

To Call or Not to Call? Factors Influencing American Indian or Alaska Natives' Propensity to Report Violent Victimization to Police

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Abstract

This study uses the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), located under the Bureau of Justice Statistics, to examine several factors predicted to influence calls to the police. The NCVS conducted yearly, has been collecting data on criminal victimization since 1973, and asks basic demographic information such as the person's age, race, and sex as well as questions about the crime and offender. For the purposes of this study, data from 1999-2021 was used to examine the social factors that predict whether American Indians and Alaskan Natives (AIAN) call the police to report a victimization from a violent crime. Preliminary data involving people who identified themselves as AIAN, and the reasons they either did, or did not, contact the police after an incident happened to them were explored. A logistic regression analysis was used to examine the following variables: household income, sex, marital status, age, education, location, victim/offender relationship, weapon use, and victim/offender race. This analysis will help to determine which predictors influence whether or not a personal victimization was reported to the police.

Keywords: Victimization, American Indian and Alaska Native, NCVS, Reporting Crime, Police, Violence

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Introduction

Indigenous peoples comprise approximately one percent of the U.S. population (Hanson 2023) but are more likely to be victims of violence than any other ethnicity. According to Petrosky et al. (2021), American Indian or Alaska Native (AIAN) men are three times more likely to be murdered than AIAN women. Furthermore, Indigenous women and girls are ten times more likely to be murdered than any other ethnicity (Native Women's Wilderness n.d.). When exploring other nonlethal forms of violence, AIAN men experience violence at a rate of 1.3 times higher than non-Hispanic white men in their lifetime. Similarly, AIAN women experience violence at a rate of 1.2 times higher than non-Hispanic white women in their lifetime (Rosay 2016). Given these statistics, one would think that police would be one of the first calls a victim makes. According to the National

Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), less than half of all crimes are reported to law enforcement (Thompson and Tapp 2022). Many factors are considered by victims and bystanders when deciding whether to call the police. With the AIAN population, this issue is further complicated because of the history of mistreatment by the United States government.

This particular research is important because there is a gap in the literature focusing on Indigenous populations in relation to criminology and crime studies. There is a large absence of quantitative data focused specifically on the AIAN population when it comes to violent victimizations and reporting to the police specifically. One of the only other studies recently published focusing on the AIAN population and the police used the National Incident-Based

Reporting System (NIBRS) to explore clearance rates when AIAN individuals were both the offender and victim (Lantz and Ward 2023). Therefore, our research adds to the literature by providing an overall analysis resulting in an overview of 23 years of NCVS data focusing on AIAN violent victimizations. The existing literature typically analyzes race as a variable within the larger study rather than as a selection criterion (Avakame et al. 1999; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010). Thus, research solely focusing on AIAN populations is lacking. This analysis aims to narrow this gap by exploring which predictors influence whether a violent victimization was reported to the police when the victim identified themselves as AIAN¹. Choosing a timeframe of 1999-2021, the current study examines the characteristics of and circumstances under which violent victimizations of AIAN are reported to the police. Reasons for why the police were or were not called following these incidents are also explored

Historical and Theoretical Background

Under President Grover Cleveland, in 1887, the Dawes Act (or General Allotment Act) forcefully swept through the homelands of hundreds of Native American tribes in the West. In accordance with the Dawes Act, land was divided among living members of Native American nations, with 160 acres of farmland designated to the head of each household. Once distributed, all “excess” land was sold to white settlers moving into the area for a small price. In this process, the United States government was attempting to make farmers out of tribal members in the West, encouraging them to give up their nomadic ways of life and become ranchers and farmers. In exchange for the allotted land, Indigenous peoples were required to enroll with the Office of Indian Affairs, now known as the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), listing their names on what is known as the “Dawes Rolls.” While some tribes still use the Dawes Rolls for their enrollment requirements and records², the impact this had on the lands both Native and non-Native peoples are living on impacts government and police jurisdictions still today (National Archives 2022).

One of the largest issues when crimes occur on tribal lands (e.g., reservations, Pueblos, or Alaska Native villages) or near tribal lands involving Indigenous peoples is determining which entity has the jurisdiction to act. Essentially, who do you call? Do

you call the BIA, the county sheriff, state troopers, or the local police? Some question if it is worth calling anyone because there is the feeling that they will not get there in time to help.

In one of the nearly 300 interviews conducted by Perry (2006:411), one male in Montana stated, “There’s a lot of incidents that never get reported – who ya’ gonna file a complaint with: The County? The State? The Feds? Nobody trusts them...” One of the most compelling instances that came up while exploring the literature about jurisdiction issues on tribal lands came from an interview with an Indigenous male in Wisconsin. He explained that a “guy” – he does not clarify if that man was Indigenous, or not – was standing there holding a loaded gun to his head. He explains the situation that followed when his wife tried to call the police for help.

So she went and called the cops and it didn’t actually take them that long, you know, fifteen, twenty minutes late here comes a county sheriff, comes rolling up, he looks at the situation, he looks at this dude standing there holding a shotgun...and the county cop looks at it and says, I don’t have jurisdiction here, and gets in his car and drives away...We had reservation officers, tribal game wardens; she [his wife] said ‘I’ll go see if I can get one of them up here.’...[he] drove up, he has his uniform, he has his gun, he has his truck...He looked at it and said, ‘this is not my jurisdiction.’ And he went on his way (Perry 2006:429).

These interviews illustrate how the struggle of determining which law enforcement entity to call is one of the first challenges and hurdles when it comes to reporting violent victimizations where the victim is AIAN on tribal lands (e.g., reservation, pueblo, Alaska Native village, etc.). Part of the issue is that tribal lands are spread across the United States and there are few people to serve these vast areas.

According to the BIA, four offices service the 574 federally recognized tribes in the United States. The Office of Justice Services (OJS) funds law enforcement, tribal courts, and detention facilities on tribal lands (U.S. Department of the Interior n.d.-a). The field offices of the OJS are split into nine districts across the United States. Each district is responsible for a specific land area and number of tribal members. For example, the Rocky Mountain Region (District V)

¹ For the purpose of this paper, the terminology AIAN is being utilized because the NCVS data lists this from their data collected through the United States Census, on behalf of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS).

² Enrollment includes, but is not limited to the Dawes Rolls, base rolls, as well as blood quantum requirements which vary depending on specific tribal rules and regulations.

covers more than 8.7 million acres and almost 75,000 enrolled tribal members across 9 tribes in Montana and Wyoming. Most districts cover at least two states, while District VI headquarters is in Tennessee and covers not only the state, but the entire East Coast (U.S. Department of the Interior n.d.-b).

Not only is the land itself a significant player in an individual's response to the police, but so are the law enforcement officers themselves. Indigenous peoples in North America have a long and contentious history with United States officials extending to broken treaties, boarding schools, Indian Agents, and the United States Calvary. This centuries-old mistrust of government officials and the horrendous treatment of Indigenous peoples cannot be ignored by Indigenous individuals today.

Complaints about how police do not take their problems seriously stressed the overall feeling that it was not worth the effort to report victimization to the police. In her work examining policing in Native American communities, Perry (2006) uncovered the following themes: 1) victims did not know where to go to help the situation, 2) victims think they do not have enough evidence for police to believe them, 3) the police are generally non-responsive to minor issues and only take calls if an Indigenous person is the offender and a non-Indigenous person (generally white) is the victim, and 4) police do not come even when they are called. The last two themes are reiterated by Cunneen (2001), who found an issue of "selective policing" in his work on policing aboriginal communities in Australia. Another reason that a victim might report their victimization has something to do with their past experiences reporting to the police and if they were a positive or negative experience (Hickman and Simpson 2003). While the current study is specifically researching calls made, or not made, to police and not exactly their interactions with the victims, it is still important to expand on reference to Indigenous peoples.

Where discrimination against Indigenous peoples is concerned, more than 1 in 5 Native Americans in a sample size of 342 "reported avoiding interactions with legal systems because they fear unfair treatment" (Findling et al. 2019:1439). Instances of racial profiling, as well as physical and verbal abuse from the police officers also pose a concern (Hamilton and Sinclair 1991; Neugebauer 1999; Wakeling et al. 2001). These issues are highlighted when examining the use of deadly force by police officers. Research shows AIAN men are 1.2 to 1.7 times (per 100,000) more likely to be killed by the police than white men, and AIAN women are 1.1 to 2.1 times more likely than white women to be killed by the police (Edwards, Lee, and Esposito 2019). While exploring age as a determinant, 25- to 29-year-old Native American and

Alaska Native men are killed by police at a rate between 1.5 to 2.8 per 100,000, and AIAN women are killed at a rate of 0.14 per 100,000 (Edwards et al. 2019). This increased risk of deadly force by the police only aids to further deter Indigenous peoples from calling the police in their time of need.

With the long history of mistrust between Indigenous peoples and the United States government, and the overall remoteness of tribal lands it might seem like a feat in the moment to even pick up the phone to call for help. The BIA Victim Assistance Program (VAP) was created to help individuals who are Indigenous victims on tribal lands fill in the gap between tribal and Federal court issues (U.S. Department of the Interior n.d.-c). Whether or not a violent victimization occurs on tribal lands would aid in determining who to call, but jurisdiction issues when the offender is non-Indigenous becomes another issue that also has complications.

Sovereignty and jurisdiction issues are complex and while not the scope of this project, it is important to briefly mention some of the dynamics of tribal lands and the United States government. Scholars and lawyers have degrees dedicated to understanding these boundaries and jurisdiction issues to better aid Indigenous peoples in all aspects of life because these boundaries, although invisible besides some possible signage, might as well have literal walls when it comes to the law. Podcasts (such as All My Relations, Stolen, Vanished, and Taken, among others), as well as episodes of Dateline focusing on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) or Missing and Murdered Indigenous Peoples (MMIP), have helped to highlight what is going on in Indian Country and give the general public more information about what is taking place. These podcasts have highlighted what is taking place across North America in reference to missing and murdered Indigenous peoples, including how families or entire tribal communities are taking matters into their own hands because as many mention, "the police won't help."

While history and jurisdiction pose unique challenges for Indigenous victims when considering whether to call the police, this decision is faced by all victims or witnesses of crime. Many theoretical frameworks propose that racial and ethnic minorities may be less inclined to call the police to report a victimization. These perspectives, though not directly tested in this study, provide a context to better understand the decisions victims make to report a criminal incident. A rational choice framework is commonly used in criminology to explain why individuals commit or resist committing a crime, incorporating a cost-and-benefit assessment of the situation or the crime (Cornish and Clarke 1987). However, it has been used to explain decisions made

by victims regarding the decision to report a crime incident to the police (Bowles, Garcia, and Garoupa 2009; Felson et al. 2002). When a criminal incident occurs, victims weigh the costs and benefits of reporting the incident. If calling the police is deemed to be more costly than beneficial, then the crime will not be reported (Kaukinen 2002). Research suggests the costs of reporting a crime to the police may be great, particularly for racial and ethnic minorities. Some of the costs include fear of retaliation, embarrassment, victim blaming and shaming, and poor or negative responses by the police, such as discrimination and racial profiling (Boateng 2015, 2018; Bowles et al. 2009). Yet, there are several benefits to calling the police as well, such as obtaining police protection, receiving treatment for injuries, recovering property, and preventing future offending by the perpetrator (Boateng 2018).

Ruback et al. (1984) as well as Greenberg and Ruback (1992) suggest social support networks play a key role in the decision-making process, as others may advise victims to report or not report, provide emotional support, and other relevant information. They proposed a three-stage process: (1) labeling the incident a crime, (2) deciding if the crime that occurred is serious, and (3) deciding to either report or not report the crime (Ruback et al. 1984; Greenberg & Ruback 1992). Unlike a rational choice framework, this model emphasizes the motivation to report a crime, which is impacted by one's mental state. After a victimization, an individual may experience various emotions and stress that may impede or encourage calling the police.

The above frameworks highlight explanations regarding crime reporting, but none of these perspectives are a complete picture on their own. Xie and Baumer (2019) propose a multilevel explanatory framework that builds on help-seeking behaviors as a factor for reporting a crime. There are three components to this model: Victimization/harm, individual/household characteristics, and the external environment. Victimization and harm refer to the severity of the incident based on the victim's perceptions of need. Victims may seek formal and/or informal sources of help, ranging from the police (formal) to family and friends (informal). The severity of the incident influences this decision. The victim is more likely to seek the services of the police if the crime is more severe, such as weapon use during the incident (Davies et al. 2007) and in cases of physical injury and extreme fear (Resnick et al. 2000).

Individual/household characteristics involve demographics, perceptions of the police, prior experiences with the police, and other resources that may influence a victim's decision to report to the police (Xie and Baumer, 2019). Attitudes toward the

police also influence a victim's decision on whether to report a crime. Those who report a criminal incident to the police also report positive attitudes toward the police, including being satisfied with the work of the police in their community, and having a high level of confidence in the police to do their job, while the opposite is found for those who do not report to the police (Carr, Napolitano, and Keating 2007; Watkins 2005). Further research postulates the cost and benefit analysis of reporting crime to the police is impacted by many factors including victim, offender, and incident characteristics (Tarling and Morris 2010). For instance, despite how beneficial calling the police could be, a victim may decline to do so if they know the offender as would be the case in incidents involving domestic violence (Boateng 2015). Given the importance of these characteristics, several individual factors, such as age, gender, marital status, and socioeconomic status of the victim, the location of the incident, and whether the offender was known to the victim are examined to determine whether they predict calling the police.

The third component is the external environment, which includes social networks that may encourage or discourage reporting but may also provide resources in the form of social support (emotional, informational, and material). The external environment also involves organizational characteristics, specifically the social institutions and the policies that impact individuals and can influence the decision to report a crime. Finally, this aspect includes neighborhood, community, state, regional, and national level settings. Various characteristics, including socioeconomic conditions or disadvantage at the neighborhood/community level, the crime rate, and community demographics play a role in whether a victim reports a crime to the police (Xie and Baumer 2019).

This framework captures several areas of influence in victim reporting, from victim's perceptions to macro-level factors. Moreover, this multilevel explanatory model illustrates how the external environment impacts both individual/household characteristics and the victim, and how all three components, along with previous help-seeking experiences, influence calling the police, making the decision to seek help in other ways, and whether to seek help in the future (Xie and Baumer 2019). While Xie and Baumer (2019) develop a thorough framework that incorporates both individual and macro-level factors to explain reporting to the police, the model only provides a backdrop to the current study. In the next section, these characteristics are explored further to determine which variables explain why an AIAN individual might or might not call the police to report a violent victimization.

Literature Review

While there is significant literature on how some minority groups, such as African Americans view the police, there is a large gap in this literature that primarily focuses on Indigenous peoples' views and opinions on the police in the United States. Therefore, literature on which characteristics influence calling the police among the general population is used to inform which variables are important to consider in relation to whether the police are called following the victimization of an AIAN individual.

Demographic Characteristics

Whether the police are called following a crime victimization is influenced by several personal and situational characteristics. Some of these factors have been well established in the literature, especially regarding demographic variables. A victim's race, sex, age, marital status, education, and income have all been found to influence willingness to call the police (Avakame, Fyfe, and McCoy 1999; Baumer 2002; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Schnebly 2008). However, the nature of these relationships can vary depending on the type of crime examined.

One of the more consistent findings in the literature is that incidents involving female victims are more likely to come to the attention of the police (Baumer 2002; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Hart and Rennison 2003; Schnebly 2008), especially in instances of family or domestic violence (Bachman and Coker 1995; Felson et al. 2002; Kang and Lynch 2014). In an examination of violent crimes tracked by the NCVS, Baumer (2002) found notification of police was significantly more likely for female victims of simple assault, aggravated assault, or robbery. Similarly, Felson, Messner, and Hoskin (1999:937) concluded that "victims are more likely to report an incident when a female is involved in the incident as either an offender or victim." Additionally, they report that violent incidents are handled more privately when both the victim and the offender are male and that third-party reports are most likely when the offender is male and the victim is female (Felson et al. 1999). Baumer and Lauritsen (2010) echo these findings for all crimes reported by the NCVS (both violent and property).

Research examining the influence of age has been less consistent. Several studies have found police are more likely to be called when the victim is older (Avakame et al. 1999; Baumer 2002; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010), regardless of the type of violent crime experienced (Baumer 2002). However, others have failed to find a significant relationship (Schnebly

2008), especially in instances of rape or domestic violence (Bachman 1998; Hutchinson 2003; Kang and Lynch 2014; Pitts 2014).

The influence of marital status, education, and income on crime reporting has been less thoroughly explored in the literature. When studied, most research indicates police are more likely to be notified when the victim is married (Avakame et al. 1999; Baumer 2002; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Hart and Rennison 2003; Schnebly 2008). These results vary, however, when examining rape victimization specifically. In these violent instances, marital status does not predict the likelihood of calling the police (Bachman 1998). Studies including a measure of education are also inconsistent in their findings. Some studies have found the likelihood of reporting to police is higher in incidents in which the victim is less educated (Avakame et al. 1999; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010). However, an examination of crime reporting by type of crime reveals an increase in education results in an increased likelihood of the police being called in cases of simple assault (Baumer 2002) and rape (Lizotte 1985). It is important to note that research analyzing calls to the police for domestic violence has failed to find education plays a significant role in this decision (Felson et al. 2002; Hutchinson 2003).

Finally, limited research examining the influence of income on crime reporting has typically shown victimizations are more likely to be reported to the police when the victim is from a lower socioeconomic status (Avakame et al. 1999; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Block 1974; Hart and Rennison 2003). Not all studies have found support for this relationship. In an analysis by crime type, Baumer (2002) reported income did not play a significant role in the decision to call the police after being assaulted or robbed. The same was found in studies focusing on incidents of family or domestic violence (Hutchinson 2003; Kang and Lynch 2014). Relatedly, Berg, Slocum, and Loeber (2013) failed to find a significant relationship between income and calling the police in cases with known offenders. While results are mixed in the literature, none of the prior research examined revealed an instance of increased reporting among those from upper social classes.

The research presented above clearly shows an influence of demographic characteristics on the likelihood of calling the police though a few caveats exist. What has not been thoroughly examined, however, is the impact on crime reporting specifically among the Indigenous population. The current research aims to fill this gap in the literature by determining which, if any, demographic variables are associated with the likelihood of calling the police among AIANs.

Victim-Offender Relationships

The influence the victim-offender relationship has on whether an individual might be more likely to call the police to report a victimization has been established in the literature (Block 1974). Research typically indicates that law enforcement is less likely to be notified about a criminal incident when the victim and offender know each other (Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Block 1974; Hart and Rennison 2003; Nicksa 2014). Hart and Rennison (2003) found that overall reporting to the police is higher when the offender is a stranger to the victim. Similarly, Felson et al. (1999) found bystanders are more likely to call the police when they witness an assault among strangers than intimate partners (Felson et al. 1999). This finding was mimicked by Nicksa (2014), indicating bystander intervention was less likely if the offender was known to the victim. However, this relationship can vary based on the type of crime committed (Baumer 2002; Felson et al. 2002; Kang and Lynch 2014; Lizotte 1985). Some research has indicated victims of simple assault are more likely to call the police when the offender was a family member (Baumer 2002) or ex-spouse (Felson et al. 1999). The current study contributes to the literature by examining how the victim-offender relationship influences the likelihood of AIAN reporting violent victimizations to the police.

Presence of Weapons

Incidents that involve weapons are more dangerous and potentially deadly for the parties involved. In fact, research has shown that simply the presence of weapons (specifically guns) increases the likelihood of a conflict escalating into violence (Phillips and Maume 2007). This threat of injury may explain why criminal incidents involving weapons are more likely to result in calling the police (Avakame et al. 1999; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Berg et al. 2013; Hart and Rennison 2003). These findings are consistent in the literature with few, if any, studies failing to find a significant impact (Xie et al. 2006). Given this known relationship, it is important to consider the impact weapons have on the Indigenous populations' decision to call the police following a violent victimization.

Race/Ethnicity of Victim and Offender

Many studies have examined how the race of the victim and/or offender influences the likelihood of reporting a crime to the police (Avakame et al. 1999; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010). This line of research has

typically found an increase in calling the police in incidents involving blacks (Hart and Rennison 2003). Much of this literature, however, examined the race of the victim and/or the race of the offender separately. There is a dearth of research analyzing the interplay of the race of both the victim and the offender (i.e., inter-racial versus intra-racial incidents). In the limited literature that does exist, incidents involving individuals of the same race or nationality have been found to be associated with an increase in reporting crimes to the police (Avakame et al. 1999; Lizotte 1985; Xie and Lauritsen 2012). For example, Xie and Lauritsen (2012) found crimes involving both black victims and offenders were more likely to be reported than victimizations among other racial combinations. Similar results are reported by Powers, Khachatryan, and Socia (2020). In their study of how racial dyads impact reporting victimizations to the police, Powers et al. (2020) indicate crimes with black victims and offenders were more likely to be reported to the police compared to those involving other racial combinations. Because intra-racial crimes account for most crimes in the United States (Siegel 2023), these findings are not unexpected. It is important to note, however, that these studies tend to focus on either the white/black dichotomy or the white/minority dichotomy. Studies have not examined the role of inter- versus intra-racial victimization among the Indigenous population specifically. Therefore, this study adds to the literature by examining the role of the victim and offender's race in the likelihood that AIAN would report a violent victimization to the police.

Research Questions

As is evidenced in the literature, there is ample research analyzing which factors may influence whether a victimization is reported to the police. While some of this research focuses on a few specific racial or ethnic groups (i.e., whites, blacks, Hispanics), research focusing exclusively on the Indigenous population is lacking. The shortage of research exploring whether these factors are applicable to the Indigenous population is the impetus for the current study. Analyzing the AIAN population specifically provides a base understanding of what may motivate this population to report victimization to the police.

Based on the literature presented above the following research questions are proposed:

1. Does the violent victimization of Indigenous peoples occurring on tribal lands influence the likelihood of reporting the crime to the police?

2. Which demographic characteristics of the victim, if any, influence the likelihood of calling the police to report a violent victimization of an Indigenous person?
3. Does the victim-offender relationship influence the likelihood of calling the police to report a violent victimization of an Indigenous person?
4. Does the presence of a weapon influence the likelihood of calling the police to report a violent victimization of an Indigenous person?
5. Are intra-racial crime incidents among Indigenous peoples more likely to result in reporting the crime to the police?

Methods and Data

Data Source

This study utilized the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) Concatenated File for 1992-2021. The NCVS is conducted yearly by the Census Bureau for the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). The NCVS began in 1973 and collects data on property and personal victimizations experienced by individuals aged 12 and older from a nationally representative sample of U.S. households. Property crime data are collected at the household level and include burglary, motor vehicle theft, and other theft, while incidents of personal crimes are collected at the individual level and include rape or sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated or simple assault. The selected households remain in the sample for three and a half years, and individuals are interviewed every six months. Thus, individuals may contribute up to seven interviews. Data are collected via face-to-face and telephone interviews with the initial interview conducted face-to-face and follow-up interviews generally conducted via telephone. The NCVS collects basic demographic information, such as age, race, sex, and income of the victim, as well as questions about the crime, the victim, and the offender, including but not limited to whether the incident was reported to the police, the number of offenders, if the offender(s) were known to the victim, if a weapon was involved, location characteristics, individual characteristics of the offender, and whether medical care was received (U.S. Department of Justice n.d.).

Sample

This sample includes data collected on AIAN between 1999-2021 who experienced a violent victimization (rape, robbery, and assault) by a single offender³. This 23-year period was selected to ensure a large enough sample size of victimizations reported by AIAN individuals. Data were cleaned to remove missing cases from all variables to conduct a complete case analysis⁴. For the purposes of the current study, missing cases are indicated by the response options of don't know and residue. Residue in NCVS are genuinely missing cases. Out of universe refers to skip patterns where a question may or may not apply (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics 2022). Skip patterns do not apply to the questions used in this study. Therefore, there were not any out-of-universe responses. This resulted in a sample size of 309 victimizations.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable for the current study captures whether the incident was reported to the police by using the following question: "Were the police informed or did they find out about this incident in any way?" The original response options were 1=Yes, 2=No, 3=Don't Know. For data analysis purposes, the variable was dummy coded to 0=No and 1=Yes.

Independent Variables

Given the long history of jurisdictional issues surrounding Indigenous peoples living on reservations, it is important to determine the role, if any, being victimized on tribal land has on whether the police are called following a victimization. To do so, the following question was utilized: "Did this incident occur on an American Indian reservation or on American Indian lands?" The original response options of 1=Yes and 2=No, were dummy-coded to 0=No and 1=Yes.

To capture the sex of the victim, the original response options (1=Male, 2=Female) were dummy-coded to 0=Male and 1=Female. Marital status is measured by the NCVS as the victim's marital status during the current survey period. Response options include 1=Married, 2=Widowed, 3=Divorced,

³ While the concatenated file goes back to 1992, the question regarding whether a crime took place on a reservation, or not, was not added to the survey until 1999.

⁴ A sensitivity analysis was conducted comparing the means and proportions from the sample before and after missing data were excluded. This analysis did not reveal statistically significant differences between the two samples. Data from the sensitivity analysis is available upon request.

4=Separated, 5=Never married. For data analysis purposes, the response options were dummy-coded where 1=Married and the categories of widowed, divorced, separated, and never married were collapsed and recoded as 0=Not married.

Age and education are measured as continuous variables in the NCVS. As such, the victim's age was measured by asking the respondent their age on their last birthday. Their education level was captured as the number of years of schooling completed. Due to the potentially unlimited responses, the NCVS reports the income range within which a respondent's income is located. The response options include 1=<\$5,000; 2=\$5,000-\$7,499; 3=\$7,500-\$9,999; 4=\$10,000-\$12,499; 5=\$12,500-\$14,999; 6=\$15,000-\$17,499; 7=\$17,500-\$19,999; 8=\$20,000-\$24,999; 9=\$25,000-\$29,999; 10=\$30,000-\$34,999; 11=\$35,000-\$39,999; 12=\$40,000-\$49,999; 13=\$50,000-\$74,999; 14=>\$75,000. Though measured categorically, income was treated as an interval/ratio variable for data analysis purposes.

Whether the respondent knew the offender was measured using the question: "Was the offender someone you knew or a stranger you had never seen before?" The response options are 1=Knew or had seen before, 2=Stranger, 3=Don't Know, 6=Not known if the offender was a stranger or don't know. The variable was recoded to measure whether the offender was a stranger (coded 1) or known (coded 0).

The presence of a weapon was measured with the following question: "Did the offender have a weapon such as a gun or knife, or something to use as a weapon, such as a bottle or wrench?" The response options of 1=Yes, 2=No, 3=Don't Know, were dummy coded to 0=No and 1=Yes for data analysis purposes. Finally, the race of the offender as reported by the victim is included in the analyses. Within the NCVS, the victim is asked about the offender's race with the use of several questions rather than a single question with multiple response options. Victims are asked if the offender was 1) White, 2) Black or African American, 3) American Indian or Alaska Native, 4) Asian, 5) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, or 6) Don't know. For each racial category question, response options were 0=No and 1=Yes. To capture intra-racial crime incidents, a "yes" response to the offender being American Indian or Alaska Native was coded 1=Native American/Alaska Native. The race of the offender was coded as 0=Not Native American/Alaska Native if the victim responded "yes"

to any other racial category. All don't know and residue were coded as missing.

Analytic Strategy.

The first analysis conducted for this research is descriptive statistics for all study variables. After conducting the descriptive analysis, the hypotheses were tested using a logistic regression model to analyze the influence of all independent variables on the dependent variable. Logistic regression was used because the dependent variable is dichotomous or dummy-coded 1 and 0. To generalize the findings to the larger population, the victimization weight provided by the NCVS was employed for the current sample.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations for all continuous measures used in this study. Percentages are reported for all nominal or discrete measures. The data indicate that approximately 49% of victimizations or incidents resulted in the police being called. Only 6.5% of the reported victimizations occurred on a Reservation or on Indigenous lands. Regarding the demographic characteristics, approximately 51% of the sample is female, 24% of victims are married, and the average age of the sample is 36.17 years. Respondents report an average of 11.81 years of education, or approximately a high school diploma. Furthermore, the average income of the sample is 8.11, or approximately \$25,000. In 26.5% of the victimizations the offender was a stranger, and a weapon was present in 27.5% of these incidents. Finally, approximately 8.4% of the victimizations were intra-racial, or committed by an AIAN offender. Though not analyzed, it is interesting to note the frequency of each type of violence experienced. As found in the general population, simple assault is the most common form of violence reported among this sample of AIAN victims, accounting for approximately 62% (n=192) of the 309 victimizations. Aggravated assault accounts for nearly 25% (n=76) of the victimizations, followed by robbery (7.4%; n=23) and rape or sexual assault (5.8%; n=18).

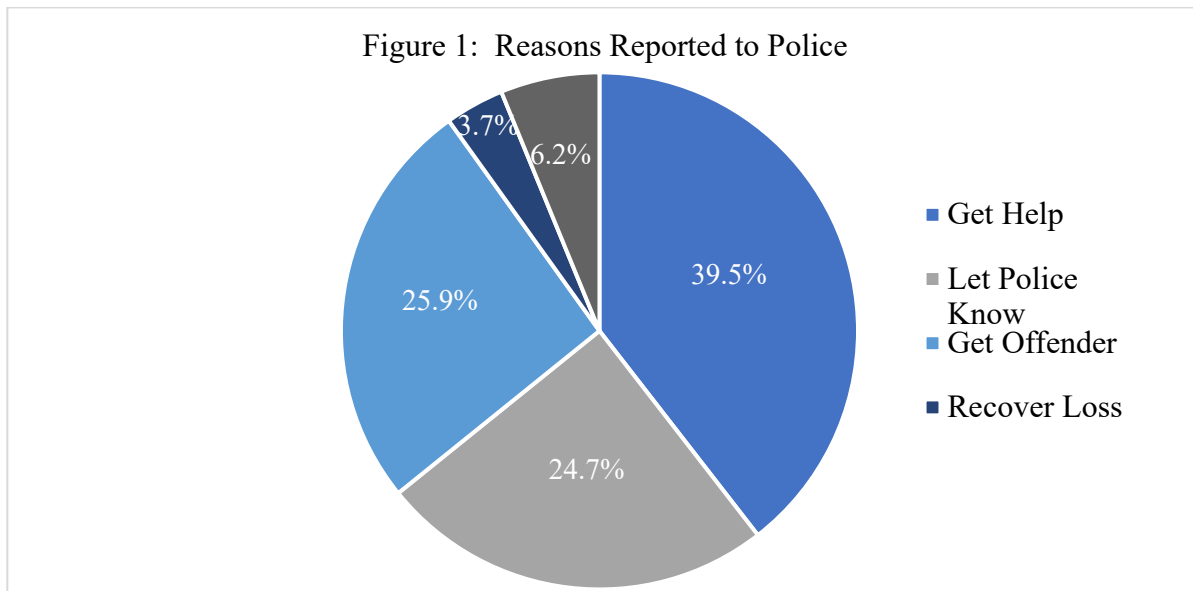
Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

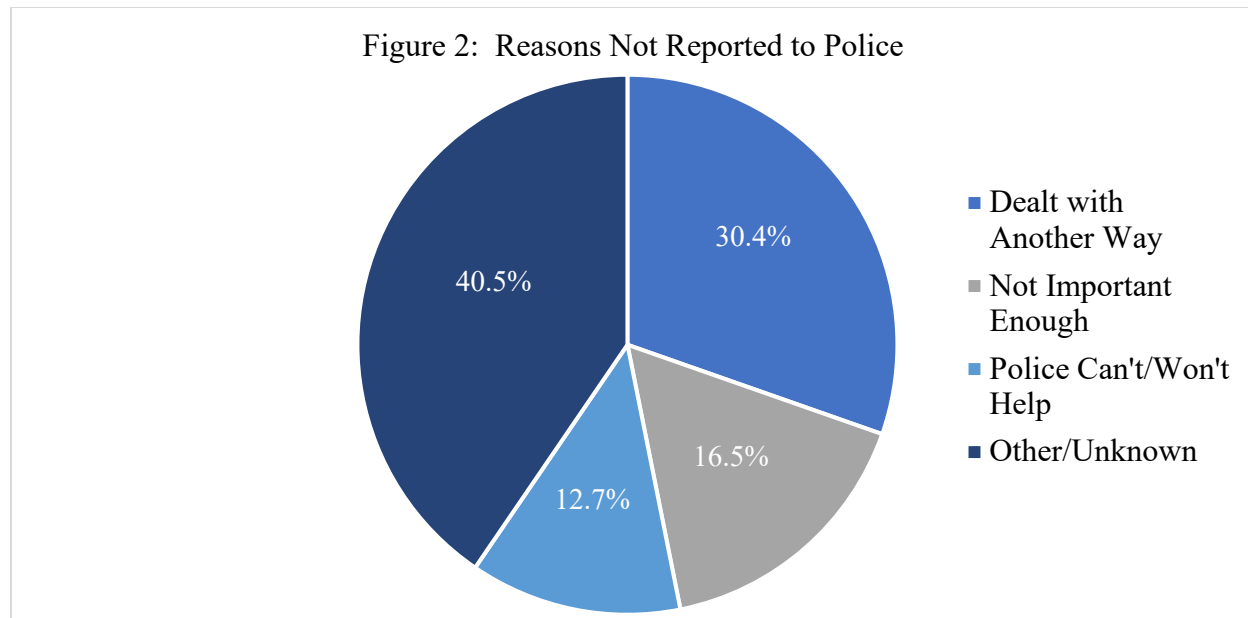
Dependent Variable	Mean/%	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Called Police (1=Yes)	48.5%			
Explanatory Variables				
Location (1=reservation)	6.5%			
Sex (1=female)	50.5%			
Age	36.17	14.80	12	76
Marital Status (1=married)	24.0%			
Years of Education	11.81	2.25	2	17
Income	8.11	4.60	1	14
Victim/Offender Relationship (1=stranger)	26.5%			
Weapon Present (1=yes)	27.5%			
Offender Race (1=intra-racial)	8.4%			

N=309

This paper also examines the most important reasons AIAN called the police and the most important reasons why the police were not called to report a victimization. Out of the 150 reported victimizations, 82 were reported to the police by the victims themselves. Figure 1 displays the reasons given for reporting these incidents to the police. The most important reason to call the police as identified by respondents was to get help (39.5%). This was followed by reporting to get the offender (25.9%) and to let the police know of the incident (24.7%). Figure 2 displays the reasons given for not reporting the

violent victimization to the police. Of the 159 unreported victimizations, 30.4% were not reported because the victim dealt with the incident in another way instead of calling the police. This was followed by the belief that the crime was not important enough to report (16.5%) and that the police could not or would not help the victim/situation (12.7%). While the reasons for calling or not calling the police are not predictors in the regression model, this information provides additional context surrounding the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the police.





Logistic Regression Model

Table 2 presents the results of the logistic regression model. The only significant predictor of whether the police were called to report a victimization was marital status. Married AIAN individuals are more likely to call the police to report a victimization than those who are not married. The odds ratio for marital status indicates that those who are married are slightly more than twice as likely to call the police.

Based on the chi-square statistic (11.98, $p > .10$), the overall model with all explanatory variables is not a good fit for predicting the likelihood of calling the police to report a victimization. The pseudo-R-squared value is presented in Table 2. Based on the reported value, approximately 3.9% of the variance in the likelihood of calling the police is explained by the current model. This indicates there are other potential factors that may influence the decision to call the police. serving as the reference group.

Table 2: Logistic Regression Models Predicting Calls to Police (N=309)

	b	SE	OR
Location (1=reservation)	0.648	(0.588)	1.911
Sex (1=female)	0.218	(0.270)	1.244
Age	-0.000 ^a	(0.009)	1.000
Marital Status (1=married)	0.765*	(0.320)	2.150
Years of Education	0.091	(0.063)	1.095
Income	-0.015	(0.030)	0.985
V/O Relationship (1=stranger)	-0.304	(0.322)	0.738
Weapon Present (1=yes)	0.415	(0.301)	1.515
Offender Race (1=intra-racial)	-0.351	(0.512)	0.704
Constant	-1.264	(0.703)	0.283
Pseudo R ²	0.039		

† $p \leq .10$; * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$

^aCoefficient is zero due to rounding

While it is common for weights to be utilized for the purpose of generalizing findings to the larger population, whether the use of NCVS weights is appropriate for use in regression analyses has been questioned in the literature (Lantz, Wenger, and Malcom 2022; Lohr and Liu 1994). For comparison purposes, analyses of the unweighted data were performed, which revealed substantively similar results with the exception of model fit. Unlike the weighted analyses presented here, the unweighted model proved to be a better model fit ($\chi^2=14.677$; $p<0.10$).⁵

Discussion and Conclusion

The long and contentious history of Indigenous people in the United States has had lasting impacts on how they see and are seen by the government today. After being forced onto reservations, many in this population have been mistreated and feel forgotten by those who are supposed to be there to help. With tribal lands spread across the United States, there is little direction on who to call in their time of need. The current study aimed to understand the characteristics of and circumstances under which Indigenous peoples call the police to report a violent victimization.

The decision to report a victimization is personal and specific to the parties involved. Given the contentious history between the United States government and the Indigenous population, this decision can be even more daunting. Despite this, the descriptive analysis from the current sample reveals that violent victimizations of Indigenous peoples were more likely to be reported to the police over the study period compared to those occurring among the general population. NCVS data show approximately 46% of all violent victimizations were reported to the police in 2021 (Thompson and Tapp 2022), which matches the historical average from 2000 to 2021. Additionally, it is important to note that a significant portion of the AIAN victimizations were reported to the police by someone other than the victim (approximately 45%). Among the general population, third-party calls account for only about one-third of reports to the police (Felson, Baumer, and Messner 2000; Felson et al. 1999). This increased incidence of third-party reporting for AIAN victims may speak to the reluctance of victims calling on their own behalf. Further analysis of the reasons given for not reporting these incidents reveals some consistency between Indigenous victims and the general population. Dealing with the matter in a different way (other than calling the police) was the most common reason given

by respondents in this sample, which matches the overall trend found among NCVS participants (Langton et al. 2012). While it is evident that reporting victimizations to the police is not an issue unique to the Indigenous population, it is important to understand the reluctance to do so and the circumstances under which police are called upon for their assistance.

The current study reveals factors typically found to correlate with calling the police are generally not predictive of doing so when AIAN victims are involved. The only factor significant in predicting the likelihood of calling the police after a violent victimization among Indigenous peoples is marital status. Results reveal that law enforcement is more likely to be notified in cases involving married victims than those who are divorced, widowed, separated, or never married. This finding supports prior research (Avakame et al. 1999; Baumer 2002; Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Hart and Rennison 2003; Schnebly 2008), though the impact of marital status is not as thoroughly examined in the literature as other demographic characteristics.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Conducting a study on a relatively small population is not without its limitations. One issue is that of statistical power, which may explain the lack of significant findings. However, the sample size used in the current study meets the threshold as recommended by Peduzzi et al. (1996). Peduzzi et al. (1996) recommend the sample size to be $10k/p$, where k refers to the number of predictors and p refers to the proportion of successes. Based on this formula, a sample size of 186 is sufficient as the current analysis has nine predictors (independent variables) with approximately 48.5% of victimizations reported to the police.

Another limitation of the current sample is the inability to separately examine each violent crime. Prior research indicates that factors impacting the decision to call the police may vary by the type of violence experienced (Baumer 2002; Hart and Rennison 2003). However, because those identifying as AIAN alone account for approximately 1% of the U.S. population (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services n.d.), this information would be difficult to analyze quantitatively. Future researchers should utilize qualitative methods to ascertain the impact these characteristics have on reporting each specific violent crime to the police.

Similarly, less than ten percent of victimizations in the current sample were reported to have occurred

⁵ The model using the unweighted data is available upon request.

on American Indian reservations or tribal lands. Though insignificant in the model, this underrepresentation of crimes on reservations may hinder the ability to capture the true influence this measure has on reporting AIAN victimizations to the police due to a lack of statistical power. It is important to note that according to the U.S. Census Bureau, only approximately 13% of the AIAN population live on trust lands or reservations (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services n.d.). Future researchers should explore methods and techniques that would provide adequate representation of crime occurring on reservations.

It is clear from the overall lack of significant findings that other factors are at play in these situations. The NCVS data should be examined to determine any additional variables that may have an influence on reporting AIAN victimizations to the police. One such variable is whether an injury occurred during the violent event. Prior research has found the severity of one's injury is indicative of an increased likelihood of reporting crime to the police (Baumer and Lauritsen 2010; Felson et al. 2002). Similarly, further examination of the victim-offender relationship may be warranted. The current study utilized a simple dichotomous variable focusing on whether the offender was a stranger. However, the degree of closeness among victims and offenders who know each other has been found to influence some crime reporting (Block 1974; Kang and Lynch 2014).

Additionally, given the 23-year period covered in the analysis, it may be important to consider the role of time in whether the police are called following a victimization incident. Data from the NCVS show that the percentage of violent crimes reported to the police fluctuates yearly and has been on a downward trend since 1993 (Thompson and Tapp 2022). Over the same period, perceptions of police have generally become more negative (Xie, Solis, and Chauhan 2024), especially following high-profile incidents of police brutality (Oglesby-Neal, Tiry, and Kim 2019). Furthermore, Xie et al. (2024) indicate that since the mid-2000s, victims have increasingly become untrusting of police responsiveness to their victimization. It is possible, therefore, that the social climate at the time of the victimization influences whether the police are called. As such, future research should consider controlling for victimization year to ascertain its impact on crime reporting.

While adding variables found in the NCVS could improve the model fit, it is possible the distrust of law enforcement within the Indigenous community is so rampant that it overrides any other potential explanations for reporting (or not reporting) crime to the police. As such, future research should delve deeper into the personal experiences Indigenous

victims have had with law enforcement to more completely understand their decision to call or not call the police following a victimization. Additionally, this indicates that there is a need for government agencies to pay better attention to violence and victimization happening on tribal lands.

Aside from addressing the limitations above, future research could further expand upon the current study in two ways. First, an examination of property crimes is necessary. Statistics show that these crimes are even less likely to be reported to the police (Thompson and Tapp 2022). However, research understanding why this is the case is not as robust as is found for violent victimizations (Baumer and Lauritsen 2010). Second, future research should analyze differences among various racial groups. Most studies include the race of the victim as a variable rather than as part of the selection criteria (Avakame et al. 1999; Hart and Rennison 2003). Baumer and Lauritsen (2010) provide a precedent for analyzing separate models by the race of the victim. However, in their study, Native Americans and Alaska Natives were collapsed into a category classified as "other" races due to NCVS data limitations at the time. Additionally, tests to determine significant differences between racial categories were not conducted as it was outside the scope of the study. Since the Baumer and Lauritsen (2010) study, the NCVS has changed how the victim's race is coded in the data. Thus, a more nuanced analysis of racial differences in reporting crime to the police could be conducted using current NCVS data.

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