

PROPERTY CRIME REPORTING: EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF  
VICTIMS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR SOCIAL CONTEXT ON THEIR  
REPORTING BEHAVIOUR

by

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## ABSTRACT

It has been consistently documented that much of the property crime in Canada and in the Western world in general is not being brought to the attention of the police (Skogan, 1984; van Dijk, 1991; Goudriaan, Lynch, & Nieuwbeerta, 2004). Three approaches were taken in past research to examine the factors contributing to crime reporting behaviour – the economical, psychological, and sociological. While having some success in explaining reporting behaviour from these sole perspectives, the downside of these projects is the disregard of other possible factors embedded in “competing” frameworks (Goudriaan, 2006; Ménard, 2003).

This project merges these three approaches under the assumption offered by a socio-ecological framework (Barker, 1968; Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Hawley, 1950, 1986) which asserts that characteristics of victims, incidents, and social contexts of neighbourhoods will influence victims’ reporting behaviour. Victims are assumed to form the decision to notify the police of incidents through rational or normative processes.

Data from the General Social Survey cycle 18 (administered by Statistics Canada in 2004) were used to examine the reporting behaviour of property crimes in Canada. The analytic strategy engaged quantitative methods of analysis, including frequencies, bivariate, and multivariate (logistic regression) methods. Results of bivariate distributions of the reasons provided by victims for reporting or not reporting their incidents to the police indicate that reporting behaviour is a result of either rational or normative considerations. Further, results of multivariate regressions reveal that, for the most part, the effects of incident characteristics, and to a limited extent those of

individual and social context characteristics, affect victims' crime-reporting behaviour. On the incident level, incidents that resulted in greater loss, incidents committed against insured victims, and more severe incidents were found to be more likely to be reported. On the victim level, only visible minority status proved to affect the reporting behaviour. Members of visible minority groups were less likely to report their incidents. Finally, on the level of social context, only the perceptions of social disorder in victims' neighbourhoods proved to be a significant factor in reporting; victims who perceived greater disorder were more likely to report their incidents. Similar to the bivariate distributions, results of multivariate analysis were explained using the rational/normative action approaches.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	v
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES .....	vi
INTRODUCTION .....	1
CHAPTER ONE – LITERATURE REVIEW .....	8
Introduction .....	8
<u>Section I</u> : Rational vs. Normative Action .....	9
Rational Action Approach .....	9
Normative Action Approach .....	15
<u>Section II</u> : Neighbourhood Factors .....	21
Socio-Economic Disadvantage .....	21
Social Cohesion .....	24
Social and Physical Disorder .....	28
Chapter Summary .....	31
CHAPTER TWO – METHODOLOGY .....	32
Introduction and Concepts .....	32
The Survey Instrument .....	33
Data Collection and Sampling Technique .....	36
Operationalization of concepts .....	38
Dependent Variable .....	38
Independent (Predictor Variables) .....	38
Imputation of Missing Values .....	46
Data Limitations .....	48
Methods of Data Analysis and Presentation of Results .....	51
Chapter Summary .....	53
CHAPTER THREE – RESULTS .....	54
Introduction .....	54
Descriptives of Variables Used in Models .....	54
Bivariate results .....	55
Reasons for (Not) Reporting the Incident to the Police .....	58
Logistic Regression Results .....	59
Effects of Victim Characteristics .....	61
Effects of Incident Characteristics .....	63

Effects of Perceptions of Social Context in Neighbourhoods .....	65
Chapter Summary .....	66
CHAPTER FOUR – DISCUSSION .....	69
Introduction .....	69
Reasons for (Not)Reporting the Incident .....	69
Results of Multivariate Analysis .....	73
Effects of Perceptions of Social Context in Neighbourhoods .....	75
Limitations of the Project .....	78
Chapter Summary .....	80
IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION .....	82
Theoretical Implications.....	82
Methodological Implications.....	83
Policy Implications.....	85
Conclusion .....	88
REFERENCES .....	90
APPENDIX .....	97

## LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Table 2.1	Descriptives of scales used in models .....	42
Table 2.2	Descriptives of Demographic Variables from GSS-17 and GSS-18 .....	48
Table 3.1	Descriptives of the dependent and control variables used in models .....	55
Table 3.2	Percentage of incidents reported to the police by victim and incident characteristics .....	56
Table 3.3	Means of scales used in models (incidents reported vs. not reported) .....	56
Table 3.4	Reasons for Reporting the Incident to the Police (those who reported the incident) .....	59
Table 3.5	Reasons for Not Reporting the Incident to the Police (those who did not report the incident) .....	60
Table 3.6	Coefficients of effects of victim and incident characteristics and perceptions of police and neighbourhood from the logistic analyses on reporting behaviour .....	61

## INTRODUCTION

According to Statistics Canada, police forces reported 1,274,931 incidents of property crime in Canada in 2004 (Statistics Canada, 2005a). It has been fairly consistently documented that many incidents in Western nations and in Canada are not being brought to the attention of the police (Skogan, 1984; van Dijk, 1991; Goudriaan, Lynch, & Nieuwbeerta, 2004; see also Table 3.1). Further, the overall crime-reporting rate has been steadily declining for most crime types in Canada since 1988 (Statistics Canada, 2000). Many victims experience multiple victimizations.

Regardless of the rate of victimization and reporting, the individual and social costs of victimization are grave. The individual consequences of victimization have been fairly well documented (Greenberg & Ruback, 1985; Greenberg & Ruback, 1992; Kidd & Chayet, 1984), and include physical, psychological and financial strains. The social costs include the rising fear of crime, but also the financial cost of operating the legal system, victim compensation and restitution schemes, and other victim services. Indeed, the estimated cost of policing, courts, legal aid, criminal prosecutions, and adult and youth corrections was \$11 billion in 2000/01 (Statistics Canada, 2003).

This study, much like others in the area of crime reporting, will ask the ‘traditional’ research question: Why do victims not report their victimization to the police? However, unlike most other studies, this project will attempt to incorporate victims’ perceptions of their social surroundings (social cohesion, and social and physical disorder in neighbourhoods), while controlling for individual and incident effects. Thus, a sub-question of this project is: What effects do victims’ perceptions of

social cohesion and social and physical disorder in their neighbourhoods and communities have on their crime reporting behaviour?

There are at least three important reasons that might be provided for the importance of studying victims' crime reporting behaviour. First, unreported crime may result in unresolved disputes that have implications for the parties involved in an incident as well for the community (Skogan, 1984). Furthermore, it limits the deterrent capacity of the criminal justice system as well as the police, thus undermining their major purposes. Finally, not reporting is a potential way of excluding certain social groups from civic protection, as the criminal justice system would be unaware of the occurring crimes and ongoing victimization.

Similar to these three rationales, Kidd & Chayet (1984) further state that unreported crime could lead to a vicious circle in that by not reporting a crime, law authorities and the criminal justice system in general would not be able to resolve the situation, and this would further undermine their effectiveness in dealing with criminal activity and its consequences. In this regard, victims are viewed as key decision makers in the criminal justice system, or “gatekeeper[s]’ of the criminal justice process” (Hinderlang & Gottfredson, 1976: 58) since her/his decision to report incidents to the police puts control on the input to the system.

Research on victims reporting crime to the police has enjoyed a great amount of attention in the past three decades. Goudriaan (2006) indicates three main theoretical approaches to studying crime-reporting behaviour that were utilised in past research: economic, psychological, and sociological. In the economic model - the most popular of the three - it is assumed that a victim's decision to report a crime is an outcome of a

cost-benefit calculation determining whether or not the effort of contacting the police is worthwhile (Myers, 1980; Skogan, 1984). Reiss summarised the idea of the economic model in the following quote:

“... people do not call the police unless they are seriously wronged or have something to gain – for example, being able to collect an insurance policy if a crime is reported to the police. The gain must outweigh the effort of calling the police and the psychological cost of getting involved with the legal system; otherwise the call will not be made” (Reiss 1967:99, cited in Conklin 1975: 157).

Individual as well as incident level factors play a central role in the economic model. Thus crime seriousness, amount of monetary loss and/or injury, presence of insurance are regarded as the key determinants of police notification. Much like the above quote suggests, victims will report their incidents only when the loss is severe enough, and when the perceived chances to recover it are high.

Just like the economic model, the psychological model too follows the assumption of a cost-benefit calculation in victims' crime-reporting behaviour. However, the model extends beyond the idea that crime seriousness and associated determinants play the most important role in reporting. It considers the consequences of crime such as the affective influence of fears, stress, and psychological traumas resulting from the experience of victimization. These affectionate reactions to victimization play a noticeably more decisive role in the decision-making process of victims of violent crimes, rather than in victims of property crimes<sup>1</sup> (Greenberg &

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Waller & Okihiro (1978) indicate that the most frequently mentioned reaction to victimization among the burglary victims in Toronto was surprise, followed by a general upset feeling. Only the third frequently mentioned reactions were fear and anger. In contrast, the reactions most frequently reported by victims of violent crimes and sexual assaults are general fear, anxiety, embarrassment and shame, fear of rejection by or blame from family or friends, avoidance of notoriety and stigma that is attached to prosecution, and a fear of retaliation from the offender (Greenberg &

Ruback, 1985; Kidd & Chayet, 1984; Waller & Okihiro, 1978). The model also looks at victims' immediate social network (e.g. the influence of significant others, relatives, etc.) and victim-offender relationship (see Greenberg & Ruback, 1992). Finally, victims' desires for protection and prevention of further victimization played a central role in the psychological model (Felson, Messner, Hoskin, & Deane, 2002).

The third approach, the sociological model, takes a radically different approach than the other two in that it focuses on the societal social structures and their influence on victim's reporting behaviour (e.g. Black, 1976). The process of victims' individual decision-making is not a key concern to the model; the focus is predominantly on the effects that the contextual variables have on victims' reporting practices. This approach could be regarded as the macro-level explanation for reporting of crime. According to Black (1976), examples of contextual variables that are theorised to affect reporting include social stratification, morphology, culture, organization, and social control. More recently, researchers looked at the effects of social processes in neighbourhoods on reporting; these included socio-economic disadvantage (Baumer, 2002; Goudriaan et al., 2005), social cohesion (Goudriaan et al., 2005; Laub, 1981; Rose & clear, 1998), and confidence in police effectiveness (Bennett & Wiegand, 1994; Goudriaan et al., 2004)<sup>2</sup>.

Each of the three hitherto mentioned approaches have its strengths and limitations. The economic and the psychological approaches give much attention to

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Ruback, 1985; Kidd & Chayet, 1984). Evidently, the different psychological outcomes will have different effects on victims' crime-reporting behaviour.

<sup>2</sup> The non-inclusion of measures of social processes in communities and neighbourhoods in previous studies on crime-reporting is partially attributed to a general shortage of contextual variables in victimization surveys (Goudriaan et al., 2004). The British Crime Survey administered by the Social Survey Division and the National Centre for Social Research of Great Britain is an exceptionally useful resource for data related to victimization and crime reporting, which also includes a variety of contextual variables. For more information, please see <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/index.htm>

individual and incident factors, and have undoubtedly had some success in explaining victims' reporting behaviour on micro and meso levels (Goudriaan, 2006). However, they have failed to incorporate the influences of the social surroundings (contexts) in which victims live in their models of analysis. The sociological approach, on the other hand, focused primarily on the context, while falling short of including the individual and situational effects.

Given the fact that to date, research on crime reporting has, for the most part, utilised only one of the three approaches<sup>3</sup>, it seems plausible to incorporate the premises standing behind the three approaches into one model. Such an inclusion will help in avoiding the pitfall of focusing on only the individual, incident, or social context determinants of reporting. The approach of social ecology offers a starting point for the integration of the three approaches.

The socio-ecological framework suggests that in order to better understand human behaviour, we must incorporate different levels of analysis, which include individual, situational, and socio-environmental influences on human behaviour (e.g. Barker, 1968; Bursik & Grasmick, 1993; Hawley, 1950, 1986). The framework emphasises the importance of the idea that people's decisions are not made in a 'vacuum', but are embedded within the ecological environment in which people are situated (Pescosolido, 1992). The ecological units of human environment are one of the primary agents of socialization and, as such, are sources of certain social processes that tend to influence the conduct of our behaviour. Further, it is believed that if

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<sup>3</sup> Goudriaan et al. (2005) indicate that so far only eight empirical studies, other than their own, gave attention to the effects of social processes in neighbourhoods or communities on victims' reporting behaviour, while still including individual and incident factors: Avakame, Fyfe, & McCoy (1999); Baumer (2002); Bennett & Wiegand (1994); Fishman (1979); Gottfredson & Hinderlang (1979); Laub (1981); Ruback & Ménard (2001); and Warner (1992).

neighbourhood effects have an influence on social outcomes (e.g. crime), “presumably they are constituted from social processes that involve collective aspects of community life” (Sampson, 2000: 712). Hence it seems essential to consider these social effects of neighbourhoods and their relation to one aspect of human behaviour, the reporting of crime by victims.

Within the three approaches to studying crime reporting and within the socio-ecological framework, there are two processes by which victims’ decisions to report their incidents are assumed to be made: the rational and the normative. The rational processes presuppose a process of cost-benefit calculation on the victims’ part. It plays a central role in the economic approach described above. The normative processes, in contrast, are a result of the impact of norms of a situation or social norms existing in the victims’ social environment. These play an important role in the psychological and sociological approaches.

The theoretical overview of both the rational and the normative action is presented in Chapter 1 of this project. The theories’ claims, strengths and weaknesses are assessed. Also discussed in this chapter is the importance of social processes in studying victims’ reporting behaviour. The social processes assessed are socio-economic disadvantage, social cohesion, and social and physical disorder in neighbourhoods. However, due to limitations of the data, socio-economic disadvantage is not utilised in this project as a predictor (see Chapter 2). Its theoretical relevance is discussed nevertheless.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the data source and the analytic strategy engaged in this project, as well as the assessment of quality of data. The data source

utilised in the project is the General Social Survey cycle 18 (GSS-18) carried out by Statistics Canada in 2004. The GSS-18 provides a representative sample of non-institutionalised persons who are 15 years of age and over, not military personnel, and reside in the 10 Canadian provinces. The analytic strategy of this project is comprised of quantitative methods of analysis, which include bivariate and multivariate (logistic regression) models.

Results of different tests performed in this project are presented in Chapter 3. The replications of and inconsistencies with findings of previous research on reporting behaviour are also discussed.

Finally, the discussion of results is the core of Chapter 4. The results are discussed using the rational and normative processes framework outlined in Chapter 1. The discussion begins with a rational/normative assessment of various reasons provided by victims for (not)reporting their incidents. I then discuss the effects of various independent predictors included in the logistic regressions, and their role within the rational/normative divide. Following, the role of effects of perceptions of social processes on reporting behaviour within the divide is considered. Some general limitations of the project are outlined in the last part of the chapter.

CHAPTER ONE  
LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The literature review of this project is divided into two parts. The first section provides an overview of the two processes – rational and normative actions – through which the reporting is carried out. While this dichotomy of action was briefly addressed by researchers that studied crime reporting (Felson et al., 2002; Goudriaan et al., 2004), it would seem that a more thorough discussion is needed. An outline of the rational approach to studying human action is introduced, followed by relevant criticisms of the rational approach and a discussion of an alternative approach to studying ‘action’, namely the normative approach. The relevance and importance of both of these approaches to studying victims’ crime-reporting behaviour is discussed. In addition, examples of crime-reporting behaviour, which assist in clarifying the theories presented, are provided.

The second section of this chapter overviews the factors relating to social context in which the victims are situated. The importance of the socio-economic disadvantage in neighbourhoods, as well as the perceptions of social cohesion and social and physical disorder in victims’ neighbourhoods, to the study of reporting behaviour are discussed.

## Section I: Rational vs. Normative Action

### **Rational Action Approach**

The rational action theory has received a great amount of attention among social theorists; developers and supporters of this theory come from a diverse intellectual background, ranging from the natural and computer sciences, to economics, to law, and to anthropology (Denzin, 1990). Therefore, one could imagine that the theory has been transformed and, to some extent, has mutated several times since its inception. The various formulations and contexts to which the theory has been applied range from a micro perspective on human interaction to a macro approach of the problem of collective action and social order<sup>4</sup>. However, two key elements of the rational choice theory could be regarded as common to all the varieties: the view of human nature, and the determinants of action.

Regarding the view of human nature, rational choice theorists argue that society and social life are generally made up of value- and goal-oriented individuals. In part, this is referred to as *methodological individualism*, or the view that all social phenomena can be explained only in terms of individual actions of [rational] actors (Elster, 1989b; Hechter, 1989). From this perspective, individuals are regarded as intentional and purposive actors, whose actions are always guided by a principal decision rule, such as utility-maximization, satisfaction, achievement, gain, etc. (Elster, 1989a, 1989b; Hechter, 1989; Goldthorpe, 1996, 1998). Denzin summarises these speculations about human nature with the following critique: "... [the] human being of

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that I review neither the varieties of rational action theory, nor their applicability for answering questions in social science. I am only concerned with the relevance of rational action theory to the study of crime reporting behaviour. As such, a limited overview of the theory, its strengths and weaknesses is provided.

the rational choice theory is egoistical, hedonistic, asocial, rational, and purposive in his or her actions” (Denzin, 1990: 174).

Regarding assumptions about the determinants of human action, rational choice theorists posit that the actions that rational individuals undertake must be motivated by their perceived or desired goals. It would follow that rational individuals would not engage in any sort of action unless they perceive some utility in this action. Such a utility might be achieving a certain desired outcome or goal. As such, the actions of rational individuals are to be regarded strictly as means to achieve a perceived ends (Elster, 1989a, 1989b; Goldthorpe, 1996). In short, rational action must be understood as an outcome-oriented, purposive type of action.

But what makes a given action rational? The idea of choosing the means to achieve ends should be elaborated further. Under the rational action framework it is assumed that the actor will strive to choose the *best* perceived means to achieve the desired ends (Elster, 1989a). This choice requires the actor to engage with a cost-benefit analysis of some sort, i.e. to weigh the costs of action vis-à-vis the benefits of the outcome of the action. However, the problem with such an engagement is that in situations that require actions the actors will not always be aware of the means (or options) available for action. In other words, the information about the action and its possible consequences available to the actor is scarce or absent in some situations.

Further, the process of choosing the *best* perceived means to achieve a desired end involves certain desires and beliefs, according to which the actors would decide whether or not to act in a given situation (Elster, 1986). Actors hold particular desires and beliefs about a certain way to act, which might or might not be rational. However,

we observe that "... for an action to be rational the beliefs sustaining it must themselves be rational, in the sense of being grounded in the available evidence [information]" (Elster, 1986: 13). Therefore, in order to act rationally, actors must hold beliefs about an action that are properly informed and learned.

It would seem that the rationality of action then, is a fine balance between the beliefs and desires about a particular way to act on the one hand, and the extent of actors' cognition of the evidence or information available in a given situation, on the other. This, however, presents yet another problem: given certain desires and beliefs, how much evidence must be available to the agent so that s/he could act rationally? Better, when is it a good time to stop collecting evidence and start acting rationally in a given situation? There is no clear answer to these questions within the framework of rational choice theory. The closest response is as follows: "The collected amount of information lies between the upper and the lower bounds that are defined by the problem situation ..." (Elster, 1986: 14). According to this statement, it is the scenario in which the actors are engaged that prescribes the amount of evidence required for a rational decision.

To illustrate the connection between desires, beliefs, and cognition, let us contrast two occurrences of victimization. One is a theft of a vehicle, and the other is a violent assault. In both situations, the victims would desire some form of retribution for their victimization. Both would also hold beliefs of an appropriate action, but it is yet unclear whether their beliefs are rational. The victim of the vehicle theft, while holding enough information about the state of his/her insurance policy, would probably form a rational belief (or rationalize) that the best way to obtain retribution for her/his

victimization is to report the incident to the police so that the insurance company would be able to issue the monetary compensation (a form of retribution). The “upper” and the “lower” bounds of necessary information proposed by Elster (1986: 14) are rather clearly defined in this case through the information about the state of the insurance policy.

The bounds of necessary information perhaps are not so apparent in the second case, for there are many more options available. The victim has the option of reporting the incident to the police so that the offender could be punished; s/he might refer to various victim services for necessary help; there is an option of turning to certain agencies of informal control, including families, community organizations, etc.; finally there is an option of not reporting the incident due to several constraints, or due to victim’s desire to ‘forget’ the incident as quickly as possible. In addition, any combination of the above options is also an option in itself. Enough information should be collected about each of the options so that, given the desire of a victim, a rational belief about the action could be formed. In other words, it is unclear to what extent the victim should be informed about the meaning and the possible outcomes of each of the options in order to form rational beliefs about the appropriate action to be carried out.

The above illustration is by no means fool proof for success of rational action theory in explaining the reporting of property-related victimization, or its failure to explain the reporting of violent victimization. Indeed there are some radical rational choice theorists such as Gary Becker (1976) who would argue that all human behaviour, most probably including crime-reporting, can and should be explained using the economic rational choice approach (1976: 119). Researchers have also utilized the

rational choice framework to explain the reporting of domestic violence to the police, and they have argued that the desire for protection and the desire to stop on-going violence are rational, and result from victims' cost-benefit calculus of pros and cons of reporting (Felson et al., 2002). However, as I will demonstrate in the remainder of this section, our understanding of the reporting practices of incidents of victimization, especially the ones of violent, non-property related nature is restricted when limited to victims' cost-benefit calculus. I extend the rational action framework in the next section to include the normative domain of reporting practices.

More often than not studies on victims' reporting behaviour have assumed that victims' decisions to report their victimization to the police are rational (Felson, et. al, 2002; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1987; Myers, 1980; Skogan, 1984). Given the previous discussion, it is perhaps not surprising that rational action theory has been successful in explaining the reporting behaviour of victims of property-related victimization or victimization that results from some sort of monetary loss (cf. Felson et. al, 2002; see also Goudriaan et al., 2004). Simply put, researchers state that victims of property-related crimes would report their incidents of victimization to the police because they desire some sort of recompense for their loss and perceive the reporting as the best available means to obtain this recompense. In contrast, they would make the decision not report an incident simply because they believe that their loss is insignificant and not worth the bother of reporting.

It seems that the rational choice framework offers a comprehensible foundation for understanding crime-reporting behaviour if and only if it is conceived in a narrow (or, to use Goldthorpe's terminology, "special") rather than general approach to

explaining human behaviour (Goldthorpe, 1998). By “narrow” approach I mean a rational choice approach where the cost-benefit analysis is evident, or “when the individual’s calculus is [not] expanded beyond the narrowest cost-benefit motivation” (Bohman, 1992: 217). In this respect the “narrow” definition of rationality resembles Max Weber’s view of instrumental rationality, according to which human action is motivated by material or economic interests (Boudon, 1998, 2003; Zafirovski, 2003). In other words, unlike Becker’s advocacy for an understanding of all human behaviour within a general economic model (1976), the rational aspect of victims’ reporting behaviour should be understood within as narrow conception of rationality as possible, without going too far in trying to rationalize victims’ normative environment. This will maintain the effectiveness of the explanation of human action offered by the rational choice theory, as well as help avoiding the pitfalls of tautologies (Bohman, 1992).

To sum up, the difficulty with such a general conception of reporting behaviour is that it almost perfectly disregards the social relations and processes that victims undergo prior to, during, and following the incident, which might, and in most cases do, influence their decision to report or not to report their victimization. Thus it appears that the rational action framework must be supplemented with further accounts of the social context and social processes that influence victims’ reporting behaviour. The next section will offer a theoretical extension to rational choice framework, where I discuss the importance of considering social norms and normative behaviour in studying crime reporting.

### **Normative Action Approach**

The theory of rational choice is probably one of the most popular theories to criticize within the domain of sociology. The criticism ranges from the argument that rational choice theory is too narrow and does not include the full extent of actors' cognitive domain (i.e. their false beliefs and tendencies) (Boudon, 2003; see also Goldthorpe, 1998), to the claim that rational choice theory is completely inadequate with the sociological endeavour (SurrIDGE, 2002). However, to maintain relevancy, I will limit my discussion mainly to criticism that comes from the critiques of social psychology and normative action theory.

Jon Elster, a prominent rational choice theorist, but also probably one of the least to acknowledge the importance of social norms in studying human behaviour, provides the following quote: "To paraphrase Weber, a social norm is not like a taxi from which one can disembark at will. Followers of a social norm abide by it even when it is not in their interest to do so." (Elster, 1994: 31). Social norms are an important point of departure from the pure rational explanation of human action. However, the following outline of the normative framework should not be regarded as a complete converse of rational choice theory, but rather as a supplement to it in this project.

Within the normative action framework, societies and social life in general are made up first and foremost of social beings. To use Coleman's terminology (1990: 503), the "elementary actor" is a social actor, who is also pragmatic and "not isolated and ever-consciously rational" (Pescosolido, 1992: 1103). Where such a perception of actors differs from the one of rational action framework is in the notion that the actors

are not remote rational goal-oriented beings, but are knowledgeable, conscious, and socially-active actors, who are involved in various dynamic social networks (Pescosolido, 1992). Borrowing heavily from the social interactionist framework, the actors' 'self' is regarded as a social product, which is continually shaped, maintained and changed through interaction with other social beings.

As was discussed in the previous section, the meaning of action of rational beings is, for the most part, self-oriented and embedded within the individual domain of the actor. The meaning of action within the normative action framework, on the other hand, is rooted within the social collectivities, i.e. communities, networks, etc. (Etzioni, 1988). When a decision to act in a certain way is being constructed by the agent, be it a rational or a normative decision, it is to some extent shaped by the social processes of the community in which the individual is situated. Because of a complexity of social webs in which such processes take place, which includes a vast array of normative influences and constraints on the actors' choice, they cannot be reduced to simple calculations of rational agents (Archer, 2000). In this light, Denzin (1990) and Pescosolido (1992) maintain that social actors do not solely exist and make decisions in a 'vacuum', but within a certain social context, at times complex, that influences their actions.

Generally, social norms and norms of behaviour and action play a central role in the normative action framework. Just like Jon Elster's quote suggests, norms are inseparable from human action; we all abide by certain norms, follow and violate them. A norm is thought of in terms of proscriptive statements or assertions which both guide and restrict our actions and behaviour (Therborn, 2002: 864; Ullmann-Margalit, 1977:

12-13), as well as prescribe the appropriate punishment for violation (Forsyth, 1983, cited in Greenberg & Ruback, 1992: 209). In other words, norms tell us what to do and not do, how to behave or act in a given circumstance. We tend to internalize norms and normative values of behaviour, which in turn direct our perceptions and judgements (Etzioni, 1988: 106). We also tend to sometimes follow norms even when our reasoning tells us otherwise (Elster, 1989b).

Further, a defining characteristic of norms is that they are not outcome-oriented and non-consequential (Elster, 1989a, 1989b, 1994). By and large people follow norms in an unconscious, mechanical or even compulsive fashion (Therborn, 2002; Elster, 1989a). However, there are some rational action theorists that would tend to argue that norms are created, maintained and followed as outcome of actions of rational self-interested actors (Coleman, 1990; see also Ullmann-Margalit, 1977). In other words, it has been argued that it is a rational choice on agents' part to abide, follow, and even break norms. While such an assertion holds true in some cases, it often fails in others. For example, a victim of violent assault might report the incident to the police because of a desire for protection. Felson et al. (2002) have argued that reporting behaviour in this case should be regarded as rational. However, if the same victim does not report the incident because of a norm enforced by a family, community, or her/his own personal values, it seems that such reasoning for reporting could hardly be understood using rational action explanation.

There are times, for example, when it would be perfectly rational on our part to abide by a norm in order to avoid social disapproval (Elster 1989b). In this case, it is the costs of violating a norm, such as persecution or exclusion from a group would

outweigh the benefits, e.g. receiving formal protection from law authorities. For example, a victim of an assault could decide not to report the incident because of shame enforced by a group, or because of fear of being excluded from a group. However, we also tend to follow norms involuntarily even in the absence of witnesses or circumstances that could disapprove or sanction our behaviour (Archer, 2000). Thus a victim who was assaulted while travelling in a foreign country could report the incident to the local police knowing that the chances of getting any kind of retribution are slim (i.e. rational calculation) simply because s/he believes it to be a social duty to report crimes. It must be remembered, however, that in order to maintain the strength of the rational action framework and avoid tautologies, the definition of rationality should be kept as narrowly defined as possible (Bohman, 1992).

Normative response to victimization, therefore, is not directly caused by an assessment of the perceived costs and benefit of reporting (or not reporting), but by norms that guide conduct, which exist in the victims' social context (Goudriaan et al., 2004). For example, reasons for not reporting given by victims could include the following: 'This is not a case for the police'; 'I should deal with it myself'; or 'This is a family matter and therefore should not be reported to the police'. These types of responses point in the direction of social norms of conduct, which guide victims on the appropriate response to victimization.

Very little has been written on the role of normative influence on victims' crime reporting behaviour. Sparks, Genn, and Dodd (1977), among the few, argued that social groups develop norms with regard to definition and classification of crimes, as well as appropriate ways of responding to victimization. This includes seeking or not seeking

help and formal protection from the police. A case in a point would be Anderson's (1999) qualitative study of inner-city neighbourhoods of Philadelphia. He developed a concept of the "code of the street", a "proper way to respond to personal violence" (1999: 323) which excludes the possibility of police notification. Social norms play a crucial role in Anderson's reasoning; the notion of "code of the street" could be regarded as an inclusive body of social norms that defines and guides the appropriate action on victims' part (see more on Anderson (1999) in the next section).

The work of Greenberg & Ruback (1992) is an essential empirical contribution to the normative action approach in studying crime-reporting behaviour. They used a series of clever experiments with students in the United States to identify the norms that influence victims' reporting behaviour. They found that seriousness of the crime was the best predictor of 'appropriateness' of reporting, pointing to the idea that norms of reporting depend on the level of severity of the incident. Since some serious crimes are disturbing because they are considered to be community "wrongs", it is somewhat of a normative response on victims' part to report them to the police (1992: 127). In this sense, social influence on the part of the community on defining these "wrongs" was considered one of the main causes of crime-reporting behaviour.

There are also situational norms, such as the use of alcohol (Ruback, Ménard, Outlaw, & Shaffer, 1999), that play an important role in the likelihood of victims reporting their incident to the police. Ruback et al. (1999) in their survey of college students in the United States found that the situational norm of alcohol use is an important predictor of the likelihood of victimization to be reported. Compared with crimes occurring in other contexts, respondents were less likely to suggest that victims

that were under 21 years of age and intoxicated during the incident should report their victimization. The direction of these suggestions, in part, refers to the norms of appropriate behaviour of a particular community studied (college students), which includes the use of alcohol by underage victims.

Further, advice that victims receive from other people in circumstances that follow the incident of victimization is an important situational norm of social influence (Greenberg & Ruback, 1992; Ruback, 1994). Victims' decision to report crime might be influenced by the advice of family members, relatives, or even bystanders. Following suit, the advice that victims receive are by and large guided by the norms of community members from whom the advice is obtained. As Greenberg and Ruback put it,

“... the direction of the social influence to which victims are exposed is almost certainly dependent on the norms of important groups to which victims belong. We suspect that these norms, communicated to victims via their relatives, friends, and sometimes strangers, and subsequently internalized, determine whether victims believe a crime should be reported because “It is the right thing to do” or should not be reported because “It is not a police matter””. (1992: 128).

To sum up this section of the chapter, I agree with the normative action framework's conception of individuals as social and pragmatic actors, rather than rational utility-maximizers. This, however, does not mean that individuals are incapable of making rational decisions in the sense of weighing the costs and benefits of their actions. Thus, where costs and benefits are evident, it seems that crime-reporting behaviour could be understood using the rational action framework. Otherwise, our understanding must be supplemented with accounts on social norms and norms of behaviour, offered by the normative action framework.

## Section II: Neighbourhood Factors and Perceptions About Neighbourhoods

The purpose of this paper is to examine the rational and normative reasons for reporting or not reporting victimization to the police within the measures of social context of victims, while controlling for the victims' and incidents' characteristics. This section provides a brief overview of the relevance of social context when studying crime-reporting behaviour. Included are discussions of socio-economic disadvantage, social cohesion, and social and physical disorder in victims' neighbourhoods. The discussions of individual and incident characteristics are included in the next chapter (see section on operationalization).

### **Socio-Economic Disadvantage**

Donald Black (1976), in his general sociological theory of law, argued that by and large, socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities will display less law. He defined law as "governmental social control" (1976: 2), which is different from other types of social control such as communities' assessment of what is right or wrong, deviant, or abnormal (1976: 105). In Black's view, law is only a specific kind of formal social control. Thus according to his theory of law, contact with law authorities, which is but one form of law, would vary across neighbourhoods or communities with different socio-economic statuses. He hypothesised that residents of neighbourhoods with a larger proportion of low-income inhabitants will possess less reliance on and abidance to law.

It is important to note that while Black's hypothesis is a significant starting point in the problematization of the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and

crime-reporting, this relationship has not been empirically verified. Thus it is quite unclear whether the lack of “possession of law” in low-income communities directly relates to reduced likelihood of crime-reporting.

In line with Black’s hypothesis, Anderson (1999), in his qualitative ethnographic study of impoverished inner-city neighbourhoods of Philadelphia that are mainly inhabited by African-Americans, developed a concept of the “Code of the Street”. This concept refers to a proper way to respond to personal violence: “... a set of informal rules governing interpersonal public behaviour, particularly violence. The rules prescribe both proper comportment and the proper way to respond if challenged” (1999: 33). Since, according to the concept, one is supposed to rely on the Code in case of, say, personal violence, those who internalize the concept simply lack a respect for law (1999: 36). The possibility of police notification in the case of a criminal event is excluded from the concept of the Code of the Street.

Similar to the idea of the Code of the Street, Anderson mentions the idea of alienation of residents of impoverished neighbourhoods from the legal system, and the resulting general distrust of legal managing by underprivileged populations. He notes that there is a generalised belief in the impoverished inner-city African-American neighbourhoods about carelessness on behalf of the police about residents of these neighbourhoods. Thus “residents [of inner-city neighbourhoods] sometimes fail to call the police because they believe that the police are unlikely to come or, if they do come, may even harass the very people who called them” (1999: 321).

Anderson argues that the concept of the Code of the Street might be more applicable to neighbourhoods with extreme socio-economic disadvantage. Baumer

(2002) further mentions that the concept of Code is much more likely to be adopted by certain groups of people: males, young persons, and African Americans (see Anderson as cited in Baumer, 2002).

In short, Black's and Anderson's arguments suggest a direct relationship between socio-economic disadvantage of communities and crime-reporting behaviour. Victims who are situated within impoverished and disadvantaged neighbourhoods would be rather reluctant to notify the police of their incidents of victimization for the types of reasons discussed thus far.

However, there exists an alternative hypothesis that suggests an inverse relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and crime-reporting. In contrast to Black (1976) and Anderson (1999), a body of theories and research on informal social control mechanisms show that victims from disadvantaged communities are in fact more likely to report their victimization to law authorities than are victims from affluent communities. The classic work of Shaw & McKay ([1942] 1969) is a case in a point. According to the findings of their study of local communities in Chicago, neighbourhoods with a greater socio-economic disadvantage were found to have a relatively low degree of informal social control (Shaw & McKay, [1942] 1969; see also Bursik & Grasmick, 1993). This, in turn, suggests that residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods might be more likely to turn to agents of formal social control, such as the police, in their desire for protection, or to stop an ongoing victimization (Gottfredson and Hindelang, 1979; Baumer, 2002). While more will be said about agencies of informal social control and regulation of conduct in the next section on social cohesion, it is important to highlight a possible inverse relationship between

disadvantage and crime-reporting. Put another way, the above proposition suggests that residents of socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods could be more likely than those from wealthy ones to notify the police in cases of victimization.

Socio-economic status is but one important concept of effects of community on victims' crime-reporting behaviour. While due to data limitations, in this project it is impossible to directly measure the disadvantage of neighbourhoods (see chapter on methodology), the ideas discussed above are essential for our understanding of community processes, such as social cohesion and social and physical disorder, and their effects on the likelihood of victims to report their victimization. In the following two sections, the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage, social cohesion, and social and physical disorder of communities and neighbourhoods are discussed.

### **Social Cohesion**

The idea of social cohesion starts with Emile Durkheim's ([1893] 1947) notions of organic solidarity, in which individuals are able to cooperate with each other regardless of their differences, including differing interests and goals. Solidarity, according to Durkheim, results from cooperation of members' functions (actions) working in accord (cohesive manner). Put another way, organic solidarity is people's ability to act cohesively for a common good, while at the same time maintaining the distinctiveness of their individual goals. Social cohesion in this study should be thought of in terms of neighbourhood residents' capacity to act collectively and/or in a common interest (Avakame, Fyfe and McCoy, 1999), which includes the will and ability to

regulate conduct and mediate interpersonal disputes (Baumer, 2002; Goudriaan et al., 2005).

In the previous section it was alluded that socio-economic disadvantage is directly linked with social cohesion and the effectiveness of mechanisms of informal social control. Past research has consistently demonstrated that informal social control and collective efficacy are reduced in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Goudriaan et al., 2005; Sampson et al., 1997; Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999; Shaw and McKay [1942] 1969). As Goudriaan et al. note, “residents of neighbourhoods with extreme socio-economic disadvantage have less social contact with each other ... and participate less in local organizations” (2005: 8), implying a limited capacity of collective efficacy. It seems plausible, therefore, to assume a negative association between the socio-economic disadvantage of neighbourhoods and the levels of social cohesion.

The link between social cohesion in neighbourhoods and victims’ crime-reporting behaviour comes from the classic social disorganization model of Chicago school theorists Shaw and Mckay ([1942] 1969). As discussed earlier, the model proposes that cohesive neighbourhoods are far better able to control and solve the problems of social delinquency, as well as being able to regulate conduct compared to neighbourhoods where the degree of social cohesion is low. This idea was further developed by other researchers who have suggested that higher levels of cohesion in communities will positively affect the consensus on values, beliefs and norms among community members (Kornhauser, 1978) and the existence and the extent of mechanisms of informal social control (Bursik, 1988; Goudriaan et al, 2005; Lee & Earnest, 2003). “Integrative bonds of social cohesion”, Blau notes, “strengthen the

group in the pursuit of common goals. Group cohesion promotes the development of consensus on normative standards and the effective enforcement of these shared norms. ... Cohesion, therefore, increases social control and coordination” (1967: 60). In other words, social cohesion provides the context for mechanisms of informal social control, which in turn shape the consensus on values, norms and beliefs about appropriate behaviour. This demonstrates that cohesion and mechanisms of informal social control are positively associated with each other (Sampson et al., 1997; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999).

The effects of social cohesion in neighbourhoods on victims’ reporting behaviour could be regarded as two-fold. On the one hand, since highly cohesive neighbourhoods are characterized by high levels of informal social control that regulate the conduct of appropriate behaviour, they could be seen as competent in dealing with social problems, including victimization. To paraphrase Black’s ideas on informal social control and the quantity of law, more informal social control implies less law (i.e. less formal control) (Black 1976: 107). The opposite applies as well - since neighbourhoods with low social cohesion are characterised by a reduced degree of informal social control and, as such, are less competent in solving issues related to victimization, their residents would be more inclined to turn to formal mechanisms of social control, such as the police, in a search for help and protection (Black, 1976; Gottfredson & Hinderlang 1979). These two statements imply a negative relationship between social cohesion and crime-reporting (H1): increased cohesion results in reduced likelihood of reporting, whereas reduced cohesion implies an increased likelihood.

On the other hand, it is possible to derive a contradicting statement of a positive relationship. Anderson (1999), for example, while still referring to the concept of “code of the street”, has argued that residents of extremely disadvantaged neighbourhoods where cohesion is low are expected to assume personal responsibility for their safety, or, put simply, to take care of themselves. It is simply not a common practice to turn to agencies of formal social control in search for protection in case of victimization according to the “code”. Baumer (2002) further notes that highly disadvantaged neighbourhoods where conventional informal social control is limited tend to experience difficulties accessing and securing some public services, one of which is a formal protection by the police (Goudriaan et al., 2005, Rose & Clear, 1998). With an absence of access to formal protection, victims from these neighbourhoods could be less likely to report their victimization to the police. We therefore derive a positive relationship between cohesion and crime-reporting (H2): increased cohesion implies increased likelihood of reporting, while reduced cohesion results in reduced likelihood.

Very few researchers have hypothesised the link between social cohesion of victims’ neighbourhoods and victims’ reporting practices (Gottfredson & Hinderlang 1979; Goudriaan et al., 2005; Bennet & Wiegand, 1994). To the best of my knowledge, only two projects have empirically tested this hypothesis. Bennet & Wiegand (1994) found no significant effect of social cohesion on victims’ reporting behaviour in the city of Belize (the country Belize), and Goudriaan et al. (2005) found a weak positive association in the Netherlands; higher social cohesion in neighbourhoods increased the likelihood of victims to report their victimizations to the police. None of these projects

have examined the relationship between *perceived* social cohesion and crime-reporting behaviour, but instead focused on *direct* ecological measures of cohesion.

### **Social and Physical Disorder**

The association between disorder and crime has received a great amount of attention among criminologists, especially since the introduction of the “broken windows thesis” by Wilson and Kelling (1982). In their study, which has become a classic in criminology, they argue that neighbourhoods where relatively small signs of social and physical disorder and decay are present will attract minor criminals simply because they provide the “right” context for criminal activity; the moderately “victimless” social and physical disorders such as public drinking and prostitution will progressively spawn more serious crime in the future. The link between social and physical disorder in urban neighbourhoods and criminal activity has been well documented (Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999; Skogan, 1990).

While the authors of the “broken windows thesis” claimed a direct link between social and physical disorder and crime, some researchers criticised their causal relationship for being overly simplistic. Skogan (1990), for example, suggested that poverty in urban neighbourhoods could be explaining both the disorder and levels of crime. Social cohesion and informal social control, in turn, are limited in these neighbourhoods. Sampson & Raudenbush (1999) further argued that socio-economic disadvantage in neighbourhoods explains the association between social and physical disorder, social cohesion and crime. They found that socio-economic disadvantage increases the extent of social and physical disorder and lowers the social cohesion of

neighbourhoods: “concentrated disadvantage and residential instability undermine collective efficacy, in turn fostering increased crime and, by implication, public disorder” (Sampson & Raudenbush, 2001: 2).

In short, it seems that socio-economic disadvantage, social cohesion, and social and physical disorder are all interrelated concepts that deserve close attention when studying crime-reporting behaviour. Socio-economic disadvantage, it was illustrated above, tends to be negatively associated with mechanisms of informal social control, and results in lower levels of social cohesion (Sampson et al., 1997; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999; Skogan, 1990). But social order in neighbourhoods and communities, as shown by Sampson and Raudenbush (1999), is an important and almost essential environment for social cohesion.

It has been observed, for example, that members of healthy communities where social order is maintained, are able to “establish and enforce codes of conduct, both formal and informal” (Eggers & O'Leary, 1980: 7), pointing to the positive association of social order and social cohesion (Nolan et. al, 2004; Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999). Skogan further notes that agencies of formal and informal crime and social control are scarce in disadvantaged and physically disordered neighbourhoods:

“Systematic studies of the distribution of anti-crime organizations across neighbourhoods indicate that they are least common where they appear to be most needed – in low-income, heterogeneous, deteriorated, high-turnover, higher-crime areas. Community organizations are more frequently encountered in better-off neighbourhoods.” (1990:130).

In other words, neighbourhoods where social order is present are characterized by high social cohesion, resulting in the community’s ability to achieve a consensus among its members with regards to conduct of behaviour (Kornhauser, 1978). In this sense it

seems essential to include both social disorder and social cohesion in the analysis of victims' crime-reporting behaviour.

Since practically no empirical work has included social disorder as a determinant of victims' reporting behaviour, two lines of thought come to mind. First, socio-economic disadvantage in neighbourhoods determines social and physical disorder (Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999), which in turn results in lower levels of informal social control mechanisms and social cohesion. Such neighbourhoods are typically characterized by higher rates of crime and victimization (Skogan, 1990; Shaw and McKay [1942] 1969; Warner and Pierce, 1993). When crime rates are high and collective efficacy to solve the problems related to crime is low, neighbourhoods' residents might turn to the "police to bring order into a community where they themselves may not be able to come together to create order" (Warner and Pierce, 1993: 511). Thus, victims that perceive high levels of social disorder might be more likely to report victimization to the police (H3) to stop on-going victimization, or in search for help and formal protection.

The second line of thought is the inverse of the first. Following the findings by Anderson (1999), Baumer (2002) and Goudriaan et al. (2005), we observe that victims from extremely disadvantaged neighbourhoods tend not to report their victimization to the police. Both Anderson (1999) and Baumer (2002) suggest that the reason for lack of crime-reporting by victims could be found in victims' internalization of the "Code of the Street" (Anderson, 1999) and "... value system that encourages residents to take the matter into their own hands" (Baumer, 2002: 607), which excludes police notification in case of incident. Thus the second line of thought is as follows (H4): victims who

perceive high levels of social disorder would be less likely to report their victimization to the police, specifically because of adoption of the notion of some “appropriate” ways to deal with violence and victimization.

### Chapter Summary

This chapter began with an outline of rational and normative action theories. I argued that while the rational action approach is useful in explaining some crime-reporting behaviour, it is inadequate in others. Where inadequate, it must be supplemented with a normative action approach. I further outlined the theoretical relevance of perceptions of social processes in victims’ neighbourhood in studying crime reporting. As was mentioned in the introduction to this project, it is essential to include these concepts in the analysis presented in this study with a purpose of extending our understanding of the effects of social processes on victims’ crime-reporting behaviour.

Below is a summary of hypotheses presented in the chapter:

- (H1) Victims who perceive higher social cohesion in their neighbourhoods are *less* likely to report their incidents to the police.
- (H2) Victims who perceive higher social cohesion in their neighbourhoods are *more* likely to report their incidents to the police.
- (H3) Victims who perceive higher levels of social disorder are *more* likely to report their victimization to the police.
- (H4) Victims who perceive higher levels of social disorder are *less* likely to report their victimization to the police.

## CHAPTER TWO

### METHODOLOGY<sup>5</sup>

#### Introduction and Concepts

The analyses in this thesis were performed using data from the 2004 General Social Survey (GSS) cycle 18. The GSS is a nationally representative sample of non-institutionalised persons who are 15 years of age and over, not military personnel, and reside in the 10 Canadian provinces. Households from the 10 Canadian provinces were randomly selected for interviews; overall, 23 766 respondents were interviewed in GSS-18.

Data were weighted for the entire sample to reflect the nature of crime-reporting behaviour in Canada<sup>6</sup>. Statistical analyses performed on the data included univariate, bivariate, and multivariate methods. The computer-based statistical software used to perform the analyses was SPSS 11.0.

The concept of victimization in this project refers to a criminal offence committed against the respondent, excluding spousal abuse (these were addressed in a separate module). In the GSS-18, respondents were asked whether they were victims of a criminal incident in the past 12 months. In the event of affirmative response, respondents were asked to specify the type of incident using the list of offences provided by an interviewer. In total, information on 9, 824 incidents of criminal offence in the 12 months prior to the interview was collected during the process of interviewing.

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<sup>5</sup> Much of the information contained in the first half of this chapter is from the Statistics Canada's GSS-18 User guide.

<sup>6</sup> The weight variable was obtained through a division of the incident weight variable provided by Statistics Canada over the weighted number of property crime incidents, divided by the unweighted number property crime incidents. ( $\text{new\_wght} = \text{inc\_wght} / (\text{number of incidents weighted} / \text{number of crimes unweighted})$ ).

## The Survey Instrument

The general purpose of the GSS is to gather data on social trends in Canada in order to monitor the well-being and the living conditions of Canadians. It is further used to gather information on social policy issues that might require specific attention. The GSS cycle<sup>18</sup> from 2004 is the fourth time that Statistics Canada collected information on criminal victimization in Canada (the three previous cycles were cycle 3, 8 and 13 from 1989, 1993, and 1999, respectively).

During the screening stage of the interview, respondents were asked about the nature and the extent of the criminal incidents they had experienced in the last year relative to the time of the interview. These incidents were later collapsed by Statistics Canada into a single variable that focused on the most serious criminal incident experienced by the respondent or the household in the case of property crimes<sup>7</sup>. The variable consists of 14 categories. These include two personal injuries offences (sexual assault, and assault), five property offences (break and enter, motor vehicle theft, theft of household property, theft of personal property, and vandalism), one combination of personal injury and property offences (robbery) which is considered on this survey to be a violent crime, five attempted offences (attempted robbery, break and enter, motor vehicle theft, theft of personal property, and theft of household property), and a

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<sup>7</sup> For example, if in the year prior to the interview the respondent or a member of respondent's household experienced two offences at the same time, say an assault and a break and enter, the collapsed variable would include only the incident of assault. The reason for choosing this variable as a source of type of incident is to separate possible effects of violent victimization on reporting of property-related incidents, and as a result, to avoid a possible "contamination" in the reasoning for victims' reporting behaviour. In other words, the idea is to stay as pure as possible in the selection of property crimes for analysis and exclude any impacts of violent victimization. In addition, this allows crime type to be included in multivariate models without concerns about overlaps for those victimized by more than one crime type during the reference year. These respondents might have a different reporting behaviour than those victimised only once (i.e., they could be more likely to report the incident to the police because they are fed up with non-stop victimization, or less likely because they reported once and the police did not do much about it). However, this approach won't eliminate those victimized more than once by the same crime type.

category of unclassifiable incidents. This variable will serve the purpose of classifying respondents according to property-related incidents in this project.

Respondents were asked detailed questions related to the circumstances under which the most serious criminal incident occurred, the description of the offenders, the amount of loss and/or injury, and whether or not the incident was reported to the police. Other sections of the survey focused on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, their personal and household activities, perceptions of personal and public safety as well as the functioning of the police and judicial system in Canada. Incidents that were committed by partners were examined in separate sections of the survey, and were excluded from the incidents described in the previous paragraph. Of a particular importance to this project is the introduction of a series of questions on respondents' perceptions of social cohesion and social and physical disorder in their neighbourhoods and communities.

All the questions examined in this study are originally of a close-ended nature, where the respondents were asked to choose a response from the options offered by the interviewer. In the event the respondent did not provide the response, "Not stated" category was chosen, in which case the response was classified as missing. Depending on the question, respondents were further given the option of stating "Don't Know", or "Refusing to Answer". Finally, some questions were not asked to all the respondents, but only to a selected sample of respondents, in which case the "Not asked" option was assigned to the respondents. All of the above responses are classified as missing and are excluded from the analyses.

Four sections of the GSS cycle 18 questionnaire are relevant to this project. First, the section called the “Control Form” contains all the background information on the members of the household that the interviewer reached, regardless of whether they have been victims of criminal incidents in past. A respondent over 15 years of age was then randomly chosen for an interview among the members of household reached. Thus this section provides the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

In the “Criminal Victimization Screening” section respondents were asked whether they or members of their household were victims of several crimes during the past 12 months. In the event a respondent mentioned that s/he or a member of a household were a victim of a criminal incident, a series of questions were further asked about the nature and the impact of the incident on the respondent. For each incident reported by the respondent, a “Crime Incident Report” was filled (up to ten reports per screening question, or twenty per respondent). This report contains the information on the specific circumstances of the incident, such as time and location of the incident, possible characteristics and information about the offender(s), the physical, financial and emotional impact on the victim as a consequence of the incident, whether the respondent was injured and required medical attention following violent incidents, whether the respondent related the incident to a hate crime. The section further included questions relating to whether or not the incident was brought to the attention of the police, reasons for contacting or not contacting the police, levels of satisfaction with the way police handled the situation, and whether the respondent sought any kind of civil or criminal compensation.

Finally, the section called “Housing Characteristics of Respondent” includes questions relating to the perceptions of social cohesion and social and physical disorder in the respondent’s neighbourhood. In total, 4 questions were asked about social cohesion, and 9 questions about social and physical disorder. Individual psychometric scales were created from these questions (see section on operationalization).

#### Data Collection and Sampling Technique<sup>8</sup>

In order to select a sample, Statistics Canada utilised a stratification method, where each of the ten provinces was divided into strata, or geographic area. Overall, 27 strata were created. The target population of GSS-18 is all persons living in Canada who are 15 years of age and over, not a military personnel, and reside in the 10 provinces of Canada, thus excluding the three territories: Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut<sup>9</sup>. Also excluded from the sample are persons that resided full-time in institutions.

Statistics Canada used a Random Digit Dialling (RDD) sampling method for GSS-18, which is a telephone sampling method. This method ensures that each household telephone number within a given stratum had an equal chance of being selected for interviewing. Since the RDD performed selections only among household telephone numbers, persons who do not own a household telephone number were excluded. However, according to the GSS-18 User Guide, persons who lived in household without telephones represented less than 2% of the target population (2005:

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<sup>8</sup> For a detailed discussion on a method of data collection please refer to the GSS-18 User Guide (pp. 9-27).

<sup>9</sup> The three territories were included in the survey on a pilot basis, but were excluded from the public use data file. Information on the issue of victimization in the three territories is due to be released by Statistics Canada later in 2006.

9)<sup>10</sup>. Further, interviews were not conducted by cellular telephone, therefore excluding persons with only cellular telephone service; again, according to the User Guide, this group a small proportion of less than 3% (2005: 9). When a selected household number was reached, a person that is over 15 years of age was randomly selected for an interview. The interviews were conducted in the respondent's official language of choice (interviews by proxy were prohibited). Therefore, respondents who were not able to speak either English or French were not interviewed.

The overall response rate for GSS-18 was 74.5%. This represents a decrease in response rate when compared to the three previous GSSs that focused on victimization (in 1988 (GSS-3) the response rate was 82.4%; in 1993 (GSS-8) it was 81.6%; and in 1999 (GSS-13) it was 81.3%).

Overall, the coverage of the target population was estimated by Statistics Canada to be around 95%. However, there still was around 25% non-responses rate for GSS-18. This might be accounted for by unavailability of persons in a household who are able to communicate in either of the official languages, refusal by a respondent to take part in the interview, and unavailability of a respondent (Statistics Canada, 2005: 3-4).

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<sup>10</sup> Please refer to the Statistics Canada GSS-18 User Guide (pp. 9-10) for a discussion of characteristics of the population that is unlikely to own a household telephone.

## Operationalization of Concepts

Following is an operationalization of concepts that are included in this project.

### Dependent Variable

The dependent variable, whether or not the respondent reported the incident to the police, was created from two separate variables available in GSS-18: “Did the police find out about this incident in any way?” (yes = 1 or no = 2), and “How did they learn about it? Was it from you or some other way?” (“respondent” = 1 or “some other way” = 2). To create the dependent variable in this project, the above two variables were merged in the following way: the police found out about the incident (1) AND they learned about it from the respondent (1) resulted in “yes” (1); the police did not find out about the incident (2) resulted in “no” (0). In this way, incidents that were reported to the police by an agency other than the respondent were excluded from the study<sup>11</sup>.

### Independent (Predictor) Variables

#### Individual Level Determinants (Victim)

Most of research on crime reporting included victims’ demographic parameters in the models. These demographic measures include victims’ age, gender, marital status, and education. The purpose of inclusion of these parameters is to control for possible effects they might have on crime reporting. While it is desirable to control for the same effects in this project, there are two reasons why majority of demographic measures are not appropriate for inclusion in the present project’s models.

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<sup>11</sup> The total number of incidents of property crimes reported to the police by somebody else other than the respondent and thus excluded from the study is 591.

First, because property crimes analysed in this project relate mostly to incidents that occurred to victims' households, respondents were asked whether the incidents occurred to them or to members of their household. For example, while an incident of break and enter occurred to the household, a member of the household other than the respondent might have made the decision to report or not report it to the police. And second, as mentioned earlier, the respondent was randomly chosen among the members of the household; he/she might not be the reporting or the non-reporting victim of the incident. For example, the interview may be conducted with a teenage member of the family whose parents made the decision to report a break and enter to the police. It would be inaccurate to assign the personal characteristics of the respondent, such as sex and age, to represent the household. This would be feasible only in single member households and restricting the sample in this way would seriously bias the analysis. Because of these reasons, the only demographic measures that are appropriate for inclusion in this project's models are the ones that can be considered to describe the household.

*Visible Minority Status and Immigrant Status.* Some researchers found that immigrants are less likely to report crimes committed against them than native-born citizens (Davis, Erez & Avitabile, 1996; Goudriaan et al., 2005). The reasons for not reporting include fear of retaliation from the offender, negative prior experience with law authorities, especially in the case of immigrants (Pogrebin & Poole, 1990b), and fear of secondary victimization from the police (Berrill & Herek, 1992). Visible minority status is a demographic measure necessary to control for if one wants to track down the effects of hate crimes committed against the victim (see below).

In this project three measures of immigrant and visible minority status, respectively, are achieved through the following operationalizations: whether the respondent considers her/himself a visible minority (1) or not (0); and three dummy variables measuring the year of respondent's arrival to Canada: respondent was born in Canada (1) or not (0), respondent immigrated prior to 1995 (1) or not (0), and respondent immigrated between 1995 and 2004 (1) or not (0). Although these are personal characteristics of the person responding to the survey, there is a reasonable assumption that visible minorities and recent immigrants have other household members with the same characteristics and therefore these variables represent the household.

*Number of Members of Household.* The number of household members was used in past research as a predictor of victims' reporting behaviour. It was found that victims who live alone are less likely to report their victimization to the police than victims who live in households with multiple members (Goudriaan et al., 2005). However, this effect tends to disappear when only property crimes are accounted for (Goudriaan et al., 2004). In this project, the parameter for the number of household members is coded as single household member (1), and multiple household members (0).

*Dwelling Owned.* Ideally, household income would be an appropriate measure of household's economic situation. This measure is important when studying the likelihood of reporting of property crimes since members of the economically well-off households are found to be more likely to report their property crimes than members of households that are poor (Goudriaan et al., 2004). However, the response rate for the

household income parameter is rather low (20.3% of victims of property crimes did not reply to these questions), which results in many missing cases. Therefore, the parameter of household income is replaced by the parameter of ownership of dwelling by a member of a household on an individual level<sup>12</sup>. It is coded as dwelling owned by a member of household (1) or not (0).

*Confidence In the Effectiveness of the Police.* It has been found in past research that, on individual level, attitudes toward the police play an important role in victims' reporting behaviour on (Bennet & Wiegand, 1994; Fishman, 1979; Garofalo, 1977; Kidd & Chayet, 1984). It is quite straightforward that when victims lack confidence in the effectiveness of the police in resolving some problems associated with victimization, the chances are slim that they will report their victimization (Bennet & Wiegand, 1994; Kidd & Chayet, 1984). It has also been found in previous research that confidence in police effectiveness tends to become a weaker determinant on the individual level once controlled for by seriousness of the incident (Bennet & Wiegand, 1994).

Kidd and Chayet (1984) have suggested that the perception of the powerlessness of authorities, and therefore the lack of confidence in police effectiveness, may in part be derived from feelings of vulnerability, helplessness and impotence that victims come to experience following their victimization. In these kinds of stressful situations, victims, when in doubt, are likely to rely on an assessment of their social surroundings as well as on the advice of others (Greenberg & Ruback, 1992; Ruback, 1994).

The following six questions were combined together to create a single individual psychometric scale of the extent of perceived personal confidence in the

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<sup>12</sup> The coefficient for correlation of these two parameters (Pearson's r) is equal to .38.

effectiveness of the police in respondents' neighbourhoods: "Do you think your local police force does a good job, an average job or a poor job: (1) of enforcing the laws?; (2) of promptly responding to calls?; (3) of being approachable and easy to talk to?; (4) of supplying information to the public on ways to reduce crime?; (5) of ensuring the safety of the citizens in your area?; and (6) of treating people fairly?". Following the combination of the questions, the resulted scale was inverted to reflect the positive nature of the questions. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of reliability for this scale was 0.7442, which indicates an acceptable level of reliability in social sciences (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Reynaldo & Santos, 1999). The scale has a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 18, with mean equal to 14.75 and standard deviation equal to 3.48 (see table 2.1).

**Table 2.1 Descriptives of scales used in models**

	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Confidence in effectiveness of police	14.75	3.48	6	18
Perceived social cohesion	3.06	.89	1	4
Perceived social disorder	33.85	3.65	9	36

### Incident-Level Determinants

*Crime Type.* Type of incident has been shown to influence victims' reporting behaviour in past research (Goudriaan et al., 2005; Greenberg & Ruback, 1992; (Schneider, Burcart, and Wilson II, 1976). Five types of incidents are included in the present study, all of which are associated with some kind of financial loss. The variables representing the type of crime are coded as following: break and enter, including attempted break-ins (1) or not (0), motor vehicle theft, including theft of parts

of motor vehicles (1) or not (0), theft of household property (1) or not (0), theft of personal property (1) or not (0), and vandalism (1) or not (0).

*Hate Crime.* Past research indicates that when a victim of crime believes that the incident was committed on grounds of hate, i.e. hate crime based on one's gender, sexual orientation, religious identity, colour of skin, accent, etc., s/he would be rather reluctant to report it to the police (Edgar, 2001). The measure of hate crime is operationalized as the following: the respondent believed that the incident committed against her/himself was of a hate crime nature (1) or not (0).

*Place Where the Incident Took Place.* The location where the incident took place proved to be a significant predictor of police notification in past research (Baumer, 2002), and is further of a particular importance to this study. The location is included in the model as a dummy variable: the incident took place within neighbourhood ("Respondent's home and surrounding area") coded as 1, and other place outside victim's neighbourhood, coded as 0.

*Financial Loss.* One of the most consistent findings in research on crime-reporting behaviour is the one on seriousness of the incident. More serious crimes have been consistently shown to be more likely to be reported to the police than the less serious ones (Goudriaan et al., 2004; Goudriaan et al., 2005; Greenberg & Ruback, 1992; (Schneider, Burcart, and Wilson II, 1976), especially when it comes to incidents where financial loss occurred (Myers, 1980; Skogan, 1984; Warner, 1992). The amount of financial loss that is attributed to the incident is an important predictor of crime-reporting behaviour for crimes of financial nature. It was demonstrated in past research that greater the financial loss contributed to increased likelihood of the incident to be

reported to the police (Goudriaan et al., 2005). In this project, financial loss is operationalized in terms of total economic cost of the incident, which includes stolen and/or damaged property. It is measured using 3 dummy variables that represent 3 grouped amounts of dollars attributed to the economic loss: small cost of \$0 to < \$100 (1) or not (0); medium cost of \$100 to < \$999 (1) or not (0); and large cost of \$1000 and over (1) or not (0).

*Insurance.* Whether victims had some sort of insurance to cover for their financial loss is an influential factor in their reasoning for reporting crimes (Warner, 1992) since the insurance companies require a police report in order to be able to process a claim. Insurance is coded as a dummy variable: victim had some kind of insurance prior to the incident (1) or not (0).

#### Perceptions of Social Context

*Social Cohesion in Neighbourhood.* The first question has four responses (along with the options of “don’t know” and “refusal”): “Would you say that you know: most of the people in your neighbourhood, many..., a few ... none of the people in the neighbourhood?”. The first and the last two responses for this question were collapsed together to create only two responses: respondent knows most or many people in the neighbourhood (1), or respondent knows few or none of the people in the neighbourhood (2). The three other questions have only two options for response (i.e., “yes” or “no”): “Would you say this neighbourhood is a place where neighbours help each other?”; “In the past month, have you done a favour for a neighbour?”; “In the past month, have any of your neighbours done a favour for you?”. These four questions

had many missing values due to a decision taken by the survey managers not to ask these questions of respondents who had been residing at the same address for 10 years or more. Missing values were replaced with values from GSS cycle 17 (see section on “Imputation of Missing Values” below).

A single individual psychometric scale was constructed from the above questions to measure respondents’ perception of social cohesion in their neighbourhoods (for details of construction of this scale, as well as its measures of reliability refer to the section on missing values). The scale has a minimum of 1 and a maximum of 4, with mean equal to 3.06 and standard deviation equal to .89 (see table 2.1).

*Social and Physical Disorder in Neighbourhood.* All the questions included four possible responses (along with the options of “don’t know” and “refusal”): “Could you please tell me if the following situations are a very big problem, a fairly big problem, not a very big problem, not a problem at all in your neighbourhood. (1) Noisy neighbours or loud parties; (2) People hanging around on the streets; (3) People sleeping on the streets or in other public places; (4) Garbage or litter lying around; (5) Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles; (6) People being attacked or harassed because of their skin colour, ethnic origin or religion; (7) People using or dealing drugs; (8) People being drunk or rowdy in public places; and (9) prostitution”.

Similar to perceptions of social cohesion, a single individual psychometric scale was constructed from the nine questions to create a single scale. The Cronbach’s Alpha reliability coefficient was equal to 0.8884, which indicates a rather high reliability for

the scale (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The scale has a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 36, with mean equal to 33.85 and standard deviation equal to 3.65 (see table 2.1).

Scales are used for research purposes because they are thought to be able to measure a single concept more accurately than any one separate item (Spector, 1992). As can be seen from the questions presented in the above two paragraphs, the concepts of social cohesion and social disorder are extremely hard to measure using single concepts; hence the scales are utilised. Also, collapsing many related concepts into a single scale reduced the possibility of multicollinearity in the models if all the variables were entered separately. The downside of using scales, however, is that the presence of more than one item might undermine the degree of construct validity of the scale (ibid.)

#### Imputation of Missing Values

During the process of GSS-18 data collection, respondents who stated that they lived in current dwelling for 10 years or more were not asked questions on social cohesion in their neighbourhood. Consequently, their responses were declared as missing values and could not be included in the analysis. However, since the concept of social cohesion is among the critical ones in this project, the missing values will be replaced using the multiple linear regression imputation approach (George & Mallery, 2003; Little & Rubin, 1989).

The questions on social cohesion asked in GSS cycle 18 were imported from the previous year's GSS cycle 17, where all respondents were asked these questions<sup>13</sup>. In

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<sup>13</sup> GSS cycle 17 included more questions that relate to the concept of social cohesion in respondents' neighbourhoods and communities. However, only 4 questions were imported into GSS cycle 18. For a full list of questions asked in GSS cycle 17, please refer to the GSS-17 User Guide (Statistics Canada, 2004).

total, 39.9% of respondents in GSS-18 (comparable to 37.8% in GSS-17) said they lived in their current dwelling for 10 years or more, and therefore were not asked the subsequent questions on social cohesion in their neighbourhood. Therefore, for the purposes of analysis in this project, the missing values in GSS-18 for respondents who lived in current dwelling for 10 years or more are imputed with the values found in GSS-17. The missing values for GSS-18 will be predicted using demographic profiles of respondents from GSS-17 who lived in current dwelling for 10 years or more.

To ensure consistency between the two surveys in terms of demographic variables that are used to impute the missing values, the following table provides frequency distributions for those variables. Besides some slight differences in the province of residence (most likely due to undersampling of Ontario and British Columbia and oversampling of the Prairies), no major inconsistencies are found between the two surveys (see table 2.2).

A single psychometric scale was constructed from the four questions on social cohesion for respondents who lived in their current dwelling for 10 years or more in GSS cycle 17. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficient was equal to .6221, which indicates an acceptable level of reliability for the scale (to compare, the coefficient for the all the respondents in GSS-17 was .6337). Following, a similar scale was constructed for respondents who lived in their neighbourhood for 10 years or less in GSS-18 (the Cronbach's Alpha was equal to .6548). The missing values for the scale for respondents in GSS cycle 18 (i.e., those who lived in their dwelling for 10 years or more) were then predicted using the values of the scale from GSS-17, using multiple linear regression. Once predicted, all the missing values for respondents who lived in

current dwelling for 10 years or more in GSS-18 were replaced with unstandardised predicted values.

**Table 2.2 Descriptives of Demographic Variables from Gss-17 and GSS-18**

	GSS-17 (2003)*	GSS-18 (2004)*
Sex of respondent		
Female	55.4%	55.4%
Male	44.6%	44.6%
Marital Status of respondent		
Married or common law	54.3%	54.7%
Single, divorced, separated, or widowed	45.6%	44.9%
Highest education obtained by the respondent		
Bachelor's university degree or higher	20.9%	20.8%
Some university or less	77.3%	79.2%
Grouped age of respondent		
15-24	12.7%	12.5%
25-54	55.6%	54.7%
55+	31.8%	32.9%
Region of respondent		
Atlantic Region	18.3%	18.3%
Quebec	20.1%	19.5%
Ontario	31.3%	28.7%
Prairies	18.2%	23.4%
British Columbia	12.1%	10.1%
Country of birth		
Canada	80.1%	81.9%
Outside Canada	18.3%	16.3%

### Data Limitations

To assure confidentiality, the PUMF (Public Use Microdata File) version of GSS cycle 18 includes only non-suppressed data, which excludes all and any neighbourhood indicators (such as respondents' postal codes and/or Census Metropolitan Tracks). This, in turn, presents two methodological problems. First, it is

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\* Some percentages will not add up to 100% because of missing values.

impossible to control for socio-economic disadvantage in respondents' neighbourhoods, a concept essential to the study of effects of social processes on victims' reporting behaviour (see Chapter 1). It was only possible to control for the household's economic situation in this project.

The second methodological problem associated with the data restrictions is the impossibility of *direct* assessment of neighbourhood effects on victims' crime reporting behaviour from a socio-ecological standpoint (Barker, 1968; Hawley, 1950, 1986). Instead, this project focuses on the effects of respondents' *perceptions* of their social surroundings on their crime-reporting behaviour. This would seem to represent a major drawback of this project since, as indicated in the introduction to this thesis, it seems essential to consider the socio-ecological effects of victims' surroundings on their reporting behaviour.

Nevertheless, it could be said that this project takes a necessary step preceding the socio-ecological framework. Preceding projects that analysed the effect of social context on crime-reporting behaviour (e.g. Baumer, 2002; Goudriaan et al., 2005) did not control for individual-level effects (i.e. perceptions of social context) in their models, but approached the question from a socio-ecological perspective (i.e. assuming that neighbourhood-level effects simply exist and are significant in predicting crime-reporting behaviour). I, on the other hand, propose first confirming whether the individual-level perceptions about the neighbourhood context are significant in predicting reporting behaviour, and only then test for possible contextual indicators (i.e. neighbourhood-level effects) using socio-ecological approach. This would allow

follow-up projects to focus on neighbourhood effects, while controlling for perceptions. Past studies have failed to take this crucial first step into account.

Another limitation of cycle 18 of GSS is the great amount of missing information that is of importance to studying crime-reporting behaviour. For example, household income is very important in predicting the reporting of some household crimes (Goudriaan et al., 2004); however, due to a large amount of missing cases, I used a variable measuring whether the dwelling is owned or rented by the respondent as a proxy for household income.

Other reasons for missing cases lie with the nature of victimization surveys and the nature of property crimes. For example, the relationship of victims to offenders has been identified as important for understanding victim reporting behaviour (Felson et al., 2000); however, this question cannot be reliably known by the majority of property crime victims. By definition, these are incidents in which property is stolen or damaged and confrontation between victims and offenders did not take place. If a break-in involved contact between the victim and offender it would be classified on this survey as a robbery. Knowledge of the sex and age or other attributes of the offenders therefore is not known. These questions are more reliably asked for crimes of violent nature, or for robberies. Despite the importance of these variables to the study of crime reporting behaviour (Baumer, 2002; Goudriaan et al., 2004; Greenberg & Ruback, 1992), they will be excluded from the analysis due to the large amount of missing cases.

Finally, the GSS as well as the majority of incident-victimization surveys are based on respondents' perceptions of their victimization experience. A clear example

would be the case where a respondent believes an incident to be an occurrence of a crime or a hate crime; clearly, it is impossible to objectively validate the response. This represents a general limitation of victimization surveys.

### Methods of Data Analysis and Presentation of Results

Three quantitative methods of analysis are utilised in this project to study the nature and patterns of crime-reporting behaviour in Canada.. First, univariate analyses in a form of frequencies were initially conducted to describe the nature of variables used in this study. Results of this type of analysis are summarised in a table in the beginning of the following chapter.

Second, two types of bivariate analyses were performed. The purpose of the first is to summarise the percentage distributions of the explanatory (independent) variables in terms of police notification by the respondents. The second type of bivariate analyses contrasts the various reasons given by the respondents for reporting or not reporting their incidents to the police, by the type of crime.

Lastly, multivariate analyses were performed to assess the nature of effects that the independent variables have on the dependent variable. Because of the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable (i.e., whether or not the incident was reported to the police by the respondent), binary logistic regression is the preferred multivariate method of analysis for this project (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). Unlike in linear regression, the dependent and the independent (predictor) variables in logistic regression are not linearly related. Therefore, the relationship between the dependent variable and its predictors must be drawn on a model of probability distribution of

(logarithmic) odds of the dependent variable (Menard, 2001). Its coefficients should be interpreted as increase in odds of an occurrence of event in the dependent variable (i.e. crime to be reported) for every unit change in the independent variable (ibid).

The final logistic regression analysis will include all the independent variables discussed in the section on “Operationalization”. Of a particular importance to this project is the enquiry whether the perceptions of social cohesion and social disorder in respondents’ neighbourhoods have significant effects on crime reporting in property-related victimization. However, the importance of all the factors included in this project will be discussed in the final chapter; this serves the purpose of tracking and explaining the replications of and inconsistencies with the results of prior research.

The test of crime-reporting behaviour of victims of property crime proceeded in four steps. In the first step, all the independent variables, except the scales on social cohesion and social and physical disorder, were inserted the model. This serves the purpose of tracking replications of findings from previous research. In the second and third step, respectively, the variables measuring perceptions of social cohesion and social and physical disorder in neighbourhoods will be inserted in the models. This will allow tracking the separate effects of these measures on the likelihood of crime to be reported. Finally, in the fourth step both of the measures will be inserted in the models, which serves the purpose of tracing the shared and unique effects of these measures.

### Chapter Summary

This project will analyse the property crime-reporting trends in Canada. The victimization data used in this project was collected by Statistics Canada in 2004 during for the General Social Survey (cycle 18). This dataset provides a large and comprehensive sample of property crime victims who resided in Canada in 2004. Some missing data in key variables were imported from GSS cycle 17 using multiple linear regression imputation approach. Data limitations include unavailability of suppressed data (this ensures confidentiality to he respondents), missing data, and responses based on perceptions of victimization.

Because of the structured nature of questions asked in the survey, and because of a large sample size, quantitative methods of data analysis were employed in this project. The methods used include frequency runs, bivariate relationships, and logistic regressions (due to the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable).

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESULTS

#### Introduction

This chapter presents the results of GSS cycle 18 examining the nature of crime-reporting behaviour in Canada for property-related crimes. The first section looks at the frequencies of the dependent and the independent variables. The next section examines the bivariate relationships of all the independent (predictor) variables to the dependent variable. Following is a presentation of bivariate distribution of the reasons provided by the respondents for reporting or not reporting their incidents to the police per type of incident. The final section presents the results of multivariate analysis (logistic regressions) performed in this project.

#### Descriptives of Variables Used in Models

The descriptive statistics for both the dependent and the independent variables used in the models are presented in table 3.1. As can be seen from table, only 28.6% of property-related crimes were reported to the police by victims. Thus a majority of property crimes faced by Canadian residents in 2004 were not brought to the attention of the police. Other demographic characteristics of victims and features of the criminal incidents that are utilised in this project are presented as well.

**Table 3.1. Descriptives of the dependent and control variables used in models**

Variable	%	Variable	%
Reporting	28.6	<u>Crime Characteristics</u>	
<u>Victim Characteristics</u>		Incident was a hate crime	1.8
Arrival to Canada		Incident within home or surrounding area	51.5
born in Canada	91.8	Type of crime	
before 1946 – 1994	5.7	break and enter	7.5
1995 - 2004	2.4	motor vehicle theft	6.9
Visible minority	3.8	theft of personal property	43.5
Dwelling owned by member of household	70.0	vandalism	20.0
Single member household	25.3	theft of household property	22.2
		Total financial loss	
		< \$100	36.2
		\$100-\$1000	46.1
		>\$1000	17.7
		Had insurance	66.0

### Bivariate results

Table 3.2 shows the bivariate relationships between the dependent and the independent variables. According to the chi-square tests performed, no demographic variables except visible minority status ( $p < .10$ ) are significantly associated with the dependent variable at the bivariate level. Thus respondents who do not identify themselves as visible minorities were slightly more likely to report their incidents to the police (29.0%) than their visible minority counterparts (23.6%).

With regards to features of the incident, crimes committed within victims' home or surrounding area (31.6%) were more likely to be reported than crimes committed elsewhere (25.5%). More serious crimes were more likely to be reported than the less serious ones. Thus break and enter (54.5%) and motor vehicle theft were twice as likely to be reported than say vandalism (24.0%), personal property theft (25.6%), or household property theft (23.9%).

The mean of confidence in effectiveness in the police for respondents who reported their incidents is 14.85 (compared to the mean of 14.76 for respondents who

did not report their incidents) – see table 3.3. The mean of perception of social cohesion in neighbourhood for respondents who reported their incidents is 3.05 (compared to the mean of 3.06 for respondents who did not report their incidents). Lastly, the mean of perception of social disorder in neighbourhood for respondents who reported their incidents is 34.15 (compared to the mean of 33.77 for respondents who did not report their incidents).

**Table 3.2. Percentage of incidents reported to the police by victim and incident characteristics**

Variable	%	Variable	%
<u>Victim Characteristics</u>		<u>Crime Characteristics</u>	
Arrival to Canada		Incident was a hate crime	
born (ref.)	27.8	yes	29.2
before 1946 – 1994	29.1	no	28.5
1995 – 2004	26.1	Location of incident	
Number of household members		within home or surrounding area	31.6***
single member	27.4	outside home or surrounding area	25.5***
multiple members	29.4	Type of crime	
Dwelling owned by member of household		break and enter	54.5***
Yes	28.9	motor vehicle theft	49.3***
No	28.3	theft of personal property	25.6***
Visible minority status		vandalism	24.0***
visible minority	23.6*	theft of household property	23.9***
not a visible minority	29.0*	Total financial loss	
		< \$100	10.2***
		\$100-\$1000	27.6*
		>\$1000	76.0***
		Insurance at time of incident	
		yes	35.0***
		no	16.7***

$\chi$ -square tests were performed to assess the difference in percentage reporting between the categories: \*\*\* =  $p < .01$  \*\* =  $p < .05$  \* =  $p < .10$

**Table 3.3. Means of scales used in models (incidents reported vs. not reported)**

	Incidents reported (scale mean)	Incidents not reported (scale mean)
Confidence in effectiveness of police	14.85	14.76
Perceived social cohesion	3.05	3.06
Perceived social disorder	34.15	33.77

It should be mentioned that the proportion of property crimes that are being reported to the police was rather low in Canada in 2004. For example, compare the proportion of break and enter incidents that were reported to the police in Canada in 2004 (only 54.5%) to the proportion of burglary incidents reported to the police in the Netherlands between 1995 and 2001 (88.6%) (Goudriaan et al., 2005). A possible explanation for the difference is due to the fact that the Canadian crime survey (GSS-18) includes attempted as well as completed break-ins. Attempted break-ins are much less likely to be reported to the police than completed ones. Also, break and enter in Canada includes “illegal entry into a residence or other building on the victim’s property” (Statistics Canada, 2005: 737). In other words, it is not specified what kind of buildings are being broken in; some victims may choose not to bother reporting an illegal entry into edifices that lack valuables or are not of essential use. In the same vein, while only 49.3% of motor vehicle theft was reported to the police in Canada, in the Netherlands the percentage reached 97.0% (Goudriaan et al., 2005). This difference is due to the fact that “motor vehicle theft” variable in Canada includes not only a theft of a car, but a “theft of a car, truck, van, motorcycle, moped or other vehicle or part of a motor vehicle” (Statistics Canada, 2005: 738). Thefts of parts of a vehicle are much less likely to be reported than theft of a car.

As for the economic loss due to the incident, crimes resulted in greater financial loss (over \$1,000) were much more likely to be reported than incidents with average financial loss (\$100-\$999), or incidents with little or no loss (76.0%, 27.6%, and 10.2%, respectively). Victims who had insurance prior to the incident (35.0%) were twice as

likely to report their incident to the police than victims who did not have an insurance (16.7%).

### Reasons for (Not) Reporting the Incident to the Police

In the GSS cycle 18 respondents were asked to provide reasons for reporting or not reporting their incidents to the police. Curiously, the main reason provided by over 8 out of 10 of respondents for reporting the incident was “because [respondent] felt it was [his/her] duty to notify the police” (84.1% of total crimes) – see table 3.4. The next frequent reason was “to arrest and punish the offender” (63.5%), while only the third frequent response was “to file a report to claim compensation or insurance” (52.7%). Although the percentages are much higher in Canada, the ranking of reasons for reporting<sup>14</sup> largely correspond to previous research findings (e.g. Edgar, 2001; Goudriaan et al., 2004; Smith & Maness, 1976).

With regards to reasons for not reporting, the main response mentioned by nearly two-thirds (65.4%) of the respondents was “not important enough [to respondent]” – see table 3.5. The second most frequently mentioned reasons are “the police couldn’t do anything” (59.6%). The ranking of reasons for not reporting crime mostly coincide with previous research findings (e.g., Bennett & Wiegand, 1994; Edgar, 2001; Fishman, 1979; Goudriaan et al., 2004; Hindelang & Gottfredson, 1976), though the wording of the reasons could have differed depending on the survey analysed (see footnote 12).

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<sup>14</sup> Note that the wording of reasons for reporting and not reporting crime could be different depending on the survey used. Thus for example, Goudriaan et al. (2004) report that the most frequent reason for reporting crime in 16 selected countries studied in their project was “because crimes should be reported to the police”. In GSS cycle 18 the most frequent reason observed was “because it was [your] duty to notify police”. I regard the two reasons as conceptually similar, and therefore comparable to each other.

**Table 3.4. Reasons for Reporting the Incident to the Police (those who reported the incident)<sup>15</sup>**

	Break and enter	Motor vehicle theft	Theft of personal property	Theft of household property	Vandalism	Total
% of respondents						
<i>People have different reasons for reporting incidents to the police. Was it: ...</i>						
because [respondent] felt it was [his/her] duty to notify police?	89.5	86.7	82.5	82.6	83.1	84.1
to arrest and punish the offender?	71.8	69.2	62.5	62.4	56.0	63.5
to file a report to claim compensation or insurance?	49.1	68.2	54.4	50.3	43.4	52.7
to stop the incident or receive protection?	43.6	32.0	31.7	33.2	47.0	38.3
on the recommendation of someone else?	10.5	8.7	21.2	12.3	16.2	15.8

### Logistic Regression Results

Table 3.6 summarises results from the multivariate logistic regression analysis conducted in this project. The models presented include the victim and crime characteristics, and perceptions about neighbourhood. In this way the effects of perceptions of neighbourhoods are assessed after controlling for the effects of victim and criminal incident characteristics. The coefficients depicted in the models represent the probability (measured in log-odds<sup>16</sup>) of an incident to be reported to the police by the respondents in the reference category.

<sup>15</sup> Since multiple responses were allowed, percentages will add to more than 100%.

<sup>16</sup> Alternatively, the measures of probability presented in log-odds in table 3.6 could be converted to log-ratios, which in turn simplifies the interpretation of the coefficients. Thus, for example, according to table 3.6 (Model 1), the *log-odds* of reporting an incident to the police (vs. not reporting) for members of a visible minority group decreases by .70 when compared to the non-visible minority respondents. Following the conversion of log-odds into log-ratios, the *odds* of reporting an incident to the police (vs. not reporting) by members of a visible minority group decreases by a factor of .50 (or about 50%) when compared to their non-visible minority counterparts (see Appendix A, Model 1). From here onwards, the reader is invited to refer to the conversion table in Appendix A for further clarification of the coefficients.

**Table 3.5. Reasons for Not Reporting the Incident to the Police (those who did not report the incident)<sup>17</sup>**

	Break and enter	Motor vehicle theft	Theft of personal property	Theft of household property	Vandalism	Total
	% of respondents					
<i>Reasons why some people choose not to contact the police. Was it: ...</i>						
because it was not important enough [to respondent]? (e.g. minor crime, small loss, child offender, no intended harm, etc.)	57.5	65.7	64.2	70.2	62.6	65.4
because the police couldn't do anything about it? (e.g. didn't find out until too late, couldn't recover or identify property, couldn't find or identify offender, lack of proof, etc.)	58.9	63.8	56.0	59.5	62.3	59.6
because it was dealt with another way? (e.g. reported to another official, landlord, manager, school official, or private matter that took care of myself, etc.)	30.8	23.5	33.5	23.9	36.0	30.3
because [respondent] did not want to get involved with police?	19.8	18.2	24.2	24.1	19.9	22.3
because the incident was a personal matter and did not concern the police?	20.0	21.3	23.0	21.5	19.7	21.3
because the police wouldn't help? (e.g. wouldn't think it was important enough, wouldn't want to be bothered or get involved, police would be inefficient or ineffective, would harass/ insult respondent, offender was police officer)	21.5	20.1	17.7	20.8	20.3	19.8
because [respondent's] insurance wouldn't cover it? (e.g. no insurance, loss less than deductible, etc.)	14.1	18.5	11.6	11.8	10.5	11.9
because nothing was taken or the items were recovered?	10.5	2.8	4.5	4.7	25.6	10.8
Other	15.0	8.3	11.0	6.4	8.5	8.9
because of fear of revenge by the offender?	6.5	1.2	3.2	2.7	5.2	3.6
because the police would be biased?	6.5	2.8	3.1	3.0	2.6	3.1

<sup>17</sup> Since multiple responses were allowed, percentages will add to more than 100%.

**Table 3.6. Coefficients of effects of victim and incident characteristics and perceptions of police and neighbourhood from the logistic analyses on reporting behaviour**

<i>N</i> (weighted)	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	4, 309	3, 976	4, 115
	Coeff. (S.E.)	Coeff. (S.E.)	Coeff. (S.E.)
Constant	-2.72 (.22)***	-2.90 (.27)***	-3.68 (.44)***
<i>Victim characteristics</i>			
<i>Arrival to Canada</i>			
born in Canada (ref.)	-- --	-- --	-- --
before 1946 – 1994	.01 (.19)	.01 (.120)	.08 (.19)
1995 - 2004	.30 (.31)	-.27 (.41)	.31 (.31)
Single member household	-.06 (.10)	-.04 (.10)	-.04 (.10)
Dwelling owned by member of household	-.10 (.09)	-.02 (.10)	-.15 (.10)
Visible minority	-.70 (.27)***	-.52 (.29)*	-.71 (.28)***
<i>Incident characteristics</i>			
Incident was a hate crime	.18 (.30)	.18 (.31)	.38 (.32)
Incident within victim's home or surroundings	.14 (.09)	.20 (.09)**	.08 (.09)
<i>Type of crime</i>			
theft of personal property (ref.)	-- --	-- --	-- --
motor vehicle theft	.31 (.16)**	.33 (.16)**	.33 (.16)**
break and enter	.69 (.16)***	.63 (.17)***	.78 (.17)***
vandalism	-.46 (.12)***	-.45 (.12)***	-.45 (.12)***
theft of household property	-.25 (.11)**	-.28 (.11)**	-.22 (.11)**
<i>Total economic loss (ref.: &lt;\$100)</i>			
\$100 – \$999	1.26 (.10)***	1.22 (.11)***	1.30 (.10)***
≥ \$1000	3.33 (.13)***	3.37 (.13)***	3.32 (.13)***
Had insurance	.69 (.09)***	.68 (.10)***	.71 (.10)***
Confidence in effectiveness of police	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)
<i>Perceptions of Neighbourhood</i>			
Social cohesion		.00 (.05)	
Social disorder			.03 (.01)**
Model Chi-Square	1215.3***	1137.5***	1185.3***
-2 Log likelihood	4035.5	3694.1	3848.6
Nagelkerke R Square	.35	.35	.35

\*\*\* =  $p < .01$     \*\* =  $p < .05$     \* =  $p < .10$

### Effects of Victim Characteristics

Model 1 from table 3.6 includes the variables measuring the demographic and the incident predictors. Only one victims' demographic characteristic out of three tested has significant effects on crime-reporting behaviour. The parameter of visible minority status is statistically significant at  $p < .01$  in two out of three models (Models 2 & 3) while the level of significance in the other model is  $p < .10$ . Its effects are relatively

strong and negative. Respondents who identified themselves as members of a visible minority group are much less likely to report their victimization to the police than their non-visible minority counterparts while controlling for the effects of financial loss and other characteristics of incidents.

The lack of statistical significance on the part of victims' characteristics is somewhat contradictory with prior research. Goudriaan et al. (2004), and Warner (1992) for example, found economic well-being of the household (measured in upper and lower 50% household income, and in actual families' incomes, respectively) to be a significant predictor of reporting of property crimes. Skogan (1984) further notes that victims who own a house were more likely to report incidents of burglaries to the police. There are possible explanations for these inconsistencies. First, the measure of household well-being used in this project is not among the best; dwellings could be passed among generations, which does not necessarily contribute to economic well-being. It should also be remembered that the correlation between household income and ownership of dwelling in GSS-18 was only of moderate strength (Pearson's  $r = .38$ ). Second, there are 5 types of property incidents taken into account in this project; the parameter of ownership of dwelling might have been a significant predictor if only one type of incident (e.g. break and enter) was considered.

With regards to number of household members, the lack of significance coincides with findings by Goudriaan et al. (2004); number of household members does not have a significant effect on crime reporting behaviour when property crimes are taken into account. However, if both property and violent (contact) crimes are included in models, the effect tends to be significant (Goudriaan et al., 2005).

Finally, the time of arrival to Canada has no significant effect on crime reporting behaviour. This is inconsistent with previous research (Davis, Erez & Avitabile, 1996; Goudriaan et al., 2005) that found that recent immigrants are less likely to report crimes than citizens that are native to the country. However, these research projects did not divide the analysis by type of crime. In other words, when only property incidents are taken into account and the effects of other variables such as visible minority status are controlled, the time spent in Canada does not seem to have a significant effect on crime reporting behaviour.

#### Effects of Incident Characteristics

All of the incident characteristics, except whether or not the incident was a hate crime, have significant effects on crime-reporting behaviour in most of the models. The predictor that has the strongest effects in the models is the one measuring the amount of financial loss. The larger the amount of financial loss, the more likely the incident is to be reported to the police. Following similar logic, the predictor measuring whether or not victim had any kind of insurance prior to the incident has strong and positive effects on reporting behaviour. The probability for reporting increases for those respondents who had insurance prior to the incident. In short, victims who suffered a greater financial loss or had insurance are more likely to report their victimization than victims who suffered a moderate loss or had no insurance even when the effects of each of these variables on the other are controlled. These findings are among the most consistent in research on crime reporting (Goudriaan et al., 2004; Goudriaan et al., 2005; Hindelang & Gottfredson, 1976; Myers, 1980; Skogan, 1984; Warner, 1992).

More serious crimes are more likely to be reported than the less serious ones even when controlling for level of financial loss and possession of insurance. Thus the two most serious crimes – motor vehicle theft, and break and enter - have positive effects on reporting, whereas the two less serious crimes of theft of household property and vandalism have negative effects when compared to theft of personal property (the reference category). In other words, all other variables held constant, the crimes of break and enter and motor vehicle theft are much more likely to be reported to the police than the theft of personal property. The crimes of theft of household property and vandalism, on the other hand, are less likely to be reported to the police when compared to theft of personal property. Similar to financial loss and existence of insurance, the significance of seriousness of incident is a fairly consistent finding (Fishman, 1979; Goudriaan et al., 2004; Goudriaan et al., 2005; Skogan, 1984).

Finally, location of the incident has a significant effect only in one out of three models (Model 2). Its effect is relatively weak and positive; crimes that were committed within respondents' homes or surrounding areas are more likely to be reported to the police than crimes that were committed elsewhere.

Perception about effectiveness of the police does not have a significant effect on likelihood of reporting crimes in any of the three models tested. This finding is not very surprising since, as mentioned by Skogan (1984), the effects of attitudes towards the police are fairly small and at times nonexistent in most American surveys. Bennet & Wiegand (1994) further note that the effects of attitudes towards the police tend to diminish once the seriousness of the incident is controlled for, which is the case in this project. Goudriaan et al (2004), on the other hand, found confidence in the police to be

a significant predictor of crime reporting behaviour for property crimes, but on a country level (the more confidence in police exists in a country, the more likely property crimes were to be reported).

#### Effects of Perceptions of Social Context in Neighbourhoods

Model 2 in table 3.6 examines the relationship between victims' perception of social cohesion in their neighbourhood and the likelihood of an incident to be reported to the police. The coefficient for the effect of social cohesion is close to zero and not statistically significant. Consequently, neither of the two hypotheses (H1 or H2 – see Chapter 1) stating the relationship of social cohesion to crime reporting is confirmed.

The relationship between perceptions of social disorder and likelihood of crime reporting is addressed for in Model 3. The parameter for the effect of social disorder is statistically significant; it is positive and rather weak. This means that victims that perceive higher levels of social disorder in their neighbourhoods and communities are more likely to report their victimization to the police than victims that perceive lower degree of disorder when the effects of victim and incident characteristics are held constant. Thus the hypothesis stating a positive relationship of social disorder to crime reporting (H3 – see Chapter 1) is confirmed, though it should be emphasised that the effects of the parameter are very weak.

### Chapter Summary

Due to a large amount of diverse findings in this chapter, presented below is a summary of principal findings. On the bivariate level, statistically significant relationships include the following:

- Victims who identified themselves as members of a visible minority group were less likely to report their incident than their non-visible minority counterparts (23.6% vs. 29.0,  $p < .10$ ).
- Incidents that occurred within victims' homes or surrounding areas were more likely to be reported to the police than incidents that happened elsewhere (31.6% vs. 25.5%).
- The distribution of crime reporting by a type of crime is as following: break and enter (54.5%); motor vehicle theft (49.3%); theft of personal property (25.6%); vandalism (24.0%); and theft of household property (23.9%).
- Crimes that resulted in a greater financial loss of \$1,000 or more (76.0%) were more likely to be reported than crimes that resulted in a loss of \$100 - \$999 (27.6%), or crimes resulted in a loss of less than \$100 (10.2%).
- Crimes committed against households that had some kind of insurance were more likely to be reported than crimes committed against households with no insurance (35.0% vs. 16.7%).
- Reasons for reporting victimization to the police include the following: out of sense of duty (84.1%); to arrest and punish the offender (63.5%); to file a report to claim compensation or insurance benefits (52.7%); and following someone else's recommendation (15.8%).

- Reasons for not reporting victimization include the following: not important enough (65.4%); the police could not do anything (59.6%); the incident was dealt with another way (30.3%); the respondent did not want to get involved with the police (22.3%); the incident was a personal matter and did not concern the police (21.3%); the police would not help (19.8%); the insurance would not cover the loss (11.9%); nothing was taken or the items were recovered (10.8%); other (8.9%); fear of revenge by the offender (3.6%); and the police would be biased (3.1%).
- The only victim characteristic that remained significant throughout the three multivariate models presented in this chapter is victims' visible minority status. Consistent with the bivariate results, victims who identified themselves as members of a visible minority group were less likely to report their victimization to the police than their non-visible minority counterparts, controlling for all other effects.
- Consistent with the bivariate findings, incidents that took place within victims' homes or surrounding areas were more likely to be reported to the police than incidents that took place elsewhere (Model 2), holding all other variables constant.
- Incidents of break and enter, and motor vehicle theft were more likely to be reported to the police than theft of personal property; incidents of vandalism, and theft of household property were less likely to be reported to the police than theft of personal property, holding all other effects constant.

- Consistent with the bivariate results, incidents that incurred a loss of a \$1,000 or more were more likely to be reported to the police than incidents that resulted in a loss of \$100 or less, as were incidents that incurred a loss of \$100 - \$999, holding all other effects constant.
- Finally, consistent with the bivariate results, victims who had some type of insurance prior to the incident were more likely to report their incidents to the police than victims who had no insurance.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

The present project examined reasons provided by victims for reporting and not reporting their victimization to the police. Further, the roles of individual and incident characteristics, as well as perceptions of social context (i.e., social cohesion and social disorder) in neighbourhoods in victims' decisions to report property crime to the police were analysed. Results indicate that mostly effects of incident characteristics, and to a limited extent those of individual and social context characteristics affect victims' crime-reporting behaviour. Once these characteristics are accounted for, victims' decision-making could be a result of a rational or normative process, or a combination of the two.

#### Reasons for (Not)Reporting the Incident

The most frequent reason for reporting of property crime was "because [respondent] felt it was [his/her] duty to notify police" (84.1%). This reason, in my view, could hardly be considered as rational. Crime reporting for the sake of duty could be considered an example of a "nonconsequential prescriptive belief", where actor's (victim's) "normative beliefs cannot readily be explained in consequentialist terms" (Boudon, 2003: 9). While the costs of reporting might be obvious to the victim, this is not the case with the benefits as a consequence of reporting. To illustrate, consider the example of voting; just as a voter votes knowing that her vote will virtually have no consequence on the outcome of the election (ibid), a victim reports for the sake of duty

knowing that his report will have no direct impact on the practices and functioning of the judicial system. This is especially true in cases of petty crimes, which are not entered in police's incident database, and as such do not have any impact on functioning of the police. On the other hand, it is more plausible to view reporting for sake of duty as a normative behaviour in that citizens internalise the idea of civic duty, which asserts that they *should* be voting and reporting crime. These are norms of behaviour that are imbedded in the Western society. Thus the action of reporting crime for the sake of duty seems to be more plausibly explained by the normative rather than rational action approach<sup>18</sup>.

Other reasons for reporting the incident seem to comply with rational reasoning. The two reasons of "arresting and punishing the offender" (63.5%) and "stopping the incident or receiving protection" (38.3%) could be seen as rational (Felson et al., 2002) since the costs and the benefits of reporting are evident to the respondent. They are both associated with his/her desire for a recompense, be it through the satisfaction of knowing that police would work towards the arrest and punishment of the offender, or through the reassuring thought of protection by the police (Felson et al., 2002; Greenberg & Ruback, 1985).

The reason of "filing a report to claim compensation or insurance" (52.7%) has been considered as rational throughout past research projects (e.g. Goudriaan et al., 2004; Schneider, Burcart, and Wilson II, 1976). It refers to the traditional rational action

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<sup>18</sup> Alternatively, the reporting for sake of social duty could be explained using Max Weber's value-rationality, which is generally driven by ideal interests such as ideological, political, ethical, religious, or affective motives for action (for discussion, see Zafirovski, 2003). Following this logic, victims might be reporting incidents for the out of sense of duty to ameliorate the well-being of a group (community, neighbourhood, nation). However, this logic extends far beyond the "narrowness" of rational action framework suggested in Chapter 1. In this respect, reporting for the sake of duty cannot and, in my view, should not be explained using rational action approach.

argument, where the victim is reporting an incident because s/he wants to obtain (financial) compensation.

As for reasons provided for not reporting crime, the two most frequently mentioned reasons were because the incident was not important to the respondent (65.4%), and because the police couldn't do anything about the incident (59.6%). These reasons for not reporting were traditionally regarded as rational in past research (Goudriaan et al., 2004). The perceived costs of reporting outlined earlier do not outweigh benefits, or the anticipated return does not justify the effort or the trouble of reporting, and so the incident is deemed not worth of reporting<sup>19</sup>.

The third most frequent reason for not reporting, "because the incident was dealt with in another way" (30.3%) seems to point towards the normative action framework. While the decision to deal with an incident in some other way might involve the weighing of costs and benefits, it is the norms of the situation that are more probable to influence this decision (Goudriaan et al., 2004). This is especially evident from the extension provided with the question: "e.g. reported to another official, landlord, manager, school official, or private matter that took care of myself, etc." In this line of reasoning, norms of the situation, or violation of norms of appropriate behaviour at the situation in which the incident occurred might have led the victim to believe that the incident was not the case for the police, and as such reporting to an alternative agency is more appropriate (Greenberg & Ruback, 1992; Ruback et al., 1999).

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<sup>19</sup> It is particularly interesting to note the explanations of these two reasons that were read out to the respondent at the time of the interview (see table 3.4). The first reason was supplemented with the following extension: "e.g. minor crime, small loss, child offender, no intended harm, etc."; the second read "e.g. didn't find out until too late, couldn't recover or identify property, couldn't find or identify offender, lack of proof, etc.". A careful examination of these explanations would point to the direction of rational reasoning. After all, it is not *worth* reporting the incident if the loss is too minor or if the incident lacked proof.

The idea of an incident being a personal or private matter is a recurrent theme in normative action framework (fifth most frequently mentioned reason – 21.3% of respondents). Victims hold beliefs on whether it is appropriate to report the incident to the police or solve it as a private matter without the assistance of the authorities (Goudriaan et al., 2004; Greenberg & Ruback, 1992). In part, such beliefs are grounded in victims' learned and internalised norms of behaviour (Etzioni, 1988), such as regarding certain criminal incidents as a private matter and responding to them accordingly (i.e., not reporting to the police). The internalised norms are sometimes followed in an unconscious manner, even if rational reasoning would tell otherwise (Elster, 1989b).

The remainder of the reasons for not reporting the incidents are explained with rational action framework. Thus the fourth frequent reason for not reporting is “because the respondent did not want to get involved with the police” (22.3%) is explained by respondents' possible existing troubles with the police or general reluctance to deal with police due to negative past experience (Greenberg & Ruback, 1992), or unwillingness to bother to report (i.e., not worth it). The sixth frequent reason is “because the police would not help” (19.8%), the seventh is “because the insurance would not cover it” (11.9%), and the eighth is “because nothing was taken or items were recovered” (10.8%). Again, these reasons point towards the rational framework because there is an apparent process of weighing the costs and the benefits of reporting, where the desired returns do not justify the effort of reporting. It seems that these reasons could easily be replaced with the reason of “not worth the bother of reporting”. The remaining three reasons are well below the frequency of 10% and are not worth mentioning in the text.

### Results of Multivariate Analysis

Turning now to results of multivariate analysis displayed in Model 1 (table 3.4), we observe that, aside from a demographic measure of visible minority status, the strongest and the only significant effects are those of variables explaining self-interest in crime-reporting behaviour. The negative effects of visible minority status (i.e., victims who identify themselves as visible minorities are less likely to report their incidents to the police than their non-visible minority counterparts) are explained by previous negative experiences with the police or other law authorities and the resulting fear of secondary victimization (Berrill & Herek, 1992; Pogrebin & Poole, 1990b).

The first effect explaining self-interest in reporting is that of the amount of total economic cost as a result of the incident. It is also the strongest predictor in the model. It shows that, holding all other effects constant, incidents with large loss are much more likely to be reported than incidents with little or no loss. Second, related to economic loss caused by the incident is an idea of presence of insurance prior to the incident. According to the results of multivariate analysis, victims who had insurance prior to the incident are more likely to report the incident to the police than those who did not have an insurance (holding all effects constant).

The explanation for the above two trends lies in victims' desire to compensate their loss. Since the insurance companies require a report from the police in order to be able to proceed with a claim, victims who are insured would absolutely need to report their incident should they wish to proceed with the compensation (Schneider, Burcart, and Wilson II, 1976). Victims who did not have insurance and lost a lot of money or assets in the incident would still turn to the police, as it should increase their chances of

recovering lost property (*ibid*). This is because the police are regarded as the immediate public authority for assisting victims with the recovery of stolen or damaged assets.

Indeed, when large amounts of money or assets are stolen or damaged, it is reasonable to assume a rational response on the part of the victim who desires a recompense for the loss. Reporting the loss to the police is a safe and legitimate path to obtain the recompense.

Third, more severe incidents or incidents that are likely to result in a larger loss were found to be more likely to be reported to the police than less severe incidents that will probably result in a minor loss. Thus, holding all effects constant, break and enter or motor vehicle theft are much more likely to be reported to the police than theft of personal property. This is understandable since, in the case of break and enter, victims are more likely to develop a fear of crime and desire the protection of the police than in the case of theft of personal property. This is further evident from the reasons provided for reporting the incident to the police; victims of break and enter were more likely than victims of other crimes to state that they reported the incident in order to arrest and punish the offender (71.8% vs. 63.5% of overall victims). Also, victims of break and enter were slightly more likely than victims of other crimes to state they reported the incident because they wanted to stop the incident and receive protection (43.6% vs. 38.3% of overall victims). In the case of motor vehicle theft, the loss incurred as a result of the incident is much larger than it is in theft of personal property. Motor vehicle and motor vehicle parts are also very likely to be insured prior to the incident. Thus we observe that victims of motor vehicle theft were more likely than victims of other incidents to state that they reported the incident to file a report to claim compensation or

insurance (68.2% vs. 52.7% of overall victims). Both these explanations point in the direction of rational desires for either protection and/or recompense.

### Effects of Perceptions of Social Context in Neighbourhoods

The lack of significant effect of perceptions of social cohesion on crime-reporting behaviour among victims of property crimes should not be surprising once the rational/normative action divide is considered. Social cohesion in itself could be regarded as a fairly normative concept. As noted in Chapter 1 of this project, cohesion is defined as people's (neighbourhood residents') capacity to act in a cohesive manner in common interest. Further, the concept of cohesion relates to peoples' will and ability to regulate conduct of behaviour (Baumer, 2002; Goudriaan et al., 2005). Social norms, as a set of proscriptive agreed-upon rules of behaviour (Greenberg & Ruback, 1992: 209), which define, guide, and restrict people's behaviour. It is through the consensus on social norms that the members of a particular group are able to act cohesively in a shared task. In this regard, norms are to be conceived as a certain driving force behind social cohesion (Durkheim, [1893] 1947).

This normative aspect of social cohesion is further supplemented with the notion of norms defining the community's "wrongs", violators of which are being punished with rejection, disdain or loss of status in the community (Greenberg & Ruback, 1992). Crimes are an example of a community's wrongs, and it is supposedly in the community residents' common interest to repair and eventually dispose of those wrongs. However, as the results of multivariate analysis reveal (Model 2), this is not the

case when property crimes are considered. No significant effect of perceptions of social cohesion is present when other variables are controlled for.

The explanation for lack of effect lies in victims' rational self-interest reasoning when it comes to (not)reporting property crimes to the police. This is mainly evidenced by the remaining significance and strength of effects of predictors that assess self-interest in reporting (i.e., monetary loss, insurance, and severity of incident). In chapter 1 I suggested several effects social cohesion might have on reporting behaviour; it was hypothesised that presence or absence of mechanisms of informal social control (in a form of social cohesion) would affect members' crime-reporting behaviour. However, findings show that these normative domains have no effect on reporting; instead, it is victims' desire for recompense as well as other rational considerations that play a decisive role in reporting incidents to the police.

Unlike the effect of perception of social cohesion, the other measure of social processes in neighbourhoods, the perception of social disorder, has a weak, yet significant effect on crime-reporting behaviour among victims of property crimes. The effect is positive, meaning that victims who perceive higher levels of disorder in their neighbourhoods are more likely to report their victimization to the police than those who perceive a lower level of disorder (Model 3). This result follows along the first line of reasoning presented in the section on social and physical disorder (Chapter 1).

It is worthwhile to recall Sampson and Raudenbush's (2001) findings about the association of disorder and cohesion. As outlined in chapter 1, their research shows that where disorder is present, collective efficacy, or cohesion is undermined, which in turn leads to further decay. "The extent of disorder", they argue, "reflects the extent of

residents' effectiveness in improving their neighbourhoods and may affect their willingness to sustain their activism" (2001: 1). This (in)effectiveness in improving neighbourhoods and controlling minor criminal activity ultimately leads to more disorder and on-going victimization.

Thus my interpretation of the positive association between disorder and crime reporting is grounded in victims' desire to stop an on-going victimization that characterises neighbourhoods where disorder is present, and/or in their search for formal protection from the police. Victims from these neighbourhoods would turn to the police "to bring order into a community where they themselves may not be able to come together to create order" (Warner and Pierce, 1993: 511). Or put simply, victims from neighbourhoods where disorder is present might be fed up with the on-going victimization and the inability of neighbourhood residents to regulate conduct and restore order (i.e., lack of social cohesion and informal means of social control); turning to means of formal social control for help seems to be the alternative taken by victims.

It is not all too clear whether the effect of perceptions of social disorder in neighbourhoods fits in the rational or normative action framework. On the one hand, Richard Felson's work has showed that desires for protection arise out of rational considerations (e.g., Felson et al., 2002). Greenberg & Ruback (1985) list the following rational considerations for reporting out of a desire for protection: reduction of perceived sense of injustice if the offender is caught; elimination of threat to the victim; and the subsequent reduction of fear of victimization.

On the other hand, as indicated by the bivariate results for reasons for reporting, victims may report crimes because of a normative consideration of sense of civic duty.

As put by Smith and Maness, “a call [to the police] may help the victim feel that he [she] is not to blame for the community’s failure to stop crime. He [she] did his [her] part” (1976: 85). This indicates that the desire to stop on-going victimization in neighbourhoods characterised by disorder is not entirely rational, but has a normative component to it.

### Limitations of the Project

As noted in the introduction, this project extends prior research in several instances. First, unlike the majority of previous research where all types of crimes are inserted in models, this project looked at only one type of victimization, property crimes. This allowed for a refined approach to studying reporting behaviour, where some factors might have had diverse effects on some crimes and not on others. In addition, unlike in most previous research of crime reporting, measures of social context are introduced in this project. Finally, this project looks at perceptions (as opposed to direct measures) of social context, thus taking a prior step to socio-ecological framework (see Chapter 2).

There are also a few drawbacks to this project worth mentioning. The first is associated with a general shortcoming of surveys. As mentioned in the chapter in Methodology, the sampling procedure utilised in the GSS survey, and non-response could exclude potential respondents. Examples include respondents who do not own a ground phone line, those who do not speak either of the official languages, or unavailability or refusal by the respondent to participate in the survey. As indicated by Van Goor & Rispen (2004), the undercoverage resulting from sample design, and non-

response could potentially result in underrepresentation of disadvantaged groups and overrepresentation of the middle class respondents.

Another general shortcoming of victimization surveys is the recall bias. For example, more serious offences are remembered in greater detail over a longer period of time than the less serious offences. This may result in minor crimes' details not being recalled during the interview (Biderman & Lynch, 1981). Also, because offences that are reported to the police are "rehearsed" beforehand, they are remembered more frequently and in greater detail than incidents not reported (ibid). In this regard, police-based data would include more reliable measures of details of offences because it was recorded immediately and by an outside agency (e.g., police officer). Thus, arguably, police-based data is recorded without the time and emotional biases. However, this type of data would not be appropriate for this project because it unavoidably excludes details on victims who did not report their incidents to the police (Morgan, 2003).

Other limitations of the project are associated with data restrictions in GSS-18, and discussed in depth in Chapter 2. Briefly, these limitations include absence of confidential data (e.g., postal codes and/or CMA's); this in turn does not allow measures of socio-economic disadvantage in victims' neighbourhoods to be included in the analysis. It further does not allow for hierarchical (multilevel) analysis, which would be a preferred method for this project. Also, due a large amount of missing data, some important variables were excluded from the analysis. The reason for missing data is by and large attributed to the nature of incidents analysed in this project.

Lastly, the arguments presented in this paper would benefit from comparison of patterns of reporting behaviour of property and violent crimes. However, only

household property crimes were analysed in this project. The comparison of two types of crimes was not possible for two reasons. First, the sample of violent victimization drawn from GSS-18 is relatively small. The sample size of violent crimes becomes even smaller due to missing data in some key variables related to reporting of violent victimization. Second, questions for violent crimes focused on the victim, whereas questions for property crimes focused on the household. Comparison of effects of independent variables included in those two models might have lead to fallacious conclusions about reporting behaviour.

#### Chapter Summary

This chapter started by analysing the reasons provided by victims for reporting and not reporting their incidents to the police using the rational/normative framework introduced in the beginning of the paper. It was argued that the reasoning for reporting becomes could be considered as rational when victims' desire for protection or recompense (or a combination of the two) is evident in the response; it should be considered as normative when crimes are being reported out of sense of duty. Further, reasoning for not reporting could be considered as rational when victims determined it was not worth bothering to report the crime (i.e., the costs of reporting did not justify the benefits), or did not want to get involved with the police; the reasoning is considered as normative when the incident was considered a private matter and/or was dealt with another way.

Results of multivariate analysis indicate that for the most part, indicators of incident characteristics, and to a lesser degree those of individual and social context

characteristics influence victims' crime-reporting behaviour. All the effects of incidents characteristics were explained with the rational action framework, where victims' desire for compensation played a major part in the reasoning for reporting incidents. The absence of effects of perceptions of social cohesion was also explained using rational action approach; the remaining robustness of effects explaining victims' self-interest in reporting pointed towards the rational reasoning. Finally, the effect of perceptions of social disorder was considered to be arising out of victims' desire to stop ongoing victimization and receive protection from the police, as well as out of sense of civic duty; it could be explained using both the rational and normative action approaches.

## IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION

### Theoretical Implications

One of the characteristics of modern times is a segregation of human life into social units; we all not only exist on our own, but tend to be part of some sort of social gathering: family, community, neighbourhood. These social groups tend to be the agents of socialization that humans undergo in their childhood; they further tend to influence and govern our conduct of behaviour throughout our lifetimes. In other words, there exist some certain social processes in the communities that we live in, which influence the conduct of our behaviour. As Robert Sampson puts it, if neighbourhood effects have an influence on social outcomes (e.g. crime), “presumably they are constituted from social processes that involve collective aspects of community life” (Sampson, 2000: 712)

The importance of focusing on effects of communities and neighbourhoods is further emphasised through the ideas of Nikolas Rose. He argues that the government of human conduct is being shifted from all-inclusive and all-encompassing Welfare State approach, or the “Social”, to a segregated government of conduct through communities. In other words, instead of being governed through their allegiance and bonds to a large-scale State, humans now seem to be governed through their bonds and moral responsibility to their families, communities and neighbourhoods (Rose, 1996). What primarily characterises individuals within such an approach to government is both their responsibility for their self as well as emotional and moral “bonds of affinity to a circumscribed ‘network’ of other individuals – unified by family, by locality, by moral

commitment ...” (Rose, 1996: 334). Individuals’ attachment, bonds, and connections to their communities are formed, cultivated, encouraged, and operationalized with an anticipation of results of human conduct that are desirable for each and all of the associates of the community. In this light, the “new modes of neighbourhood participation, local empowerment and engagement of residents in decisions over their own lives will, ... , reactivate self-motivation, self-responsibility and self-reliance in the form of active citizenship within self-governing community” (Rose, 1996: 335).

This emerging role of communities and neighbourhoods needs to be accounted for in research on crime reporting. The idea that victims’ decisions are not being made in a vacuum, where the choices made arise out of pure self-interest, must be integrated in the conceptualisation of a theoretical framework of future research. Although no direct assessment of victims’ ecological settings, as the socio-ecological model described in the introduction, was made in this project, it was shown that victims’ perceptions of their social context influences their decisions with regards to reporting crime. In this sense, their decisions should be regarded as part of a dynamic interaction with social environment with an embedded normative component. This, for the most part, was disregarded in previous research on crime reporting<sup>20</sup> behaviour.

### Methodological Implications

Similar to the theoretical implication of inclusion of neighbourhood effects on reporting behaviour, future methodologies should accommodate this theoretical extension. First, it was found in this project that individual perceptions of neighbourhood effects are important predictors of reporting behaviour. This finding

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<sup>20</sup> For exceptions, see introduction to this project.

adds yet another dimension to previous research, which mainly focused on neighbourhood effects, excluding individual perceptions as possible control variables (e.g. Baumer, 2002; Goudriaan et al., 2005). In other words, this project shows that including measures of personal perceptions of neighbourhood effects is an important methodological step needed to be taken prior to the classic socio-ecological framework adopted in research on crime-reporting (Baumer, 2002; Goudriaan et al., 2005; Ménard, 2003).

Second, a follow-up project should adopt the socio-ecological framework introduced earlier, and conduct a hierarchical (or multilevel analysis) on neighbourhood effects. Two levels of analysis should be included – the individual and incident level, and the neighbourhood level. In such a way, the analysis is carried out while controlling for individual-level perceptions of neighbourhood effects. This would be done with a purpose of checking whether the possible neighbourhood effects are really neighbourhood effects, or effects of personal perceptions.

The multilevel analysis should also include measures of socio-economic disadvantage in victims' neighbourhoods. As suggested in Chapter 1, socio-economic disadvantage is an important measure of neighbourhood effect that might be mediating the relationship between social cohesion, social and physical disorder and crime reporting behaviour (see for example Goudriaan et al., 2005). In this project it was impossible to control for socio-economic disadvantage in victims' neighbourhoods due to data restrictions described in Chapter 2; as such, only individual measures of economic situation in victims' households were included in the analysis. This, it was

mentioned in Chapter 4, represents a significant drawback to the methodology employed in this project.

Future research will also benefit from inclusion of additional and more refined measures of social processes in neighbourhoods. For example, while the scale measuring social and physical disorder in neighbourhoods used in this project seems to be exhaustive and consistent with prior research (e.g., Ross & Mirowsky, 1999; Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999), the scale measuring social cohesion could be supplemented with other items (e.g., Bennet & Wiegand, 1994; Goudriaan et al., 2005). The scale measuring the confidence in effectiveness of police could be used on both the individual and the neighbourhood levels (e.g., Bennet & Wiegand, 1994). The measure of effectiveness of the judicial system could also be used as a measure of social processes in neighbourhoods, and could be included on both the individual and neighbourhood levels in future research.

### Policy Implications

Before discussing the policy implications that come out of this project, it is worthwhile mentioning that it is impossible and probably undesirable to encourage victims of all crimes to report their incidents to the police. For example, victims of violent crimes, especially rape victims, are often better off not reporting their incidents to the police and go through the criminal justice process of “questioning by sceptical police officers and a hostile defense attorney” (Greenberg & Ruback, 1985: 613). Similar argument applies to visible minority and homosexual victims who, by reporting their victimization to the police, might experience a secondary victimization from the

police and the criminal justice process (Berrill and Herek, 1992). Also, increased crime reporting, especially of minor or petty crimes, will overtax the judicial system, as well as contribute to overloading of the ever understaffed and overburdened system (Greenberg & Ruback, 1985).

The finding of the positive association between social disorder and reporting, which was interpreted as victims' desire to stop an ongoing violence and receive protection from the police, suggests that more efforts should be directed at policing and aiding communities and neighbourhoods where disorder is present. However, this suggestion must not be confused with the zero-tolerance policing style inspired in part by Wilson and Kelling's "broken windows thesis" (1982). As Sampson & Raudenbush (2001: 5-6) put it,

"Tackling public disorder as a means of reducing crime leaves the common origins of both, ... , untouched. Perhaps more effective would be an approach that focuses on how residents' efforts to stem disorder may reap unanticipated benefits in greater collective efficacy, which in turn would lower crime in the long run. Informally mobilizing a neighborhood cleanup, for example, would reduce physical disorder while building collective efficacy by creating and strengthening social ties and increasing awareness of the residents' commitment to their neighborhood. ... By contrast, a police-led crackdown on disorder would probably produce a very different response by residents".

The idea of aiding and policing communities with disorder is further reflected in the arguments presented by Nolan, Conti & McDevitt (2004). Neighbourhoods and communities with disorder, they argue, should adopt the "Securing and Organizing" style of policing (2004: 112-113). In the first stage, police should exercise "traditional means such as stepped-up law enforcement" (ibid: 112). However, once the police have expressed to residents their commitment to cooperate with them by assisting with the most immediate and major problems, the police must contribute to community

organisation. “The police do not necessarily need to be the community organizers, but must make sure that community organizing is going on and support it” (ibid: 113). It should be mentioned that this policing style is most applicable to neighbourhoods where disorder is rampant and crime is high; in neighbourhoods with strong social networks and mechanisms of informal social control, or in neighbourhoods vulnerable to disorder the authors recommend the police to be more of a support agency that work together with residents to organise the community.

Another policy implication arises out of the predominance of rational reasoning for crime reporting traced in this project. In my view, the ultimate goal of criminal justice policy should be geared towards both the improvement of the physical, psychological, and material well-being of the victim, as well as restoration of harmony deranged by crime. To achieve this, the public should be informed about the process of labelling the events as crimes, and as such further rationalise the reporting process (Greenberg & Ruback, 1985). For example, the public should be informed that petty or minor property crimes would rarely be dealt with by the police, and in most cases will not even be entered in the system. In other words, the public should be informed on the actions the police is probable to take following the crime. However, discouraging victims of minor or petty crimes to report their incidents to the police might result in a great decline of citizens’ perception of effectiveness of the police, as well as a general distrust in law authorities. More research in a form of experimental informational sessions and educational campaigns is needed to determine an effective approach to public education about the practices of the police following reporting of incidents, and

how the police might be effective and, more importantly, ineffective in aiding the victims of crimes.

### Conclusion

This project analysed property crime reporting trends in Canada in 2004. Three approaches previously taken to studying crime-reporting behaviour – economic, psychological, and sociological – were merged together with a purpose of broadening our understanding of reporting behaviour. This integration allowed the inclusion of individual, incident, and social context predictors of crime reporting into one model. Such an inclusion was, for the most part, overlooked in previous research, where researchers focused on only one of the approaches to reporting.

Further, the two processes through which the reporting is assumed to be carried out were discussed in depth. It is generally conceived in literature (Conklin, 1975; Skogan, 1984) that crimes that resulted in damaged, vandalised, or stolen property, or when victim's private property was broken in, victim's reasoning for (not)reporting the incident to the police is rational. In other words, by weighing the costs of reporting (e.g. the bother of bringing the case to the attention of the police, or concerns for retaliation from the offender) and the perceived benefits (e.g. recovering property, obtaining a compensation in one form or another, or receiving protection from further victimization), a victim comes up with a balanced decision to report or not to report the incident to the police.

This project, much like others in the area of property crime reporting, found that rational reasoning for reporting predominates among the victims. Nevertheless, the

normative domain should not be overlooked. For example, the idea of some sort of civic duty to report crimes is the most frequently mentioned reason for reporting, and as discussed in Chapter 4, this clearly represents a normative consideration.

It is much desired to continue incorporating the three approaches to studying crime-reporting behaviour in future projects. As I hoped to show in this project, they should be regarded as mutually complementary, rather than exclusive. Both the rational and normative processes play essential roles in reasoning for reporting; while in some cases the labelling of a reporting behaviour as either rational or normative is rather straightforward, it becomes extremely cumbersome in others. As such, these mechanisms of reporting behaviour should be further examined and refined in future.

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APPENDIX A

***Coefficients of effects of victim and incident characteristics and perceptions of police and neighbourhood from the logistic analyses on reporting behaviour (presented in log-ratios)***

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Coeff.	Coeff.	Coeff.
Constant	.07***	.06***	.03***
<i>Victim characteristics</i>			
Arrival to Canada			
born in Canada (ref.)	--	--	--
before 1946 – 1994	1.01	1.01	1.09
1995 - 2004	1.34	.77	1.36
Single member household	.94	.98	.96
Dwelling owned by member of household	.90	.98	.86
Visible minority	.50***	.60*	.49***
<i>Incident characteristics</i>			
Incident was a hate crime	1.20	1.20	1.46
Incident within victim's home or surroundings	1.15	1.22**	1.09
Type of crime			
theft of personal property (ref.)	--	--	--
motor vehicle theft	1.36**	1.39**	1.39**
break and enter	2.00***	1.87***	2.19***
vandalism	.65***	.64***	.64***
theft of household property	.78**	.76**	.80**
Total economic loss (ref.: <\$100)	--	--	--
\$100 – \$999	3.50***	3.38***	3.51***
≥ \$1000	28.03***	29.11***	27.78***
Had insurance	1.99***	1.97***	2.04***
Confidence in effectiveness of police	1.01	1.01	1.01
<i>Perceptions of Neighbourhood</i>			
Social cohesion		1.00	
Social disorder			1.03**

\*\*\* = p< .01      \*\* = p<.05      \* = p<.10