

How Violence Exposure Shapes Crime Reporting Decisions Among Latinas/os

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Introduction/ Background

- Many violent crimes go unreported, even when victims experience serious harm.
- Menjivar & Bejarano (2004) found that for Latinas/os, fear of police and past experiences play an important role in the decision to report. Recent research also shows that when Latinas/os experience violence and have negative views of police, they are less likely to report crimes (Xie & Baumer, 2019).
- Exposure to violence can affect how safe people feel and whether they believe police will help them.
- Fear of crime can shape reporting decisions and, in some cases, discourage people from contacting the police (Lane & Meeker, 2003).
- Past experiences with violence, community stress, and perceptions of police fairness influence whether crimes are reported. Research shows that even when violence happens, many Hispanic immigrants avoid reporting it to the police due to fear, immigration concerns, and distrust of law enforcement (Hautala, Dombrowski, & Marcus, 2015).
- Together, these patterns help explain why people who experience violence do not always contact the police.

Research Question

- What is the relationship between exposure to violence and reporting crimes to the police?

Data

- Online convenience sample of Latinas and Latinos
- Connect by CloudResearch
- Sample Size = 304

Methods

Measures

- **Dependent:** Cooperation with the police (4-point Likert-type scale: 1 = Very unlikely, 2= unlikely, 3=likely, 4 = Very Likely) (Tankebe, 2013), mean of three items
 - "I am willing to.."
 - Report suspicious activity near my house to the police
 - Report a crime I witnessed to the police
 - Provide information to the police to help find a criminal suspect
- **Independent:** Direct victimization (9-point Likert-type scale: 1=Never to 9 – Almost everyday) (Richters & Saltzman, 1990; Survey of Exposure to Community Violence [SECV]), mean of 8 items
 - "How many times have you yourself been threatened with serious physical harm?"
 - "How many times have you yourself been beaten up or mugged?"
 - "How many times have you yourself been attacked with a weapon?"

Controls:

1. Age
2. Sex
3. Witnessed violence
4. Household Violence
5. Fear of Crime
6. Procedural justice
7. Legal Cynicism

Analytical strategy

- Descriptive Statistics
- Correlations

Results

- Experiencing direct victimization was correlated with lower cooperation with police.
- Participants were more willing to cooperate with police when they believed officers act fairly/respectfully and when participants were older.
- As legal cynicism decreased, cooperating with police increased.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (N=304)

	Mean (#)	SD	Min	Max
Dependent Variable				
Cooperation with Police	3.10	0.82	1	4
Independent Variables				
Direct Victimization	1.46	0.68	1	5.77
Control Variables				
Witnessed Violence	1.67	0.87	1	5.88
Household Violence	1.65	2.36	0	8
Fear of Crime	2.49	1.05	1	4.63
Procedural Justice	2.16	0.73	1	4
Legal Cynicism	2.12	0.29	0.11	3.23
Age	33.57	9.19	18	60
Sex	1.53	0.49	1	2

Table 2. Correlation Matrix

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Cooperation with Police	1.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Direct Victimization	-0.15*	1.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3. Witnessed Violence	-0.08	0.74*	1.00	-	-	-	-	-	-
4. Household Violence	0.09	0.46*	0.46*	1.00	-	-	-	-	-
5. Fear of Crime	0.05	0.31*	0.31*	0.20*	1.00	-	-	-	-
6. Procedural Justice	0.47*	-0.23*	-0.21*	-0.18*	-0.06*	1.00	-	-	-
7. Legal Cynicism	-0.12*	0.17*	0.18*	0.20*	0.09	-0.08	1.00	-	-
8. Age	0.15*	0.16*	0.18*	-0.11*	-0.00	0.11*	-0.04	1.00	-
9. Sex (Female)	-0.07	-0.00	0.09	-0.11*	-0.25*	-0.10	0.12*	-0.00	1.00

Note: * p<0.05.

Conclusion/Discussion

- Prior severe victim experiences are likely impacted by how the criminal justice system handled those experiences.
- Latinas/os may not feel safe or that they will be believed if they contact the police.
- How people interpret/perceive the police plays a role in cooperation.

Selected References

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