AN EXPLORATION OF THE DETERMINANTS OF REPORTING CRIME TO THE POLICE IN THE CITY OF TIANJIN, CHINA*

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Western research has investigated three types of correlates of crime reporting—victim-specific (individual or household), incident-specific, and environment-specific variables. The current study applies this general, analytical framework to explore the determinants of crime reporting to the police in contemporary urban China. Using data collected from a recent survey of criminal victimization in Tianjin, we assess the determinants for reporting of robbery, assault, personal theft, and household burglary. The results consistently show that offense seriousness is a significant predictor of reporting for all offenses studied. Also, a nonlinear relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and reporting of burglary is found. In contrast, individual-specific and household-specific factors do not affect reporting, with the exception of

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a cumulative measure of victimization experience. Measures of neighborhood social cohesion and informal control are also not associated with reporting. The implications of these findings are discussed with reference to the unique neighborhood organizational infrastructure in urban China.

Since the late 1960s, interest in victims' reporting of crime to the police has grown because of its important role in the criminal justice process. Many studies suggest that those who report crime to the police are the "gatekeepers" of the criminal justice system (Black, 1971; Gottfredson and Gottfredson, 1980; Hindelang, 1976; Hindelang and Gottfredson, 1976; Skogan, 1984; Warner, 1992). Victims' reports constitute the main source of information for police investigators and for subsequent actions in adjudicating cases (Bennett and Wiegand, 1994; Greenberg and Ruback, 1992; Mayhew, 1993). A review of Western studies indicates that three types of correlates of crime reporting have been examined in the research—victim-specific (individual or household), incident-specific, and environment-specific variables (Bennett and Wiegand, 1994; Goudriaan, Lynch, and Nieuwbeerta, 2004).

The victim-specific correlates encompass major demographic characteristics for personal victimization, such as gender, age, race, and education (Gottfredson and Hindelang, 1979; Hindelang and Gottfredson, 1976; Skogan, 1984), and household characteristics for household crimes, such as the number of household members and household income. The incident-specific variables tap the nature and situational features of the criminal incident, such as injury, monetary loss, and the victim–offender relationship (Gottfredson and Hindelang, 1979; Goudriaan, Lynch, and Nieuwbeerta, 2004; Greenburg and Beach, 2004; Kury, Teske, and Wurger, 1999; Skogan, 1984). With respect to the environment-specific correlates, most studies have investigated the effects of neighborhood characteristics, such as neighborhood disadvantage and social cohesion (Baumer, 2002; Bennett and Wiegand, 1994; Feins, 1983; Goudriaan, Wittebrood, and Nieuwbeerta, 2006; Ruback, Greenberg, and Westcott, 1984; Schoenberg and Rosenbaum, 1980).[1] Generally, the findings suggest a hierarchical ranking in which the incident-specific correlates (especially the seriousness of the offense) are the most powerful predictors followed by the victim-specific factors. Typically, the environment-specific factors have the weakest effects on crime reporting (Bennett and Wiegand, 1994; Gottfredson

1. Using data collected from the International Crime Victim Surveys (ICVS), Goudriaan, Lynch, and Nieuwbeerta (2004) assess the effects of several national characteristics such as norm of conformity and level of individualism on crime reporting to the police for a sample of 16 Western, industrialized countries.

and Hindelang, 1979; Goudriaan, Lynch, and Nieuwbeerta, 2004; Laub, 1980; Skogan, 1984).

The purpose of the current study is to explore the determinants of crime reporting in Tianjin—the third largest city in China. Very little evidence is available about crime reporting in China, with the exception of the data from the victimization survey conducted in Beijing as part of the International Crime Victim Survey (ICVS) between 1993 and 1994. The ICVS data suggest that in urban China, as in Western cities, much crime goes unreported, and the most common reasons for not reporting are perceptions that the crimes are not serious enough or that the police will be unable to do anything (Zhu et al., 1995: 75). Although highly valuable, the ICVS data are limited in important respects. Chinese society has experienced profound changes over the past decade, and the survey responses from the early 1990s may not be relevant to current conditions. In addition, neighborhood-specific variables cannot be measured with the ICVS data given the nature of the sampling design.[2] Using data from a victimization survey conducted recently in Tianjin, we can probe more deeply into crime reporting in contemporary China than has been possible to date by estimating models of police reporting that include indicators of each of the three types of predictors commonly considered in previous Western research—victim-specific, incident-specific, and neighborhood-specific variables.

THE CHINESE CONTEXT

China has embarked on an ambitious program of economic reform that has altered profoundly many features of society, including levels of, concern about, and responses to, criminal behavior. Under Mao's mass-line policy during the pre-reform era, crime control was not only the responsibility of the police in cooperation with individual victims but also an obligation for the masses. The guiding principal was that everybody should be a "watch dog" of criminal activities under the guidance of the Communist Party (Bracey, 1989; Dutton, 2005; Jiao, 2001). Given the remarkably low crime rates and pervasive socio-political control, crime reporting to the police was not a major concern for the Chinese criminal justice system at the time. However, since the nation implemented economic reform and the open-door policy in the late 1970s, crime rates in China have evidently been rising (Liu, 2006; Liu and Messner, 2001). According to official statistics, the nation's total crime rate in 2000 was almost 50 times higher than

2. As Goudriann, Lynch, and Nieuwbeerta (2004: 942) observe, the lack of sufficient data for neighborhood-level analyses have hindered efforts to examine the effects of social context on crime reporting more generally, and not simply in China.

the rates observed in the 1950s and 1960s (Dai, 2001; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2001).

Although the increased crime rates in China are still relatively low compared with developed countries (Bakken, 2005), they constitute a genuine challenge to the Chinese police forces as well as to other criminal justice agencies. As China moves toward a market economy, Mao's mass-line policy in the criminal justice system has been fading (Rojek, 2001). Now "getting rich" has become an important goal in Chinese society, and people's behaviors are motivated to a much greater extent by economic interests. This pecuniary orientation permeates all aspects of society, which includes the criminal justice system. The political practices and moral appeals once used under Mao's mass-line policy have given way to ". . . a series of money-based bonus systems, responsibility systems, and other contractual arrangements" (Dutton, 2005: 195) that are commonly observed in capitalist societies. The nation has been moving toward "a government of the contract" (Dutton, 2005: 195). As a result, voluntary, mass involvement in crime prevention and overall crime reporting has declined significantly. Now crime reporting by individual victims has become a major concern.

Faced with the crime challenge and the changing social context, the Chinese police forces have been undergoing significant reform (Bakken, 2005; Dai, 2001; Jiao, 2001). One major change has been the movement toward professional policing. Previously, the Chinese police were viewed as a political tool for class struggle as defined in the 1957 police law (Dai, 2001). The new police law issued in 1995 redefines the functions of the police to include safeguarding state security; maintaining social order; protecting personal freedom, safety, and property; and deterring criminal activities (Dai, 2001). To perform these newly defined functions, the Chinese police have begun to professionalize, specialize, and legitimize their work as Western police forces do. As Dutton observes (2005: 195), by the end of the last century "the Western concept of the police . . . had arrived in China." For example, the Chinese police adopted a new approach in 1991 to policing a beat with a "110" calling system in urban areas. Also, 17 police colleges and academies and 81 police training schools across the nation had been established by 1997 (Dai, 2001).

In short, rising levels of crime and growing concern about crime have been accompanied by a withering away of the extensive involvement of the Chinese masses in crime control and efforts to develop a professional police force. The factors that affect victims' crime reporting to the police in China, however, remain unknown. We examine the extent to which patterns of crime reporting observed in Western research are replicated in this previously unexplored setting.

THEORY AND RESEARCH IN THE WEST

Western research on crime reporting is most often informed by the general rational choice perspective (Felson et al., 2002; Gottfredson and Gottfredson, 1987; Skogan, 1984).[3] According to this approach, victims weigh the benefits and costs when deciding whether to file a complaint about a criminal incident with the police. Potential benefits include the gratification of seeing offenders punished and brought to justice and protection of the victim and others from future victimizations (Felson et al., 2002: 618). This line of reasoning provides a rationale for expecting a relationship between the seriousness of an incident and crime reporting: The more serious the crime, the greater the desire for retribution and protection. These considerations also provide a basis for anticipating sociodemographic variation in crime reporting. For example, more vulnerable groups are more likely to place a greater weight on self-protection than less vulnerable groups. For property crimes, an additional potential benefit of crime reporting is the prospect of recovering the stolen goods. Of course, the strength of these incentives will depend on personal assessments of the capacity of the police to do something about the crime.

Victims also confront potential costs of reporting crimes to police. Important disincentives include fear of reprisal from offenders, embarrassment at having been victimized, disapproval from others in groups where cooperation with governmental officials is frowned on, and fear of formal sanctions for victims themselves who have engaged in illegal activities. In addition, crime reporters may incur nontrivial opportunity costs, especially if victims are required to participate in a prolonged adjudication process (Felson et al., 2002: 621). Given these disincentives, perhaps it is not surprising that the majority of even serious crimes such as assault and violence are not reported in the United States (Baumer, 2002: 593).

Another theoretical perspective in the study of crime reporting is Donald Black's (1976) sociological theory of the behavior of law. Black defines law as "governmental social control" (1976: 2) and interprets it broadly to encompass a "call to the police, a visit to a regulatory agency, or a lawsuit" (1976: 3). The distinctive feature of Black's conceptualization of law is that it is a quantitative variable. The quantity of law varies across time and space, i.e., ". . . across societies, regions, communities, neighborhoods, families, and relationships of every kind" (1976: 3).

3. As Greenberg and Beach (2004) observe, the rational choice perspective emphasizes the role of cognitive determinants of crime reporting. Their research indicates that affective and social influence processes also determine crime reporting. Our data set does not contain any indicators of affective or social determinants of crime reporting.

Black's theory carries implications for each of the three types of correlates of reporting: victim-specific, incident-specific, and neighborhood-specific variables. In his discussion of the relationship between stratification and law, Black (1976: 17) hypothesizes that ". . . all else constant, lower ranks have less law than the higher ranks, and the higher or lower they are, the more or less they have." This hypothesis implies that indicators of individual socioeconomic status should be related positively to crime reporting. Black also discusses the impact of relational distance on the quantity of law, which is one of his morphologic hypotheses. In modern societies, relational distance is likely to be related negatively to law—the closer the relationship between the victim and the offender, the less likely it is that the incident will be reported (Black, 1976: 41).

Another of Black's morphological hypotheses is related to his theories about "radial location": the integration of individuals to the mainstream of society. The hypothesis is that "law varies with integration" (Black, 1976: 48). The level of social integration is related positively to law, which implies that people who are more integrated to mainstream society are more likely to report crimes than those who are less integrated. For instance, employed individuals are more integrated than unemployed individuals. Therefore, employed victims are more likely to report the incidents to police than are unemployed victims. Similarly, married people are more integrated than singles. Thus, victims who are married are more likely to report crime incidents than singles.

In addition, Black's theories about social stratification and social control have provided a rationale to study the effects of neighborhood disadvantage, social cohesion, and informal control on crime reporting (Baumer, 2002; Gottfredson and Hindelang, 1979; Goudriaan, Lynch, and Nieuwbeerta, 2004; Goudriaan, Wittebrood, and Nieuwbeerta, 2006; Laub, 1980). Black (1976: 20) hypothesizes that ". . . law varies with the proportion of the population that is more or less wealthy." This hypothesis implies a compositional effect of community socioeconomic conditions on crime reporting: The probability of crime reporting should be particularly high in communities in which there are large numbers of people with high socioeconomic status (Baumer, 2002). Black (1976: 107) hypothesizes additionally that law varies inversely with social control, the normative aspect of social life. Specifically, in social contexts "which permit people continuously to observe and react to each other's conduct, law is less important as a mechanism of social control" (Gottfredson and Hindelang, 1979: 13). With respect to crime reporting, Black's arguments imply that the level of neighborhood social cohesion and informal control should be related negatively to crime reporting.

These perspectives provide a theoretical foundation for the three types of correlates of crime reporting (i.e., victim-specific, incident-specific, and

neighborhood-specific variables) examined in Western research. A large body of research on these correlates has accumulated in the West over the past few decades. Perhaps the most well-established finding is an effect of seriousness: The greater the seriousness of the incident, the more likely it is to be reported (Fishman, 1979; Gottfredson and Hindelang, 1979; Pino and Meier, 1999; Skogan, 1976, 1984; Sparks, Genn, and Dodd, 1977). Research also indicates that older and female victims are more likely to report than are their demographic counterparts (Baumer, 2002: 589). In contrast, the results of the research on the effects of victim/offender relationship on crime reporting have been mixed (Bachman, 1998; Felson and Messner, 1999; Felson et al., 2002; Ruback, Greenberg, and Westcott, 1993).

Finally, the few studies that have examined macrolevel predictors have yielded inconsistent findings. Goudriaan, Wittebrood, and Nieuwbeerta (2006) report that neighborhood disadvantage and social cohesion affect crime reporting, whereas Baumer (2002) finds a significant curvilinear relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and crime reporting. Other studies have not reported similar findings when the demographic characteristics of victims and offense seriousness are controlled (Bennett and Wiegand, 1994; Fishman, 1979; Gottfredson and Hindelang, 1979; Laub, 1980; Warner, 1992).

In short, the results of Western studies provide strong support for an effect of offense seriousness on crime reporting and reasonably consistent findings of correlations with sociodemographic characteristics that are suggestive of vulnerability. In contrast, findings for variables that reflect victim/offender relationships and macrolevel conditions are mixed. Nevertheless, despite the inconsistencies in the literature, the research in the West has yielded an overarching analytic framework that is useful to select and organize potential predictors of crime reporting. We use this framework to explore the determinants of crime reporting for victims of crime in the city of Tianjin, China, and the ability to generalize the patterns observed in Western research.

CURRENT STUDY

Our analyses focus on three offenses: personal violent crimes (robbery and assault), personal theft, and household burglary. For the personal offenses, we consider the commonly studied demographic characteristics of gender, age, education, marital status, and unemployment as potential individual-specific correlates of crime reporting. Race is not a relevant predictor in the research context because Tianjin is homogeneous racially.

Also, we include an indicator of past victimizations as an individual-specific correlate in the models of personal offenses. In the analyses of burglary, household size, income, and martial status serve as household-specific variables.

We follow the lead of Western research and treat the use of a weapon as an incident-specific variable that reflects the seriousness of violent victimizations. As explained below, our dependent variable for personal violent victimization combines robbery and assault. The assaults are likely to be dominated by relatively minor assaults. Accordingly, we include an indicator of the nature of the violent victimization (robbery vs. assault) as a predictor, assuming that robbery is likely to reflect more serious incidents. Victim/offender relationship serves as a third incident-specific variable in our models of personal violent offenses.

The only incident-specific variables for the analyses of personal theft and household burglary are indicators of seriousness. For both of these offenses, we include measures of the estimated value of lost property. A second dimension of seriousness for the offense of burglary is damage to the household.

Finally, variables that reflect neighborhood context are applicable equally across all offenses. Following the lead of Western research, the dimensions of neighborhood context considered are socioeconomic disadvantage, social cohesion, and informal social control. As noted, Baumer (2002) finds a nonlinear relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and the reporting of simple assaults using data collected from the 1995–1997 Area-Identified National Crime Victimization Survey and 1990 census data in the United States. We assess nonlinear relationships between neighborhood disadvantage and reporting personal violent crimes, personal theft, and household burglary.

Our analytical framework involves the estimation of four models for each of these types of offenses. The first model assesses the effects of the individual-specific (or household-specific) variables. In the second model, the incident-specific variables are entered, followed by the neighborhood-specific variables in the third model. The final model includes a squared term for neighborhood disadvantage to test for a curvilinear relationship.

DATA AND METHODS

DATA COLLECTION

The data for the study come from a household survey conducted in the city of Tianjin, China, in 2004.[4] Tianjin is the third largest city and one of

4. The authors collaborated with researchers from the Tianjin Academy of Social

the four municipalities directly under the leadership of the central government in the People's Republic of China. It is located about 100 miles northwest of Beijing. The city population was 10.01 million at the end of 2001. Tianjin has an industrial economy, with 36 large enterprises that serve as the pillar industries in machinery, electronics, and chemical products. A total of 12,000 enterprises in Tianjin contributed 283.821 billion Chinese yuan to the Gross National Product in 2001, which equates to approximately $36.897 billion U.S. dollars.[5] Tianjin is less dominated by the political apparatus than is Beijing (the second largest city and the capital of China) and is less commercialized and less influenced by global trade than Shanghai (the largest city), which has become a major commercial center. Although every city in China exhibits distinctive characteristics, Tianjin is representative of large, industrial cities.

The survey involved approximately 2,500 respondents who were 18 years old and older and entailed a multistage cluster sampling design. Tianjin has 15 administrative districts and 3 counties. The sample was drawn from the six traditional districts located in the central urban area of the municipality. They include the Heping, Nankai, Hongxiao, Hexi, Hebei, and Hedong districts. Each district has approximately six to ten City-Street Offices, which are the grass-roots organizations of the Tianjin government. We first randomly selected two City-Street Offices from each of the selected districts, yielding a total of 12 City-Street Offices.

Among the 12 selected City-Street Offices are two large offices that include a relatively large number of neighborhood committees. Five neighborhood committees were selected randomly from each of these large City-Street Offices, whereas four neighborhood committees were drawn randomly from each of the remaining ten City-Street Offices. A total of 50 neighborhood committees were obtained through a combination of purposive and random selection. Members of the research team met the supervisor in each of the selected neighborhood committees to explain the purpose and importance of the survey, the financial sources of the survey, and the compensation for costs associated with administration. Once agreement for assistance was secured, the research team requested a complete list of households in that neighborhood.

Fifty-one households were selected for the survey in each of the 50 selected neighborhoods in hopes of reaching the target of 2,500 households. Using the household roster provided by the neighborhood committee in each selected neighborhood, the research team conducted

Sciences to formulate the survey instrument and to develop the sampling design. Personnel from the Academy administered the survey.

5. The source is People's Daily Online, which is a major media agency of the Chinese government (http://english.people.com.cn/data/province/tianjin.html).

systematic sampling. A starting point was determined randomly, and every eighth household from each neighborhood was selected until the specified number of households was obtained. The research team defined a criterion date to select a specific respondent from a selected household with more than one person 18 years old or older. The individual with a birthday closest to the criterion date was chosen to be the respondent.

Data were collected through anonymous, self-administered questionnaires at convenient sites within the neighborhood (e.g., recreational areas). With the assistance of the neighborhood committees, the research team contacted the respondents to schedule the questionnaire administration. The representatives of the neighborhood committees arranged the specific site for the administration and made sure that the site was suitable (e.g., facilities were available, such as tables and chairs). No one was allowed to enter the site during the administration other than the respondents and the members of the research team. The questionnaire was intended to be self-administered, although onsite members of the research team were allowed to clarify the questions if requested. Most respondents had an elementary-school education or higher (97.4 percent), and thus illiteracy was not a problem. Consistent with standard Institutional Review Board protocols, respondents were assured of the voluntary nature of their participation, their right to refuse to answer questions, and the confidentiality of their responses. After the questionnaires were completed, they were placed in large envelopes, sealed, and transmitted directly to the chief Tianjin researcher who secured them in a safe location.

A total of 2,474 valid questionnaires was obtained. This response rate is remarkably high by Western standards—97 percent. However, our experience is similar to that reported for an earlier survey conducted in Beijing as part of the ICVS (Zhu et al., 1995).

The analysis focuses on victims' crime reporting for robbery, assault, personal theft, and household burglary that occurred within the past 5 years. We examine subsamples composed of respondents who reported victimizations for these offenses. The subsample sizes are 49 for robbery, 49 for assault,[6] 104 for household burglary, and 286 for personal theft. Because the subsample sizes for robbery and assault are too small to detect meaningful differences, we combined them to yield a subsample size of 93 respondents for analysis of the combined category of violent personal crime. The total is 93 rather than 98 because of multiple victimization experiences in robbery and assault (see table 1 for information about the selected demographic characteristics of the three subsamples).

6. The term "assault" used in the survey is broad, which includes both simple and aggravated assault. It was adapted from the ICVS.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Robbery/Assault, Personal Theft, and Burglary Subsamples

	Subsample					
	Robbery/Assault		Personal Theft		Burglary	
Variable	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Gender						
Male	62	66.7	115	40.2	55	52.9
Female	31	33.3	171	59.8	49	47.1
Age Group						
18–34	42	45.2	119	41.6	34	32.7
35–54	42	45.2	123	43.0	55	52.9
55 and over	9	9.7	44	15.4	15	14.4
Education						
Illiterate/elementary school	3	3.2	7	2.4	6	5.8
Middle and high school	60	64.5	190	66.4	63	60.6
College and above	30	32.3	89	31.1	35	33.7
Family Income						
Below 500 *yuan*	33	35.5	97	33.9	35	33.7
500–999 *yuan*	39	41.9	112	39.2	39	37.5
1,000 *yuan* and above	21	22.2	77	26.9	30	28.0
n	93		286		104	

MEASURES

Our analysis focuses on three offenses: personal violent crimes (robbery and assault), personal theft, and household burglary. The dependent variables are whether the victims reported the robbery, assault, personal theft, or household burglary to the police.[7] Each dependent variable is a dummy variable coded 1 = yes, 0 = no. For the offenses of robbery, assault, or personal theft, the survey questions ask whether the respondent reported to the police. For burglary, the question asks, "Did you or somebody else in your household report the incident to the police?" Reporting refers to the most recent victimization in instances of multiple victimization of the same type.

As noted, the individual-specific variables for the analysis of the robbery/assault subsample and the personal theft subsample are gender, age,

7. Practical and financial considerations placed severe constraints on the length of the questionnaire in the Tianjin survey. Moreover, the survey was designed to address a variety of issues surrounding criminal victimization. As a result, the kind of intensive probing about crime reporting that is part of large-scale efforts such as the NCVS was not feasible. Thus, we have no information on police reporting by third parties, reporting to official agencies other than the police, or reasons given by respondents for their decisions to report or not report victimizations.

education, marital status, family income, employment status, and victimization experience. Gender is a dummy variable coded in the direction of female. The measure of age has three categories: 1 = 18–34, 2 = 35–54, and 3 = 55 and older. The measure of education also has three categories: 1 = illiterate and elementary school, 2 = middle and high school, and 3 = college and over. Marital status is a dummy variable coded as 1 = single, 0 = others. Family income is measured with three levels: 0 = below 500 Chinese yuan, 1 = 500–999 Chinese yuan, and 2 = 1,000 Chinese yuan and above. Employment status is a dummy variable coded as 1 = unemployed, 0 = others. Finally, victimization experience is measured using five types of offenses that respondents might have been victimized over the course of the past five years. They include robbery, assault, household burglary, personal theft, bicycle theft, and swindle.[8] We sum respondents' victimizations across these offenses to create a measure of victimization experience.

It is important to acknowledge that the timing of these victimizations cannot be determined with precision. We know that the incidents occurred within the 5-year time period, but we do not know whether the reported victimizations occurred subsequent to, rather than prior to, the victimization for which crime reporting has been measured, which raises questions about causal order. We consider the issue of causal order for this variable in the course of interpreting the results.

For the robbery/assault subsample, offense seriousness is measured by the presence of a weapon and nature of the offense. The presence of a weapon is dummy coded 1 = yes, 0 = no. The nature of the offense is measured with a dummy variable that distinguishes robbery (coded 1) from assault (coded 0). The remaining incident-specific predictor for violent offenses is victim-offender relationship, coded as 1 = know, 0 = don't know. For the personal theft subsample, the incident-specific variable for seriousness of the offense is the estimated monetary value that the respondents lost from the theft, expressed in natural logarithms given the highly skewed distribution.

In the analysis of the household burglary subsample, three household-specific variables are used—family income, marital status, and the number of household members who are 18 years or older. The measures of family income and marital status are the same as those for the analysis of the

8. We do not include bicycle theft for analysis because there are no survey items to measure the seriousness of a bicycle theft incident. Swindle is a special type of offense that has emerged in China since the 1970s. This crime entails an element of fraud, but it differs from common fraud. It is analogous to a "confidence game" in the United States. People who are swindled are often embarrassed about the victimization, and the dynamics of reporting for these offenses are likely to be unique. We thus focus on crime reporting for the more conventional offenses.

robbery/assault sample and the personal theft sample. The number of household members 18 years or older is measured with item: "How many family members age 18 and above live in your household?" Two incident-specific correlates for this subsample that reflect seriousness exist: a dummy variable that taps whether any damage was done in the household (1 = yes, 0 = no) and the estimated monetary value of the property stolen (also in natural logarithms given the highly skewed distribution).

Finally, for all subsamples, three neighborhood-specific variables are included—neighborhood disadvantage, social cohesion, and informal control. The measure of neighborhood disadvantage is a combination of the proportions of households with family income below 500 Chinese yuan and unemployment in the neighborhood. The standardized reliability coefficient (alpha) is .71 for this index. Social cohesion is measured using three perceptual items that ask: "Do you think your neighborhood is a close-knit neighborhood?" "When you or your family has some important matters, does anyone in this neighborhood care much?" "Do people in this neighborhood trust each other?" Each question has a Likert-type response set: 1 = certainly not, to 4 = certainly is so. Responses to these questions were summed to create an index of perceived social cohesion. The standard reliability coefficient (alpha) is .78. One survey question is used to measure informal control. The question asks, "If there is a major problem around here, do neighbors get together to discuss and work out measures to resolve it?" The response set and coding for this item are the same as that for the items of social cohesion.

We used the entire sample of 2,474 respondents to aggregate the items to create the neighborhood measures and merge these measures into each of the three subsamples for analysis (see appendix A for descriptive statistics of the variables).[9] Using the same method as Baumer (2002), we compute a squared term for the neighborhood disadvantage index to test the nonlinear relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and crime reporting. Given the binary character of the dependent variables, logistic regression is used. The multistage sampling design of the survey implies that the observations are not independent. We estimate fixed effects with hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) to adjust for the clustering of respondents within neighborhoods and to assess statistical significance with robust standard errors.[10]

9. Ideally, neighborhood measures would be based on fully enumerated census data rather than on survey estimates. Unfortunately, no neighborhood census data are available in China. The smallest census units are city districts. The number of cases in each of the 50 neighborhoods in the sample ranges from 42 to 51.

10. Given the sampling design described above and the infrequency of criminal victimizations in Tianjin, the number of potential crime reporters in any given neighborhood is too small to permit within- and across-neighborhood analyses.

RESULTS

As shown in the top panel of appendix A, the reporting rates vary across offense types. About 47 percent of robbery/assault victims, 19 percent of personal theft victims, and 77 percent of household burglary victims reported the incidents to the police. If the violent crimes are considered separately, the results indicate that approximately 61 percent of robbery victims and 55 percent of assault victims reported the incidents to the police. The precise figures differ from those observed in the United States, although the overall pattern is similar. The 2005 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) shows that 52 percent of robbery victims, 47 percent of assault victims, 56 percent of burglary victims, and 35 percent of personal theft victims reported the incidents to the police (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006). Thus, in China as in the United States, victims are more likely to report serious crimes, such as robbery, assault, or burglary, to the police than less serious ones, such as personal theft.[11]

Table 2 reports the logistic regression results for the effects of individual-specific, incident-specific, and neighborhood-specific variables on victims' reporting of robbery/assault. Considering individual-specific predictors first (model 1), the results show that no measure of sociodemographic characteristics (i.e., gender, age, education, family income, marital status, and employment status) exhibits effects on reporting. The results for gender and age are particularly noteworthy, given Western research, which indicates that females and the elderly are more likely to report victimizations (Baumer, 2002). The only significant predictor in model 1 is the measure of victimization experience, which yields a negative coefficient (b = –.61). Respondents who had been victimized previously were less likely to report than those who only experienced robbery or assault. This unwillingness could reflect some impact of the experience of victimization on the willingness to report to the police (e.g., increased isolation from society with growing victimization). Alternatively, given the ambiguities that surround the exact timing of the victimizations noted earlier, it could reflect reverse causation. Reporting victimizations might offer protection against additional victimization.

The second model adds the incident-specific variables to the equation. The results reveal that the nature of offense affects crime reporting significantly and positively (b = 1.15). Given the direction of the coding (1 = robbery; 0 = assault), the finding implies that a robbery offense is more

We thus follow the traditional approach to assessing contextual effects (see Lauritsen, 2001: 11–2), using HLM for purposes of estimating robust standard errors.

11. These comparisons must be made with caution because of different sampling methods. The NCVS has a national sample, while the Tianjin survey used a city sample. The sample sizes also differ greatly across surveys.

Table 2. Logistic Regressions of Robbery/Assault Reporting on Individual, Incident, and Neighborhood Variables (HLM adjusted)

Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Individual-Specific Variable				
Gender	–.02	.32	.38	.31
	(.49)	(.55)	(.55)	(.56)
Age group	.34	.30	.37	.31
	(.55)	(.57)	(.57)	(.57)
Education group	.49	.80	.83	.86
	(.57)	(.60)	(.60)	(.62)
Family income group	–.09	–.06	–.07	–.09
	(.33)	(.36)	(.36)	(.37)
Marital status	–.85	–.94	–.86	–1.00
	(.653)	(.66)	(.68)	(.72)
Unemployment	.77	1.14	1.08	1.01
	(.66)	(.70)	(.73)	(.76)
Victimization experience	–.61*	–.73*	–.73*	–.72*
	(.30)	(.29)	(.29)	(.30)
Incident-Specific Variable				
Robbery offense	—	1.15*	1.16*	1.13*
		(.45)	(.46)	(.45)
Weapon presence	—	1.07*	1.12*	1.09*
		(.50)	(.56)	(.53)
Known offender	—	–.16	–.12	–.18
		(.48)	(.56)	(.58)
Neighborhood-Specific Variable				
Neighborhood disadvantage	—	—	.61	–6.09
			(1.27)	(5.51)
Social cohesion	—	—	.94	1.23
			(.84)	(.79)
Informal control	—	—	–1.46	–1.43
			(1.59)	(1.58)
Neighborhood disadvantage squared	—	—	—	5.72
				(4.68)

NOTE: Standard errors are reported in parentheses. $n = 93$.
*$p < .05$.

likely to be reported by the victim than an assault offense; this finding is consistent with the premise that robberies are more serious incidents on average than are assaults. The results also show that offense seriousness as reflected in weapon presence has a significant and positive effect on victims' reporting of robbery/assault ($b = 1.07$). The measure of victim–offender relationship, in contrast, has no effect. The effect of victimization experience remains significant when the incident-specific factors are controlled.

Model 3 includes all individual-specific, incident-specific, and neighborhood-specific factors, whereas model 4 adds the squared term for neighborhood disadvantage. None of the three neighborhood-specific factors

(i.e., neighborhood disadvantage, social cohesion, and informal control) has a significant effect on victims' reporting of robbery/assault. The measures of victimization experience, offense nature, and weapon presence remain significant.

Table 3 reports the effects of individual-specific, incident-specific, and neighborhood-specific variables on reporting of personal theft. The results in the three models can be summarized easily. Only the incident-specific factor that reflects seriousness—the estimated lost value of personal theft—has a significant effect, which indicates that the likelihood of reporting increases with the value of the property stolen.

Table 3. Logistic Regressions of Personal Theft Reporting on Individual, Incident, and Neighborhood Variables (HLM adjusted)

Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Individual-Specific Variable				
Gender	.09	.15	.17	.13
	(.26)	(.29)	(.30)	(.30)
Age group	.07	.28	.26	.26
	(.28)	(.32)	(.32)	(.32)
Education group	.33	.36	.37	.38
	(.39)	(.33)	(.34)	(.35)
Family income group	–.06	–.05	–.04	–.02
	(.19)	(.20)	(.21)	(.21)
Marital status	–.04	.27	.22	.25
	(.40)	(.43)	(.44)	(.44)
Unemployment	.04	.17	.14	.16
	(.41)	(.43)	(.44)	(.44)
Victimization experience	.05	.02	.01	.02
	(.19)	(.21)	(.21)	(.21)
Incident-Specific Variable				
Logged estimated lost value	—	.64*	.63*	.65*
		(.13)	(.13)	(.13)
Neighborhood-Specific Variable				
Neighborhood disadvantage	—	—	.33	3.26
			(.66)	(2.53)
Social cohesion	—	—	–.10	–.14
			(.34)	(.34)
Informal control	—	—	–.52	–.77
			(.98)	(1.02)
Neighborhood disadvantage squared	—	—	—	–2.79
				(2.34)

NOTE: Standard errors are reported in parentheses. $n = 286$.
*$p < .05$.

Table 4 presents the results of logistic regressions of household burglary reporting. The results in model 1 show that the measures of the three household-specific variables (i.e., the number of household members 18

years and over, family income, and marital status) have no effects on reporting of household burglary. Model 2 indicates that the two measures of seriousness—household damage and the estimated monetary value of the property stolen—exhibit significant effects in the expected positive direction ($b = 1.92$ for household damage and .26 for monetary value loss). Burglaries in which the household is damaged or the estimated value of the loss is great are more likely to be reported.

Table 4. Logistic Regressions of Burglary Reporting on Household, Incident, and Neighborhood Variables (HLM adjusted)

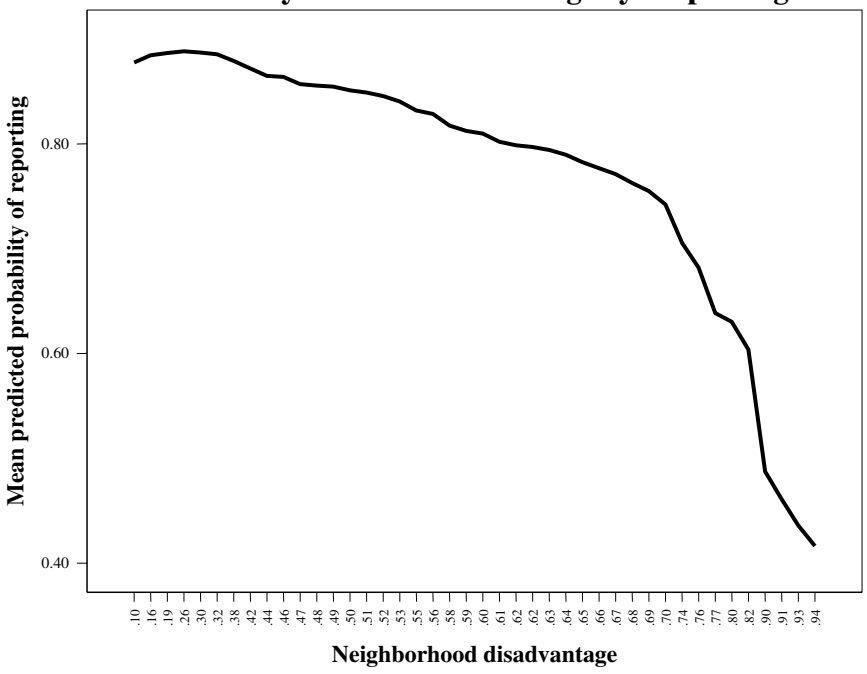
Independent Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Household-Specific Variable				
# household members 18 years and over	–.17	.06	.16	.21
	(.33)	(.35)	(.39)	(.39)
Family income group	.48	.57	.39	.47
	(.30)	(.35)	(.37)	(.41)
Marital status	.12	.21	.33	.47
	(.52)	(.69)	(.76)	(.77)
Incident-Specific Variable				
Household damage	—	1.92*	1.93*	2.12*
		(.62)	(.66)	(.73)
Logged estimated lost value	—	.26*	.26*	.28*
		(.08)	(.08)	(.09)
Neighborhood-Specific Variable				
Neighborhood disadvantage	—	—	–2.80	9.25
			(1.76)	(6.15)
Social cohesion	—	—	–.02	.02
			(.09)	(.09)
Informal control	—	—	–.42	–1.03
			(1.73)	(1.87)
Neighborhood disadvantage squared	—	—	—	–10.10*
				(4.85)

NOTE: Standard errors are reported in parentheses. $n = 104$.
*$p < .05$.

The results in model 3 show that none of the three neighborhood-specific variables (i.e., neighborhood disadvantage, social cohesion, and informal control) has a significant effect on reporting behavior when the household-specific and incident-specific factors are controlled. The two incident-specific variables—household damage and loss of estimated monetary value— remain significant. However, the measure of neighborhood disadvantage squared emerges as a significant predictor of reporting household burglary as indicated in model 4 ($b = –10.10$). This measure implies a nonlinear, negative relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and burglary reporting. Figure 1 provides a graphic presentation of the relationship. The graph indicates that the rate of burglary reporting

decreases steadily as the level of neighborhood disadvantage increases, but starting at about the 70th percentile, the reporting rate declines sharply. Respondents who reside in highly disadvantaged neighborhoods are much less likely to report burglary incidents to police. This finding is consistent with what Baumer (2002) discovered for simple assault in the United States.

Figure 1. Neighborhood Disadvantage and Predicted Probability of Household Burglary Reporting



DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Studies in the West have concentrated on three groups of correlates of victims' crime reporting to the police—incident-specific correlates (especially the seriousness of offenses), individual-specific factors (e.g., gender, age, education, employment status, and marital status), and environment-specific factors (e.g., neighborhood disadvantage, social cohesion, and social control). The current study employs these three groups of correlates as an analytical framework to examine the determinants of crime reporting to police in contemporary urban China using data collected from a

recent survey in Tianjin. The results replicate certain findings observed in the West but also yield some contrasting patterns.

First, a consistent finding is that offense seriousness is a significant predictor of crime reporting for all the offenses studied—robbery/assault, personal theft, and household burglary. Offense seriousness as reflected in the presence of a weapon is associated significantly and positively with reporting of robbery/assault when other important correlates are controlled. Also, victims are more likely to report robbery offenses than assault offenses. Given that the category of assault includes simple assaults along with aggravated assaults, these latter findings also suggest a seriousness effect. For reporting of personal theft, the only significant factor is offense seriousness, which is measured with respect to the estimated value of property stolen. Reporting of household burglary is also affected significantly by two measures of offense seriousness. One measure indicates whether any damage was done in the household, and another is the estimated monetary value of the property stolen in the household. These findings replicate those discovered in the West (Bennett and Wiegand, 1994; Gottfredson and Hindelang, 1979; Goudriaan, Lynch, and Nieuwbeerta, 2004; Laub, 1980; Skogan, 1984), and they imply that a key element of the general rational choice perspective on crime reporting is generalizable across very different sociocultural contexts.

In contrast, almost no individual-specific and household-specific factors are related significantly to reporting of any offense types studied. Only the measure of victimization experience has a significant negative effect on reporting of robbery/assault when other factors are controlled. Respondents with multiple experiences of victimization are less likely to report crime incidents to police. However, as noted, data limitations render causal order for this predictor ambiguous. The negative relationship could reflect either a tendency for victims to become more hesitant to turn to the police as victimizations increase or a protective effect of police reporting on future risks of victimization. Future research in China with more detailed data on the sequencing of victimization and crime reporting is needed to untangle the nature of the causal processes that underlie the association observed in our analyses.

We also find that the measures of neighborhood disadvantage, social cohesion, and informal control have no linear effects on the probability of reporting for robbery/assault, personal theft, or household burglary.[12] However, a significant nonlinear relationship between the measure of

12. The measure of social cohesion is based on respondents' perceptions. The results could differ conceivably if measures based on social ties and associations were used rather than perceptual indicators. More research is needed to address this issue.

neighborhood disadvantage squared and the probability of burglary reporting is found when other factors are controlled. Respondents who resided in highly disadvantaged neighborhoods were much less likely to report incidents of household burglary. This finding is in accord with research in the United States that points to appreciable but complex effects of neighborhood context on the reporting of serious crimes (see Baumer, 2002).

In summary, our findings suggest that, consistent with Western research, offense seriousness is a critically important factor that accounts for variation in crime reporting to police in contemporary urban China. On the other hand, individual-specific factors (e.g., gender, age, education, marital status, and family income) and most neighborhood-specific variables (e.g., social cohesion and informal control) do not affect the probability of crime reporting. We can offer a few speculative remarks about how these null effects might reflect the neighborhood organizational infrastructure in urban China.

Urban communities in China have been organized in terms of neighborhood committees (*Ju Wei Hui*) since the Communists took power in 1949. A neighborhood committee is a semi-official agency that deals with daily affairs, such as mediating disputes/conflicts between residents, conducting neighborhood watches to monitor suspicious or criminal behaviors, and taking care of family needs. The day-to-day operations are directed by the City-Street office (*Jie Ban Shi Chu*), which is a grassroots governmental agency. The City-Street office appointed members of neighborhood committees in the past, but now they are likely to be elected by residents. The members receive a small stipend from the City-Street office. The operations of neighborhood committees represent a kind of semi-public (official) control at the neighborhood level. These committees are mass-based and are supported by Chinese governments.

Usually, a neighborhood committee has a close relationship with another grassroots governmental agency—the neighborhood police station (*Pai Chu Suo)*. Neighborhood police stations instruct and assist the work of neighborhood committees on residents' security and safety. The presence and operation of neighborhood committees and their close connection with neighborhood police stations may have important implications for crime-reporting behaviors. In the context of the Chinese traditional preference for informal control (Leng and Chiu, 1985; Troyer, 1989; Zhang et al., 1996), vulnerable social groups, such as women and the elderly, may be reluctant to contact the police directly. Instead, they may be more likely to seek help and assistance from the neighborhood committees as "intermediaries" to the police. We lack measures that indicate whether victims reported the criminal incidents to neighborhood committees rather than to police. An important task for future research is to examine the

extent and the nature of third-party reporting in the Chinese context. We suspect that the results will, in some respects, mirror those reported in the West but also will differ in other respects that reflect the distinctive organizational infrastructure of neighborhoods in urban China.

We conclude this article by emphasizing that our study represents a preliminary exploration of the determinants of crime reporting to the police in urban China oriented specifically toward an application of the well-established Western analytical framework. This framework facilitates a comparison of the determinants of crime reporting in China with those studied in Western research, but it limits our ability to explore the unique factors and mechanisms that may shape Chinese reporting behaviors. We suggest that the exploration of these factors and mechanisms is a particularly important and promising task for future comparative research in criminology.

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Appendix A. Descriptive Statistics of Variables in Analysis of Robbery/Assault, Personal Theft, and Burglary Subsamples

	Subsample											
	Robbery/Assault				Personal Theft				Burglary			
Variable	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Dependent Variable												
Robbery/assault report	.47	.50	0	1.00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Personal theft report	—	—	—	—	.19	.39	0	1.00	—	—	—	—
Burglary report	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.77	.42	0	1.00
Individual-/Household-Specific Variable												
Gender	.33	.47	0	1.00	.60	.49	0	1.00	—	—	—	—
Age group	1.65	.65	1.00	3.00	1.74	.71	1.00	3.00	—	—	—	—
Education group	1.29	.52	0	2.00	1.29	.50	0	2.00	—	—	—	—
Family income group	.87	.76	0	2.00	.93	.78	0	2.00	.95	.79	0	2.00
Marital status	.33	.47	0	1.00	.27	.45	0	1.00	.23	.42	0	1.00
Unemployment	.20	.41	0	1.00	.15	.35	0	1.00	—	—	—	—
Victimization experience	2.31	.98	1.00	5.00	2.09	.76	1.00	5.00	—	—	—	—
# household members 18 years and over	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.80	.86	0	4.00
Incident-Specific Variable												
Robbery offense	.53	.50	0	1.00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Weapon presence	.35	.48	0	1.00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Known offender	.76	.43	0	1.00	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Logged estimated lost value	—	—	—	—	5.38	1.88	0	10.74	5.15	3.40	0	11.51
Household damage	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.33	.47	0	1.00
Neighborhood-Specific Variable												
Neighborhood disadvantage	.57	.20	.16	.94	.53	.20	.10	.94	.58	.20	.10	.94
Social cohesion	9.81	.31	8.76	10.51	9.78	.39	8.76	10.51	9.64	1.18	3.08	10.51
Informal control	3.00	.18	2.57	3.45	3.00	.17	2.57	3.45	2.98	.17	2.57	3.45

NOTE: $N = 93$ for the robbery/assault subsample, 286 for the personal theft subsample, and 104 for the burglary subsample.