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# THE INFLUENCE OF CITIZEN INTERACTION WITH THE POLICE ON CRIME-REPORTING BEHAVIOR: ITS MANIFESTATIONS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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## **Abstract**

*Citizen's crime-reporting is generally low, with a number of factors affecting its prevalence and incidence. Research suggests that there is an interrelationship between the type of contacts citizens have with the police (e.g., citizen-initiated or police-initiated), attitudes toward the police, police behavior, and crime-reporting behavior. To determine whether citizen interactions with the police influence crime-reporting behavior and attitudes toward the police, this study tested four research hypotheses. The findings of this study suggest that predictors such as citizen-initiated contacts, police-initiated contacts, frequency of those contacts, and exposure to media about police misconduct cannot be used as a group but rather individually to predict all three different levels of crime-reporting behavior (i.e., reporting of less serious crimes, reporting of medium-level crimes, and reporting of serious crimes).*

**Keywords:** *crime-reporting behavior; police-citizen interactions; media exposure; attitudes toward the police*

## **Personal Experiences with the Police**

The relationship between citizens and the police is comprised of two components: 1) physical and 2) emotional. The physical component relates to individuals who have had direct contact with the police through their own personal encounters. The emotional component, on the other hand, relates to both direct contacts with the police and contacts that occur vicariously. This refers to opinions that are formed based on observation of others, either through the media or from friends, neighbors, who have had physical contacts with the police (Brown & Delores, 2000; Chermak, McGarrell, & Grunewald, 2004).

Personal experiences with the police, as a form of the physical component of the citizen-police relationship, vary by numerous factors (i.e., number of stops made by the police, types of contacts with the police, citizens' demographic characteristics, personal attitudes toward law enforcement, and disregard for the safety of others). Research shows that about 21% of U.S. residents have contact with the police each year (Bureau of Justice Statistics,

2001; 2005b, 2007b). This percentage has been fairly stable for several years in a row. Furthermore, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2005b) reported that in 2002 about 28% of all those contacts with the police were to report a crime or to report a problem in the neighborhood. A greater number of contacts with the police, however, did not include reporting a crime or reporting other problems to the police. Most of those citizen-police encounters were police-initiated (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005b, 2001). In this context, it is hypothesized that the outcome of citizen-police encounters leaves a positive or negative imprint on citizens' evaluation of the police (i.e., satisfaction with the police is most likely to be affected by the outcome of citizen-police encounters), which will have a positive or negative effect on crime-reporting behavior since the encounter is police-initiated, and as such, in most cases, it is involuntary (Smith & Arian, 2006; Goudriaan, 2006; Robertshaw, Louw, & Mtani, 2001). This tells us that negative personal experiences with the police are more likely to occur and accumulate during non-crime-reporting events.

Moreover, personal experiences can be explained by the type of contacts citizens have with the police (see subsection that follows). Research shows that frequent traffic stops, racial profiling, arrests made by the police, and police misconduct have a tremendous effect on the citizen-police relationship (Bates & Fassenfest, 2005; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005b, 2002). Again, this effect is manifested in a form of dissatisfaction with the police. This form of dissatisfaction, resulting from personal experiences with the police, is a contributing factor in the creation of negative attitudes toward the police, which ultimately result in lower crime-reporting behavior (see Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1987; Byrne, Conway, & Ostermeyer, 2005; see also; Skogan, 1994).

Empirical evidence shows that the link between personal experiences and crime-reporting behavior is mainly based on age, gender, and socio-economic status. Based on prior research, three general research hypotheses can be generated that link personal experience to crime-reporting. Younger people are more likely to accumulate negative experiences with the police as a result of higher frequency of contacts with the police and therefore are less likely to cooperate with social control institutions (i.e., less likely to report crime to the police) than older people. This hypothesis has been tested and empirically supported by many researchers (Bickman, 1976; McAra & McVie, 2005; Hopkins & Hewstone, 1992; Low & Durking, 2001; Hindelang, 1976; Tanton & Jones, 2003; Byrne, Conway, & Ostermeyer, 2005; Skogan, 2005). By gender, males are more likely to encounter negative experiences with the police and are less likely to report crimes to the police than females (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005b, 2001; Beck & Yulia, 2004; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005b; McAra & McVie, 2005; Piliavin & Briar, 1964). And third, regardless of age and gender, people who live in socially and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods are more likely to report having had negative experiences with the police than people who live in more socially and economically developed neighborhoods. For the poor and the unemployed, such experiences have a negative influence on their attitudes toward the police and ultimately on crime-reporting behavior (Sampson & Bartusch, 1998; Bennett & Wiegand, 1994; Goudriaan, 2006; Skogan, 1976a, 1976b).

The argument can be extended to include race, and its correlation with personal experiences with the police, as an equally important factor in explaining crime-reporting behavior. Along this line, some researchers have reported that, by race, African Americans and whites have different experiences

with the police. This difference has been documented by Howell, Perry, and Vile (2004) in their study about the evaluation of the police by race. According to Howell, Perry and Vile (2004), "blacks are more likely than whites to report having experienced involuntary, uncivil, or adversarial contacts with the police; to be stopped, questioned, and/or searched without cause or due process; and to experience verbal or physical abuse personally" (p. 46). Weitzer and Tuch's (1999) study also supports Howell, Perry and Vile's (2004) findings about blacks reporting more negative experiences with the police than whites (see also Brown & Delores, 2000; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005b, 2001). However, controlling for negative experiences, attitudes, and victimization rates, race has not been shown to be a strong determinant of crime-reporting behavior. Therefore, race as an independent variable cannot be used with a high degree of certainty to explain the variation in crime-reporting behavior since evidence to support this is weak and somewhat questionable. However, race is a strong factor if used to explain the variation in attitudes toward the police rather than crime-reporting behavior.

In summation, there are many factors that can be taken into account when using personal experiences to explain crime-reporting behavior. However, research shows more support for three distinguished factors: namely age, gender, and socio-economic status (SES). This does not mean that there are no other factors that can be used to explain crime-reporting behavior in the context of personal experiences; it only means that up-to-date research shows that the effect of these three factors on crime-reporting behavior is more pronounced compared to other variables. This leaves us enough room for further testing in this area, either with the same hypotheses or by generating new hypotheses.

## **Types of Contacts with the Police**

### ***Citizen-initiated and Police-initiated Contacts***

Research indicates that the nature of the contact (voluntary versus involuntary) and perceptions of that contact have a strong influence on citizen-police relationships (Schafer et al., 2003). There are a number of different reasons why a person would have contact with the police. Notably, by type of contacts, the encounters with the police can either be citizen-initiated contacts or police-initiated contacts. According to Davis and Henderson (2003), citizen-initiated contacts include mostly calls to report crimes, emergencies, suspicious persons, and noise complaints (Davis & Henderson, 2003). Generally speaking, cit-

izen-initiated contacts with the police pertain to how people see the police, usually as a vital community resource, one entity whom they can contact to receive or give important information (i.e., to report crimes), or discuss community problems such as demanding or suggesting appropriate solutions to reduce crime (Johnson, 1993). Police-initiated contacts, on the other hand, are contacts initiated by the police for various reasons, and they may be formal or informal in nature (Sced, 2004). Such contacts include traffic stops, execution of arrest warrants, summons, arrests for minor crimes, and arrests for serious crimes.

### *Citizen-Initiated Contacts*

The link between citizen-initiated contacts and crime-reporting behavior is mostly through attitudes toward the police as an intervening variable. According to Rosenbaum et al. (2005), citizen-initiated contacts, in general, tend to produce positive attitudes toward the police. Research shows that even in cases when citizens were not satisfied with the results of police service, their attitudes toward the police did not change (Rosenbaum et al., 2005). However, these findings are not stable when comparing them to a number of similar studies. Schafer, Huebner, and Bynum (2003), for example, argued that citizens who had voluntary contacts (citizen-initiated contacts) with the police and were dissatisfied with the results/outcome of those encounters, reported a lower level of satisfaction with the police. Correspondingly, low level of satisfaction with the police is an indicator of negative attitudes toward the police (Scheider, Rowell, & Bezdikian, 2003; Skogan, 1994; Touhy & Wrennal, 1995; see also Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006a). And as discussed earlier, negative attitudes toward the police are manifested in lower crime-reporting behavior (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1987; Robertshaw, Louw, & Mtani, 2001; Skogan, 2005; Salmi, Voeten, & Keskinen, 2005; Byrne, Conway, & Ostermeyer, 2005). In this current study, citizen-initiated contacts will be treated as an independent variable with the assumption that citizen-initiated contacts with the police, to some degree, affect crime-reporting behavior.

Furthermore, the general assumption is that those who have voluntary contacts with the police are more likely to hold positive attitudes toward the police and are more willing to cooperate with the police. However, this hypothesis does not hold true. Empirical evidence tells us that, by race for example, blacks are

more likely to hold negative attitudes toward the police, regardless of the type of contact. Yet, their attitudes are not affected by the type of contacts as much as by the frequency of contacts with the police, police behavior, personal experiences, prior victimization, and a number of other variables (Carter, 1985; Bates & Fasenfest, 2005; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005a, 2005b; Brown & Delores, 2000; Travis et al., 2000; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007a). Thus, the logic of using race to explain crime-reporting behavior based on the type of contacts with the police (voluntary vs. involuntary) is not philosophically nor empirically defensible. That is, based on empirical evidence, we should not expect race to have the same effect on crime-reporting behavior as it has on attitudes toward the police, even when controlling for types of contacts with the police. When race produces negative results in trying to explain the variation in attitudes toward the police, it does not mean that race will also produce negative results in explaining the variation in crime-reporting behavior (see Johnson, 1993).

Overall, research tells us that a citizen-initiated contact with the police, when treated as an independent variable, has some influence on crime-reporting behavior. Needless to say, citizen-initiated contacts with the police do not seem to have a strong direct influence on crime-reporting behavior. Rather, this influence is projected through other variables, namely attitudes toward the police, police behavior, and personal experiences with the police.

### *Police-Initiated Contacts*

The discussion of police-initiated contacts in this subsection is limited to its effect on crime-reporting behavior and attitudes toward the police. Police-initiated contacts in most cases are involuntary. Research shows that contacts between the police and citizens may not be as a result of actions taken by the citizens.<sup>1</sup> Police-initiated contacts occur for a variety of reasons. In a great number of cases, police-initiated contacts may carry out negative consequences (Beck & Yulia, 2004; Skogan, 2005; Rosenbaum et al., 2005). Johnson (1993) argued that police-initiated traffic stops, for example, can lead to potentially violent confrontations. Although violent confrontations with the police only occur in 1.5% of all police-initiated contacts, the negative consequences are much broader than the percentage itself (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005b, 2002). In this view, the outcome of police-initiated contacts with citizens may have

<sup>1</sup> In this subsection and in the previous subsection, we used the word "citizen" rather than "public" because the police are part of the public. In this context, police-initiated contacts could also mean public-initiated contacts. Hence, to make this distinction, we used citizen-initiated contacts rather than public-initiated contacts.



negative effects on the citizen-police relationship. The general assumption is that police-initiated contacts result in citizens' negative experiences with the police, and as such, those experiences negatively affect citizen's attitudes toward the police, a primary behavior, and eventually crime-reporting behavior, a subsequent behavior. In other words, police-initiated contacts are the source of citizens' negative experiences with the police. However, most research studies indicate that the police are not likely to randomly stop citizens without probable cause. According to Bureau of Justice Statistics (2005b, 2002, 2006a), about 84% of drivers who were stopped by the police in 1999 and 2002 considered those stops legitimate. This tells us that police-initiated contacts, although undesirable, for the most part are necessary occurrences.

What makes police-initiated contacts relevant to the current study is that some groups of people have a higher level of involvement or are more exposed to police-initiated contacts than others. In this regard, research shows that blacks and other minorities, younger people, low-income individuals, and males more than females by gender are more prone to police-initiated contacts (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002; Byrne et al., 2005; Skogan, 2005; see also Hurst & Frank, 2000). And as mentioned earlier, their experiences with the police contribute to the development of negative attitudes toward the police (Johnson, 1993; McAra & McVie, 2005). In many instances, such attitudes are usually caused by a negative predisposition. That is, someone may selectively recall negative encounters with the police; thus, this attitudinal predisposition is more likely to provoke a negative police response in return (Rosenbaum et al., 2005).

Finally, it is logical that experiences with the police, especially with police-initiated contacts, play an important role in citizen-police relationships. Most public opinions about the police are derived from past experiences with the police. Normally, past experiences, to a large extent, are predictors of crime-reporting behavior toward the police. Past negative experiences, for which it has been established that are more likely to result from police-initiated contacts than citizen-initiated contacts, produce a negative effect that is spread across crime-reporting behavior, attitudes toward the police, and a number of other variables that are vital in the functioning of social control mechanisms such as the police.

### *Frequency of Contacts with the Police*

The effect of frequency of contacts with the police on crime-reporting behavior has not been studied. Based on available empirical studies, this effect can

only be linked indirectly to crime-reporting behavior. The current study, however, will attempt to determine the amount of direct influence of the frequency of contacts with the police on crime-reporting behavior.

Most prior studies have been focused on the determinants (e.g., age, gender, race, and SES) that are correlated with the frequency of contacts with the police while trying to explain citizen-police relationships. In other words, researchers have attempted to determine why certain groups of people have more frequent contact with the police than others (see Rosenbaum et al., 2005; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005a, 2002). Needless to say, frequency of contacts with the police, in this context, has been treated as a dependent variable. In contrast, in this study we treat frequency of contacts with the police as an independent variable.

Research shows that a higher number of contacts with the police results in lower willingness to cooperate with the police. This effect is more pronounced with police-initiated contacts than citizen-initiated contacts. In other words, research shows that those who have more frequent contacts with the police are more likely to report negative attitudes toward the police (Frank & Hurst, 2005). Page, Wake, and Ames's (2004) study also shows that a higher frequency of contacts with the police negatively affects public attitudes toward the police (see also Jesilow et al. 1995). However, some researchers have noted that attitudes toward the police are fairly stable, and as such they are not easily influenced by one or two police-initiated contacts (Rosenbaum et al., 2005). This tells us that in order for us to use the frequency of contacts with the police as an influencing variable on crime-reporting behavior, the number of contacts should be significantly high; high enough to affect attitudes toward the police before affecting crime-reporting behavior. Moreover, if the number of police-initiated contacts affects citizens' attitudes toward the police, it follows that the number of contacts with the police will also affect crime-reporting behavior since attitudes have a significant influence on crime-reporting behavior (see Jesilow et al. 1995; Carter, 1985; Skogan, 2005; Carcach, 1997; see also Singer, 1988; Goudrianna, 2006; Smith & Arian, 2006; for reviews).

### *Media Exposure*

The possibility of association between exposure to media about police misconduct and crime-reporting behavior has been investigated by very few researchers (Lurigio & Rosenbaum, 1991; Salmi, Smolej, & Kivivuori, 2007; Bachman, 1998). Most of the research currently available about media exposure

is concentrated in police use of force and public attitudes toward the police (Weitzer & Tuch, 2005; Miller et al., 2005). Unsurprisingly, past research studies cannot successfully explain the amount of influence that exposure to media about police misconduct has on crime-reporting behavior. By contrast, the current study makes an attempt to determine the direct influence of media exposure on crime-reporting behavior.

Needless to say, over the past few decades, television in America has become a central component of contemporary social life (Doyle, 2000). Both the public and the police are dependent on the mass media. Goldstein (1977) argued that the public depends on the media for their understanding of issues related to policing (see also Gallagher et al., 2001). This dependency, therefore, contributes to the formation of public opinions about the police that may negatively or positively affect many dimensions of policing (Goldstein, 1977). The media (e.g., newspapers, television, internet, and radios), like the police, have a mission to accomplish. Their mission is to inform the public about police service and police effectiveness as realistically as possible. Occasionally, this function of the media conflicts with the interests of the police as police agencies have the desire to keep certain information confidential, especially information that involves police misconduct (Wallace, Roberson, & Steckler, 1995; Cole & Smith, 2001). The media, in this regard, have been criticized and, in fact, blamed for portraying and delivering a negative image of the police to the general public (Goldstein, 1977).

Generally, the effect of media on crime-reporting behavior can be positive and negative, and this effect is linked through public trust, satisfaction with the police service, police legitimacy, and an unrealistic exaggeration of the amount of crime that occurs on a daily basis, which increases the level of fear among people. The negative effect of media on crime-reporting behavior becomes evident when exposing police misconduct to the public. This exposure considerably hurts the public trust in the police (Cole & Smith, 2001; Tyler, 2005; Stoutland, 2001; Hurst & Frank, 2000; Goldsmith, 2005; Dowler, 2003). Nonetheless, as hurtful as it might seem, exposing police behavior has some positive effects, at least in the long-run. That is, exposure through media influences police institutions to become more proactive, and restricting or concealing particular operations becomes less practical in police agencies (Doyle, 2000).

The direct link between the media and crime-reporting behavior is through the publications of crime prevention strategies. That is, through the mass media campaigns, the police can reach a large

audience by launching crime stoppers programs that can target specific types of crimes and specific types of offenders by encouraging individuals to come forward with information that can help the police catch criminals (Lurigio & Rosenbaum, 1991; see also Sacco & Silverman, 1981; Mendelsohn, & O'Keefe, 1982; Rosenbaum et al., 1987).

### The Present Study

In this study, we test four research hypotheses about the influence of citizen interaction with the police on crime-reporting behavior and attitudes toward the police. Earlier studies show that citizen interaction with the police is multilevel. In this context, citizens may decide to initiate direct contacts with the police (citizen-initiated contacts), a form of contact that is considered voluntary. However, citizen interaction with the police can also be involuntary. This form of contact is rather police-initiated. The review of literature suggests that negative or positive experiences with the police can result from both police-initiated and citizen-initiated contacts (Johnson, 1993; Rosenbaum et al., 2005; Bates & Fasenfest, 2005). Nonetheless, there is an inherent nature of negative experiences with the police to originate from police-initiated contacts rather than citizen-initiated contacts with the police. Depending on the type of contacts people have had with the police in the recent years, people feel more or less confident in the police and more or less willing to cooperate with them (see Beck & Yulia, 2004; Skogan, 2005; Rosenbaum et al., 2005). Moreover, research shows that citizen-initiated contacts in general tend to produce positive attitudes toward the police (Rosenbaum et al., 2005). Attitudes toward the police, in turn, have a direct influence on crime-reporting behavior (see Carcach, 1997; Robertshaw, Louw, & Mtani, 2001; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1987; Bennett & Wiegand, 1994). Police-initiated contacts, on the other hand, may have negative consequences. This means that police-initiated contacts are rather involuntary, and as such they tend to negatively influence citizen-police relationships (Bennett, 2004; Beck & Yulia, 2004; Skogan, 2005; Rosenbaum et al., 2005).

In addition to citizen-initiated and police-initiated contacts, research shows that public opinions about the police and cooperation with the police are influenced by what people see or read in the media, e.g., television, radio, newspapers, and internet (Brown & Delores, 2000; Chermak, McGarrell, Gruenewald, 2004; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). However, regarding media exposure, there is no conclusive evidence as to what extent media

influences crime-reporting behavior. Most research in this area has been focused on the influence of media on attitudes toward the police (Weitzer & Tuch, 2005; Miller et al., 2005). Nevertheless, media remains an important factor of public interaction with the police. In summation, prior research shows the indirect link of the influence of citizen interaction with the police on crime-reporting behavior and the direct link of the influence of citizen interaction with the police on attitudes toward the police. There are no studies that directly tested the influence of citizen interaction with the police on crime-reporting behavior. To test this direct influence, the following four research hypotheses were developed:

- H (1): Those who have citizen-initiated (voluntary) contacts with the police are more likely to report crimes to the police compared to those who have police-initiated (involuntary) contacts with the police. In other words, citizen-initiated contacts with the police have a positive influence on crime-reporting behavior since citizen-initiated contacts are considered as voluntary.
- H (2): Those who have voluntary (citizen-initiated) contacts with the police are more likely to hold positive attitudes toward the police compared to those who have involuntary (police-initiated) contacts with the police. In other words, citizen-initiated contacts with the police have a positive influence on attitudes toward the police.
- H (3): Individuals who have more frequent contacts with the police, regardless of the type of contact, are less likely to report crimes to the police. In other words, there is an inverse relationship between the number of contacts with the police and willingness to report crimes to the police. To state it differently, as the frequency of contacts with the police increases, willingness to report crimes to the police decreases.
- H (4): Those who are more often exposed to media about police misconduct are less likely to report crimes to the police.

## DATA AND METHODS

### *Participants*

The data for this research study were collected in 2009 as part of a larger study on crime-reporting behavior. For this study, using a 111-item questionnaire, we surveyed 531 undergraduate university stu-

dents (248 males and 283 females) in six colleges in a large public university in Pennsylvania, USA. The students who participated in this study ranged in age from 18 to 52 years ( $M = 22$ ,  $SD = 4.5$ ). In terms of race/ethnicity, most participants identified themselves as Whites (72.3%), followed by African Americans (16.1%), Asians (3.8%), Hispanic/Latinos (1.3%), and "other" (6.5%). To select the sample of participants in this study, we adopted a two-stage cluster sampling procedure, stratified by colleges. Building on the advantages of the cluster sampling method, we drew six sub-samples, one from each college, assuring an equal representation of students in the final sample ( $n = 531$ ). We calculated the number of participants for each sub-sample based on the percentage of students enrolled in each of the six colleges.

### *Measures of Crime-Reporting Behavior*

The dependent variable in this study is crime-reporting behavior. Since crime-reporting behavior varies by the degree of the seriousness of the crime, we used three separate scales (composite measures) with a total of 24 mini-scenarios/items measured on a five-point Likert-scale (*strongly disagree* = 1, *disagree* = 2, *neutral* = 3, *agree* = 4, and *strongly agree* = 5).

To determine the groupings of items for each of the three scales, the pool of 24 crime-reporting items/mini-scenarios was subjected to factor analysis using SPSS version 16.0 (Statistical Package for Social Science). The initial results of the factor analysis using the maximum likelihood extraction with the varimax rotation indicated that there were four factors with eigenvalues exceeding 1.0, explaining 43.83%, 14.43%, 7.33%, and 4.53% of the variance in crime-reporting behavior. After inspecting the scree plot, a three-factor solution was deemed suitable for further investigation. Thus, we performed a second factor analysis with a forced extraction, limiting the number of extracted factors to three. We labeled the first factor, Factor 1, "crime-reporting 3," we labeled the second factor, Factor 2, "crime-reporting 1," and the third factor, Factor 3, "crime-reporting 2." The items that were grouped in Factor 1 measured the reporting of serious crimes (e.g., kidnapping, rape, murder, etc.), the items that were grouped in Factor 2 measured the reporting of less serious crimes (e.g., smoking marijuana, selling illicit drugs, painting graffiti, etc.), and the items that were grouped in Factor 3 measured the reporting of medium-level crimes (e.g., physical threats, future terrorist threats, etc). The main idea here was to extract a minimum number of factors that can explain the maximum amount of variance in the crime-reporting behavior.



The internal consistency coefficients computed for each crime-reporting scale is adequate, .89, .87, and .94, respectively, indicating that these measures have excellent reliability for research purposes. Additionally, the results of scree test for each crime-reporting scale, which are based on principal component analysis, suggest that all three crime-reporting scales are unidimensional.

A second dependent variable, a mediating variable, in this study is attitudes toward the police. We measured attitudes toward the police using a 30-item Likert scale (*strongly disagree* = 1, *disagree* = 2, *neutral* = 3, *agree* = 4, and *strongly agree* = 5). A higher score on the attitude scale indicates positive attitudes toward the police, whereas a lower score indicates more negative attitudes toward the police. The internal consistency coefficients computed for attitudes toward the police scale is also adequate for research purposes (Cronbach's Alpha = .94).

#### ***Measures of Citizen Interaction with the Police***

We used five variables to measure citizen interaction with the police. We measured the interaction with the police in terms of the quantity and quality of contacts with the police. The quality of contacts with the police refers to the types of contacts people had with the police, namely police-initiated contacts and citizen-initiated contacts. To measure police-initiated contacts, we used a 12-item list of possible mini-scenarios pertaining to police-initiated contacts. To measure citizen-initiated contacts with the police, we used a 9-item list of possible mini-scenarios pertaining to citizen-initiated contacts. Each item had a binary response category (*Yes* = 1, *No* = 0).

To reiterate, the first survey question was designed to capture whether or not respondents had contact with the police in the past two years. They were asked to recall the number of contacts (quantity) they have had with the police in the *past two years* (*Yes* = 1, *No* = 0). A follow-up survey question asked respondents to recall the most recent contact they have had with the police. This question extended beyond the last two-year period; it attempted to capture the last remembered contact respondents had with the police, *regardless of time*. Additionally, we classified the interaction with the police by the type of contacts or quality of contacts (police-initiated and citizen-initiated contacts) respondents had with the police. In some instances, people may not have contacts with the police, but they still have an opinion about the police. Weitzer and Tuch (1999, 2005a), for example, contend that some people create their opin-

ion about the police based on what they see on television (Weitzer & Tuch, 1999, 2005a). To capture this influence, we used a one 4-point Likert item ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*often*) that asked respondents to indicate how often they heard or read about police misconduct on TV, radio, newspapers, and internet, a survey item that was borrowed from Weitzer and Tuch's (1999) study. This single item was designed to measure the influence of media exposure on people's decisions whether or not to report witnessed crimes or victimization events to the police; a vicarious form of contact with the police.

#### ***Control Variables***

This study controls a number of variables, including demographic variables (e.g. age, gender, and race, socio-economic status). Among others are police behavior measured by a 22-item scale (Cronbach's Alpha = .927), prior victimization (victimization for crimes against persons measured by a 3-item index and victimization for crimes against property measured by a 4-item index), fear of criminal retaliation, which we measured by a one single item with 1 to 5 response category, and crime-reporting anonymity, a construct that we measured using a 4-item Likert scale (Cronbach's Alpha = .713) (refer to Table 6). Additionally, to determine whether or not the respondents had introduced personal bias in their answers to other inventories (scales), we used a 12-item personal reaction inventory (scale) with binary response categories (*Yes* = 1, *No* = 0) (see Crowne & Marlowe, 1960; McCrae & Costa, 1983; Ray, 1984). People have a tendency to over-report or under-report activities that are considered to be socially or culturally desirable or undesirable (Zerbe & Paulhus, 1987; see also DeVellis, 2003; Moorman & Podsakoff, 1992). The concern with this effect is that the respondents who tend to respond in more socially desirable ways are more likely to indicate they will report crimes to the police when in fact the reality is otherwise. This 12-item scale has a Cronbach's Alpha of .665, which is considered a minimally acceptable level of reliability (see DeVellis, 2003). A higher correlation between social desirability scale and other scales indicates that the respondents have introduced some bias in their answers. Conversely, a lower correlation indicates that the respondents have answered truthfully. The correlation analysis in this study shows that the effect of social desirability bias on respondents concerning the truthfulness of their responses was minimal, which adds to the validity and reliability of the research findings in this study.



## RESULTS

*Hypothesis 1* predicted that individuals who have voluntary (citizen-initiated) contacts with the police are more likely to report crimes to the police compared to those who have involuntary contacts with the police (police-initiated contacts). In other words, citizen-initiated contacts with the police have a positive effect on crime-reporting behavior, whereas police-initiated contacts have a negative effect on crime-reporting behavior. To test this hypothesis, we used ordinary least square (OLS) regression analysis.

In Table 1, the bivariate regression analysis shows that citizen-initiated contacts have a positive effect on the reporting of less serious crimes [ $b = 3.448$ ,  $F(1, 529) = 21.127$ ,  $p < .0005$ ]; also a positive effect on the reporting of serious crimes [ $b = .584$ ,  $F(1, 529) = .559$ ,  $p < .455$ ], but a negative effect on the reporting of medium-level crimes [ $b = -.121$ ,  $F(1, 529) = .058$ ,  $p < .811$ ]. However, this effect reached statistical significance only for the reporting of less serious crimes. This effect was significant ( $p < .001$ ) at both the bivariate level (see Table 1) and the multivariate level (see Table 6). In this context, the data in Tables 1 and 6 tell us that individuals who have had voluntary (citizen-initiated) contacts with the police are more likely to report less serious crimes to the police compared to those who have had involuntary (police-initiated) contacts. This conclusion, however, does not hold true for the reporting of medium-level and serious crimes. Conversely, the effect of police-initiated contacts was positive for both the reporting of medium-level crimes [ $b = .033$ ,  $F(1, 529) = .004$ ] and serious crimes [ $b = 1.689$ ,  $F(1, 529) = 3.847$ ]. At the bivariate level, this effect was statistically significant only for the reporting of serious crimes [ $b = 1.689$ ,  $F(1, 529) = 3.847$ ,  $p < .05$ ] (see Table 2). At the multivariate level, the effect of police-initiated contacts on the reporting of medium-level crimes [partial  $b = -.507$ ,  $F(17, 513) = 3.894$ ,  $p < .403$ ] and serious crimes [partial  $b = .288$ ,  $F(17, 513) = 8.646$ ,  $p < .742$ ] (see Table 6) failed to reach the statistical significance of  $p < .05$ .

Although statistically insignificant, these data tell us that individuals who have had police-initiated contacts are more likely to report medium-level and serious crimes to the police compared to individuals who have had citizen-initiated contacts with the police. Thus, our hypothesis that police-initiated contacts will have a negative effect on crime-reporting behavior was incorrect. In light of this empirical

evidence, hypothesis 1 is rejected since we only found partial support from these data.

*Hypothesis 2* predicted that citizen-initiated contacts with the police are more likely to have a positive effect on attitudes toward the police compared to police-initiated contacts. The bivariate regression analysis in Table 3 shows that this hypothesis is partially supported. As predicted, empirical evidence suggests that police-initiated contacts have a negative effect on citizens' attitudes toward the police [ $b = -3.126$ ,  $F(1, 529) = 2.036$ ,  $p < .154$ ]. This means that people who have had police-initiated contacts are more likely to display negative attitudes toward the police compared to those who have not had such contacts. The effect of police-initiated contacts on attitudes toward the police, however, did not reach the significance level at the bivariate level. Additionally, even when controlling for the effect of other variables (e.g., demographic variables, frequency of contacts, crime-reporting anonymity, and police behavior, see Table 6), police-initiated contacts [partial  $b = -2.168$ ,  $F(14, 516) = 47.949$ ,  $p < .191$ ] failed to reach the specified minimum significance level of  $p < .05$  in this study. Citizen-initiated contacts, on the other hand, produced a positive effect on attitudes toward the police [ $b = 4.74$ ,  $F(1, 529) = 5.797$ ,  $p < .016$ ]. This means that people who have had voluntary (citizen-initiated) contacts with the police are more likely to display positive attitudes toward the police. This effect is statistically significant  $p < .05$  at both the bivariate level (see Table 3) and the multivariate level (see Table 6). In light of this evidence, hypothesis 2 is partially supported. However, a partially supported hypothesis does not qualify for the acceptance of that hypothesis. Based on this criterion, hypothesis 2 is rejected.

*Hypothesis 3* predicted that individuals who have more frequent contacts with the police are less likely to report crimes to the police. In other words, as the frequency of contacts with the police increases, willingness to report crimes to the police decreases. To test this hypothesis, we used ordinary least square (OLS) regression analysis.

The data in the current study did not support this hypothesis. In fact, findings of this study show quite the opposite direction of the relationship between the frequency of contacts and crime-reporting behavior. The bivariate regression analysis in Table 4 shows that frequency of contacts with the police has a positive effect on all three crime-reporting measures. However, except for the reporting of serious crimes [ $b = .803$ ,  $F(1, 529) = 5.144$ ,  $p < .024$ ], the effect of frequency of contacts with the police did not reach the significance

**Table 1.** *Bivariate Regression Analysis: Regressing Crime-Reporting Behavior on Citizen-Initiated Contacts with the Police (n = 531)*

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t
Constant (1)	20.559	.572		
Citizen-Initiated Contacts	3.448	.750	.196	4.596***
R <sup>2</sup> = .038 F (1, 529) = 21.127***				
Constant (2)	22.315	.385		
Citizen-Initiated Contacts	-.121	.505	-.010	-.240
R <sup>2</sup> = .000 F (1, 529) = .058				
Constant (3)	42.847	.595		
Citizen-Initiated Contacts	.584	.780	.033	.748
R <sup>2</sup> = .001 F (1, 529) = .559				

Note: \*\*\*Significance at the .001 level. \*\*Significance at the .01 level. \*Significance at the .05 level. Dependent Variables: Constant (1) = Crime-reporting 1 (scale for measuring the reporting of less serious crimes). Constant (2) = Crime-reporting 2 (scale for measuring the reporting of medium-level crimes). Constant (3) = Crime-reporting 3 (scale for measuring the reporting of serious crimes).

**Table 2.** *Bivariate Regression Analysis: Regressing Crime-Reporting Behavior on Police-Initiated Contacts (n = 531)*

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t
Constant (1)	23.062	.722		
Police-Initiated Contacts	-.684	.846	-.035	-.808
R <sup>2</sup> = .001 F (1, 529) = .653				
Constant (2)	22.221	.477		
Police-Initiated Contacts	.033	.559	.003	.059
R <sup>2</sup> = .000 F (1, 529) = .004				
Constant (3)	41.959	.734		
Police-Initiated Contacts	1.689	.861	.085	1.961*
R <sup>2</sup> = .007 F (1, 529) = 3.847*				

Note: \*\*\*Significance at the .001 level. \*\*Significance at the .01 level. \*Significance at the .05 level. Dependent Variables: Constant (1) = Crime-reporting 1 (scale for measuring the reporting of less serious crimes). Constant (2) = Crime-reporting 2 (scale for measuring the reporting of medium-level crimes). Constant (3) = Crime-reporting 3 (scale for measuring the reporting of serious crimes).

**Table 3.** *Bivariate Regression Analysis: Regressing Attitudes toward the police on Police-Citizen Encounters (n = 531)*

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t
Constant (1)	93.586	1.504		
Citizen-Initiated Contacts	4.748	1.972	.104	2.408*
R <sup>2</sup> = .011 F (1, 529) = 5.797*				
Constant (2)	98.621	1.868		
Police-Initiated Contacts	-3.126	2.191	-.062	1.427
R <sup>2</sup> = .004 F (1, 529) = 2.036				

Note: \*\*\*Significance at the .001 level. \*\*Significance at the .01 level. \*Significance at the .05 level. Dependent Variable: Attitudes toward the Police.

level of  $p < .05$ ; a criterion used to accept or reject research hypotheses in this study. At the multivariate level (see Tables 6), the effect of the frequency of

contacts with the police on all three crime-reporting measures failed to reach the minimum significance level of  $p < .05$ . Therefore, hypothesis 3 is rejected.

**Table 4.** Bivariate Regression Analysis: Regressing Crime-Reporting Behavior on Frequency of Contacts with the Police ( $n = 531$ )

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t
Constant (1)	22.217	.530		
Frequency of Contacts	.326	.348	.041	.936
R <sup>2</sup> = .002 F (1, 529) = .876				
Constant (2)	22.057	.350		
Frequency of Contacts	.176	.230	.033	.763
R <sup>2</sup> = .001 F (1, 529) = .582				
Constant (3)	42.329	.538		
Frequency of Contacts	.803	.354	.098	2.268*
R <sup>2</sup> = .010 F (1, 529) = 5.144*				

Note: \*\*\*Significance at the .001 level. \*\*Significance at the .01 level. \*Significance at the .05 level. Dependent Variables: Constant (1) = Crime-reporting 1 (scale for measuring the reporting of less serious crimes). Constant (2) = Crime-reporting 2 (scale for measuring the reporting of medium-level crimes). Constant (3) = Crime-reporting 3 (scale for measuring the reporting of serious crimes).

**Table 5.** Bivariate Regression Analysis: Regressing Crime-Reporting Behavior on Media Exposure ( $n = 531$ )

Independent Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients	t
Constant (1)	23.670	1.215		
Exposure to Media	-.399	.417	-.042	-.956
R <sup>2</sup> = .002 F (1, 529) = .915				
Constant (2)	21.378	.802		
Exposure to Media	.313	.275	.049	1.137
R <sup>2</sup> = .002 F (1, 529) = 1.293				
Constant (3)	43.603	1.241		
Exposure to Media	-.150	.426	-.015	-.353
R <sup>2</sup> = .000 F (1, 529) = .125				

Note: \*\*\*Significance at the .001 level. \*\*Significance at the .01 level. \*Significance at the .05 level. Dependent Variables: Constant (1) = Crime-reporting 1 (scale for measuring the reporting of less serious crimes). Constant (2) = Crime-reporting 2 (scale for measuring the reporting of medium-level crimes). Constant (3) = Crime-reporting 3 (scale for measuring the reporting of serious crimes).

*Hypothesis 4* predicted that individuals who have been more often exposed to media about police misconduct are less likely to report crimes to the police. Interestingly enough, the bivariate regression analysis in Table 5 shows that exposure to media about police misconduct did not reach the minimum significance level of  $p < .05$  when measured against any of the three crime-reporting measures; a variable that we expected to have a significant influence on crime-reporting behavior. However, when introducing new variables (see Tables 6), exposure to media significantly affected the reporting of medium-level crimes [partial  $b = .552$ ,  $F(17, 513) = 3.894$ ,  $p < .04$ ] and the reporting of serious crimes [partial  $b = .828$ ,  $F(17, 513) = 8.646$ ,  $p < .04$ ]. This also tells us that at the multivariate level, exposure to media had a positive and statistically significant

effect on crime-reporting behavior (for the reporting of medium-level and serious crimes). It is noteworthy that at the bivariate level, exposure to media had a negative effect on the reporting of less serious crimes ( $b = -.399$ ) and serious crimes ( $b = -.150$ ), but it had a positive effect on the reporting of medium-level crimes ( $b = .313$ ). Regardless of these effects, this hypothesis did not reach the acceptance criteria since we only found partial support from these data. As such, hypothesis 4 is rejected as well.

### Multivariate Regression Analyses

In addition to bivariate linear regression analyses, multiple linear regression analyses were used to develop a multivariate model for predicting reporting of less serious crimes (see Table 6, Crime-Reporting 1),

**Table 6.** *Multivariate Regression Analysis: Regressing Crime-Reporting Behavior on Independent Variables (n = 531)*

Independent Variables	Crime-Reporting 1		Crime-Reporting 2		Crime-Reporting 3	
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	b	B	b	B	b	B
Constant	10.040***		17.846***		40.824***	
Age	.485	.055	.392	.068	.898**	.100
Gender (Male)	-2.328***	-.134	-2.122***	-.185	-1.505*	-.085
Asian	-4.821***	-.106	-5.294***	-.176	-9.962***	-.214
Black	-.848**	-.036	-.255	-.016	-3.751***	-.155
Other Race	-.315	-.010	-1.757*	-.083	-4.023**	-.123
SES	-.487	-.053	.215	.035	-.162	-.017
Frequency of Contacts	.031	.004	.212	.040	.568	.069
Citizen-Initiated Contacts	2.148***	.122	-.789	-.068	-.033	-.002
Police-Initiated Contacts	.140	.007	-.507	-.039	.288	.015
Exposure to Media	.516	.054	.552*	.087	.828*	.085
Victimization	-.144	-.007	-.940	-.070	-1.888	-.091
Victim of Property Crimes	1.127	.064	.501	.043	1.483	.083
Victim of Crimes A/ Persons	-.238	-.013	.871	.074	1.741	.095
Fear of Criminal Retaliation	-1.084***	-.156	-.274	-.060	-1.163***	-.163
Crime-reporting Anonymity	.036	.015	.076	.049	.267*	.111
Police Behavior	-.014	-.028	-.014	-.045	-.099***	-.202
Attitudes toward the Police	.147***	.382	.039***	.154	.041	.105
	R <sup>2</sup> = .287 F (17, 513) = 12.128***		R <sup>2</sup> = .114 F (17, 513) = 3.894***		R <sup>2</sup> = .223 F (17, 513) = 8.646***	

Note: \*\*\*Significance at the .001 level. \*\*Significance at the .01 level. \*Significance at the .05 level. Dependent Variables: Crime-Reporting 1 (reporting of less serious crimes), crime-reporting 2 (reporting of medium-level crimes), crime-reporting 3 (reporting of serious crimes).

a model for predicting reporting of medium-level crimes (see Table 6, Crime-Reporting 2), and a model for predicting reporting of serious crimes (see Table 6, Crime-Reporting 3). The main objective of including these three multivariate models is to test research hypotheses. The idea is to hold constant the effect of all variables in the model to see if the significant effect found at the bivariate level remains or disappears.

Although the existing models presented in Table 6 include all available candidates as predictors, it is noteworthy that these models have been simplified. Thus, using the backward elimination procedure, these three multivariate models were modified, leaving them with only those variables that reached the significance level of  $p < .05$ . All variables that did not contribute to explaining the variability in the dependent variable were discarded.<sup>2</sup>

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

To determine whether citizen interactions with the police influence crime-reporting behavior, four research hypotheses were tested. Hypothesis one predicted that individuals who have had voluntary

(citizen-initiated) contacts with the police are more likely to report crimes to the police compared to those who have had involuntary (police-initiated) contacts. And hypothesis two predicted that individuals who have had citizen-initiated contacts with the police are more likely to display positive attitudes toward the police compared to those who have had police-initiated contacts.

The literature suggests that there is an interrelationship between the type of contacts citizens have with the police (e.g., citizen-initiated or police-initiated), attitudes toward the police, police behavior, and crime-reporting behavior (Johnson, 1993; Carter, 1985; Bates & Fasenfest, 2005; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005a, 2005b; Brown & Delores, 2000; Travis et al., 2000; Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007a). By the type of contacts, the literature suggests that citizen-initiated or voluntary contacts with the police have a positive effect on attitudes toward the police. As discussed earlier, an increase in attitudes toward the police score results in an increase of crime-reporting behavior score (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1987; Robertshaw, Louw, & Mtani, 2001; Skogan,

<sup>2</sup> Due to space limitations, modified models are not presented in this research report.



2005; Salmi, Voeten, & Keskinen, 2005; Byrne et al., 2005). This means that there is a positive relationship between citizen-initiated contacts and attitudes toward the police. Inferentially, the relationship between citizen-initiated contacts and crime-reporting behavior is positive, meaning that citizen-initiated contacts should have a positive effect on crime-reporting behavior. However, we note that there is little or no research that has attempted to link citizen-initiated contacts directly to crime-reporting behavior. Thus, the findings of the current study are perhaps the first to report the direct influence of citizen-initiated contacts on crime-reporting behavior.

Consistent with the literature, the findings of the current study show that citizen-initiated contacts have a positive and statistically significant effect on attitudes toward the police, which is one of the mediating variables that link citizen-initiated contacts and crime-reporting behavior. This effect was significant when tested at the multivariate level as well.

With regard to crime-reporting behavior, the data in the current study show that citizen-initiated contacts with the police have a positive and statistically significant effect only on the reporting of less serious crimes. This effect remains significant even after controlling for the effect of other variables in the model. However, the findings of the current study suggest that citizen-initiated contact, when treated as an independent variable, is not a good predictor of crime-reporting behavior, especially for predicting the reporting of medium-level and serious crimes. Contrary to the theoretical predictions and to what we have hypothesized, the multivariate analyses in this study show that citizen-initiated contacts have a negative effect on the reporting of medium-level crimes and serious crimes. Nonetheless, at the multivariate level, this effect did not reach the significance level of  $p < .05$ .

In light of this empirical evidence, it is safe to conclude that citizen-initiated contacts can only be used to predict the reporting of less serious crime (e.g., smoking marijuana, selling illicit drugs, painting graffiti, etc.) but not for the reporting of medium-level crimes (e.g., physical threats, future terrorist threats, etc), and serious crimes (e.g., kidnapping, rape, murder, etc.). On the other hand, in addition to predicting the reporting of less serious crimes, citizen-initiated contact with the police can be considered a good predictor of attitudes toward the police since citizen-initiated contacts had a significant effect on attitudes toward the police.

Regarding police-initiated contacts, the literature suggests that the outcome of police-citizen

encounters leaves an imprint (negative or positive) on citizens' evaluation of the police; that is, satisfaction with the police is most likely to be affected by the outcome of police-citizen encounters. This, inferentially should have a negative effect on crime-reporting behavior since the encounters are police-initiated, and as such, in most cases, they are involuntary (see Wheitzer, 2000; Smith & Arian, 2006; Goudriaan, 2006; Robertshaw, Louw, & Mtani, 2001; see also Beck & Yulia, 2004; Skogan, 2005; Rosenbaum et al., 2005; for reviews).

First, the results of the current study confirm the literature which suggest that police-initiated contacts negatively affect citizens' attitudes toward the police (see Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002; Byrne et al., 2005; Skogan, 2005; see also Hurst & Frank, 2000; Johnson, 1993; McAra & McVie, 2005). However, this effect did not reach the significance level of  $p < .05$  at the bivariate level or multivariate level. Likewise, the effect of police-initiated contacts on crime-reporting behavior did not reach this significance level for the reporting of less serious crimes (e.g., smoking marijuana, selling illicit drugs, painting graffiti, etc.) and medium-level crimes (e.g., physical threats, future terrorist threats, etc.). The data in the current study show that police-initiated contacts had a significant negative effect only on the reporting of serious crimes. This effect reached statistical significance at both the bivariate and multivariate levels. Overall, the research findings in the current study show that police-initiated contact, when treated as an independent variable, can be considered a good predictor of crime-reporting behavior only for the reporting of serious crimes.

The interaction with the police includes more than just the type of contacts with the police (e.g., citizen-initiated and police-initiated contact); it also includes the frequency of those contacts and exposure to mass media (e.g., internet, tv, radio, and newspapers) about police behaviors. Hypothesis three in this study predicted that individuals who have had frequent contacts with the police, regardless of the type of contacts, are less likely to report crimes to the police. We predicted that a higher number of contacts with the police is negatively associated with crime-reporting behavior. Likewise, hypothesis four predicted that individuals who are more often exposed to mass media about police misconduct are less likely to report crimes to the police.

The literature suggests that individuals who have a high frequency of contacts with the police are more likely to accumulate negative experiences with the police. Thus, negative experiences

with the police, resulting from a high frequency of contacts, negatively affect public cooperation with social control institutions, namely the police (see Bickman, 1976; McAra & McVie, 2005; Low & Durking, 2001; Hindelang, 1976; Tanton & Jones, 2003; Byrne, Conway, & Ostermeyer, 2005; Skogan, 2005; for reviews). Inferentially, a high frequency of contacts with the police should negatively affect crime-reporting behavior.

Unexpectedly, the current study shows that frequency of contacts with the police did not have a significant or substantial effect on crime-reporting behavior. The frequency of contacts with the police was significant at  $p < .05$  only for the reporting of serious crimes. This significant effect, however, disappeared when tested at the multivariate level with a seventeen-variable model. It is noteworthy that frequency of contacts with the police remained significant when the number of variables were reduced down to seven at the multivariate level. Besides, our hypothesis that a higher number of contacts with the police have a negative effect on crime-reporting behavior was incorrect. Conversely, this study shows that frequency of contacts with the police had a positive effect on crime-reporting behavior. Despite the statistical insignificance, the data in the current study show that those who have more frequent contacts with the police are more likely to report crimes to the police, an unexpected finding.

The current study also tested the effect of media exposure about police misconduct on crime-reporting behavior. Hypothesis four, which predicted that exposure to media has a negative effect on crime-reporting behavior, was partially supported by the data in the current study. When tested against the three measures of crime-reporting behavior (i.e., the measure of the reporting of less serious crimes, medium-level crimes, and serious crimes), the findings of this study suggest that exposure to media

about police misconduct has a negative effect on the reporting of medium-level crimes and serious crimes. This effect, however, was significant only when exercising statistical controls, controlling for the effects of other variables in the model. Interestingly enough, at the bivariate level, exposure to media did not have a significant effect for any of the crime-reporting levels (i.e., the effect was insignificant in prediction the reporting of less serious, medium-level crimes, and serious crimes).

In summation, predictors such as citizen-initiated contacts, police-initiated contacts, frequency of those contacts, and exposure to media about police misconduct have been used in prior studies to test the influence of citizen interactions with the police on other important dependent variables, namely, attitudes toward the police, perceptions of the criminal justice system, and perception about fear of crime. In the current study, these four predictors were used to predict people's crime-reporting behavior. Needless to say, these four crime-reporting predictors cannot be used as a group to predict all three levels of crime-reporting behavior (e.g., reporting of less serious crimes, reporting of medium-level crimes, and reporting of serious crimes). Exposure to media, for instance, is a good predictor of reporting medium-level and serious crimes but not a good predictor of less serious crimes. Frequency of contacts with the police is an insignificant variable in predicting the reporting of less serious and medium-level crimes. It can only be used to predict the reporting of serious crimes. In terms of the type of contacts (e.g., citizen-initiated or police-initiated), the current study suggests that citizen-initiated contact, when treated as an independent variable, is a good predictor of the reporting of less serious crimes, whereas police-initiated contact as a variable is a good predictor of the reporting of serious crimes.

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# UTJECAJ KONTAKTA IZMEĐU POLICIJE I GRAĐANA NA PRIJAVLJIVANJE KRIMINALNOG PONAŠANJA: POJAVNOST KOD STUDENATA

## **Sažetak**

*Prijavljivanje kriminalnog ponašanja kod građana je relativno nisko, a mnogi čimbenici utječu na prevalenciju i incidenciju. Istraživanja ukazuju da postoji povezanost između vrste kontakta između građana i policije (iniciranih od strane građana, iniciranih od strane policije), stavova prema policiji, ponašanja policajaca i prijavljivanja kriminalnog ponašanja. S ciljem utvrđivanja utječe li interakcija građana s policijom na prijavljivanje kriminalnih oblika ponašanja i na stavove prema policiji, ovo istraživanje testira četiri postavljene hipoteze. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju da prediktore (poput kontakata iniciranih od strane građana ili od strane policije, učestalosti tih kontakata, izloženosti utjecaju medija o lošem postupanju policije), treba sagledavati individualno u odnosu na razinu prijavljivanja kriminalnog ponašanja (primjerice, prijavljivanje lakših, srednje ozbiljnih i teških kaznenih djela).*

**Ključne riječi:** prijavljivanje kriminalnog ponašanja, interakcija policije i građana, izloženost medijima, stavovi prema policiji