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THE ROLE OF ATTITUDES IN DECISIONS TO
REPORT CRIMES TO THE POLICE

by

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Interviewing for the 1974 survey was conducted by Bardsley and Haslacher, Portland, Oregon. The data analysis is done at the Oregon Research Institute Computing Center, Eugene, Oregon.

PREFACE

The research reported in this document is the sixth in a series of reports on Crime and Victimization in the Portland metropolitan area for the period of May 1973 through April 1974. The victimization information was collected from a randomly selected sample of 3950 households in the Portland Metropolitan area. The research was conducted by the Oregon Research Institute, Eugene, Oregon, under a contract from the Oregon Law Enforcement Council and the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

Full details about the sample design, questionnaire construction, interviewing procedures, coding reliability, and other pertinent aspects of the survey research effort are contained in "The 1974 Portland Victimization Survey: A Report on Procedures."

Other reports in this series are:

"Methodological Approaches to Measuring Short-Term Victimization Trends."

"Description and Preliminary Analysis of Victimization Rates and Probabilities in the Portland Metropolitan Area."

"Crime and Victimization in Portland: Analysis of Trends, 1971-1974."

"Evaluation of the Portland Neighborhood-Based Anti-Burglary Program."

Additional reports and documents are in preparation, and scheduled for publication by July, 1975.

SUMMARY

Background

The fact that many victims of crimes do not report the incidents to the police has been documented in the Portland Studies, in the LEAA National Crime Panel surveys, and in every other victimization survey which has been conducted. The meaning of non-reporting, however, has not been dealt with extensively, and criminal justice officials have not had sufficient information about non-reporting to know whether this phenomenon should be a major concern or whether non-reporting can be dismissed as an interesting phenomenon but one of little importance in crime analysis, planning, and evaluation.

In two previous reports from the Portland data it has been shown that:

1. Non-reporting rates fluctuate considerably from one time period to another, producing changes in the official crime rates which bear no resemblance to changes in the actual crime rates.
2. Non-reporting rates vary considerably from one section of the metropolitan area to another.

Findings

The major substantive findings from the research reported in this paper are summarized below:

1. Serious offenses are much more apt to be reported than minor offenses, but a substantial proportion of even the most serious incidents do not become known to the police. For the most serious property crimes, 84 percent are reported and 16 percent are not; about half of the moderately

serious property crimes are reported, and only 25 percent of the minor ones become known to the police. The serious personal crimes are more apt to be reported than minor ones, but 33 percent of the serious personal offenses never come to the attention of the authorities.

2. Most persons in the Portland area have positive attitudes toward the police and are relatively well integrated into the community, but they do not believe the system is very effective in catching or punishing criminals. Most persons do not believe there is a better than even chance that the police will be able to catch an offender if the person is described to the police; only nine percent believe the odds are better than even that the police will be able to recover stolen property if the property is described to them, and slightly more than a third of the people believe that the court would punish an offender if he were caught.

3. The seriousness of a property offense (measured by the value of the monetary loss and the type of entry, if any, to the home) is the best single predictor of whether the victim will report the incident. For personal crimes, the victim's ability to understand the nature of local issues is the single most important predictor of the person's decision to report or not report the incident, and the seriousness of the crime is the second most important factor.

4. Although the more serious crimes are more apt to be reported, the non-reporting rate cannot be adequately understood without consideration of persons' attitudes toward the police and the community.

Generally, persons are more apt to report crimes to the police if they are more integrated into the community, if they believe the police will be able to catch the offender, if they are more trusting of the police, and if they have been involved in neighborhood-

based crime prevention activities such as those sponsored by the Portland Crime Prevention Bureau.

5. Serious property crimes are more apt to be reported if the victim believes the police will be able to catch the offender, if the victim has lived in the same place for a longer period of time, if the victim has insurance, and if the crime was committed by a stranger.

Implications

In relation to the major question of whether criminal justice agencies should be concerned about unreported crime, or whether they can risk acknowledging its existence but making no other changes in data collection procedures, analysis, planning and evaluation, the evidence is accumulating for the first point of view. In addition to the probable inaccuracy of official data for measuring trends and geographical location of crime, the research indicates that:

1. Efforts to improve residents' attitudes toward the police probably will increase the reporting rate for minor and serious personal crimes, as well as the reporting rate for minor and moderately serious property crimes.

2. Increases in the effectiveness of the criminal justice system such as improved ability to apprehend criminals, locate stolen property, and punish offenders probably will increase the proportion of all crimes that are reported--if the increases in effectiveness are perceived by the residents of the area.

3. Changes in the proportion of residents who feel isolated and alienated from their community probably will produce changes in the proportion of incidents that are reported--especially the proportion of personal crimes.

4. Programs designed to increase citizen involvement in crime prevention programs probably will increase the reporting of crimes to the police.

The paradox is that an increase in the effectiveness of the criminal justice system--as measured by citizen trust, citizen involvement, citizen perceptions of effectiveness--could produce an apparent decrease in effectiveness as measured by the amount of reported crime.

THE ROLE OF ATTITUDES IN DECISIONS TO REPORT CRIMES TO THE POLICE

I. INTRODUCTION

It is generally recognized that many persons who are the victims of crimes do not report the incidents to the police. The National Crime Panel surveys of the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration show that nearly half of the victims of assault, robbery, burglary, and larceny of \$50 and above did not report the incidents to the police. For property crimes involving less than \$50, the non-reporting rate was about 80 percent (LEAA, 1974). The NCP surveys do not differ from their predecessors in this respect: every victimization survey conducted since 1967 has shown that total crime is two to three times as high as the amount of crime known to the police.

It appears that two points of view may be developing concerning the response which the criminal justice system should make in light of the high rates of unreported crimes. One point of view is that the criminal justice system does not need to be overly concerned about the fact that many victims do not report the incidents. This point of view might be warranted if it is established that unreported incidents are minor, trivial crimes, if the lack of reporting reflects the lack of importance of the incident rather than lack of confidence in the criminal justice system, and if the non-reporting rate is relatively constant across different time points and different geographical areas.

If these statements are true, then the official crime statistics can be "corrected" simply by recognizing that real crime is two or three times as great as reported crime, and criminal justice officials would not need to give any additional consideration to the problem.

An alternative point of view is that the non-reporting of crimes to the police should be a major concern for the criminal justice system. This point of view would be warranted if it is shown that many serious incidents never became known to the police. In addition, this point of view would be warranted if the non-reporting of incidents represents a lack of trust in the police, or is produced by feelings of alienation and isolation from the community as a whole. The first factor, if it indeed is reflected in low reporting rates, is important since it reflects on the performance of the criminal justice system itself. The second factor, if it too is related to non-reporting, is important because many persons believe that the breakdown of community and family not only results in the non-reporting of crimes, but also is associated with the types of values and orientations which result in rising crime rates. Criminal justice planning and evaluation agencies also are concerned about non-reporting rates because of the potential effect on the accuracy and reliability of the data used by the agencies. If non-reporting rates vary from area to area, or change from one time period to another, then the data used to generate plans and to evaluate programs may be inaccurate. Evidence suggesting that the Uniform Crime Reports were unreliable indicators of burglary trends in Portland has been reported in an earlier report (Schneider, 1975a). More important than any of these, however, is the fact that an offender who is quite confident the crime will not be reported can be rather certain that he/she will not be apprehended.

for the crime. Thus, the non-reporting of incidents could contribute to rising crime rates.

Donald Santarelli, former director of the LEAA, reacted to the National Crime Panel survey by observing that, "the statistics have uncovered in minute detail the sobering fact that a great many people do not report crime because they are turned off by the criminal justice system and its clanking process. It shows that there is an obvious need to turn the citizen on to the criminal justice system through citizen action programs (LEAA, 1974)."

Although the LEAA surveys definitely indicate that many victims do not report crimes, these studies were not designed to probe the reasons for reporting or non-reporting of incidents to the police. Victims were asked, however, whether or not they reported the incident and, if the answer was negative, they were asked why it was not reported. The most frequent responses to the open-ended question were that the crime was not important enough or that the police would not be able to do anything. Open-ended questions can provide valuable information about reporting and not reporting crimes, but they do not provide comparable data for ascertaining whether persons are "turned off" by the criminal justice system. Nor is it possible, from open-ended responses, to determine what types of efforts would increase the reporting of incidents to the police. At this writing, there have been no published empirical studies which examined the importance of citizen attitudes, community involvement, or other similar variables in the decisions of victims to report crimes.

The purpose of this report is to provide an exploratory analysis of reporting and non-reporting of incidents in order to ascertain the reasons for non-reporting and to provide some additional guidance to

criminal justice officials about whether they should be concerned or unconcerned about non-reporting rates. The research is exploratory because there has been very little previous research, and almost no theoretical work. Further, the Portland survey from which the data are taken was not designed explicitly as a study of decisions to report crimes. Thus, although some of the data are quite useful in a study of such decisions, not all of the data needed for a thorough study are available from the questionnaire.

II. CONCEPTUALIZING THE PROBLEM

In order to understand why a person might decide to report a crime to the police, or not report it, one must begin with some intuitive ideas concerning what a person might gain, or lose, if the crime is reported to the police.

Beginning first with property crimes, the following list is proposed as a parsimonious statement of what a person might perceive as desirable outcomes in the aftermath of a property crime:

1. Recovery of the stolen property or compensation, through insurance or other means, for the property loss.
2. Avoidance of future victimizations by the same person(s).
3. Avoidance of future victimizations by other offenders.
4. Assistance to the neighborhood and community so that others would be less apt to be victimized.
5. Revenge.

After a property crime has been committed, the individual could be interested in achieving one or more of the goals listed above. There are basically three strategies available to the person for achieving these goals. One would be to report the crime to the police. This should increase

the chance that the property would be returned, if it is recovered; and most insurance claims will not be honored unless the crime was reported. In addition, reporting to the police should alert the police to the specific offender (if known) and alert them to the fact that a crime of a particular type occurred in a specific place. Thus, reporting to the police could, under ideal circumstances, reduce the likelihood that the same offender would victimize the person again. If the police increase their surveillance of the area, it should reduce the probability of victimization from any offender not only for the resident who was already victimized, but for others as well. Further, if potential criminals believe that victims in a particular area will report incidents, it could provide an incentive for them to cease committing crimes in that area.

A second strategy is for the individual to take private action to prevent a recurrence of the incident and to recover the property. This strategy could be effective if the offender is known to the victim, and if the victim has some means of control over the offender. A strategy of this type might seem reasonable for incidents committed by juveniles who live in the area and whose parents, or other adults, could reverse the criminal behavior. The strategy might also be effective if a relative or other well-known person is the offender. Private action to prevent a recurrence also can involve simple "gate locking" activities such as locking doors, not leaving items outside the house, and so on.

The third strategy is to do nothing at all. This, of course, would not achieve any of the goals mentioned above, but it would prevent the victim from incurring any of the costs of reporting crimes to the police (such as time, energy, and possibly the harassment which might accompany

reporting). In addition, the victim would avoid retaliation by the offender which, for some persons, might be viewed as more serious than another property crime.

Given the goals mentioned above, it follows that the incentive to do something about a crime (rather than nothing) should be greater if the monetary loss from the crime was greater. In addition, the incentive to do something should be greater dependent upon how serious the crime could have been. That is, a loss of \$10 from an automobile while it was parked downtown is monetarily equal to a loss of \$10 from a bedroom drawer in the middle of the night. The incentive for action does not depend only on recovering the monetary loss, but in preventing future offenses. The latter offense could have been much more serious, and there would be a greater incentive to prevent a recurrence of it than to prevent a recurrence of the first incident.

Summarizing the discussion to this point, the incentive for a victim to take some type of action about a property crime depends on the seriousness of the crime as measured both by the monetary loss and an estimate of how serious a similar crime might be if committed again. The question, then, is what type of action the victim is most apt to take: reporting it to the police or personal action against the offender.

First, if the victim does not know who the offender is, then the chance of taking effective private action against the individual is very low. Thus, crimes committed by strangers should be more often reported to the police than are crimes committed by persons known to the victim.

Second, if the person is insured, the crime is more apt to be reported to the police because this would result in recovery of at least

part of the loss (disregarding the vagueries of insurance companies, which of course would not be known to the victim until after an attempt to collect).

The third factor which should be of some importance in the victim's decision pertains to his/her subjective estimate of whether it will do any good to report it to the police, or whether reporting will just be a waste of time and energy. Some persons might not report the incident if they fear embarrassment or harassment from the police, or if they think the police would not believe them or would not try to solve the crime. Some may have an aversion to having the police come into their home or place of business. Some may not want increased police surveillance in the area. Attitudes of trust and confidence in the police, then, should provide an incentive to report. In addition, victims should be more apt to report the incident if they believe there is some possibility of recovering the property, or some possibility that the police will catch the person, that the courts will punish the offender if he is caught, and so on.

Attitudes and orientations of the person to the local governing institutions could also impinge on the decision to report. Those who do not believe they can be effective in their relationships with either the police or other local officials may be less apt to report incidents to the police.

As pointed out above, one of the possible goals a person might have in mind is to prevent the offender from victimizing others in the community and/or to increase police attention and surveillance in an area for the benefit of everyone who lives there. An individual may believe he/she

can take effective action, personally, to prevent the crime from being repeated--such as putting a new lock on the door, keeping the bicycles inside the house, installing an alarm, and so on. These actions, however, are of no benefit to the neighbors and community. Thus, it seems reasonable to expect that persons who are more involved in their community, or who are more concerned about assisting in a neighborhood or city-wide crime prevention effort, will be more apt to report crimes to the police.

The latter factor differs from the others in one important respect: We are assuming that any reasonable person wishes to recover lost property and wishes to prevent future crimes against himself, but we do not assume that everyone is "community oriented."

Personal Crimes

The rationale for taking action in the aftermath of a personal crime differs from property crimes in two ways. First, many personal crimes do not involve any monetary loss, and, therefore, there is less incentive to take action in order to recover monetary losses for personal crimes, as a whole, than for property crimes, as a whole. Second, losses due to injuries, the psychological trauma accompanying an encounter with an assailant, and so on, cannot be measured in monetary terms and cannot be recovered in any way at all. Nevertheless, the logic underlying the decision to take action, and what type of action to take, is basically the same as for property crimes.

First, the individual is more apt to take some kind of action if there was a monetary loss (in order to recover it), and is more apt to take some kind of action as a direct function of how serious the crime could have been. In particular, the use of a weapon, or a threat to use a weapon or seriously injure the person, is more apt to provide an incentive

for action than is a personal incident not involving a weapon or threat to use one. The person is also more apt to take action in direct relation to the seriousness of the injury. If the victim knows the offender, then there may be a greater chance that the victim might attempt to handle the offender personally than if the offender were a stranger. Insurance would provide additional incentive to report the crime to the police only if a property loss accompanied the incident. As before, the victim's attitudes toward the police and other local officials should be important, as should the extent of community involvement.

This discussion suggests that the following propositions should be supported from the data:

1. If the seriousness of the crime is greater, the probability of reporting is greater.
2. If the victim has more positive attitudes toward the police, is more trusting of the police, then the probability of reporting is greater.
3. If the victim believes the police and other law enforcement institutions are effective, then the probability of reporting is greater.
4. If the victim is more involved in the community, more integrated into the community, then the probability of reporting is greater.
5. (If property was lost): If lost items were insured, then the probability of reporting is greater.
6. If the offender is a stranger, then the probability of reporting is greater.

These propositions will be tested separately for property and for personal crimes because of the non-comparability of monetary loss and other aspects of seriousness across the two categories. It is possible

that the motivation for reporting an incident could differ dependent upon the seriousness of the crime. For example, the victim's estimate of the likelihood that the police will catch the person, or recover the property, could be more important motivations for reporting serious crimes than for reporting minor ones. For this reason, the attitudinal variables and community-involvement indicators will be examined within each category of crime seriousness whenever it is feasible to do so, given the limited number of incidents in some categories.

It is obvious that the theory sketched above and the propositions do not suggest that socioeconomic characteristics of individuals should be important in decisions to report or not report incidents to the police. Characteristics of victims such as income or race are omitted because if these are related to reporting, it should be through the effect of some other attribute of the individual. That is, persons with higher incomes may be more apt to report crimes to the police, but if so it would be because they lost more in the crime or differed in some other way from low income persons. If blacks are less apt to report than whites, it might be because they are less trusting of the police. In other words, socioeconomic variables should not be important in the decision to report except insofar as they are surrogate indicators of some attitudinal characteristic.

III. METHODOLOGY

The data for this analysis are from more than 3900 face-to-face interviews of a random sample of Portland area residents. The interviewing was done in the summer of 1974. Although more than 1700 offenses were reported to the interviewers, only approximately 900 different persons

were victims of one or more target offenses during the twelve-month recall period.

The purpose of the analysis is to examine the strength of the relationship between reporting crimes and selected independent variables, as well as to ascertain the statistical significance of the observed relationships. The dependent variable (reporting) is dichotomous with scores of 1 given to non-reporting, and scores of 2 to reporting. Most of the independent variables are ordinal scales. There is, of course, an on-going controversy about whether to use correlation-regression analysis on ordinal data, or whether to employ one or more of the non-parametric statistics designed for use with ordinal data.

The argument that correlation analysis should be confined to interval data will not be reviewed here. It has been shown that Pearson's correlation coefficient, r , is quite robust even though the data are not intervally scaled. That is, correlation analysis is not apt to show that a relationship exists when one in fact does not exist, even though the data are ordinal rather than interval. Rutherford has shown that Pearson's r , in fact, consistently underestimates the true strength of the relationship when used on ordinal and/or nominal data (Rutherford, 1972).

Thus, it seems that there is no danger in using correlation analysis except that it may underestimate the strength of the relationship. Rutherford's work indicates that several non-parametric statistics, including gamma, are more accurate than Pearson's r for estimating the "true" strength of association on ordinal data.

The choice of statistics to be used here, then, consists of the use of gamma and Pearson's r for examining the bivariate relationships. In the final section of this paper, a multivariate analysis using discriminant function analysis and multiple correlation-regression will be presented.

IV. RESULTS OF BIVARIATE ANALYSIS

The dependent variable for the analysis is the reporting or non-reporting of victimization incidents. Only those incidents committed against the respondent, or the household, in the 12-month recall period, were used. If the person did not answer the question concerning whether the incident was reported to the police, or if the person said he/she did not know whether it was reported, the incident was counted as an "unreported" incident. There were only a few non-responses, and only a few "don't know" answers. It should be emphasized that all the data are from the survey respondents. The term "reported to the police" refers to the respondent's statement to the interviewer that the incident was reported. It does not refer to actual police data from official records.

The relationships between reporting crime and each of the following independent variables will be examined: (1) seriousness of the crime, (2) attitudes toward the police, (3) effectiveness of the police and courts, (4) community involvement and integration, (5) insurance, (6) strangers as offenders.

Seriousness of the Crime

The seriousness scale used in the analysis is a replication of Sellin and Wolfgang's 1964 index (see Appendix A for the exact questions and

scoring procedures). For personal crimes, the index includes an injury component, sex-offense component, weapon component, intimidation component and, if there was any monetary loss, this also was considered in the scaling. For property crimes, the total loss is the major component and the type of entry to the home (if any) is the second component. By definition, a property crime could not involve injury, use of a dangerous weapon, and so on.

Because of the low frequency for crimes in the very high seriousness categories, the incidents were regrouped in order to provide greater stability to the statistical analysis. For property crimes the incidents were grouped into three categories (low, moderate, and high seriousness). As indicated in Table 1, 35 percent of the crimes were of very low seriousness, 44 percent were in the moderate category, and 21 percent were considered quite serious. The definitions of each category are also shown in Table 1.

Personal crimes were divided into two categories as shown in Table 1. Because of the small number of persons who were the victims of personal crimes, most of the analysis for these incidents will be done without dividing the sample.

As expected, the seriousness of the crime is one of the most important factors explaining why some crimes are reported and others are not (see Table 2). When property and personal crimes are combined, the percentage reported goes from 24 percent in the low seriousness category to 49 percent for the moderately serious to 80 percent for the crimes designated as highly serious. Gamma estimates the strength of relationship at .64 and correlation coefficient (Pearson) is .43. For property crimes alone, 24 percent of the minor ones were reported, 49 percent of the ones with

Table 1
Property and Personal Incidents

Type of Crime	Number of Incidents	Percent in each Seriousness Category	Definitions
<u>Property Crimes</u>			<u>Property Crime Definitions</u>
Low Seriousness	283	35%	<u>Low Seriousness.</u> Lowest possible score on serious was "1" and all cases with this score are considered "low". Incidents in this category involve no loss at all, or loss not greater than \$10, and in no instance is a forcible entry involved.
Moderate	352	44%	<u>Moderate Seriousness.</u> Scores of "2" on the scale. Incidents include those with loss of \$10 to \$250 <u>not</u> involving forcible entry; or loss of less than \$10 <u>with</u> forcible entry.
High	171	21%	<u>High Seriousness.</u> Scores of "3" or greater include loss greater than \$250 (with or without forcible entry); or forcible entry with a loss of \$10 or more.
<u>Personal Crimes</u>			<u>Personal Crime Definitions</u>
Low Seriousness	42	53%	<u>Low Seriousness.</u> (Scores of 1, 2, or 3 on the seriousness scale.) No incident in this category involved use of a weapon, none involved injury requiring doctor's treatment, none were sex offenses, and none involved loss of more than \$250. These incidents, then, involve a combination of verbal threats, small losses, minor injuries.
High Seriousness	38	47%	<u>High Seriousness.</u> (Scores of 4 or higher.) In this category are rapes, any offense involving a dangerous weapon, any injury requiring doctor's treatment, any monetary loss of \$250 or more, and combinations involving threat of harm with monetary loss; threat of harm and minor injury combined with any monetary loss.

Table 2
Crime Seriousness and Reporting

Type of Crime	Not Reported		Reported	Strength of Relationship
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	
<u>Property Crimes</u>				
Low Seriousness	283	75%	25%	Gamma = .65
Moderate Seriousness	352	51	49	Pearson's r = .43
High Seriousness	171	16	84	
<u>Personal Crimes</u>				
Low - Moderate	42	47%	52%	Gamma = .52
High	38	22	77	Pearson's r = .26
<u>All Crimes Combined</u>				
Low Seriousness	290	76%	24%	Gamma = .65
Moderate Seriousness	357	51%	49%	Pearson's r = .43
High Seriousness	239	20%	80%	

an intermediate (moderate) seriousness level were reported, and 84 percent of high serious incidents were reported. (It should be pointed out again that information about whether the incident was reported or not comes from the respondent and not from an independent check on the police records.) The seriousness of personal crimes also influences reporting: 52 percent of the less serious ones are reported, compared to 77 percent of the highly serious.

Attitudes, Orientations toward the Police and Criminal Justice System

Trust in Police. A scale involving five attitudinal items was developed to reflect an overall measure of trust in the police (see Appendix A for the exact questions and scoring procedures). The five questions involved the following major attitudinal components: (a) the police would give serious attention to them if they contacted the police; (b) they would be treated as well as anyone else by the police; (c) the police would believe their account of what happened if they reported a crime to the police; (d) the police would try to find out who committed the crime they reported; (e) generally, attitudes toward the police are favorable. All of the questions had responses which could be divided into two main categories of favorable vs. unfavorable.

The distribution of respondents on the trust scale, as well as the percentage of persons in each category who reported crimes to the police, are shown in Table 3. The first column in Table 3 shows the number and percentage of persons in each of the trust categories. Most persons have favorable attitudes toward the police, as 57 percent are in the high trust category, compared to 23 percent of the crime victims who had low trust scores, and 20 percent with moderate scores. The high trust category includes persons who gave positive responses to all five questions which

Table 3

Percent of Victims Reporting Incidents to the Police by Attitudes

Independent Variable	Distribution of Responses		Property Crime Victims Seriousness			Personal Crime Victims Seriousness		
			Low % Rep.	Moderate % Rep.	High % Rep.	All % Rep.	Low % Rep.	High % Rep.
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>						
<u>1. Trust in Police</u>								
Low Trust	180	23	14	42	86	55	42	63
Moderate Trust	155	20	21	38	81	64	37	100
High Trust	440	57	30	56	89	74	68	81
<u>2. Police-Community Relations</u>								
Poor	141	19	10	45	88	61	55	69
Fair	155	21	21	47	73			
Good	360	48	30	55	88	53	55	-
Very Good	101	13	38	48	89	64	40	81
<u>3. Chance Police Catch Offender</u>								
Poor	146	17	25	44	76	56	44	69
Fairly Poor	181	21	20	46	83			
Even	270	31	26	47	83	74	65	84
Good	267	31	24	57	93	62	50	77

Table 3 (Cont'd.)

Independent Variable	Distribution of Responses		Property Crime Victims			Personal Crime Victims		
			Low	Moderate	High	All	Low	High
4. <u>Chance Police Recover Property</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>% Rep.</u>	<u>% Rep.</u>	<u>% Rep.</u>	<u>% Rep.</u>		
Poor	388	44	25	49	82	62	54	71
Fairly Poor	237	27	25	46	89			
Even	172	20	29	52	75	90	50	93
Good	82	9	15	50	99			
5. <u>Chance Court Punish Offender</u>								
Very Poor	120	14	22	53	85	52	40	69
Poor	169	20	28	44	99	74	69	78
Even	277	32	22	44	78	70	63	85
Good	300	37	28	53	83			
6. <u>Attitudes Toward Court</u>								
Very Unfavorable	69	8	23	56	79	42	83	63
Unfavorable	182	21	23	45	81	38	77	58
Neutral	230	26	23	46	87	64	74	70
Good	391	45	26	50	84			
7. <u>Understanding of Local Issues</u>								
Understand few, none	502	57	20	45	85	56	43	73
Understand most	376	43	32	53	83	79	72	85

Table 3 (Cont'd.)

Independent Variable	Distribution of Responses		Property Crime Victims			Personal Crime Victims		
	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	Low	Moderate	High	All	Low	High
8. <u>Length of Residence</u>								
Less than 1 yr.			17	53	77	55	40	76
One to six yrs.			26	42	83	70	61	90
more than 6 yrs.			31	49	90	60	65	61
9. <u>Involvement in CPB Program</u>								
None	427	48	21	39	84	60	47	79
1 Activity	286	32	23	50	77	77	84	72
2 Activities	120	13	42	64	98	58		
3 or more	54	6	37	76	86	54	40	87
10. <u>Insurance</u>								
None	228	26	22	47	78	64	53	76
Insured	658	74	26	49	86	65	52	79
11. <u>Stranger</u>								
Well known	24	4	39	32	77	64	47	84
Slightly known	28	3	15	38	67	81	-	-
Stranger	754	93	25	49	85	62	53	74

formed the scale. Individuals in the moderate category gave one negative response on the five questions, and individuals in the low trust group gave two or more negative responses.

Although the results are somewhat uneven, the percentage of victims who report incidents to the police tends to be higher if the victims had higher scores on the trust scale. Of the persons who were victims of minor property crimes, 14 percent reported these incidents if they tended to distrust the police, whereas 30 percent of those who scored in the high trust category reported the minor incidents. (The percentages are computed on the basis of the number of persons in each cell. For example, there were 49 persons who were the victims of a minor property crime and who also had low trust scores. Fourteen percent of these reported the incidents, and 86 percent did not. The latter figure is not shown in the table.) The same pattern exists for property crimes of moderate seriousness: victims who distrust the police are less apt to report the incidents (42 percent reporting) than are victims who are more trusting (56 percent reporting). The relationship does not hold for serious property crimes, however.

A relationship between trust and reporting also was found for personal crimes. When all were analyzed together, disregarding seriousness, 55 percent of the personal crime victims with low trust scores reported the incidents, compared with a 74 percent reporting rate for victims with high trust scores. When the personal crimes are divided into less and more serious categories, the same pattern holds, but the relationship is not as steady across the trust categories. Generally, however, personal crimes are more apt to be reported by persons who trust the police than by those who do not.

Police-Community Relations. Respondents were asked to rate the quality of the relationship between the police and community. As shown in the first column of Table 3, most persons said the relationship was good (48 percent), and 13 percent said it was very good. This indicator of victims' attitudes toward the police generally was not very important in terms of reporting crimes with the exception of minor property offenses. For these, the persons who live in areas which they say have poor relationships with the police are not at all likely to report the minor property offenses (10 percent reporting rate, 90 percent non-reporting). In contrast, 38 percent of the minor property crime victims who say the relationship with the police is very good report the crimes.

Belief in Police Effectiveness. Most of the respondents are not very optimistic about the chance of the police catching the offender, and are even less optimistic that the police would be able to recover property lost in a burglary. (These questions were asked of all respondents in relation to a hypothetical offense. The responses shown in Table 3 are only for the persons who were victims of some type of crime, however.) Slightly more than 30 percent believe the chances are better than even that the police would catch an offender, and only nine percent believe the chances are better than even that the police would be able to recover the property. Persons who believe that the police have a good or fairly good chance of catching the offender are more apt to report a serious crime than are persons who think the police will not catch the person (Table 3). The belief (or lack of it) is not important in a person's decision to report minor property crimes, and has a slight effect on those in the moderate seriousness category.

The belief that the police will (or will not) recover the stolen property has very little effect on reporting of property crimes regardless of whether the incident is very minor or quite serious. This lack of relationship should not be taken to mean that a belief in police effectiveness would never impinge on a person's decision to report a crime, however, because there are very few persons in the sample who think that the odds are greater than 50-50 that the police will be able to recover the property.

Attitudes Toward the Courts. Two questions about the court system were included on the questionnaire. One question concerns the respondent's subjective estimate of whether the court would punish an offender if he/she were caught. The other is a general question concerning whether the respondent's attitudes toward the courts are favorable or not.

As shown in entries 5 and 6 of Table 3, a majority of persons believe the chances are even or less than even that the court would punish an offender if he/she were caught. On the other hand, slightly more persons (37 percent) believe the courts would punish an offender than believe the police would catch him.

For property crimes, persons who think the court is more apt to punish the offender are no more likely to report the incident than are persons who think the court would not punish the person. For property crimes, there is no difference in reporting rates for persons with favorable rather than unfavorable attitudes. The victims of personal crimes, however, are somewhat more likely to report the incident if they think the court would punish the offender than if they do not believe the court would take action.

Community Involvement, Integration

Several indicators of community involvement and integration were available to test the relationship between this aspect and reporting of crimes. One indication that a person is not integrated into the community or has a sense of localized "anomie" in relation to the community is from a question which asked whether the respondent was able to understand most of the local issues or only a few of them (see Appendix A for the actual question).

The length of residence in the community was used as an additional, more objective, estimate of community integration on the assumption that persons who have lived in an area longer will feel more a part of it.

The final scale relating to the general community-orientation dimension was formed from four items concerning community and/or city-based crime prevention involvement. The only active crime prevention program in the city is a burglary prevention program by the Crime Prevention Bureau. Individuals were given one point for each of the following activities: (1) Having heard about the crime prevention programs, (2) engraving their property, (3) displaying an anti-burglary sticker, (4) having attended a block meeting concerning the anti-burglary program or some other crime prevention program. The scores range from zero for persons who had done none of the above, to four for persons who responded affirmatively to all four items. The distribution of respondents on these variables, and the percentage of victims in each category who reported the incidents to the police, are shown in entries 7-10 of Table 3.

The person's ability to understand local political issues is one of the most consistent indicators of whether an individual will report a crime or not. Persons who say they cannot understand local issues are

less apt to report minor property crimes, moderately serious ones, the less serious personal crimes, and the more serious personal crimes. Particularly striking is the difference in percentage reporting for the less serious personal crimes, where 43 percent of the victims who do not understand the nature of local issues report, compared to 72 percent of those who are able to understand issues. It is interesting to note, as well, that 57 percent of the victims say that they generally are not able to understand local issues.

Length of residence at the person's current address is not a consistent predictor of decisions to report crimes, although persons who have lived at the same address for more than six years are more apt to report minor property offenses and major ones than are the more transient victims.

Involvement in the Portland Crime Prevention Bureau's anti-burglary program is another very consistent predictor of decisions to report property offenses, especially the minor and moderately serious ones.

The final two entries in Table 3 concern whether the victim was insured or not, and whether the offender was a stranger or someone known to the victim. Persons with insurance are more apt to report property offenses, but the percentage differences are not very great. For minor offenses, 22 percent of the persons without insurance report, compared to 26 percent of the persons with insurance. In the moderate category, 47 percent of the non-insured report, compared to 49 percent of the insured. And, for the more serious property crimes 78 percent of the non-insured report, compared to 86 percent of the insured. Only the latter difference is great enough to be statistically significant. The cliché that property crimes are reported because of insurance is much too simple to constitute an explanation of the reporting of property crimes.

Most of the crimes were committed by strangers, and victims were less apt to report moderate or serious property crimes if they knew the identity of the offender.

Strength of the Relationships

The correlation coefficients and gamma values relating each of the independent variables to reporting are shown in Table 4. These statistics make it easier to summarize the relationships observed in the percentages of Table 3.

Minor property crimes, involving no forced entry and no loss greater than \$10, are more apt to be reported to the police if the victim:

- (a) Is more trusting of the police, rather than less trusting
- (b) Lives in an area where the police enjoy good relationships with the community
- (c) Is more integrated into the community in the sense that he/she is able to understand most of the local issues rather than only a few or none of them
- (d) Has participated in more activities sponsored by the Crime Prevention Bureau anti-burglary team.

It is also interesting to notice, for the minor crimes, that beliefs about the ability of the police to catch the offender or recover the property are not important factors in a victim's decision to report incidents, and neither are attitudes toward the courts. In addition, whether the offender is a stranger or not seems to be irrelevant, as does the question of whether the property was insured.

The pattern changes in an interesting way for property crimes that fall into the most serious category. Serious property crimes are more apt to be reported if the victim:

Table 5
Reporting Property Crimes: Multivariate Analysis

	Discriminant Function Coefficient	F	Partial Regression Coefficients	F
Seriousness	.73	96	.39	96
Participation in CPB Program	.34	22	.18	21.5
Trust in Police	.18	6.6	.10	5.0
Understand Local Issues	.17	5.0	.09	5.1
Police-Community Relations	.14	2.2	.07	2.88
Belief Police Catch Person	-.12	2.4	.07	2.5

Canonical Correlation = .466

R = .465

% of cases correctly classified = 71%

Prediction Results from Discriminant Function

Actual Group	No. of Cases	Predicted Group Group 1	Membership Group 2
1. Non-Reporters	268	198	70
		74%	26%
2. Reporters	254	83	171
		33%	67%

Table 6
Reporting Personal Crimes: Multivariate Analysis¹

	Discriminant Function Coefficient	F	Partial Regression Coefficients	F
Understand Local Issues	.64	7.6	.44	12.9
Seriousness	.51	6.6	.34	8
Belief Police Catch Person	.24	4.5	.17	1.7
Belief Police Recover Property	.55	1.8	.21	2.7
Belief Courts Punish Offender	.33	2.8	.34	6.8

Canonical Correlation = .62

R = .62

% Correct = 81%

Prediction Results from Discriminant Function

Actual Group	No. of Cases	Predicted Group Membership	
		Group 1	Group 2
1. Non-reporters	23	19 81%	4 19%
2. Reporters	28	5 19%	23 81%

¹ Any case with missing data on any variable used in the analysis had to be excluded, reducing the N considerably from that used in the bivariate analysis.

Table 4
Strength of Relationship Between Attitudes and Decisions
to Report Crimes¹

Independent Variable	Property Crimes						Personal Crimes	
	Low		Seriousness Moderate		High		All	
	<u>gamma</u>	<u>r</u>	<u>gamma</u>	<u>r</u>	<u>gamma</u>	<u>r</u>	<u>gamma</u>	<u>r</u>
1. Trust in Police	.32	.15*	.25	.14*	.15	.05	.31	.18 ⁺
2. Police-community Relations	.32	.18*	.08	.04	.13	.04	.11	.04
3. Chance Police Catch Offender	.02	.01	.14	.09*	.32	.16*	.08	.06
4. Chance Police Recover Property	-.04	-.03	.02	.02	.07	.03	.32	.15 ⁺
5. Chance Court Punish Offender	.10	.07	.04	.03	-.28	-.13*	.25	.16*
6. Attitudes Toward Court	.10	.06	.03	.01	.07	.04	.12	.07
7. Understand Local Issues	.30	.14*	.17	.08 ⁺	-.07	-.03	.48	.23*
8. Length of Residence	.11	.05	-.09	-.04	.34	.18*	.08	.06
9. Involvement in CPB Program	.24	.14*	.35	.22*	.09	.06	.04	.01
10. Insurance	.10	.05	.05	.04	.25	.12*	.08	.07
11. Stranger	.02	.02	.29	.14*	.40	.22*	.08	.05

¹ Tests of significance for the gamma values are not readily available, and were not conducted. The Pearson correlation significance levels are shown. An asterisk indicates significance at .05 or better, and a plus sign indicates significance between .05 and .10.

- (a) Believes the police will be able to catch the offender
- (b) Has lived in the city for a longer period of time
- (c) Has insurance on the stolen items
- (d) Thinks the offense was committed by a stranger

Again, a belief that the police will be able to find the stolen property is not important, and neither are attitudes toward the court. The negative relationship between reporting of serious property crimes and the question of the person's belief that the court would punish the offender indicates that victims who think the likelihood of punishment is small are more apt to report incidents than those who are more confident that the court will punish the offender. This is just the opposite from what we suggested in the propositions stated earlier. Perhaps the statement should be made with the direction of causality reversed: Persons who have reported incidents to the police are less confident the courts will punish the offender than are persons who were victimized but did not report the incident.

Personal crimes are more apt to be reported if the victim:

- (a) Has greater trust in the police rather than less trust
- (b) Believes the courts are more apt to punish the offender if he is caught
- (c) Is better able to understand local issues
- (d) Believes the police have a better chance of recovering lost property.

V. RESULTS OF MULTIVARIATE ANALYSIS

The multivariate analysis has two major purposes. The first is to determine whether any of the relationships observed previously change when the other major independent variables are controlled. The second

purpose is to show the predictive power of the independent variables, and to ascertain the proportion of victims who are accurately classified into the reporting and non-reporting categories.

Two types of multivariate analysis are used. One is multiple regression-correlation analysis, and the other is discriminant function analysis. The results of the two are virtually identical, as shown in Tables 5 and 6. In conducting the analysis, the independent variables were entered into the equation in order of the additional explanatory power which they would add.

Six variables have statistically significant relationships with reporting property crimes when each of the other variables is statistically controlled (Table 5). The seriousness of the crime is the strongest predictor, followed by participation in the Crime Prevention Bureau anti-burglary program. In addition, trust in the police, understanding local issues and the quality of police-community relationships contribute to reporting. The negative relationship between the final variable (belief that police will catch the person) indicates the correlation is in the wrong direction. The canonical correlation from the discriminant function is .466, and the multiple R from the regression analysis is .465. The discriminant function analysis indicates that 71 percent of the property crime victims were correctly classified as reporters or non-reporters using the linear discriminant function. At the bottom of Table 5, the proportion correctly classified is shown. Of those who did not report the incident, information on the six independent variables results in 74 percent of these being correctly classified as non-reporters. Seventy persons (26 percent) were incorrectly classified. Of those who did report the crime, the linear combination of the independent variables

placed 67 percent in the correct category, and 33 percent were wrongly classified.

From the previous analysis, it is clear that the minor and moderately serious property crimes tended to dominate the multivariate analysis, as most of the variables showing significant relationships are those which were important in the reporting of minor and/or moderate incidents.

The results for personal crime victims are shown in Table 6. The ability to understand local issues is the strongest single predictor variable, followed by the seriousness of the incident. In addition, the victim's belief in the effectiveness of the criminal justice system, as indicated by the three variables pertaining to the chance that the police will catch the person, recover the property, and the court will punish the offender, add additional explanatory power. The multiple correlation is .62, and 81 percent of the victims are correctly classified using these five independent variables. It should be pointed out that the variable representing trust in the police did not enter the analysis. However, a reanalysis of the data indicates that the trust in the police variable could be entered in place of any one of the three indicators of effectiveness, and the results would be virtually identical to those shown in Table 6.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The seriousness of a property crime is the single most important factor in a victim's decision to report, or not report, the incident to the police. For personal crimes, the victim's ability to understand the nature of local issues is the single most important factor in victims' decisions to report incidents, although the seriousness of the crime is also a good predictor of whether the incident will be reported or not.

When the victims are divided into groups corresponding to the type of crime, and the seriousness, it is apparent that attitudinal variables are more important factors in the decisions to report for victims of minor and moderately serious property crimes, and for all victims of personal crimes (assaults, rapes, and robberies). Attitudinal variables are not as important in the reporting by victims of serious property crimes. Combining the bivariate and multivariate analysis reported earlier, all crimes except serious property offenses are more apt to be reported if:

(a) The victim is more integrated into the community as evidenced by the person's ability to understand most of the local issues in the community and/or if the victim has been involved in community crime prevention activities.

(b) The victim believes there is a fairly good chance the police will be able to catch the offender, and

(c) The victim has more positive attitudes toward the police and is more trusting of them. In relation to the latter point, it should be recalled that the scale of police trust was formed from questions concerning the respondent's statement that they think they would be treated equally by the police, that the police would believe their account of an incident, and so on. The trust scale did not include any statements concerning the victim's belief in the effectiveness of the police.

In addition to the above factors, victims of personal crimes also were more apt to report them if they thought the court would punish the offender, and if they believed the police would be able to recover lost property.

Serious property crimes are most apt to be reported, and the reasons for reporting or not reporting them are not as tied to attitudinal variables as are the other types of crimes. Only one attitudinal measure--the belief that the police would be able to catch the offender--correlates with higher reporting rates for victims of serious property crimes. The other variables which tend to be associated with higher reporting are insurance, longer residence in the city, and a crime which was committed by a stranger.

One implication of these results is that intensive efforts to improve residents' attitudes toward the police probably will increase the proportion of minor property crimes which are reported, as well as the proportion of personal crimes that are reported. Increased perceptions by residents that the police will be effective probably will have the same effect. One of the most important variables, however, was the individual's ability to understand local issues. This was a stronger predictor of reporting for personal crimes than any other--including seriousness. Our interpretation is that an individual's response to the question about local issues taps a dimension of anomie or alienation from the community--a sense of rootlessness and lack of belonging. Persons who feel alienated and isolated from their community are not as apt to report crimes. Efforts by the police to increase their effectiveness or increase citizens' trust of them may increase reporting tendencies for some persons, but others may still fail to report even the more serious personal crimes because of their sense of isolation and alienation from the community. It is possible that some police and civilian activities to increase involvement in crime prevention may, as a side product, increase the sense of belonging to a community or neighborhood.

The implication of this study for the measurement of crime rates with official crime statistics also should not be overlooked. A change in the proportion of victims who report incidents to the police can produce changes in the official crime rate, even though the actual volume of crime did not change at all. If residents become more trusting of the police, more involved in local crime prevention, if the police become more effective, then the reporting rate may increase, producing an apparent increase in the crime rate. Further, comparisons of official crime statistics from one city to another could be complicated by the fact that the citizens of one city may have more positive orientations toward the police and a higher reporting rate. Thus, the official crime rate may not be an accurate indication of the comparative amount of crime in different cities. More important, when official crime statistics are used to measure the effectiveness of the criminal justice system, they may produce quite misleading results, since citizens who trust the police and believe them to be more effective tend to report more crimes than citizens who do not have these attitudes. An increase in the effectiveness of the criminal justice system--as measured by citizen trust and perceptions of effectiveness--could produce an apparent decrease in effectiveness as measured by the official crime statistics.

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Appendix A

Scales used in the Reporting and Non-Reporting Analysis

1. Seriousness of the Crime

The seriousness scale used in the analysis is a replication of Sellin and Wolfgang's 1964 index (Thorsten Sellin and Marvin E. Wolfgang, The Measurement of Delinquency. New York, Wiley, 1964).

a. Injury Component

Question (INC069): (If victim was injured): Did you receive treatment at a hospital, at a doctor's office, or what type of treatment did you receive?

Scoring:	Score
Blank (indicates no injury)	0
1. No treatment	1
2. Treated in doctor's office	4
3. Treated in emergency room	4
4. Overnight at hospital, or more	7

b. Sex Offense

(Crime codes of 120000 through 129999 are rape)

Rape	8
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c. Weapon Intimidation

Question (INC030) Did the person(s) have a weapon such as a gun or knife, or something he used as a weapon, such as a bottle or wrench?

Scoring:	Score
1. No	0
2. Yes, gun	4
3. Knife	4
4. Gun and knife	4
5. Other dangerous weapon	4
9. Don't know	0

d. Physical or Verbal Intimidation

Question: (INC031) Did the person(s) threaten you with harm in any way?

Scoring:	Score
1. No	0
2. Yes	2
9. Don't Know	0
Blank	0

e. Forcible Entry

Question (INC021) Was there any evidence that the offender(s) forced his way in or tried to force his way into the building, such as a broken lock, broken window, forced door, forced window, or slashed screen?

Scoring	Score
1. Blank or No	0
2. through 8. (other evidence)	1
9. Don't know	0

f. Costs and Losses

(Questions concerning losses are called COST1, COST2, COST3... COST6, and represent, in order, money lost, dollar value of items lost and dollar value of damages, none of which was recovered; insurance paid, value paid by offender, value paid by anyone else. The sum of these represents the total value of the loss.)

Scoring	Score
Under \$10	1
10 - \$250	2
251 - 2000	3
2001 - 9000	4
9001 - 30,000	5
30,001 - 80,000	6
80,001 - highest	7

(note: values of 88,888 represent refusal to name the amount, and values of 99,999 represent don't know. These were set to a score of 1.)

Several alternatives to the Sellin seriousness scale were also tried, but none of these had greater explanatory power for reporting than the Sellin index. The revised seriousness scores included all of the above indicators, plus one additional point if the crime was committed by a stranger, or if it occurred at night, or if it was closer to the person's home, or if all of these were characteristics of the crime. None of these additions improved the correlation between seriousness and reporting.

2. Seriousness of Property vs. Personal Crimes

The seriousness of a property crime (burglary or larceny) was computed exactly as above except, by definition, there were no injuries, etc. The only indicators, then, are cost and whether the entry was forcible or not. For personal crimes, all of the indicators are used because personal crimes could involve monetary losses.

3. Confidence, Trust in Police

(VAR077, VAR078, VAR138, VAR139, VAR144)

Questions:

1. If you explained your point of view to the police, what effect do you think it would have? Would they give your point of view serious consideration, would they pay some attention, only a little attention, or would they ignore what you had to say?

2. If you had some trouble with the police--a traffic violation, maybe, or being accused of a minor offense--do you think you would be given equal treatment? That is, would you be treated as well as anyone else?

3. Suppose you reported a crime to the local police department. Generally speaking, do you think they would believe your account of what happened? Do you think they would definitely believe you, probably believe you, probably not believe you or definitely not believe you?

Scoring:

1. Serious } = 1
2. Some }
3. Little } = 2
4. Ignore }
9. D.K.

1. Yes = 1
2. No = 2
9. D.K.

1. Definitely } = 1
2. Probably }
3. Probably not } = 2
4. Definitely not }
5. Depends on
9. D.K.

4. Would the police try to find out who committed the crime you reported? Do you think that they definitely would, probably would try to find out probably would not try or definitely would not try to find out who committed the crime?

- 1. Definitely } = 1
- 2. Probably }
- 3. Probably not } = 2
- 4. Definitely not }
- 5. Depends on
- 9. D. K.

5. Generally speaking, how would you characterize your attitude toward the police?

- 1. Very favorable = 1
- 2. Favorable
- 3. Neutral
- 4. Unfavorable = 2
- 5. Very unfavorable
- 9. D. K.

END

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