Who Calls the Police? A Race-Specific Analysis of Reporting Violent Victimization

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Abstract: Since 1973, the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) has collected data on criminal victimization, gathering detailed information about the victim, offender, and circumstances surrounding criminal offenses. The current study utilized NCVS data to determine how specific social and contextual factors influence whether the police are called after experiencing a violent victimization event. Utilizing data from 2010-2021, logistic regression analyses were used to examine social factors that predict reporting violent victimization to the police and whether those factors vary by the victim's race. Demographic characteristics as well as characteristics of the crime incident were examined. Results indicate that age is a significant predictor of reporting an incident to the police for victims of all racial backgrounds. The influence that other demographic characteristics have on reporting varies by race. Furthermore, presence of a weapon is the strongest predictor of calling the police for victims who identify as white, black, or two or more races. One of the most common reasons for reporting a violent victimization to the police was to get help, while dealing with the victimization another way was commonly cited as a reason for not reporting the crime to the police. Limitations and areas for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Reporting Crime, Police, Victimization, Violent Crime, Race/Ethnicity, NCVS.

INTRODUCTION

When a violent victimization happens to an individual, many might assume that the police will be notified simply because a crime occurred. However, the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) consistently shows that more than half of all victimizations go unreported to the police (Tapp and Coen 2024), leaving scholars to question why this is the case. For many groups, especially minorities, several factors are taken into consideration prior to deciding whether to report the victimization to the police.

Demographic characteristics, such as the victim's sex, age, marital status, socioeconomic status, or level of education, may impact whether the police are called, or not called, following a violent victimization. Along with the factors listed above, contextual factors may also influence the decision to call or not call the police, such as if the victim knew the perpetrator, if a weapon was used, or if the violent victimization was occurring for the first time or was a repeat victimization. This short list of variables may influence whether a victimization is reported and can vary based solely on how that individual racially identifies. While studies show the relationship between the victim and offender's race/ethnicity in relation to whether a violent victimization was reported to the police (Avakame, Fyfe, and McCoy 1999; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010),

there is a need in the literature to understand how demographic and contextual factors may differentially impact the decision to call the police based on the victim's racial identity.

As such, the current study utilizes NCVS data from 2010-2021 to determine how victim characteristics differentially impact the decision to call the police based on the race of the victim. Specifically included in the analysis are those who experienced a violent victimization, which includes rape or sexual assault, robbery, or an aggravated or simple assault. In what follows, logistic regression is used to conduct race-specific analyses to determine which characteristics and circumstances predict whether victims identifying as 1) white, 2) black, 3) American Indian or Alaska Native, 4) Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander, or 5) two or more races are more or less likely to report a violent victimization to the police.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars have examined the influence of demographic (such as age, sex, educational or marriage status) and contextual (*e.g.*, victim/offender relationship and presence of a weapon) characteristics on reporting a crime to the police (Baumer 2002; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Felson, Messner, and Hoskin 1999; among others). As noted above, however, these findings are not disaggregated by race of the victim to determine how these factors may play a differential role in the decision to report a violent victimization to the police. As such, the summary of prior literature provided below is based on general findings, rather than race-specific results.

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Demographic Characteristics

Several demographic characteristics have been explored to determine their role in predicting whether a victimization is brought to the attention of the police. With regard to age, Hashima and Finkelhor (1999) found that juveniles had a higher risk of victimization than adults. Despite this, research has typically shown that older victims are more likely to have their victimization reported to the police (Avakame *et al.* 1999; Baumer 2002; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Hart and Rennison 2003). It is important to note that there is a body of research that fails to find a correlation between age and reporting crime to the police (Hutchinson 2003; Kang and Lynch 2014). These studies are typically focused on specific forms of victimization, such as rape or domestic violence (Hutchinson 2003; Kang and Lynch 2014).

The sex of the individual also matters in cases of whether a violent victimization was reported to the police. Avakame *et al.* (1999) found that male victimizations are more likely to be reported to the police, although a female's victimization is more likely to result in an individual being arrested. This result is contrary to most of the research which indicates that females were more likely to report a violent victimization to the police than males in general (Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Conway and Lohr 1994; Felson *et al.* 2002; Hart and Rennison 2003; Schnebly 2008), when a female was involved as the victim and offender (Felson *et al.* 1999), and when a female was a bystander witnessing a violent victimization (Kaukinen 2004).

Marital status, education, and socioeconomic status have also been explored to determine their role in reporting crime to the police. Research has found that victimizations of married individuals are more likely to come to the attention of the police in general (Avakame *et al.* 1999; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Gottfredson and Hindelang 1979; Hart and Rennison 2003; Schnebly 2008), as well as in cases of rape (Lizotte 1985) and simple assault and robbery (Baumer 2002) specifically. Regarding education, the results of the literature are mixed. Research has indicated that increased education results in an increased likelihood of reporting to the police in general (Kaukinen 2004; Pitts 2014), as well as in cases of rape (Lizotte 1985) and simple assault (Baumer 2002) specifically. However, some studies have shown that those who are less educated are more likely to report a violent victimization to the police (Avakame *et al.* 1999; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Kang and Lynch 2014). Finally, lower income or socioeconomic status has been linked to increased reporting to the police (Avakame *et al.* 1999; Bachman 1993; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Hart and Rennison 2003). This finding, however, is not consistent, with several studies failing to establish income as a significant contributing factor for calling the police to report a crime (Baumer 2002; Berg, Slocum, and Loeber 2013).

Contextual Characteristics

Characteristics specific to the crime incident have also been analyzed for their role in whether a victimization is reported to the police, including the victim/offender relationship and the presence of a weapon during the commission of the crime. Criminologists commonly note that victims are more reluctant to report victimization committed against them by a known offender (especially intimate partners) usually due to a concern of getting someone they know in trouble (Avakame *et al.* 1999; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Felson *et al.* 2002; Nicksa 2014). However, some research has found increased reporting to the police when the offender is a family member or intimate partner in cases of assault (including domestic violence) (Baumer 2002; Felson *et al.* 1999; Kang and Lynch 2014). Regarding the presence of a weapon, research has consistently found that facing an armed offender increases the likelihood that the police will be called following a violent victimization (Avakame *et al.* 1999; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Berg *et al.* 2013; Felson *et al.* 2002; Hart and Rennison 2003; Lizotte 1985).

Summary and Research Questions

The literature outlined above provides guidance on factors that may influence whether the police are called following a violent victimization. This research, however, analyzes general patterns of reporting crime to the police. In these studies, race is treated as one of several explanatory variables within a larger model (Avakame *et al.* 1999; Baumer 2002; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010) rather than creating samples stratified by race. Because these findings are not race-specific, this exploratory analysis considers the following research questions:

1. Does the influence of demographic characteristics on reporting a violent victimization to the police vary by the race of the victim?

2. Does the influence of the victim/offender relationship on reporting a violent victimization to the police vary by the race of the victim?

3.   Does the influence of the presence of a weapon on reporting a violent victimization to the police vary by the race of the victim?

4.   Are there racial differences in reasons for reporting and not reporting a violent victimization to the police?

DATA AND MEASURES

Data Source

The NCVS provides the data utilized in the current study. A concatenated file spanning 30 years (1992-2021) was obtained for analysis. The NCVS is a nationally representative survey of households that is conducted yearly. It is aimed at capturing crime victimization, regardless of whether that victimization came to the attention of law enforcement. Individuals who are 12 years of age or older are invited to participate in the survey (with minors requiring consent from the guardian). The survey collects demographic information, as well as crime details for several personal and property crimes (U.S. Department of Justice n.d.).

Sample

This sample includes data on individuals who experienced a violent victimization (defined as a rape or sexual assault, robbery, or an aggravated or simple assault) perpetrated by a single offender between 2010 and 2021. This 12-year period was selected to ensure a sufficient sample size for minority races, which comprise less than 20% of violent crime victimizations captured by the NCVS. All missing cases on relevant variables were removed to perform a complete case analysis. Responses of "don't know" or "residue" within the data file were considered missing. The NCVS defines "residue" as genuinely missing cases (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics 2022). Removal of missing cases resulted in an overall sample of 13,537. The sample was then split based on the race of the victim to perform race-specific analyses. Racial categories and their corresponding sample sizes are as follows: 1) white (n = 10,849), 2) black (n = 1,540), 3) American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN) (n = 190), 4) Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander (n = 339), and 5) two or more races (n = 619).[1]

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[1]Respondents reporting Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander as their race were combined with Asian respondents due to the small number of Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders in the sample (approximately 50 in the 12-year period).

Dependent Variable

Whether an incident was reported to the police serves as the dependent variable for the current study. Respondents were asked the following question: "Were the police informed or did they find out about this incident in any way?" The variable was dummy coded to 0=No and 1=Yes.

Explanatory Variables

Demographic characteristics of the victim were analyzed to determine their influence on reporting an incident to the police. The following categorical variables were dummy coded to 0 or 1 response options as follows: sex (0=Male and 1=Female); marital status (0=Not married and 1=Married).

The victim's age, measured as an interval variable, was based on the respondent's age on their last birthday. Level of education and household income are reported to the NCVS as ordinal variables. For education, the NCVS measures number of years of schooling for respondents who have not earned a high school diploma, then adjusts its response options for post-secondary education based on degree earned (*i.e.*, Associate, Bachelor, Master, Professional School, or Doctorate degree). For the purposes of the current analysis, education level was recoded such that higher values indicate more education as follows: Values of 1 through 11 indicate the corresponding number of years of education; 12=High school graduate; 13=Some college (no degree); 14=Associate's degree; 15=Bachelor's degree; 16=Master's degree; 17=Professional school degree; 18=Doctorate degree. Similarly, the NCVS reports the respondent's household income within a range as follows: 1=<\$5,000; 2=\$5,000-\$7,499; 3=\$7,500-\$9,999; 4=\$10,000-\$12,499; 5=\$12,500-\$14,999; 6=\$15,000-\$17,499; 7=\$17,500-\$19,999; 8=\$20,000-\$24,999; 9=\$25,000-\$29,999; 10=\$30,000-\$34,999; 11=\$35,000-\$39,999; 12=\$40,000-\$49,999; 13=\$50,000-\$74,999; 14=$\geq$\$75,000. Though measured ordinally, education and income were treated as interval variables for data analysis purposes.

Crime-specific variables were also included to ascertain their influence on whether the police were informed of the incident. The perceived relationship between the victim and offender was based on the question: "How did you know the offender?" Responses were coded as 0=Known offender and 1=Stranger. Finally, the presence of a weapon was measured with the following question: "Did the offender have a weapon such as a gun or knife, or something to use as

a weapon, such as a bottle or wrench?" The response options were dummy coded to 0=No and 1=Yes for data analysis purposes.

Control Variable

Hispanic origin (coded as 0=Not Hispanic and 1=Hispanic) was included in the models as a control variable. Though not a racial category, this ethnic group is commonly treated as a racial group in analyses due to its relative size of the population. As of 2024, Hispanics account for 20% of the U.S. population, making them the largest ethnic minority group (U.S. Census Bureau 2025). Existing research has shown reporting differences between Hispanics and non-Hispanics (Rennison 2007). However, sample limitations (discussed below) prevented a separate analysis of this population in the current study.

Analytical Strategy

Descriptive statistics were conducted for all study variables for the overall sample, as well as for race-specific subsamples. Logistic regression analyses were used to determine the influence of the explanatory variables on whether an incident was reported to the police. This statistical method was necessary because the dependent variable is a dichotomous or dummy coded variable.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table **1** reports the means and standard deviations for all variables measured continuously, as well as percentages for dichotomous variables. Overall, approximately 45% of all violent victimizations are reported to the police. Violent victimizations of black victims are more likely to be reported to the police, with nearly half of these victimizations coming to the attention of the police. Those reporting two or more races are least likely to have their victimization reported to the police.

Overall, victims are more likely to be female, comprising more than half of all victims who experienced a violent victimization. This pattern is evident for each racial category except Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander, in which victims are slightly more likely to be male rather than female. On average, victims are approximately 38 years old. The average age of victims is youngest among those reporting two or more races at approximately 35 years old. Educational attainment appears to be similar across racial categories. Most report having obtained at least a high school diploma, on average. The average reported income for the overall sample is 9.91, which equates to roughly $30,000-$34,999. Blacks report the lowest income, while those of Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander descent report the highest income, on average.

Regarding characteristics of the crime incident, most victimizations are perpetrated by someone known to the victim. Those of Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander descent report a higher percent of victimizations committed by strangers at more than half of all violent crime victimizations. Additionally, a

Table 1:   Descriptive Statistics

|	Overall		White		Black		American Indian/Alaska Native		Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander		Two or More Races	
	Mean/ %	Std. Dev	Mean/ %	Std. Dev	Mean/ %	Std. Dev	Mean/ %	Std. Dev	Mean/ %	Std. Dev	Mean/ %	Std. Dev
Dependent Variable												
Called Police (1=Yes)	44.9%		44.8%		49.9%		42.1%		41.3%		37.2%	
Explanatory Variables												
Sex (1=female)	55.3%		54.3%		61.4%		50.5%		48.4%		62.8%	
Age	38.02	16.48	38.36	16.57	37.32	16.31	38.19	14.47	36.19	14.62	34.61	16.46
Marital Status (1=married)	28.3%		30.4%		14.4%		23.2%		38.4%		21.8%	
Education	12.59	2.57	12.66	2.57	12.20	2.28	11.96	2.27	13.64	2.35	11.88	2.98
Income	9.91	4.23	10.22	4.10	7.94	4.45	8.51	4.64	10.81	4.18	9.29	4.32
V/O Relationship (1=stranger)	38.5%		38.9%		32.3%		37.4%		59.3%		35.5%	
Weapon Present (1=yes)	21.7%		20.8%		25.6%		27.9%		24.8%		24.4%	
Control Variable												
Hispanic (1=Hispanic)	13.9%		15.0%		4.6%		18.4%		5.0%		20.5%	
	n = 13,537		n = 10,849		n = 1,540		n = 190		n = 339		n = 619	
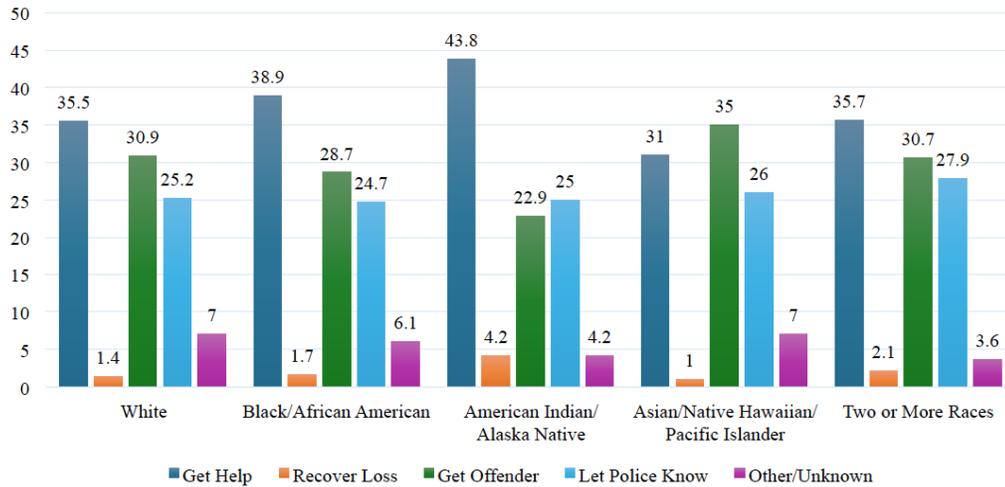
Figure 1: Most important reason for reporting victimization to the Police.

weapon is not likely to be present during these incidents. AIAN victims are more likely to report that a weapon was present than other victims.

To better understand why crime is or is not reported to the police, the NCVS also asks respondents to report the most important reason the police were or were not informed of the crime. Figure **1** displays the most important reason provided for why the police were called after a violent crime incident. Approximately one-third of respondents across all racial categories indicated that getting help was the most important reason for notifying the police of the crime. This reason was the most common response for all groups, except those of Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander descent. Among this group in particular, the primary motivation of calling the police was to get the offender. This category includes reasons such as preventing more crime committed by the offender, as well as

punishing or catching the offender. Recovering a loss was the least common response across all groups.

Figure **2** displays the most important reason provided for why the police were not called after a victimization. Approximately one-third of respondents across all racial categories indicated that the incident was not reported because it was dealt with another way. This could include reporting the crime to a different official (such as an employer or school administrator) or dealing with it as a private or personal matter. This reason was the most common response for all groups, except for AIAN and multiracial victims. For these groups, dealing with the victimization a different way was second to the catchall "other" category, which includes reasons such as fear of reprisal, not wanting to get the offender in trouble, and being advised to not report (among others). While distrust of police is an area of concern for many racial
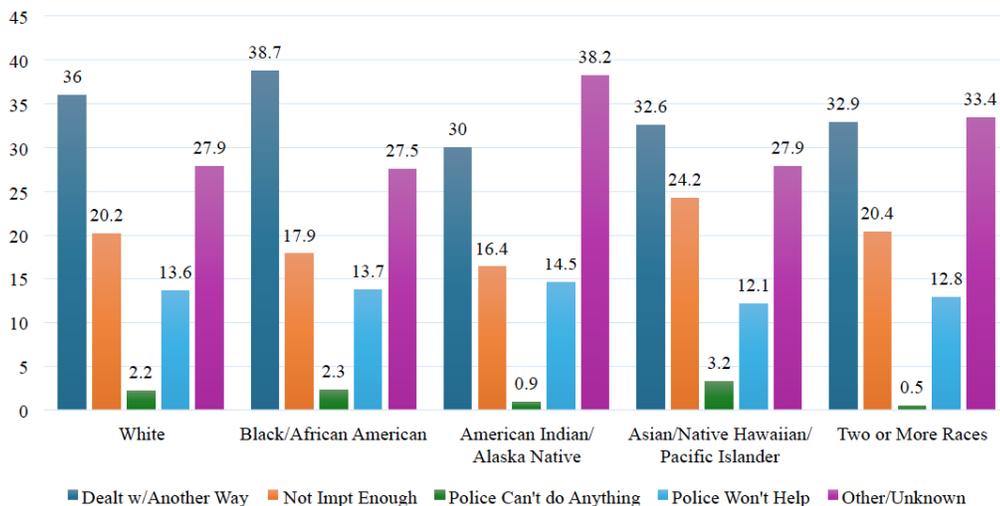

Figure 2: Most important reason for not reporting victimization to the Police.

groups (Wu 2014), police being unable or unwilling to help were among the least common reasons given for why law enforcement was not informed of the incident.

Table **2a** displays the logistic regression results predicting calls to the police by the race of the victim. These findings are summarized in Table **2b**, which identifies significant predictors by race, as well as the nature of the relationship between the explanatory variables and the likelihood of calling the police. The results indicate that the victim's sex plays a significant role in reporting a crime to the police for white and black victims only. For these individuals, female victims are more likely to have their victimization reported to police than males. Age is a significant predictor of reporting a crime to police across all racial categories. For each racial category except AIAN, each unit increase in age increases the likelihood of a victimization being reported to the police. For AIAN victims only, as age increases, the likelihood of calling the police decreases.

Table 2a: Logistic Regression Model Predicting Calls to the Police by Race of the Victim

	White (n = 10,849)			Black (n = 1,540)			American Indian/Alaska Native (n = 190)			Asian/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (n = 339)			Two or More Races (n = 619)		
	b (SE)		Odds Ratio	b (SE)		Odds Ratio	b (SE)		Odds Ratio	b (SE)		Odds Ratio	b (SE)		Odds Ratio
Sex	0.150 (0.041)	***	1.162	0.354 (0.116)	**	1.424	0.457 (0.325)		1.579	0.181 (0.245)		1.199	0.106 (0.182)		1.112
Age	0.012 (0.001)	***	1.012	0.013 (0.003)	***	1.013	-0.026 (0.012)	*	0.974	0.030 (0.009)	***	1.031	0.015 (0.006)	*	1.015
Hispanic	0.176 (0.056)	**	1.193	-0.247 (0.257)		0.781	0.158 (0.423)		1.171	0.473 (0.531)		1.605	0.170 (0.210)		1.185
Marital Status	0.274 (0.046)	***	1.315	0.564 (0.161)	***	1.757	0.990 (0.386)	**	2.690	-0.106 (0.268)		0.900	-0.050 (0.223)		0.951
Education	-0.010 (0.009)		0.990	0.022 (0.025)		1.022	0.163 (0.083)	*	1.177	-0.080 (0.054)		0.923	0.023 (0.032)		1.024
Income	-0.020 (0.005)	***	0.980	-0.012 (0.013)		0.989	-0.063 (0.037)	†	0.939	0.059 (0.032)	†	1.061	-0.030 (0.021)		0.970
Offender Stranger	-0.094 (0.043)	*	0.910	-0.205 (0.118)	†	0.815	0.128 (0.354)		1.136	-0.172 (0.250)		0.842	0.124 (0.183)		1.132
Weapon Present	0.633 (0.049)	***	1.883	0.886 (0.127)	***	2.425	0.192 (0.355)		1.212	0.432 (0.266)		1.541	0.625 (0.195)	***	1.868
Pseudo R^2	0.033			0.060			0.093			0.059			0.043		
χ^2 (df = 8)	361.798	***		94.734	***		18.521	*		20.619	**		27.048	***	

Unstandardized coefficients with standard error in parentheses.
† $p \leq 0.10$; * $p \leq 0.05$; ** $p \leq 0.01$; *** $p \leq 0.001$.

Table 2b: Summary Table of Models Predicting Calls to the Police by Race of the Victim

	White	Black	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Asian/Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Isander	Two or More Races
Explanatory Variables					
Sex (1=female)	female	female			
Age	older	older	younger	older	older
Marital Status (1=married)	married	married	married		
Education			more educated		
Income	lower income		lower income	higher income	
V/O Relationship (1=stranger)	non-stranger	non-stranger			
Weapon Present (1=yes)	weapon	weapon			weapon
Control Variable					
Hispanic (1=Hispanic)	Hispanic				

Regarding marital status, being married significantly increased the likelihood of a victimization being reported for white, black, and AIAN victims. For AIAN victims, this variable was the most significant predictor of reporting a crime to the police. The odds of calling law enforcement are nearly 2.7 times higher for married victims than unmarried victims in this racial category. Education was only a significant predictor of calling the police for AIAN victims. The more educated the victim, the more likely they were to report their victimization to the police. Income was significantly related to a decreased likelihood of reporting a crime to the police for white victims only. While only marginally significant, increased income results in an increased likelihood of reporting a violent victimization among Asian, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander victims and a decreased likelihood of AIAN victimizations being reported. Lastly, though only treated as a control variable, it is important to note that white victims who also identified as Hispanic were more likely to call the police than white victims who did not identify as Hispanic.

Regarding measures directly related to the crime incident, white and black victims were less likely to have their victimization reported to the police if the offender was a stranger. The best predictor of whether the police were called following a victimization incident was if the offender had a weapon during the commission of the crime. White and black victims, as well as those who identified as two or more races, were anywhere from 1.9 to 2.4 times more likely to call the police if a weapon was present than if a weapon was not present.

Chi-square was utilized to assess the model fit for each racial category. The overall model is found to be a good fit for predicting the likelihood of calling the police to report a violent victimization for all races, with the strongest models being for white victims, black victims, and victims identifying as two or more races. The pseudo-R^2 values are also reported in Table **2a**. This value indicates that anywhere from 3.3% to 9.3% of the variance in the likelihood of calling the police is explained by the current model. The pseudo-R^2 value is lowest for predicting the likelihood of white victims calling the police and highest for AIAN victims.

DISCUSSION

Many factors are taken into consideration when deciding whether to report a violent victimization to the police. This decision may be further compounded by the race of the victim, as minority groups are more

likely to report having negative experiences or perceptions of law enforcement (Hagan and Albonetti 1982; Wu 2014). Descriptive statistics from the current study appear to support this finding, indicating that fewer violent victimizations involving minority victims (except those identifying as black) come to the attention of the police than the violent victimization of whites. However, an analysis of why the police were not called revealed that an unwillingness or inability of the police to help was not considered the most important reason for failing to notify the police of the incident. Instead, approximately one-third of victims in all racial minority groups indicated that the most important reason the victimization was not reported to the police was because it was dealt with another way. This could include reporting the crime to a different official (an employer or teacher) or handling it personally (as a private matter), which matches the general trend found among NCVS respondents (Langton *et al*. 2012).

The current study reveals there are differences in how demographic and contextual characteristics impact whether a crime is reported to the police based on the race of the victim. For white victims, sex, age, marital status, income, the victim/offender relationship, and the presence of a weapon all influence reporting a violent victimization to the police. Most of these relationships are consistent with prior research except for the influence of the victim/offender relationship. While several studies have shown that victims are more likely to report stranger incidents (Avakame *et al*. 1999; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Felson *et al*. 2002; Hart and Rennison 2003; Nicksa 2014), whites in the current sample are less likely to report these incidents than non-stranger incidents. Furthermore, a violent victimization involving a white victim who identifies as Hispanic is more likely to be reported to the police than those involving non-Hispanic white victims. This is contrary to some prior research which indicates that Hispanics are less likely to report violent victimizations than non-Hispanic whites (Rennison 2007). Results for black victims align with those found for white victims in that sex, age, marital status, the victim/offender relationship, and the presence of a weapon are significantly related to the likelihood of reporting a violent victimization to the police.

For AIAN victims, age, marital status, education, and income influence whether a violent victimization is reported to the police. Unlike victims of all other racial backgrounds, age is negatively related to calling the police for AIAN victims. The long and storied past of

government interactions with this population may be better remembered by older individuals, resulting in a decreased likelihood of these victims calling the police for assistance. Age and income were both positively and significantly related to the likelihood of calling the police for victims identifying as Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander. Regarding income, this finding is contrary to most prior research indicating that the police are more likely to be called when victims are of lower socioeconomic status (Avakame *et al.* 1999; Bachman 1993; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Hart and Rennison 2003). Finally, for those identifying as two or more races, age and the presence of a weapon were both positive and significantly related to reporting a violent victimization to police. These findings align with prior research indicating that the victimization of older individuals (Avakame *et al.* 1999; Baumer 2002; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Hart and Rennison 2003) as well as those incidents in which an offender is armed (Avakame *et al*. 1999; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Berg *et al*. 2013; Felson *et al*. 2002; Hart and Rennison 2003; Lizotte 1985) are more likely to come to the attention of law enforcement.

Overall, these findings provide support for each of the research questions. Regarding the first three questions, the effect of demographic and contextual variables on reporting a violent victimization to the police appear to vary by racial group. Though most of the relationships between these variables are in the same direction regardless of the victim's race, the level of significance and size of each variable's impact differs between racial categories. Additionally, the variance explained and model fit for each group differs substantially. Regarding the final research question on reasons for reporting or not reporting to the police, a simple descriptive analysis shows that though similarities exist, the percent of victims reporting any given reason as the most important varies by race. This research, therefore, sheds light on the importance of examining differences in reporting crime to the police by race of the victim.

Understanding these racial differences is important given the long history of distrust among minority groups and law enforcement, or United States governmental policies and procedures more broadly. There have been long-standing issues with perceptions of the police because of colonization and broken treaties in reference to AIAN individuals (Molinari, Burke, and Doucet 2024), police mistreatment for individuals who identify as black (Edwards, Lee, and Esposito 2019), or exclusion acts and internment camps for individuals

who identify as Asian (Thiesmeyer 1995). Thus, racial disparities in reporting could reflect this history and the continued inequality faced in many minority communities.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

The current study is not without its limitations. First, this analysis is considered exploratory and is not generalizable to the population. While the NCVS provides weights to allow for generalizability, they were not employed here due to concerns regarding the appropriateness of their use in regression analyses (Lantz, Wenger, and Malcom 2022; Lohr and Liu 1994). Another potential issue is the statistical power related to the sample size of victims identifying as AIAN, Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander, or two or more races. Though these are small samples (ranging from 190 to 619 victims), each meets the threshold as recommended by Peduzzi *et al*. (1996), which suggests the sample size should be 10k/p (where k = number of predictors and p = proportion of successes).

A second limitation is the inability to analyze the impact of these factors on each violent crime separately. Though prior research has indicated differences in reporting based on the form of violence experienced (Baumer 2002; Lizotte 1985), the sample size for minority races is too small to disaggregate by type of violent crime victimization. Doing so would not provide enough cases for statistical power. Future research should expand the years of analysis to ensure an adequate sample of minority victims by type of violence. Understanding the nuanced differences in reporting by the type of violent victimization experienced is important for targeting criminal justice resources for victims. This research could help victim advocates identify those who are at a high risk of violent victimization and educate these victims on the services that might be available to them (Warnken and Lauritsen 2019).

A third limitation is the inclusion of Hispanics as a control variable rather than analyzing this group as a separate racial category. As such, there could be differences in reporting based on this ethnic identification that are masked in the current analysis. In fact, prior research has identified some differences in reporting between Hispanic and non-Hispanic victims, indicating that Hispanics are less likely to report violent victimizations overall but are more likely to report simple assaults than non-Hispanic whites (Rennison 2007). Furthermore, research has shown that of violent

victimizations reported, most involved a female victim, and the most infrequently reported victim was an uninjured, not married, adult male (Rennison 2010). Despite these findings, it was not feasible to separately analyze those identifying as Hispanic because of sample size limitations. More than 18% of all AIAN victims in the current sample identified as Hispanic. Removing those individuals for a separate analysis would have reduced the statistical power of the AIAN model predicting calls to the police. Thus, future research should disaggregate by ethnicity of the victim to ascertain specific demographic or contextual factors that may influence reporting among Hispanic victims.

CONCLUSION

One of the most prominent implications of this research is the potential to assist law enforcement agencies with building community relationships to increase reporting by victims. Research suggests that police-community relations programs can be used to build rapport with community members to increase the likelihood that the police will be contacted if needed. Keeping the community involved in decision-making processes shows that programs of community policing might be supported more if the community knows their interests on safety and other concerns are being heard (Trojanowicz 1972). Because some communities have had historically poor relationships with individual officers in community policing programs, there needs to be a "reciprocal cooperative process" between the community and the police to reduce the skepticism that new officers may be different (Trojanowicz 1972:421). One part of this reciprocal relationship would be officers learning about potential safety concerns from the community and implementing their experience in the field to keep those communities safe.

Building these relationships, however, may also be stymied by existing community-level inequalities and bias faced by minority populations. Many predominantly minority neighborhoods experience higher rates of poverty, unemployment, single-parent households, and crime than non-minority neighborhoods. These communities may be subject to increased police patrols and contacts with the criminal justice system (Crutchfield *et al*. 2012). Witnessing or experiencing the perceived over-policing of their neighborhoods may increase reluctance of residents to cooperate with law enforcement. To combat this, agencies should emphasize procedural justice and fairness. Knowing that officers are making fair decisions based on facts and law rather than opinion

could increase the probability that the community would want to work with the police to limit crime (Ward 2025).

Community cooperation is paramount for ensuring public safety since a significant portion of law enforcement is reactive in nature. Agencies rely on community notification of crime incidents to which they respond. If residents do not report their victimization, offending may go unnoticed by law enforcement. This lack of official response could then embolden offenders to reoffend, making communities less safe and leaving residents questioning police efficacy. Additionally, these residents may experience an increased fear of crime and may alter or limit their interactions with others, especially in neighborhoods that lack social cohesion. Conversely, underreporting could provide a false sense of security among community members if they are not aware of the violence being committed against their neighbors. Community-based outreach programs that increase social cohesion, educate community members on the importance of reporting crime victimization to the police, and highlight the positive role of law enforcement could enhance the police-community relationship and improve public safety.

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