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# The influence of collective efficacy on reporting crime among college students

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THE INFLUENCE OF COLLECTIVE EFFICACY ON REPORTING  
CRIME AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

by

Violet Angelina Colavito

Bachelor of Arts  
University of Nevada Las Vegas  
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

**Master of Arts Degree in Criminal Justice**  
**Hank Greenspun Department of Criminal Justice**  
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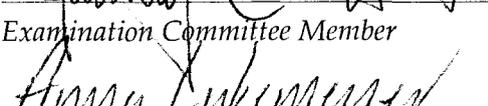
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## ABSTRACT

### **The Influence of Collective Efficacy on Reporting Crime Among College Students**

By

Violet Angelina Colavito

Dr. Joel Lieberman, Examination Committee Chair  
Associate Professor of Criminal Justice  
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Colleges and universities often aim to create a sense of community and a neighborhood feel for students. University campuses are designed in ways that reflect the factors of social cohesion measured by Goudriaan, Wittebrood, and Nieuwbeerta (2006). Crime on college campuses is an important social issue. Data from the NCVS suggest that between 1995 and 2002, college students experienced an estimated 400,000 to 530,000 violent crimes each year; yet only about 35% of violent victimizations against college students were reported to the police (Baum 2005, and Hart 2003). Yet, research exploring the effect of social cohesion and collective efficacy on reporting crime among college students has received little attention from the research community. The current study applies aspects of collective efficacy to assess which factors influence the reporting of crime among college-student victims. Data was collected through a self-report survey of college-students. The study used a systematic random sample of 160 college students at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Generally, respondents that reported high levels of collective efficacy were more likely to report the crime than those respondents who

reported low levels. The most serious crimes measured were the most likely to be reported to the police.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Crime on college campuses is an important social issue. Data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) suggest that between 1995 and 2002, college students experienced an estimated 400,000 to 530,000 violent crimes annually; yet, only about 35% of violent victimizations against college students were reported to the police (Baum 2005; and Hart 2003). Crime in the United States is measured in two ways; The Uniform Crime Reporting Program and the National Crime Victimization Study. The information that is produced from these two official measures shows a more accurate picture of the crime problem in the United States than either could produce alone (BJS 2004). There are many similarities between the two measures, but there are also important differences between them. For example, the NCVS does not measure homicide because it is a survey of crime-victims and non-victims as well as households. Another important difference to note is the fact that the UCR does not consider the crime that goes unreported, which is known as the dark figure of crime (BJS 2004).

Clearly, accurate statistics are impossible to achieve, given that one of the official crime measures does not take into account the crime that goes unreported. There are also social factors that may be linked to crime reporting. One example is the theory of collective efficacy. The current study applies aspects of collective efficacy to assess which factors influence the reporting of crime among college-student victims. This study

is important for two major reasons. First, if we are able to determine what factors influence crime reporting among college students, better strategies aimed at increasing reporting, and ultimately reducing the amount of crime, could be developed. The second reason is the theoretical implications. This study takes a deductive approach to examine the theory of collective efficacy with a specific sub-group of the population, and by looking at the social cohesion of a college campus, it can be determined if there is an effect on specific sub-populations within the general population. Thus, this study seeks to answer the following research question: Does the social cohesion and collective efficacy of a college campus predict whether crime is likely to be reported to the police?

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Collective Efficacy

The theory of Collective Efficacy is defined as cohesion among residents combined with shared expectations for the social control of public space. It explains lower rates of crime and observed disorder after controlling neighborhood structural characteristics (Sampson and Raudenbush 1999). It describes residents' perceptions regarding their ability to work with their neighbors to intervene in neighborhood issues to maintain social control and solve problems (Ohmer and Beck 2006). Collective Efficacy is a broad term that can be both a neighborhood as well as an organizational process (Ohmer and Beck 2006). The connection of mutual trust and social cohesion along with shared expectations for intervening to maintain social control is defined as neighborhood collective efficacy (Sampson and Raudenbush 1999). An organization or group's perception of its problem-solving skills and its ability to improve the lives of its members is defined as organizational collective efficacy (Sampson and Raudenbush 1999). Research on collective efficacy has looked at it being used to predict crime and the reporting of crime.

For example, researchers surveyed 8,782 residents of 343 neighborhoods in Chicago (Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997). They tested the hypothesis that collective efficacy is linked to reduced violence. The findings indicate that neighborhood

violence depends to some degree on personal background, marital status of residents and whether they were separated or divorced, the age of the respondents, and the length of tenure in their current neighborhood. They also found that gender, home ownership, and mobility were not significantly associated with response in neighborhoods. They found that the majority of the poor people lived in the same area had a significant, positive relationship with homicide, immigrant concentration was unrelated to homicide, and residential stability had a weak, positive relationship with homicide. When social composition was controlled for, the results indicate that collective efficacy was negatively related to homicide, and collective efficacy partially mediates the association between concentrated disadvantage and homicide.

Using the same data as the previous study, Sampson, Morenoff and Earls (1999) examined an intergenerational closure, reciprocal local exchange, and shared expectations for informal social control across 342 neighborhoods. The 865 census tracts in Chicago were combined to create 343 neighborhood clusters. There were three stages in the study. In the first stage, city blocks were sampled. In the second stage, dwelling units within blocks were sampled, and in the third stage, one adult who was eighteen years or older was sampled within each dwelling unit. They found that collective efficacy has a significant positive relationship on all three of the scales. They also found that density of kinship or friendship ties, and participation in voluntary associations, local activism, and mutual trust as more general components of neighborhood social capital. The three scales that were used to measure collective efficacy for children are lower in disadvantaged and unstable areas and have a weak relationship with immigrant and youth concentration. The results show that the most consistent predictors of intergenerational

closure are unstable neighborhoods. The results also show that affluence is important in allowing many neighborhoods to achieve an efficient environment of child control and exchange and closure. They also found that shared expectations for the informal social control were considerably lower in neighborhoods of concentrated disadvantage, even after controlling for perceived violence and homicide. The results show that collective efficacy for children has a direct positive relationship with a given neighborhood's internal collective efficacy regardless of the population composition of the neighborhood.

Elliot et al. (1996) used a sample of neighborhoods from Denver and Chicago to test with individual level data the argument that the effect of poverty on individual development is mediated by the organizational structure and culture of the neighborhood. Before this, there were few studies that attempted to determine the effect of neighborhood or other contextual effects on individual outcomes or behaviors. Results indicate that the higher the level of neighborhood disadvantage, the lower the level of informal social control. There is a significant, negative relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and the level of social integration in Denver, but the relationship is not significant in Chicago. Results in Denver indicate that the higher the level of neighborhood disadvantage, the lower the degree of social integration. They also found that the effects on the neighborhood rates of adolescent Prosocial Competence, Conventional Friends, and Problem Behavior are largely mediated by informal control at both locations. The results show support for the hypothesis that the effect of neighborhood disadvantage on both aggregated rates and individual developmental outcomes appears to be largely mediated by the level and form of neighborhood organization.

Sampson and Raudenbush (1999) conducted a study where observers trained at the National Opinion Research Center drove down every street in 196 census tracts between June and October 2005. There were also two trained observers who recorded their observations into an observer log for each block. They looked for unusual events such as an accident or a drug bust. This study shows that public disorder in urban spaces is a broad ecological construct that can be reliably measured at the neighborhood level using observational procedures. Specifically, this study shows that structural characteristics, especially concentrated poverty and mixed land use, have a strong relationship with physical and social disorder. Collective Efficacy predicted lower observed disorder after controlling for socio-demographic and land use characteristics, perceived disorder, as well as prior rates of crime. The findings from this study show that after adjusting for feedback effects, collective efficacy has a significant relationship with violent crime.

Mulvey and Klein (1998) present two studies investigating the influence of social perceptions including collective efficacy and cohesion, on group processes of difficulty and commitment. In the first study, the results show that the hypotheses stating that predicted and perceived loafing would be negatively related to group goal difficulty and group goal commitment was supported. The second set of hypotheses were supported, and predicted that collective efficacy would be positively related to group goal difficulty and group goal commitment. They also hypothesized that group goal difficulty and group goal commitment would be positively related to group performance and cohesion. These two hypotheses were also supported. Another hypothesis in the study is that the group goal processes would mediate the relationship between the social perception

variables, which included perceived loafing, cohesion, collective efficacy, and group performance. They found that the group goal and the social perception variables relate to group performance in the study. Their general findings were replicated in a second study where group goal commitment was deleted and hypotheses concerning the intervening perceptions of anticipated lower effort was added. The results from the second study were more supportive of the hypotheses than the first study.

Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley (2002) reviewed more than forty studies dealing with neighborhood effects that examine social processes related to problem behaviors and health-related outcomes that were published in peer-reviewed journals from the mid-1990s to 2001. The measure of collective efficacy combines scales for social control and social cohesion, informal surveillance or guardianship, and monitoring teenage peer groups. They found that the studies they reviewed included measures of several dimensions of social relations, specifically the level or density of social ties between neighbors, the frequency of social interaction among neighbors, patterns of neighboring and collective efficacy. They also found that the willingness of residents to intervene on behalf of children may depend on conditions of mutual trust and shared expectations among residents. They also found that only a few of the studies have used surveys to determine levels of participation in neighborhood organizations. The results show that the majority of the research that was reviewed on neighborhood interactional and institutional processes has focused on crime outcomes especially police reports of homicide, robbery, stranger assault, and survey reports of violent and property victimization.

Morenoff, Sampson, and Raudenbush (2001) combined structural characteristics from the 1990 census with a survey of 8,872 Chicago residents in 1995 to predict homicide variations between 1996 and 1998 across 343 neighborhoods. They replicated what was done in Sampson et al. (1997) and combined two related scales. The first is a five-item Likert scale of shared expectations for social control in which residents were asked about the likelihood that their neighbors could be counted on to take action if children were skipping school and hanging out on a street corner, children were spray painting graffiti on a local building, children were showing disrespect to an adult, a fight broke out in front of their house, and the fire station closest to home was threatened with budget cuts. They combined social cohesion and informal social control into a summary measure of collective efficacy because they were strongly related across neighborhood clusters. The results show that spatial embeddedness, internal structural characteristics, and social organizational processes are each important for understanding neighborhood-level variations in rates of violence. They found that spatial proximity to violence, collective efficacy, and alternative measures of neighborhood inequality were the most consistent predictors of variation in homicide. The results also show that structural characteristics and social processes have similar effects on homicide rates in both neighborhoods that are predominantly Black and non-Black neighborhoods.

Researchers examined whether citizen participation in neighborhood organizations located in poor communities is related to neighborhood and organizational collective efficacy among residents (Ohmer and Beck 2006). They measured neighborhood collective efficacy, organizational collective efficacy, and citizen participation in neighborhood organizations. The results demonstrated that the more

residents participated in their neighborhood organization, the greater their level of organizational collective efficacy, but not neighborhood collective efficacy. They also found that participation level individually influenced organizational collective efficacy but, participation in decision making did not. The more that residents were involved in various activities and functions of the neighborhood organization, the more they perceived the ability of their neighborhood organization's collective ability to solve neighborhood problems, and get people in the neighborhood to know one another and work together. The results indicate that that the residents in the study had high perceptions about their neighborhood organization's collective ability to solve problems. There was also a strong positive relationship between organizational and neighborhood collective efficacy. The more positive residents' perceptions of what their organization actually accomplished in areas, such as safety and housing, the more positive their perception of their neighborhood and the organization's ability to solve problems now and in the future. The results indicate no relationship between citizen participation and neighborhood collective efficacy, which is surprising because of the fact that neighborhood collective efficacy and crime reduction have been shown to be linked. The results also show that it is important to engage residents in local neighborhood organizations to help them develop the confidence that they can address difficult neighborhood problems through organized collective action.

Prussia and Kinicki (1996) developed a model for group effectiveness that emphasizes group affective evaluations, group goals, and collective efficacy. They predicted that group affective evaluations, group goals, and collective efficacy would mediate the influences of performance feedback on group effectiveness. The purpose of

the study was to have a better understanding of how different groups perform on idea generation tasks and to come up with a list of solutions for two task problems. They assessed collective efficacy with two scale indicators. They were output quantity and the successful reproduction of brainstorming process behaviors. They measured group effectiveness using two indicators of group performance output quantity, which was the number of unique ideas generated by the group and process behaviors. The results show that the groups receiving positive feedback on their performance were more likely to believe that they exceeded normative output quantity than were groups receiving negative performance feedback. Groups in the positive feedback condition were more likely than groups in the negative feedback condition to believe that their process behavior performance exceeded normative standard levels. This study used social-cognitive theory to explain motivated behavior in groups, and the analysis support group-level extensions of the theory. The results support individual level studies of social-cognitive theory. They also found that feedback information cues group-level perceptions regarding performance capabilities and group affect.

The cuing affect is a central idea in control theory research. Vicarious experience also positively influences collective efficacy and it emphasized the idea that it is important to create an environment where collective efficacy perceptions are enhanced on the basis of either actual or vicarious experience. They also found that collective efficacy is related to group effectiveness, and that collective efficacy is positively related to group goals. Group affective evaluations and collective efficacy mediate the relationship between feedback and group effectiveness, but group goals do not.

Sampson (1988) examined both the macro and micro levels of analysis through a two stage multilevel approach to studying community bonds. When they studied the micro level, they replicated the study done by Kasarda and Janowitz in 1974 where they examined the simultaneous effects of both individual and community factors on individual level dimensions of community attachment. When they studied at the macro level, they examined the structural determinants of community social organization. Their main hypothesis is that community residential stability has direct positive effects on macro-social variations in the extent of community based friendship ties, the level of community attachment, and social activity patterns. The data for this study comes from the British Crime Survey which is a survey of 10,095 residents of England and Wales conducted in 1982. They measured residential stability as the percentage of residents brought up in the area within a fifteen minute walk of home. They measured local friendship ties as the percentage of community residents who reported half or more of their friends living with a fifteen minute walk of home. They measured collective attachment as the level of sentiment and attachment to community, as the percentage of residents that reported that they would be very sorry to leave the local area. The results show that, at the macro level, local friendship ties vary widely across communities and, these variations are positively related to community stability. Macro-level stability strongly increased local friendship ties. They also found that length of residence had direct effects on individual level friendships, contextual community, and participation in local social activities. They also found that the community's mean level of friendship ties had a significant and important contextual effect on an individual's friendships. They found that overall, the data shows that the social forces that undermine an individual's

integration into the local community are not urbanization or the compositional factors as suggested in traditional theory. Rather, they are the multilevel, systematic factors such as residential mobility, sparse friendship ties, fear of crime, and collective attachment.

Researchers attempted to advance awareness about perceived collective efficacy and develop a conceptual model to explain the formation and influence of perceived collective efficacy in schools (Goddard, Hoy, and Hoy 2004). They found that collective efficacy beliefs are an important aspect of an organization's culture. The researchers also found that a strong sense of collective efficacy enhances teachers' self efficacy beliefs while weak collective efficacy beliefs undermine teachers sense of efficacy.

Goddard (2002) reexamined a twenty-one item scale that was developed by a group of researchers from Michigan State University and The Ohio State University that measured collective efficacy. Their goal was to improve the measurement of the scale. The results of the study provide new knowledge about measuring collective efficacy in schools. They found that using a twelve item scale is as effective as using the original twenty-one item scale to measure collective efficacy. They also found that the twelve item scale is a positive predictor of between school variability in student achievement in mathematics. There are also other neighborhood characteristics that researchers have looked at with regards to crime rates and collective efficacy. The following section examines the research on some of these characteristics.

### Additional Neighborhood Characteristics

Researchers conducted a study of bias and random error in neighborhood assessments by describing measures from interviews, direct observations, and videos of Chicago neighborhoods (Raudenbush and Sampson 1999). The researchers attempt to address the social and physical properties of ecological settings, especially the neighborhoods. The NORC collected data on fourteen variables in observer logs with an emphasis on land use, traffic, the physical condition of buildings, and evidence of physical disorder. They use two scales in their study. The first scale is a scale that is intended to capture the level of physical disorder, represented by items indicating the presence or absence of empty beer bottles, cigarettes or cigars, drug paraphernalia, condoms, garbage, abandoned cars, and various types of graffiti in the street, sidewalk, or gutter. The second scale is intended to measure direct evidence of social disorder including presence of adults loitering, public drinking, peer gangs, drunken adults, adults fighting, prostitutes, and drug sales. The indicators of social disorder are present far less frequently than the indicator of physical disorder. They found that in the physical disorder scale, the presence of cigarettes or cigars and garbage on the street or sidewalk, along with the presence of empty beer bottles are comparatively less severe because they have a low probability of occurrence than the presence of gang graffiti, abandoned cars, condoms, or drug paraphernalia. In the social disorder scale, everything is severe except for the item indicating adults loitering or congregating and the pattern emphasizes the low frequency of the social disorder indicators. Adults loitering and drinking alcohol is seen as being less severe than adults fighting, prostitution, or drug sales.

Researchers extended Fischer's (1995) insight that subcultural norms and legal cynicism are not only about individual variations, specifically those dealing with race or ethnicity (Sampson and Bartusch 1998). They argue that there is an important correlation between the concentrated disadvantage and the social stability of the neighborhood. They used data from The Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, which was designed to examine social context. They found that African Americans and Latino Americans have a lower tolerance for deviance than Whites. The areas of concentrated disadvantage and residential instability have increased levels of tolerance and deviance. Tolerance of deviance is higher in neighborhoods of poverty and instability but lower in concentrated immigrant neighborhoods. Respondents were less likely to see fighting among nineteen year olds as extremely wrong compared with thirteen year olds. The results also show that African Americans and Latinos are significantly more likely to condemn fighting than European Americans. Blacks report higher levels of cynicism than Whites because they are disproportionately likely to live in residential environments of concentrated disadvantage. The results show that there is no Black subculture of violence, and if there is a subculture that tolerates deviance and turns a cynical eye towards the law, it does not have anything to do with race. They found that inner-city areas had high levels of legal cynicism, dissatisfaction with the police, and tolerance of deviance. They also found that there seems to be a structure to normative orientations and that there are places where crime and deviance are more or less expected and criminal justice institutions are not trusted.

Researchers attempted to extend the item response theory in ways that would make it useful for the study of crime (Raudenbush, Johnson, and Sampson 2003). They

extended the model to include people and neighborhood characteristics that predict criminal behavior. The results show that for the violence scale, armed robbery, purse snatching, and maliciously setting fire, and attacking someone with a weapon are the crimes that are least likely to occur and the most severe. The researchers also found that hitting someone that you don't live with, throwing an object at someone and carrying a hidden weapon are crimes that are less severe. When they looked between neighborhoods, they found large variation in violent crime between neighborhoods but, they found little evidence of variation between neighborhoods for property crime. When age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and differences between neighborhoods were incorporated, they found large gender differences on both violent crimes and property crimes. The results also show that African-Americans have higher levels of violent crime than do Hispanics, but there was no difference for property crime. There is a significant and positive relationship between neighborhoods concentrated disadvantage and violent crime.

Sampson, Morenoff, and Raudenbush (2005), used a multistage sampling procedure so that they could study neighborhoods, families, and individual children at the same time. The researchers analyzed individual, family and neighborhood factors to evaluate competing hypotheses relating to racial and ethnic gaps in violence. At the interviews, respondents were asked whether during the last year, they had (a)hit someone outside of the house; (b)thrown objects such as rocks or bottles at people; (c)carried a hidden weapon; (d)maliciously set fire to a building, property, or car; (e)snatched a purse or picked a pocket; (f)attacked someone with a weapon; (g) used a weapon to rob somebody or (h)been in a gang fight. They also asked respondents socio-demographic

and family background information. The results show that Mexican Americans are more likely to be first or second generation immigrants, while Blacks are the group that is least likely to be immigrants of all of the respondents surveyed. Mexican Americans are likely to live with two biological parents, and their parents are likely to be married, and Black adolescents are likely to live with a single, unmarried parent. Family socioeconomic status is highest among Whites and lowest among Mexican Americans in the study. Whites also have longer residential tenure than do Blacks or Mexican Americans. There were 3,431 violent offenses reported but, personal violence is still a rare occurrence. The prevalence of robbery, purse snatching, arson, attacking with a weapon, and gang fighting are all less than five percent. Hitting someone, which is the most common item, is reported by less than twenty percent of respondents. The findings show support for the hypothesis that Blacks are segregated by neighborhood and therefore are exposed to key risk factors which could help explain the Black-White disparity in violence. They also found that improving neighborhood conditions such as housing vouchers to aid the poor in securing residence may reduce the racial gap in violence.

### Factors That Influence Crime Reporting

Along with collective efficacy, researchers have also studied factors that influence crime reporting. There are many factors that affect whether crime is reported to police. National studies have found that the victims' gender, race, Hispanic origin, age, annual household income, marital status, and residence affect whether crime is reported to the police (Hart and Rennison 2003). Characteristics of the offender also affect whether crime is reported, including: gender, race, age, number of offenders, victim-offender

relationship, offender's gang membership, offender's drug or alcohol use, and the presence of weapons (Hart and Rennison 2003). In addition to benchmark studies, researchers have done more in depth research using data from the NCVS to find out which factors influence whether crime is reported to the police. These factors are summarized into two broad categories that include: (1) victim and offender characteristics, and (2) incident characteristics. The following sections review the research literature for each.

### Victim and Offender Characteristics

Previous research has shown that women are more likely than men to report their victimizations to police (Skogan 1976; Conaway and Lohr 1994; Felson, Messner, and Hoskin 1999; and Birbeck, Gabaldon, and LaFree 1993). Race has also been found to influence crime reporting. For example, Skogan (1976) and Fisher et al. (2003) found that intra-racial crimes are more likely to be reported than inter-racial crimes. In addition, Davis and Henderson (2003) found that of the six ethnic groups they studied, African Americans were most likely to report a break-in or a mugging. In addition to race and gender, income level has also been found to influence crime reporting. For example, studies show that people who have a higher income are more likely to report personal crimes than those with lower incomes (Skogan 1976). Researchers found that age and income level are related (Greenberg, Ruback, and Westcott 1982, Greenberg and Ruback 1992; and Birbeck, Gabaldon, and LaFree 1993). Specifically, criminal acts were more likely to be reported when the victim was young and poor than those with higher incomes. All of these studies demonstrate how individual-level characteristics influence crime-reporting decisions.

Studies have also been done at a level lower than the National level. Some examples of these studies are ones that gathered data on the reporting of incidents via follow-up questions given to respondents who had been identified as crime victims in a survey. These studies have also demonstrated how characteristics of the offender affect whether crime is reported to the police (Skogan 1984). Victim-offender relationship, for example, also influences whether crime is reported to the police. Previous research shows that rape is more likely to be reported when it is committed by a stranger than someone the victim knows (Baumer, Felson, and Messner 2003; Lizotte 1985; Williams 1984); and Felson, Messner, and Hoskin (1999) found that victims are more likely to report a crime when the offender was an ex-spouse. Previous research shows that women who were raped and sustained serious injury reported their victimizations more often than those who were not injured (Conaway and Lohr 1994; Williams 1984, Bachman 1998). Combined, these sub-national studies reinforce what we know about crime-reporting patterns as they relate to victim and offender characteristics.

#### Incident Characteristics

Studies have also demonstrated that incident characteristics influence whether crime is reported to the police. For example, type of crime matters; that is, burglary, robbery, and assault are more likely than non-serious offenses to be reported to the police (Skogan 1976; Bachman 1998; Birbeck, Gabaldon, and LaFree 1993; Lizotte 1985; Skogan 1984). Two studies in particular also found that a major reason why crimes are not reported to the police is because the victims did not consider the crimes to be of a serious nature. This is because victims often equate the seriousness of crime with the seriousness of the injury sustained. Goudriaan, Lynch, and Nieuwbeerta (2004) found

that the frequency of reporting is strongly related to the type of crime that took place. Victims of rape whose homes were broken into or who were attacked in their cars were most likely to report, followed by those who were attacked in public (Williams 1984). Kilpatrick et al. (1987) found that burglary had the highest incidence of reporting and sexual assault had the lowest; and research indicates that more property crimes are reported than contact crimes (Goudriaan, Lynch, and Nieuwbeerta 2004). Another factor that affects whether crime is reported to the police is the presence of a weapon. (Conaway and Lohr 1994; Williams 1984). Related to this, an occurrence of an injury is also shown to have an effect on whether crimes are reported to the police. Besides examining the influence of victim and offender characteristics, and incident characteristics, studies have also examined the influence that neighborhood characteristics have on crime-reporting patterns.

#### Neighborhood Characteristics

Researchers have investigated the characteristics of neighborhoods and their effect on the amount of crime that is reported to the police. Specifically, they have looked at crime reporting behavior among immigrant communities and the factors that shape their willingness to report, which include contacts with the police, attitudes toward the police, and membership in their local ethnic community (Davis 2003). The results show that the highest rates of reporting were for break-ins and muggings were the second most likely to be reported (Davis 2003). They also found that drug selling was the least likely to be reported, and that African Americans were most likely to say that they would report a mugging (Davis 2003).

Researchers have investigated the characteristics of neighborhoods and their effect on the amount of crime that is reported to the police. Goudriaan, Wittebrood, and Nieuwbeerta (2005) hypothesized that the higher the social cohesion in a neighborhood, the more likely that crime victims who live there are to report their victimizations. Nine indicators of social cohesion were measured using a Likert scale. Respondents were asked the degree to which they agreed with the following statements: (1) if people in the neighborhood hardly know each other, (2) if they felt at home, (3) if they had contact with their neighbors, (4) if they are satisfied with the composition of the population of their neighborhood attachment to the neighborhood, (5) if they have contact with the people who live next door, (6) if they felt an attachment to the neighborhood, (7) if they thought they lived in a pleasant neighborhood, (8) if they felt responsible for making the neighborhood a pleasant place to live, and (9) if people are nice to each other (Goudriaan, Wittebrood, and Nieuwbeerta 2005). Results show that social cohesion had a positive relationship on reporting crime and was significant: with every one unit increase in the social cohesion score, there was a nineteen percent increase in the likelihood that the crime would be reported.

The survey administered by Goudriaan, Wittebrood, and Nieuwbeerta (2005) looked at the effect of social cohesion on reporting crime in communities and neighborhoods. Communities come in all shapes and sizes. Increasingly, colleges and universities are being modeled after communities. Thus, the question becomes: does the social cohesion and collective efficacy of a college or university campus predict whether crime is reported to police? The following section examines specific characteristics of

colleges and universities that are similar to those of communities and neighborhoods, as defined by Goudriaan, Wittebrood, and Nieuwebeerta (2005), to address this question.

### Neighborhoods and College Campuses

Colleges and universities resemble communities and neighborhoods in many ways. Institutions of higher education often attempt to draw students to campus by promoting a sense of community and a neighborhood feel. For example, students who are living away from home are encouraged to get to know their neighbors. First year students at Seattle University have an opportunity to be part of an Academic Residential Community (ARC), which connects a student's coursework with their environment (Seattle University 2006). Students who are part of an ARC take classes with other students that are living on their floor. This allows them to bond with their peers whom they will be living with during the school year.

Colleges and universities also want students to feel at home on campus. The University of Nevada Las Vegas, for example, has a recreation center that opened in August of 2007. This building has a full gym, indoor and outdoor pools, an indoor track, the student health center, the counseling center, and a juice bar (Littlefield 2005). UNLV has a goal of making the campus more centered on the students, and this project gives students a chance to participate in recreational activities that are of interest to them, making them feel as if they are at home while on campus.

Colleges and universities also make students feel like they are part of a community by promoting student interaction. At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, student apartments are arranged in clusters and are surrounded by large open areas

(Board of Regents UW 2005). This strategy attempts to bring students together to participate in fun outdoor activities and get to know each other at the same time.

Another important factor that creates a sense of community and a neighborhood feel among college students is satisfaction with the composition of the population of the campus. Students living on the campus of Pennsylvania State University have access to programs and services designed to help them get the most out of living on campus such as a spiritual center and career counselors (Penn State 2006). These facilities provide a place for students to be around people who share the same religious beliefs as they do as well as allowing them to be around other students who are looking to insure stable employment upon graduation.

Dorms on college and university campuses are designed so that students live next door to their friends and peers. The interaction between students and their next door neighbors also promotes a sense of community and a neighborhood feel. The University of Michigan has more than 9,400 students living in residence halls each year. Members of residence halls are invited to many social events throughout the school year including concerts, movie screenings, and sporting events (University of Michigan 2006). This allows students to socialize with their peers and feel like they belong.

Finally, the athletic program at the University of Florida has ranked among the nation's ten best athletic programs in each of the last twenty years (University of Florida 2006). Along with their intercollegiate sports program, Florida has more than sixty intramural and club sports ranging from archery to weightlifting (University of Florida 2006). This strategy brings together students who are from different places and do not

know anyone on campus. Students who participate in these activities feel an attachment to the campus, which creates a sense of community and a neighborhood feel.

The aforementioned examples of how colleges and universities are actively engaged in promoting a strong sense of community are illustrative of several components of social cohesion measured by Goudriaan, Wittebrood, and Nieuwbeerta (2005). Along with these six indicators of social cohesion for which examples were provided, university campuses are also designed in ways that reflect the other factors of social cohesion measured by Goudriaan, Wittebrood, and Nieuwbeerta (2005), which include the following: (1) if students think they live on a pleasant campus; (2) if they feel responsible for making the campus a pleasant place to go to school; and (3) if students are nice to each other (see Quinones 2005; Notre Dame 2006; UCLA 2006; Hoffman et al. 2002). In short, there is overwhelming evidence that colleges and universities aim to create a sense of community and a neighborhood feel throughout the United States. Yet, research exploring the effect of social cohesion on reporting crime among college students has received little attention from the research community.

### Present Study

The present study attempts to fill this gap in the literature through a survey of college students about the perceived social cohesion and collective efficacy of a college campus. Eight of the nine indicators of social cohesion developed by Goudriaan, Wittebrood, and Nieuwbeerta (2005) will be modified slightly in order to test the hypothesis that social cohesion of a college or university is positively correlated with the likelihood that students will report violent victimizations to the police. The analysis will

control for other factors that have an impact on crime reporting, such as gender, age of student, how long respondents have been students at the university, if they are a member of a university based student organization or club as well as the location of their current place of residency.

After examining previous research it is likely that findings of the present study will show that social cohesion and collective efficacy have a significant effect on whether or not college students will report crime to the campus police. Results will show that the higher the social cohesion and collective efficacy reported by survey respondents, the greater the likelihood that they would report the crime.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY AND DATA DESCRIPTION

#### Participants

Data was collected through a self-report survey of college-students. The study used a systematic sample of 160 college students<sup>1</sup> at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Every third person that came out of the Student Union and the Dining Commons was asked to complete the survey. The response rate for the survey was 50 percent. Survey respondents were asked demographic questions. They were asked their age, race, gender, the number of semesters that they have been a full time student at the university, if they have lived on campus, and whether they are a member of a university based club or organization. The average respondent was twenty-two years old. There were seventy-seven males and eighty-three females that participated in the study. The majority of survey respondents identified themselves as being White, non-Hispanic (57.1 percent), had never lived on campus (68.8 percent), had been students on campus less than four semesters (77.2 percent), and did not belong to a university based club or organization (70.1 percent). Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for this study.

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<sup>1</sup> Students are operationally defined as freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students admitted to the university at the time the survey was administered.

**Table 1 Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percentage
Cohesion	29.64	5.53	
Efficacy	14.63	2.83	
Theory	44.28	6.55	
Victim Offender Relationship			
Stranger			50
Nonstranger			50
Type of Crime			
Theft<\$50			25
Theft>\$300			25
Simple Assault			25
Aggravated Assault			25
Demographic Characteristics			
Age (in years)	21.89	4.08	
Gender			
Male	77		
Female	83		
Race			
American Indian, Aleut, or Eskimo, non-Hispanic			0.6
Asian, or Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic			20.8
Black, non-Hispanic			9.1
Other, non-Hispanic			9.1
White, non-Hispanic			57.1
Lived on Campus			
No			68.8
Yes			31.3
Tenure as a Full-time student			
Four semesters or less			77.2
More than four semesters			22.8
University Based Club Membership			
No			70.1
Yes			29.9

### Procedure

Each respondent was given an informed consent form, which had been approved by the university's Institutional Review Board. The form indicated that the study concerned student's reactions to crime among college students, that the students were not required to participate, and if they did participate, and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. All respondents signed the form and participated fully. Given the

challenges presented in getting accurate data with self-report victim surveys, the current study used vignettes<sup>2</sup> to determine whether crime type had an influence on reporting among college students. Participants were asked to respond to demographic questions however; they were not asked to reveal any information that would allow them to be identified. Measures used in the current study are discussed below, starting with the dependent variable.

#### Dependent Variable

The dependent variable is the *likelihood* that a crime will be reported to the police, given a hypothetical set of circumstances. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale. The scale ranges from one to five where (1) corresponds to Certainly would NOT report the incident, (2) Probably would NOT report the incident, (3) Uncertain as to whether you would report the incident, (4) Probably would report the incident, and (5) Certainly would report the incident.

#### Independent Variables

The first independent variable is social cohesion as used by Goudriaan, Wittebrood, and Nieuwbeerta (2005), modified slightly to reflect cohesion on college campuses. Collectively eight indicators make up a composite measure of social cohesion. Participants responded to the following statements using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree:

- (1) You feel an attachment to the campus.
- (2) You feel at home on campus.
- (3) You have regular (once a week) contact with your classmates.
- (4) You feel that the social interactions that you have on campus make it a pleasant place to attend school with a sense of harmony and unity.
- (5) You feel that most of the people are nice to each other on the campus.

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<sup>2</sup> Vignettes are short stories about hypothetical situations in which respondents are asked to imagine themselves and then answer questions that follow. See Finch (1987) for more information.

- (6) You feel that the social interactions that you have on campus make it a socially pleasant place to live.
- (7) Most of the people on campus have friends that also attend UNLV.
- (8) You feel that most of the people on campus are similar to you and that you belong.

Scores on the composite measure of cohesion range from eight to forty. Observed scores ranged from eight to thirty-two with a mean of 29.64.

In addition, a second independent variable, collective efficacy was measured. For collective efficacy, participants were asked to respond to the following four questions regarding whether students at UNLV would intervene if they saw certain situations taking place on campus:

- (1) How likely is it that UNLV students would physically try to intervene if they witnessed a student being assaulted on campus?
- (2) How likely is it that UNLV students would physically try to intervene if they witnessed the property of another student being stolen?
- (3) How likely is it that UNLV students on campus would call campus police if they saw another student being assaulted?
- (4) How likely is it that UNLV students on campus would call the police if they saw property of another student being stolen?

Responses were measured on a Likert scale with (1) indicating Certainly would NOT intervene, (2) Probably would not intervene, (3) Uncertain as to whether students would intervene, (4) Probably would intervene, and (5) Certainly would intervene.

Scores on the composite measure of collective efficacy ranged from four to twenty.

Observed scores ranged from five to twenty with a mean of 14.63.

### Crime Vignettes

Vignettes used in the current study are designed so that information on two variables can be captured: victim-offender relationship (VOR) and crime seriousness

(CS). Each is used as control variables, given the influence that these factors have on crime reporting. As previously mentioned, crime is a rare event. Measuring victimization directly among college students would require large samples in order to identify variations across crime type. Therefore, vignettes were used instead of observed incidents. Previous research has shown that vignettes are useful in awareness and attitudinal research in general and have been used in criminal justice research in the area of perceptual deterrence (Klepper and Nagin 1989; Schoenberg and Ravdal 2000).

Victim-Offender Relationship. The victim-offender relationship was measured as a dichotomous variable that includes the categories (0) 'Stranger' and (1) 'Non-stranger.' Non-stranger represents instances where the offender is someone the respondent knows (i.e., boyfriend, ex-boyfriend, girlfriend or ex-girlfriend, friend or ex-friend, roommate, schoolmate, or neighbor). Stranger represents instances where the offender is someone that the respondent does not know. Participants were randomly assigned to each condition.

Crime Seriousness. The types of crime that were measured include assault and theft. Each of these variables was measured at two levels. The two levels of assault were simple assault and aggravated assault. Simple assault involves an attack without a weapon resulting in either minor injury such as a bruise, cut, scrape or scratch or no injury. Aggravated assault is defined as an actual or attempted attack with a weapon, regardless of whether injury resulted. Theft is defined as the unlawful taking of property. The two levels of theft that were measured are theft of property valued at less than fifty dollars and theft of property valued at more than \$300.

### Survey Design

Finally, the survey was designed so that there are sixteen versions, each containing three parts (1) demographic questions, (2) one of the eight vignettes, and (3) the social cohesion and collective efficacy questions. There are sixteen versions because there are eight different vignettes and there are two different orders of the survey parts for each vignette. The order in which the vignette and social cohesion and collective efficacy questions were presented varied across the different versions of the survey. In the first eight versions the demographic questions are followed by the social cohesion questions, the collective efficacy questions, and the crime vignette (see Appendix 1 for survey vignettes). In the second eight versions the demographic questions are followed by the crime vignette, the social cohesion questions, and the collective efficacy questions. Rotating questions guarded against potential bias created by question-order effect.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

The question that guided this research is: Does the social cohesion and collective efficacy of a college campus predict whether crime is likely to be reported to the police? In this study, primary data analysis concerned whether collective efficacy and social cohesion as two separate variables, and collective efficacy and social cohesion as one variable (theory) have an effect on the likelihood of a crime being reported to campus police.

#### Social Cohesion and Collective Efficacy Scales

The first step in analysis was to run a factor analysis to make sure that the measures in the study were valid. The factor analysis shows that there are two components: cohesion, and efficacy. All of the cohesion questions loaded onto one factor, (Eigenvalue=4.43) interpreted as the cohesion component. In addition, a separate analysis indicated that the scale composed of these items was reliable (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.88$ ). All of the efficacy questions loaded onto a second factor (Eigenvalue=2.34), and the scale was reliable (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.77$ ).

## Theft Analysis

The vignettes for assault were different than the vignettes for theft so the crimes were analyzed separately. Data was analyzed using a 2 (victim-offender relationship: stranger vs. nonstranger) x 2 (seriousness of crime: theft < \$50 vs. theft > \$300) Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) with collective efficacy and cohesion entered as covariates<sup>3</sup>. Collective efficacy emerged as a significant covariate,  $F(1, 74) = 10.55, p < .05^4$ . There was also a significant effect for seriousness of crime,  $F(1, 74) = 5.72, p < .05$ . Participants were more likely to report a theft greater than \$300 ( $\bar{x} = 4.07$ ) than a theft less than \$50 ( $\bar{x} = 3.43$ ). No other main effects or interactions were significant ( $ps > .31$ ). The overall means are reported in table 2.

Table 2 The Effects of Crime Seriousness and Victim-Offender Relationship on Likelihood of Reporting Crime in Theft Vignettes

Crime Seriousness	Means
<b>Theft &lt; \$50</b>	
Stranger	4.38 (0.25), n = 20
Nonstranger	3.49 (0.26), n = 20
<b>Theft &gt; \$300</b>	
Stranger	3.87 (0.26), n = 20
Nonstranger	4.27 (0.25), n = 20

Note: Standard error is reported in parentheses

A second analysis was done using a 2 (victim-offender relationship: stranger vs. nonstranger) x 2 (seriousness of crime: theft < \$50 vs. theft > \$300) ANCOVA with collective efficacy and social cohesion combined into one variable (theory) and entered

<sup>3</sup> The analysis was done this way because when cohesion and efficacy were analyzed as independent variables, the cell sizes were too small to meaningfully interpret any higher level interactions.

<sup>4</sup> A separate analysis indicated that participants who reported high levels of collective efficacy were more likely to report the crime than those who reported low levels of collective efficacy  $r(160) = 0.31, p < .01$ .

as a covariate. There were no main effects or interactions that were significant ( $ps > 0.14$ ). Cohesion does not seem to be a strong predictor of whether the crime is reported to the police in this study. This will be further discussed in the conclusion section.

### Assault Analysis

A 2 (victim-offender relationship: stranger vs. nonstranger) x 2 (seriousness of crime: simple assault vs. aggravated assault) ANCOVA with collective efficacy and cohesion entered as covariates was also performed on the assault vignettes. Collective efficacy again emerged as a significant covariate,  $F(1, 74) = 7.60, p < .05$ . There was also a significant interaction between crime seriousness and victim-offender relationship,  $F(1, 74) = 7.60, p < .05$ . Participants were less likely to report a simple assault by a nonstranger, than they were to report an assault in the other conditions (table 3). There were no other significant effects ( $ps > .10$ ).

Table 3 The Effects of Crime Seriousness and Victim-Offender Relationship on Likelihood of Reporting Crime in Assault Vignettes

Crime Seriousness	Means
<b>Simple Assault</b>	
Stranger	4.36 (0.20), n = 20
Nonstranger	3.70 (0.20), n = 20
<b>Aggravated Assault</b>	
Stranger	4.28 (0.20), n = 20
Nonstranger	4.45 (0.20), n = 20

Note: Standard error is reported in parentheses

A 2 (victim-offender relationship: stranger vs. nonstranger) x 2 (seriousness of crime: simple assault vs. aggravated assault) ANCOVA was also done using collective efficacy and cohesion as one variable (theory) entered as a covariate. There was a

significant effect for seriousness of crime,  $F(1, 75) = 4.23, p < 0.05$ . Participants were more likely to report an aggravated assault ( $\bar{x} = 4.41$ ) than a simple assault ( $\bar{x} = 3.99$ ). There were no other significant main effects or interactions ( $ps > .07$ ).

### Effect of Demographic Variables

Secondary analyses were also conducted to test the effects of each of the demographic variables on the likelihood of the crimes being reported to the police. The demographic variables were not significant predictors of whether the crime would be reported in this study. Table 4 shows that Age does not have a significant effect on whether or not crime is reported to campus police ( $p = .70$ ). Gender also did not have a significant effect on whether the crime would be reported, and females were only slightly more likely than males to report the crime ( $p = .66$ ). There were no significant effects on the likelihood of whether the crime would be reported to the police based on race ( $p = .67$ ), and those respondents who identified themselves as White, non-Hispanic were only slightly more likely to report the crime as those respondents that identified themselves as being non-White. The tenure on campus variable did not have a significant effect on whether a crime was reported to the police, and respondents that had been a student on campus for more than four semesters were only slightly more likely to report the crime than those respondents that had been students on campus for four semesters or less ( $p = .77$ ). In addition, club membership did not have a significant effect on whether the crime would be reported ( $p = .54$ ). Whether or not the respondents lived on campus did not effect whether or not the crime would be reported to the police, and those respondents that had lived on campus were only slightly more likely to report the crime

to the police than those respondents that had never lived on campus ( $p = .72$ ). Thus, demographic factors generally did not affect the likelihood of campus crime being reported and questions specifically related to factors that should increase social cohesion such as tenure on campus, whether participants have lived on campus, and club membership were not predictors of crime reporting.

**Table 4 The Effects of Demographic Characteristics on Likelihood of Reporting Crime**

Demographic Characteristics	Mean
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	3.93 (0.13)
Female	4.01 (0.12)
<b>Race</b>	
White, non-Hispanic	4.00 (0.12)
non-White	3.93 (0.14)
<b>Age</b>	
Under 21	4.00 (0.10)
21 or Over	3.93 (0.15)
<b>Lived on Campus</b>	
Yes	4.02 (0.16)
No	3.95 (0.11)
<b>Tenure on Campus</b>	
Four semesters or less	3.96 (0.10)
More than four semesters	4.02 (0.19)
<b>Club membership</b>	
Yes	3.87 (0.16)
No	3.99 (0.11)

Note: Standard error is reported in parentheses

### Survey Version

There were sixteen versions of the survey, each containing three parts (1) demographic questions, (2) one of the eight vignettes, and (3) the social cohesion and collective efficacy questions. In all sixteen versions, the demographic questions came first. In versions one through eight the social cohesion and collective efficacy questions came after the demographic questions and the vignette came last. In versions nine

through sixteen, the vignette came after the demographic questions and the social cohesion and collective efficacy questions came last. The version of the survey that the participants were given had a significant effect on whether the crime was reported to the police,  $F(1, 158) = 6.89, p < .05$ . Participants that received versions one through eight of the survey, where they were first asked to think about social cohesion and collective efficacy questions were more likely to report the crime ( $\bar{x} = 4.20$ ) than those participants that received versions nine through sixteen of the survey ( $\bar{x} = 3.75$ ). This finding is addressed in greater detail in the conclusions.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

#### Discussion of Results

This study seeks to assess the degree to which social cohesion and collective efficacy influence the likelihood that crime is reported among college-students and is important for two primary reasons. First, more informed strategies aimed at reducing campus crime could be developed by identifying factors that increase the amount of crime that is reported to police by college students. Second, the study is important because of the theoretical implications. That is, the study takes a deductive approach to examine the theory of collective efficacy with a specific sub-group of the population. By looking at social cohesion on college campuses and its effect on reporting crime, it can be determined if there is an effect on specific sub-populations within the general population.

The findings in this study indicate that collective efficacy has an effect on crime reporting in crimes of assault as well as theft when collective efficacy and social cohesion are analyzed as two separate variables. Specifically, the higher the levels of collective efficacy that participants reported on the survey, the more likely that they were to report the crime to the police. When collective efficacy is looked at by itself, it is a strong predictor that the crime will be reported. However, when it is looked at as part of the theory variable, there is no significant effect on crime reporting among the survey participants.

## Lack of Social Cohesion Effects

Social cohesion does not seem to be strong predictor of whether crime is reported in this study. When social cohesion and collective efficacy were looked at separately, there were strong effects for collective efficacy but not for social cohesion. When they were looked at as one variable, there were no significant effects. This may be because the scale that was used to measure social cohesion in this study was not a good measure of cohesion. For the factor analysis, the cohesion statements that had the lowest correlations were if the participants “feel at home on campus” and if they “have regular (at least once a week) contact with other students outside of class.” The statement regarding cohesion that had the strongest correlation was that “the social interactions that participants have on campus make it a pleasant place to attend school with a sense of harmony and unity.” One possible explanation for this is that when asked if they feel at home on campus, people may think about their actual home life which may reduce a sense of cohesiveness. However, when participants are asked about the campus being a pleasant place to attend school, participants may think about how they feel about their life as a student and attending UNLV which may be more strongly related to their sense of cohesion on campus than whether they feel at home. Another possible explanation is that social cohesion may have not been a strong predictor of reporting crime in this study is because of the fact that only the crimes of assault and theft were included. There may be other crimes that are more related to social cohesion including; drug use and vandalism.

In addition, the demographic variables in the study had no significant effects on whether the crime would be reported. It did not matter whether a student had ever lived on campus, or whether they had been a student at the campus for awhile whether they

reported the crime to the police. This is important because, it was assumed that students who had lived on campus and those who had been students at UNLV for awhile would feel a stronger sense of cohesion and be more likely to report the crime. Table 5 shows a summary of the findings in this study.

**Table 5 Summary of Findings: Independent Variables and Predictor Variables**

	Cohesion	Efficacy	Theory
<b>Theft</b>			
Theft < \$50	no	yes	no
Theft > \$300	no	yes	no
<b>Assault</b>			
Simple Assault	no	yes	no
Aggravated Assault	no	yes	no
<b>Demographic Variables</b>			
Gender	no	no	no
Age	no	no	no
Race	no	no	no
Tenure on Campus	no	no	no
Lived on Campus	no	no	no
Club Membership	no	no	no
<b>Version Effects</b>			
1 through 8	no	no	no
9 through 16	no	no	no

Note: Yes is statistically significant ( $p < .05$ )

Previous research on social cohesion has found that that social cohesion had a significant, positive relationship on reporting crime (Goudriaan, Wittebrood, and Nieuwbeerta 2005). Specifically, they found that with every one unit increase in the social cohesion score, there was a nineteen percent increase in the likelihood that the crime would be reported. The current study is different from the research done by Goudriaan, Wittebrood, and Nieuwbeerta (2005) because, they conducted a survey of people living in neighborhoods and this was a study of college students. People living in

a neighborhood may experience higher levels of social cohesion than college students. This could be because people living in neighborhoods live there for a long period of time, and college students only attend school on that campus for a short period of time. People only have one home, and there may be no way for students to feel like they do when they are not in their actual home.

### Analysis of Assault and Demographic Variables

When assault was analyzed and social cohesion and collective efficacy were looked at as covariates, there was a significant interaction between seriousness of crime and victim-offender relationship. The crime that was most likely to be reported was an aggravated assault that was committed by a nonstranger, and the crime that was least likely to be reported was a simple assault that was committed by a nonstranger.

There were no significant effects on the likelihood that the crime would be reported to the police based on gender, age, race, tenure on campus, whether respondents had lived on campus, and whether respondents were members of a university club or organization. Most people may be likely to report crime because they feel like it is the right thing to do. There is a great deal of crime that goes unreported in the real world. For example, in 2000, only 49 percent of violent victimizations, and only 39 percent of property crimes were reported to the police (Hart and Rennison 2003). Although not a definitive finding, one possible explanation is that the survey respondents answered the questions on the survey in what they thought was the right way to answer them. They may have answered the questions the way that they thought that they should be answered, so it did not matter what their age, race, or gender was, how long that they had been a

student on campus, whether they had lived on campus, or whether they were member of a club or organization on campus. They simply said that they would report the crime to the police. It also may be easier for people to say they would report a crime when it is on paper than when it is a real world situation. In a real world situation, people who are victims of crime might be afraid to report the crime because of retaliation against them. People in a real world situation could also think that it's a nuisance to go down to the police station and report the crime. They may have the attitude that there is nothing that the police will do in their situation so it is not worth it to report the crime.

#### Question-Order Effects

The order of the parts of the survey had a significant effect on whether the crime was reported. Participants who received a version of the survey where the vignette came after the social cohesion and collective efficacy questions were more likely to report the crime than those participants who received a survey where the vignette came before the social cohesion and collective efficacy questions. This could be because, asking people to answer questions about collective efficacy and social cohesion before they read the vignette, increased the likelihood of a crime being reported. Crime reporting increased because their sense of social cohesion was made more salient to them.

#### Strengths of the Current Study

The current study has several strengths. First the research explored the effects of social cohesion and collective efficacy on reporting crime among college students which has received little attention from the research community. In addition, the research

focused on both social cohesion and collective efficacy, which gives a more accurate picture of the effects of the theory of collective efficacy on the likelihood of crime being reported to the police. Another strength of this study is the fact that a potential way of increasing crime reporting was discovered. When people were reminded of social cohesion and collective efficacy issues, crime reporting increased.

#### Limitations of the Current Study

Some limitations of the present research should be discussed. The sample was only students from the University of Nevada Las Vegas, so the results cannot be generalized to all college students. However, UNLV does have a very diverse student population with many students who are over the age of twenty-five, as well as over 7,000 minority students (UNLV 2007). The survey participants were given vignettes and were asked what they would do if they were in the given situation. What they would do in the hypothetical situation may not be the same if it was a situation where they were the actual victim or knew the victim personally. Third, the sample size was only 160 students, and if the sample would have been larger it is possible that more significant effects might have been found.

#### Future Research and Conclusions

Future research should be done on whether social cohesion and collective efficacy have an effect on whether crime would be reported on college campuses. Specifically, researchers should conduct similar surveys on other college campuses throughout the United States. For example, researchers could compare the effects of social cohesion and

collective efficacy between schools that have a large number of students who live on campus and those universities that are defined as commuter schools where the majority of students live off campus. Research also should be done using a larger survey of college students to determine what factors have an influence on whether or not crime is reported to the police.

In conclusion, the results from this study do not show support for the research hypothesis. Although the results do not support the hypothesis, the findings do indicate that collective efficacy has a significant effect on whether crime is reported to the police. The results of this study show a potential new way of increasing crime reporting because giving survey participants the questions relating to social cohesion and collective efficacy before the vignette leads to a higher rate of crime reporting than those who received the vignette first. Future research should continue to examine this finding.

## APPENDIX

### VIGNETTES

The following passages are the vignettes contained in the survey. The parts of the vignette that are bolded represent the variables (i.e., VOR and TOC). That is, they are the part of the vignette that changed, given the version of the survey that was administered. The version of the survey that was administered contained, only one category of each variable:

At the beginning of a new semester you go to the UNLV bookstore to purchase a **(book for class that cost \$27/books for class that cost \$327)**. Afterwards, you put the book in your car, parked nearby, and go to the Student Union for lunch. When you return to your car, you realize that the book is no longer in the car. As you are standing by your car, you see a friend get out of the car that she just parked nearby. You tell her about the book that has been taken from your car. She says that while she was driving around looking for a spot, she saw someone by your car. She looked at the person for a few seconds to see if they were planning on driving away so she could grab the spot. She also says that she is pretty sure that the person was a **(stranger/non-stranger)** that she did not recognize.

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents 'certainly would NOT report the incident' and 5 represents 'certainly would report the incident', what is the likelihood that you would report the theft described above to the police?

At the beginning of a new semester you go to the UNLV bookstore to purchase some books for class. Afterwards, you put the books in your car, parked nearby, and go to the Student Union for lunch. When you return to your car, you see someone get out of a car that she just parked nearby. You notice that another car has stopped right behind her car, and that the driver is yelling at her for taking the spot that the driver wanted to park in. You walk over and ask if everything is alright. The driver who is a **(stranger that you do not recognize/someone you know from class that you are friendly with)** tells you to mind your own business. You try to calm the driver down, but the driver gets angrier and insults you. Over the next minute, the situation escalates, until the driver punches you.

The driver then quickly drives away. As a result of being hit, you end up with a **(bloody nose and a black eye/broken nose and a broken eye socket)**.

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represents 'certainly would NOT report the incident' and 5 represents 'certainly would report the incident', what is the likelihood that you would report the assault described above to the police?

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