

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

CRIME DATA REPORTING

As part of your undergraduate criminal justice internship, you are hired to work in the campus police department. Your job is to fill out the forms used to report crimes known to your department to the FBI each month. After reviewing the FBI's UCR handbook and participating in a training session, you learn that the prior intern who had your job routinely underreported the amount of crime when filling out the monthly reports. Your supervisor explains that the underreporting is justified because the guidelines for reporting crime are somewhat vague and many crimes reported to the police probably did not occur. You learn that the bulk of police calls seem to be for stolen books and book bags, which are occasionally located (suggesting they were just lost and not stolen).

After inquiring about this underreporting, you learn that police administrators do not want to see higher crime rates in the monthly reports.

YOU DECIDE

1. Should you underreport crime in the same way that it has been underreported in the past? Why or why not?
2. Under what circumstances would it be appropriate to underreport crime to the FBI? How does discretion play into such decisions?
3. What are the implications of your decision for the campus community? What are the implications of your decision for your future career?