and police outreach within the community. The fact that police are holding the meetings is a sign that police are responsive to the needs of the community. Residents may not be happy with the state of affairs in their areas, but they show up to the meetings because they have confidence the police can do something.

*Perception of crime in area.* Perception of crime in the area included types of crimes seen in the neighborhood and the respondents' level of fear of crime in the city. Respondents were asked if they knew of any serious crime in their neighborhood and if so, to describe what crimes they know have occurred in their neighborhood. Types of crime included people openly selling drugs, people openly using drugs, auto-theft, theft of personal property, breaking and entering, violent physical attacks, crimes committed with guns, sexual assault/rape and murder. To create a value for neighborhood crime, a simple additive scale, with an alpha of .73, was created. This scale shows how much crime the respondent saw in the neighborhood. Higher values indicated higher numbers of crime in

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<sup>5</sup> Only 1 police department said they engaged in other types of meetings. A separate question asked respondents to specify the other types of community meetings. The Chicago Police Department stated police also held meetings with residents/block clubs/city services.

the neighborhood. A score of 0 meant the respondent saw no crime or was not aware of any crimes occurring in the neighborhood. Fear of crime was measured with a single five-item Likert scale used to gauge respondents' fear of crime in their city. Responses were reversed and scaled as 1=not at all fearful, 2=not very fearful, 3=no opinion, 4=somewhat fearful and 5=very fearful. Higher values indicated higher levels of fear of crime.

Neighborhood crime and fear of crime were included in the model to take account of vicarious experiences with crime and the police. As we noted earlier, attitudes toward the police can be shaped not only by one's direct experience with the police, but also by the experience of friends, family and neighbors. High rates of crime and disorder as well as fear of crime in the neighborhood give the impression that the police are not doing their job. While you personally may not have had bad experiences with the police, knowing that your neighbors are at risk and in fear, may make you less willing to rely on the police and report crime.

*Crime seriousness.* Crime seriousness typically refers to the amount of injury or loss experienced as a result of the victimization. In this instance we used the type of crime, completion of the crime, and the amount of loss to measure the seriousness of the crime. There are many more elaborate ways of assessing seriousness that would incorporate more fine-grained distinctions of injury, weapons use or psychic harms. Weapons use and egregious injury are rare events and in a relatively small (for victimization) data set, it did not make sense to make these distinctions. Moreover, there were no measures of psychic harm in the data. Victims make rational decisions about the seriousness of a crime based on the crime characteristics. Each crime is different and will therefore have a different

seriousness ranking. These variables combined reflect that overall idea of crime seriousness. Crime type was a dichotomous variable with 1=contact crime and 0=not a contact crime. About 79% of victims reported no contact crimes and 21% reported contact crimes. Whether the crime was completed or not was also dichotomous with 1=completion and 0=attempt or not completed. Additionally, deciles in the loss distribution were used to represent the differences in the amount of loss.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.3.3 Control Variables

Multiple variables were used as controls to reduce any confounding relationships found between satisfaction with police, crime seriousness, and crime reporting. Variables known to be influential in reporting crime are included in the models. These variables were included in the models as controls because of the relationship they may have with the independent and dependent variables. There are three types of individual level variables: victim characteristics offender characteristics and crime attributes.

*Victim characteristics.* Victim characteristics included demographics such as age, race, gender and education.<sup>7</sup> These variables have been shown to be related to reporting to the police in a manner where more marginal or less powerful groups are less likely to report victimizations to the police. Older victims, for example, are more likely to report events to the police than younger victims (Ruback et al., 1999). Age was a continuous variable ranging from 12 to 90 years old. Race was a dichotomous variable coded as 0=white and 1=all other races. Gender was a dichotomous variable coded as 0=male and 1=female.

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<sup>6</sup> The loss distribution was skewed so deciles were used to better distribute the values. Deciles 2 and 3 were missing because they were included in decile 1. They were all zeroes.

<sup>7</sup> Income was not included in this study due to a large amount of missing data within the variable.

Education was a continuous variable that represents the highest grade attended. Education ranged from 0 to 18, with 0 being never attended or kindergarten and 18 being the sixth year of college.

*Offender characteristics.* The main offender characteristic included in this study is whether the victim knew the offender or not. The relationship between the victim and the offender has been found to influence reporting in complex ways. While crimes by intimates may not be reported out of fear of retaliation, crimes by strangers may not be reported because victims lack information the police would need to find the offender. Whatever the process leading to reporting an event, victim offender relationship should be considered. For both single and multiple offenders, respondents were asked if they knew the offender(s) at all or if the offender(s) was a stranger. Knowing the offender was a dichotomous variable coded as 1=knew the offender(s) and 0=offender(s) was a stranger.

*Crime attributes.* The main crime attribute included in addition to the previous variables under crime seriousness is prior victimization. Whether a person experienced single or multiple victimizations was a dichotomous variable. It was coded as 0=single victimization and 1=multiple victimizations.

### 3.4 Analysis Plan

This analysis focused on reporting crime to the police. Descriptive statistics are located in Table 2. The reporting model included only those persons in the sample who have been recently victimized, since they are the only ones eligible to report crimes to the police. Logistic regression was used to estimate the reporting model, as the dependent

variable of reporting crime to the police has a binary outcome. A logit model with odds ratio and a cluster command was used as the final model. The logit model provides a clear interpretation of the coefficient in terms of odds ratios. Due to potential similarities of victims and crimes within jurisdictions, the regression model needs to account for clustering. Clustered data such as the one used in this study require models that consider the fact that people within the same group may be more similar to each other than with people in other groups. For this study, people living within the same areas may be more similar to each other than people who live in different areas of the United States. Thus, the model will be clustered based on city. There were twelve cities, so there were twelve clusters.

In addition to the regression model, diagnostic tests including checks for multicollinearity were run. Checks for multicollinearity revealed no variance inflation factor values above 2.45. This is well below the standard threshold of 10, which indicates that the independent variables in the study are not correlated. When interpreting the results of this study, it is important to keep in mind that there are temporal ordering issues with the dataset. Since the data are cross-sectional, the results can only show association, not causation. Acknowledging that these results only show a potential relationship is important and should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of this study.



## Chapter 4: Results

Results from the logistic regression model including all of the variables and reporting crime to the police can be seen in Table 3. None of the demographic variables were significantly associated with reporting crime to the police. Also, satisfaction had no significant association with crime reporting. A slightly negative relationship existed, but it was not significant at any level.

Direct interactions with police appear to have some relationship with a subsequent willingness to call the police. Any direct interaction with police seemed to be associated with a greater willingness to report crimes to the police. Victims who encountered any prior enforcement contact with the police were 1.53 times more likely to report crimes to the police than victims who did not have any enforcement contact. These results show that enforcement contact itself may not be negative; in fact, having had an enforcement contact may be a good thing. Since satisfaction was not significant, it is difficult to determine why having enforcement contact was related to a greater likelihood of reporting crimes to the police. If victims had positive interactions with the police and felt that police acted appropriately and fairly, then even though they experienced an enforcement contact, they may believe the police are doing their job and so they will report future crimes. Or it could be that an individual who has prior contact with the police in relation to enforcement knows that the police are there and they had experience with the police, so the likelihood to report a crime is greater. As a person experiences one more type of non-enforcement contact, the odds of reporting crime to the police increased by 25%. This finding shows that part of community policing goals work (Weisburd & McElroy, 1988). Police attempts to encourage reporting by expanding the range and

frequency of non-enforcement contacts with the public was associated with increased odds of reporting a crime.

Prior experiences with police also included any community policing tactics the police department engaged in. Community policing meetings showed a significant negative relationship with crime reporting while community policing actions was not significant. The odds of reporting crime to the police decreased by 5% as the number of community meetings police held increased by one. This finding is contrary to our expectation and one of the main goals of community policing. The purpose of holding community meetings is to collaborate with citizens on crime problems in the area (Cordner, 1997) and greater collaboration should increase the reporting of victimizations to the police. However, it could be that the police hold community meetings when there is a crime problem, so citizens attend these meetings because they are not happy with what is happening in their neighborhood. This would account for the negative relationship between community meetings and crime reporting. We would need longitudinal data on crime meetings and reporting to sort this out.

When we assess the robustness of community policing using the extent of community actions taken by police, there is no significant relationship with crime reporting. These different actions may not have an effect on crime reporting because the citizens may not notice when the police implement them. Just because the police put the effort into engaging in more community policing tactics does not mean that there is any outcome. Sometimes when more community-oriented policing tactics are used in an area, citizens' attention can be drawn to the amount of crime and therefore, their odds of reporting and their belief that police are doing their job decreases. There is no evidence in

this analysis that community policing programs have a positive relationship with victim's willingness to call the police.

For this study, vicarious interactions included perceptions of crime in the neighborhood and fear of crime in the city. Intriguingly, both fear of crime and perceptions of neighborhood crime were not significant. Overall, vicarious experiences did not appear to add anything to the relationship between variables in the model. It may be that vicarious experiences affect attitudes but not actual crime reporting behavior.

Crime seriousness included crime type, amount of loss, and whether the crime was completed or attempted. Individuals who experience contact crimes are 3.32 times more likely to report crimes to the police than those who are victims of non-contact crimes. When an individual is physically victimized, he/she is more likely to report the incident to the police. Additionally, the odds of reporting crime to the police increased by 22% when the loss percentile increased by 10. Greater loss was associated with a higher likelihood of reporting crime to the police. This is all consistent with previous research (Skogan, 1984). The odds of reporting crime to the police for completed crimes decreased by 65% compared to attempted crimes. People who are victims of attempted crimes are more likely to report crime to the police than completed crimes. This negative relationship is contrary to previous research (Conaway & Lohr, 1994). However, about half the completed crimes were minor crimes like threats and crimes that did not fall within the crimes classified in the NCVS.<sup>8</sup> Victims may have thought these minor crimes were not worth reporting.

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<sup>8</sup> These crimes were categorized as "No type of crime classification" in the survey codebook.

Having experienced any prior victimization had a significant negative relationship with crime reporting. That is, individuals who experienced multiple victimizations in general were less likely to call the police. The odds of reporting crime to the police if one had prior victimizations decreased by 36% compared to those who were the victim of a crime for the first time. This is contrary to previous studies which found that prior reporting of crime to the police is positively associated with subsequent reporting (Conaway & Lohr, 1994). However, repeat victimization can result in the routinization of the behavior and less involvement with the police. Also, knowing the offender was not significantly associated with the decision to report crime to the police. Including type of crime as a control variable and not running separate models for contact and non-contact crime could influence the extent to which knowing the offender was associated with crime reporting. Only those who experienced contact crimes were likely to have seen the offender and could therefore report whether or not they knew the offender. Or it could simply be that other aspects of the crime may play a larger role in reporting than whether the victim knows the offender. The seriousness of the crime may overshadow knowing the offender in regards to calling the police. Based on this model, crime seriousness had the largest relationship with the likelihood of reporting crimes to the police.

The hypothesized relationships were only partly supported. The first hypothesis stated that satisfaction would have a greater influence on crime reporting. This hypothesis was not supported. In the model, there was no significant relationship between satisfaction and crime reporting. This result is contrary to prior studies which showed that trust and satisfaction with police lead to a greater likelihood of reporting (Brandl et al., 1994; Goudriaan et al., 2006). The second hypothesis stated that the more serious the

crime, the greater the likelihood of reporting. This hypothesis was partially supported. The relationship between both the type of crime and the amount of loss on reporting was positive. Consistent with prior research, contact crimes were associated with greater reporting than non-contact crimes and greater amounts of loss were also associated with an increased likelihood of reporting (Skogan, 1984; Xie et al., 2006). However, completion was not in the hypothesized direction. The data showed that completed crimes were less likely to be reported than attempted crimes. Other studies have found the opposite, with completed crime being more likely to be reported (Conaway & Lohr, 1994). As stated previously, all three (type of contact, amount of loss, and completion) created the overall crime seriousness variable. Next, it was hypothesized that satisfaction would explain more of the variation in crime reporting than crime seriousness and other attributes of the event. This hypothesis was not supported. Contrary to the hypothesis, crime seriousness had the greatest relationship with the likelihood of reporting crimes to the police. General attitudes do not appear to be linked with the pragmatic decisions to call the police. This result is consistent with research that emphasizes the cost-benefit approach (Kaukinen, 2002; Skogan, 1984). It was also hypothesized that the greater number of community policing tactics in a jurisdiction, the greater the likelihood that a crime would be reported. This hypothesis was also not supported. Community policing actions had no significant influence on the likelihood of reporting and both policing actions and community meetings had a negative relationship with crime reporting. Higher numbers of both community policing actions and community meetings were linked with a decrease in likelihood of reporting. These findings are inconsistent with previous studies that found community policing interventions led to more crimes being reported (Connell

et al., 2008; Graziano et al., 2014; Levitt, 1998). Community meetings had a significant relationship with reporting, though it was the opposite of the hypothesized relationship. This relationship is similar to a single study that found that more efforts to engage in problem solving with the community decreased citizens' reporting of crimes to the police (Schnebly, 2008). Finally, the hypothesis regarding direct experiences was supported. Similar to findings from previous studies (see Hinds, 2009; Peyton et al., 2019), direct experiences with police, both non-enforcement and enforcement, were associated with higher likelihood of reporting while vicarious experiences had no significant relationship with crime reporting.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

### 5.1 Findings

The present study adds to the existing literature on reporting crime to the police by examining the relationship between satisfaction, police interactions and crime attributes with decisions to call the police. Contrary to proponents of the “general attitudes” approach (Tankebe, 2013), the findings for the study found that crime seriousness is more strongly associated with reporting crime to the police than general attitudes toward the police. These findings support the cost/benefit analysis approach where an individual considers the seriousness of the crime when deciding to report (Kaukinen, 2002; Skogan, 1984). General attitudes, satisfaction in particular, were not related to the likelihood of reporting crime. In this study, satisfaction had no relationship with decisions to report crime. As stated earlier, this measurement is weak so one should be cautious when interpreting the results. General attitudes toward the police may mean less than the pragmatic outcomes of the victimization incident when it comes to calling the police in the moment. The relationships for type of crime and amount of loss were in the expected direction and both were significant. However, completion was not in the hypothesized direction. Previous research states that completed crimes were more likely to be reported (Conaway & Lohr, 1994). The odds of reporting were greatest when crime seriousness and more specifically, crime type was considered. Finding that crime seriousness is linked to an increase in reporting is consistent with the hypothesis where it was believed that crime seriousness will lead to greater reporting. This can also explain the apparent contradiction where populations with the most negative attitudes toward the

police and greater socioeconomic disadvantage are the ones most likely to call the police in response to victimization (Baumer, 2002; Xie & Lauritsen, 2012).

It was also hypothesized that direct prior experiences would be related to a higher likelihood of reporting to the police. This hypothesis was supported. Both non-enforcement and enforcement contact were associated with increased likelihood of reporting crimes to the police. This may be the result that having had prior contact with police, one knows what to expect and therefore, will report future crimes to the police. These results were consistent with prior studies (Hinds, 2009; Skogan, 2005), but it is unclear why both types of prior contact were associated with increased reporting. It could be that whether citizens or police initiated the contact mediates the relationship with crime reporting (Rosenbaum et al., 2005; Slocum, 2018). Or it could be the way police act during the interaction, such as being procedurally fair, encourages citizens to report crimes (Kwak et al., 2019; Van Damme et al., 2015). Enforcement interactions are when the police show up and do their jobs. Having first-hand experience with how police act while carrying out their duties lets citizens know what to expect from any future encounters and may influence whether the citizens feel confident in reporting crime to the police. Non-enforcement is when the police go out and interact with citizens outside of normal police duties. Engagement in neighborhood organizations leads to a higher willingness to assist police (Hawdon & Ryan, 2011). Therefore, these types of interactions may lead to increased reporting. However, these results are not definitive because the measurements used for prior contact were weak. A single measurement was used to represent both enforcement and non-enforcement contact. Thus, how enforcement



and non-enforcement contact relate to crime reporting may be more detailed than can be inferred from the current study.

Contrary to the hypothesis that an increase in community policing tactics would result in greater chance of reporting, more community policing actions and meetings were associated with a decrease in the likelihood of reporting crime. Also, only community meetings were significant. This may have been the result of police reacting to crime by organizing more meetings or citizens becoming aware of more crime because they saw more police in their area. It was expected that citizens who attended police-community meetings would have more confidence in the police abilities to solve problems and would therefore report more crime to the police (Graziano et al., 2014). An important goal of community policing is facilitating more police interaction with citizens to allow people to feel more comfortable with contacting the police if there is a crime (Cordner, 1997). Findings did not support this conclusion. Furthermore, having more community meetings was associated with lower levels of reporting. Similarly, Schnebly (2008) also found that police engagement in more problem-solving partnerships with members of the community led to fewer crimes being reporting to the police. Since citizens go to community meetings to discuss crime problems in the area, having a multitude of meetings within one city might have increased residents' awareness of crime issues and therefore they were less likely to report crime. It could be that having only one of the types of community policing meetings would be sufficient to increase reporting of crime, but if so, it is unclear which type of meeting would be the best choice. Thus, it appears that community policing tactics, at least the way they were measured in this study do not have a positive influence on the likelihood of reporting.

Based on the theory of legitimacy (Tyler, 2004), it was hypothesized that satisfaction with police would have the largest relationship with crime reporting. The findings of this study suggest the contrary. Without satisfaction playing a role in decisions to report crime, police should reconsider programs designed to improve general attitudes toward the police as a means of encouraging reporting victimizations to the police. These results do support the idea that interactions with the police including non-enforcement interactions with the police are associated with increased reporting of crimes to the police (Peyton et al., 2019). So, to the extent that reform efforts like community policing result in increased interaction with the public, they may contribute to increased reporting to the police. The finding that crime reporting is situationally driven indicates that the role of legitimacy and other general attitudes toward the police should be reevaluated. In fact, legitimacy may be better utilized to explain cooperation with police more generally rather than reporting behavior specifically.

The relationship between satisfaction with police and reporting crime to the police is difficult to interpret because of causal ordering problems, as noted earlier. Satisfaction with the police was not significantly related to reporting victimization to the police. The measurement is weak so it is difficult to be too definitive in our statement that situational aspects of victimization are more important than the general attitudes of victims toward the police. This measurement may not capture a citizen's full attitude of satisfaction with police and therefore, does not provide a clear picture of how attitudes actually relate to crime reporting. With this weak measurement the relationship found in this study may not depict the true association between satisfaction and crime reporting. Currently there is no standard, agreed upon measurement of satisfaction with police.

When satisfaction has been studied, most researchers have also used secondary data. Many of the studies only included a single-item satisfaction scale. This measurement is weak and may not capture the full picture, just like the measurement in the current study. Studies that use a single item to represent satisfaction typically ask “How satisfied are you with the police?” They use a five- or four-item Likert scale with values ranging from very dissatisfied to very satisfied (Boateng, 2018; Garcia & Cao, 2005; Scheider et al., 2003). Additionally, trust has often been used as a separate measurement of legitimacy (Davis & Henderson, 2003; Goudriaan et al., 2006; Kääriäinen & Sirén, 2011). Other studies have used trust, confidence, and satisfaction interchangeably (Dukes et al., 2009; Garduno & Keeling, 2021; Lytle & Randa, 2015) which creates a broader understanding of attitudes toward police, but it is difficult to understand which has the greater impact. The variety of questions change depending on the data, so it is difficult to determine if there is external validity of attitudes toward police amongst the different studies. Weak or inconsistent satisfaction and legitimacy measures make it difficult to fully understand the relationship between legitimacy and crime reporting.

### 5.2 Limitations and Future Directions

Although the methods used in this study constitute a more rigorous and in-depth evaluation than previous research, there were still limitations to be considered. First, the dataset provides limitations for the areal grouping of community policing efforts. While city jurisdictions are useful for this study, heterogeneity within cities was not captured and that may have influenced the results. Only twelve cities were asked to respond to the survey and all twelve were large cities. Small cities and rural areas were not given the

survey; therefore, the findings can only be generalized to large cities in the United States. Attitudes toward and experiences with police may be different in smaller cities. Additionally, community policing programs in smaller cities will inherently be different from those in larger cities because the focus of community policing practices changes depending on what is needed by the citizens in that area (Weisburd & Eck, 2004). Future research should look into how experiences and attitudes shape whether victims of crime in rural communities and smaller cities decide to call the police or not. An even better measurement of areal grouping would be neighborhoods. This measure is smaller than city and would provide more variability. Different neighborhoods within cities may be different from each other. Future research should explore how neighborhood contexts influence the relationship between attitudes and experiences on the decision to call the police.

Secondly, there are various ways to measure general attitudes toward the police like legitimacy, and, while based on theory, the current study's definition was limited to the available survey questions. Satisfaction is only one aspect of legitimacy (Tyler, 2004). For this study, satisfaction was a broad measure that was an estimation of trust and confidence in police. It may not capture the full picture when it comes to trust, confidence, and the degree of respect toward the police. Since satisfaction was a general attitude, it was assumed that the overall attitude of satisfaction towards police would be enduring, even when an interaction with police or crime occurred (Brandl et al., 1994). However, this is an assumption made by researchers because of the cross-sectional nature of the data. Causal ordering of attitudes and experience could not be established. As a result, only association between the two variables could be discussed. Future studies

should include more direct measures of satisfaction that inquire about a victims' prior police interactions and how the victim felt about how the police responded to the crime. The satisfaction variables should be measured longitudinally so as to establish temporal ordering of interaction with the police and general attitudes toward the police. It would be best to gather data on satisfaction multiple times in a single year or over a few years. Future research should also make sure to ask respondents to clarify what their satisfaction was prior to any incident. This would allow researchers to establish causal order and examine how attitudes impact reporting longitudinally. Another facet of legitimacy is procedural justice. There was no measure of procedural justice in this study. Procedural justice has an effect on reporting (Tyler & Wakslak, 2004) and may be a better measurement of legitimacy than satisfaction with police. Future studies should include a measure of procedural justice when studying crime reporting. It may be that believing that police were fair and just mediates the relationship between direct experiences and reporting. If procedurally just actions are more important than attitudes toward police, then the police should focus on acting appropriately during interactions to encourage reporting.

Given that this study is a secondary analysis using previously collected data, many of the central concepts are not measured as precisely and richly as one would want. For this study, satisfaction was used as a measurement to represent attitudes toward police. However, satisfaction with police was a one-item scale that was used to represent a multi-dimensional concept. Thus, the satisfaction measurement is weak at best. The secondary analysis means that we could not create a better measurement of this concept given the questions that were asked in the survey. There was only one satisfaction

question, which led to a single item being used to create the satisfaction measurement. Even though satisfaction was weak at representing attitudes toward the police, the measurement was included as an attempt at answering how attitudes are associated with reporting crimes to the police. That being said, future studies should include a more comprehensive measurement of satisfaction in order for researchers to make a more definitive statement about the relationship between attitudes toward police and reporting crime.

Measuring attitudes toward the police should be done in multiple ways. First, there should be a general satisfaction with police measurement and a specific satisfaction with police measurement. Both measurements should include multiple-item scales. The general satisfaction measurement will indicate how the respondent feels about the police as a whole institution while the specific satisfaction measurement will address how respondents felt about police during interactions. For general satisfaction, respondents could be asked “How satisfied are you with the police in your city, how would you rate the job police are doing in terms of working with people in your neighborhood to solve neighborhood problems and how satisfied are you with the quality of police services in your area?” For specific satisfaction, respondents could be asked to state how they felt about each prior contact with police. Potential questions could include “How satisfied were you with police during the contact, how satisfied were you with the police response, how confident are you that the police did a good job, and did your level of satisfaction change after contact with the police?” Another facet of attitudes toward the police is the belief that police are procedurally fair. Questions related to procedural justice should be included in any study that looks at crime reporting through the lens of legitimacy. When

citizens feel that they have been treated fairly by the police, their trust in police increases and they are more likely to be willing to report crimes to the police (Kruger et al., 2016; Kwak et al., 2019). Potential questions could include “How do you feel the police treated you, did the police do what was expected of them, were the police polite and how impartial were the police during the interaction?” A comprehensive future study about the relationship between attitudes and the police should include most of these questions. Since these questions are specific, researchers should conduct primary data analysis.

Although this study found that satisfaction did not have a significant relationship with crime reporting, future research should examine how attitudes toward police are formed. Do vicarious or direct experiences play a larger role in the development of these attitudes? How does the type of interaction with the police influence these attitudes? Having a better understanding of the formation of attitudes will help inform policy and shape how police interact with citizens. Studies have shown that previous police interactions and police response have an influence on satisfaction (Hinds, 2009; Skogan, 2005). Having specific questions that address how the nature of these interactions impact satisfaction with police will provide a clearer picture of whether it is satisfaction in general or satisfaction towards specific aspects of policing that affect crime reporting decisions. Since the current study only focused on victimization incidents, the findings cannot be generalized to the population as a whole, as one’s experiences have an influence on attitudes and future decisions (Reisig & Parks, 2004; Tankebe, 2013). Future studies should examine how victims and non-victims’ experiences with crime and the police shape the likelihood of reporting future crimes.

In the current study, both enforcement and non-enforcement interactions were significantly associated with increased reporting. The measure of enforcement used in this study captures whether enforcement contact happened, but not how many times or how the police acted during those interactions. This limits inferences about how enforcement contact relates to crime reporting. We can say that there is a positive relationship between having enforcement contact and increased reporting, but nuances of the relationship remain unclear. Also, the non-enforcement measure used in this study reflects the number of types of non-enforcement contact with the police. This measure does not include how many overall non-enforcement interactions the citizen had with police and whether those interactions left a positive or negative impression on the citizen. Future studies should include more descriptive information on the types of contact, like whether the contact was initiated by the citizen or the police, did the police meet the citizen's expectations, and how many times the citizen experienced direct contact with the police. Knowing whether the interaction is citizen initiated or police initiated has an effect on crime reporting (Slocum, 2018). Previous studies have shown that those who experience negative police-initiated contact are less likely to trust police and report future crimes (Gibson et al., 2010; Slocum, 2018). Another aspect of understanding how direct interactions affect reporting is the extent to which the police met the expectations of the victim. If the police meet the expectations of the citizen, then one is more likely to have a positive view of the police and report future crimes (Slocum, 2018). Furthermore, knowing how many of each type of interaction a citizen has experienced may give a threshold for how each type of contact impacts future reporting. Little is known about how interactions and experiences with police accumulate over time to shape reporting



behavior (Slocum, 2018). By looking at the number of contacts over a period of time, more information on the accumulation of these experiences can be understood. With more detailed studies, police will be able to tailor their practices to best encourage reporting behavior.

Another limitation is the measurement of community policing. Though the results of the study provide good data on the fact that in general, having more community policing actions and meetings are associated with decreased reporting, we are limited in the inferences that can be made. With the current study, we can only say that the number of community meetings and the number of community policing actions have a negative relationship with crime reporting, and only community meetings are significant. But is this relationship true for every specific action taken by police or for every type of meeting? Future studies would benefit from more precise data on the nature and scope of community policing tactics used within a jurisdiction. Future research should look at the number of community policing officers, how each type of meeting relates to crime reporting, how did police implement the community policing tactics and the extent to which citizens were aware of community policing efforts in their area. Having more community policing officers has been linked to increased reporting of crime (Levitt, 1998). In this study, though police used community policing tactics, how they were implemented is unclear. More specific information on how police engaged in each tactic would provide more detailed information on how those actions relate to crime reporting. If police do not implement strategies consistently, then police should receive more community policing training and understand why it is important for every officer to use similar scripts. Since having more community meetings was associated with decreased

crime reporting, police need to work on creating a balance between increasing awareness of crime while limiting feelings of fear of crime. Police could survey residents after each community meeting in order to determine how the residents felt about the outcome of the meeting. This would allow police to adjust their policies and future interactions with the public. If having community meetings causes more fear of crime and decreases reporting, then police should use a different tactic to better engage with the public. Instead of community meetings, police could choose a few well-respected and trusted figures in each neighborhood and partner with those individuals. Talking with those individuals about how police should approach residents of the area and what would benefit the community would allow police to better facilitate positive interactions with the public. Finally, community policing tactics are only effective if the public are made aware (Schnebly, 2008). Future research should ask residents if they are aware of community policing in their area and what types of actions they see police engage in.

Most importantly, the application of and inferences from this data are bound by the time period in which it takes place. Over twenty years have passed since this data was collected and new inventions, like smart phones and the development of social media, have greatly changed how people perceive crime and how authorities know a crime has been committed (Walsh & O'Connor, 2019). Cell phones add another level to vicarious experience with the ability of taking and sharing photos and videos of encounters with the police. These encounters can be distributed to thousands of people within a few seconds. Individuals have the ability to see more examples of others' interactions with the police and this can affect personal attitudes toward the police. Additionally, attitudes toward police have changed to reflect the times. Due to news outlets and social media, the public

is more aware of violence and crime than in the past. Often, the public is not aware of whether crime rates are increasing or decreasing because most crime happens outside of an individual's view (Pfeiffer et al., 2005). Given many individuals have limited personal experience with crime, most rely on what is reported by the mass media (Pfeiffer et al., 2005). Stories about crime and violence permeate social media and news headlines because they are attention grabbing. Social media gives citizens the ability to monitor the police and circulate and expose any perceived injustice, including racial profiling and police brutality (Walsh & O'Connor, 2019). The excess of crime stories influences people to feel that crime is becoming more widespread and may create more unfavorable views of the police (Walsh & O'Connor, 2019). If more crime is publicized, then it appears that police are not doing enough to help; therefore, attitudes towards police become more negative and unfavorable. Also, social media shows police using excessive force to make arrests and detain suspects. The increase of video availability regarding police brutality has a negative influence on attitudes toward the police (Walsh & O'Connor, 2019). As time progresses, technology will continue to evolve so understanding how social media influences perceptions of the police is important. There is a need for empirical work that explores this avenue as technology is becoming more and more integrated into everyday lives. Although this study found that vicarious experiences had no significant relationship with crime reporting, it did not look into how they affected satisfaction with the police. Vicarious experiences may have a greater influence on attitudes toward police than actual decisions to report crime. Because of the influence of social media, future studies should assess the implications of vicarious experiences on attitudes toward police and decisions to report crime to the police.

Nevertheless, even with all the changes over time, the current study is beneficial. A contribution of this study is to help people understand what attitudes are and that interactions with police help citizens understand what the police do. With all the recent changes, police departments are trying to build reforms and better meet the needs of the community. The overall implications of this study can help pave the path forward for police reform to better meet the needs of citizens and encourage reporting. Police should interact with the public through direct contact and if they hold community meetings, they should limit the number of meetings within one area. Police should focus more on the type of contact they have with citizens and find out directly from citizens what policing tactics actually improve their attitudes toward police. Police training should incorporate the best tactics for responding to high intensity situations and how to de-escalate the situation so the outcome does not require a physical response. Furthermore, police should be trained in procedural justice to be more active listeners, respectful and show neutrality during citizen encounters.

## Appendices

**Table 1: Police Department by City**

<b>City</b>	<b>Police Department</b>
Chicago, IL	Chicago Police Department
Kansas City, MO	Kansas City Police Department
Knoxville, TN	Knoxville Police Department
Los Angeles, CA	Los Angeles Police Department
Madison, WI	Madison City Police Department
New York, NY	New York City Police Department
San Diego, CA	San Diego Police Department
Savannah, GA	Savannah Police Department
Spokane, WA	Spokane Police Department
Springfield, MA	Springfield Police Department
Tucson, AZ	Tucson Police Department
Washington DC	Washington Metropolitan Police Department

**Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Variables**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>	<b>n</b>
Dependent Variable					
Reported Crimes	.400	.490	0	1	5039
Independent Variables					
Individual Level:					
Satisfaction	3.55	1.12	1	5	4882
Non-enforcement Contact	.313	.655	0	5	5191
Enforcement Contact	.191	.393	0	1	5191
Fear of Crime	3.55	1.20	1	5	4882
Neighborhood Crime Seen	2.15	2.85	0	9	4883
Crime Type	.206	.405	0	1	5191
Completion	.801	.398	0	1	5191
Amount of Loss	4.84	3.40	1	10	5056
City Level:					
Community Policing Actions	4.80	1.37	2	6	5191
Community Policing Meetings	5.59	2.19	0	8	5191
Control Variables					
Age	35.92	15.09	12	90	5191
Gender	.521	.499	0	1	5191
Race	.311	.463	0	1	5191
Education	13.77	2.86	0	18	5160
Know offender	.147	.354	0	1	5191
Victimization Incidents	.222	.416	0	1	5133

**Table 3. Logistic Regression of Variables on Crime Reporting (n=4,598)**

Variable	Odds Ratio	SE
Independent Variables		
Individual Level:		
Satisfaction	0.993	0.024
Non-enforcement Contact	1.251**	0.094
Enforcement Contact	1.529***	0.143
Fear of Crime	1.046	0.046
Neighborhood Crime Seen	0.989	0.013
Crime Type	3.319***	0.375
Completion	.351***	0.042
Amount of Loss	1.222***	0.023
City Level:		
Community Policing Actions	0.971	0.035
Community Policing Meetings	0.957*	0.019
Control Variables		
Age	1.005	0.003
Gender	1.026	0.111
Race	0.998	0.088
Education	1.013	0.014
Know offender	0.901	0.093
Victimization Incidents	0.640***	0.054
Constant	0.381	0.141

\* $p \leq 0.05$ , \*\* $p \leq 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p \leq 0.001$ .

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