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College Student Victims and Reporting Crime to the Police: The Influence of Collective Efficacy

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Abstract: *Campus crime and college student victimization are important social issues. Despite the existing research in this area, little is known about whether factors that influence police notification among college students are similar to those observed among the general population. Using data from a survey of 160 college students enrolled at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, the current study assesses the influence of collective efficacy on crime reporting among college student victims, while controlling for relevant victim-, offender-, and incident-level characteristics of a crime. Results from multivariate regression analysis show that only one dimension of collective efficacy (i.e., social control) significantly influences police notification behavior among this college student sample. With the exception of crime severity, other factors that are commonly associated with crime reporting decisions among the general public are not correlated with these students' willingness to report crime to police. Findings are discussed in terms of both campus policies concerning crime reporting as well as theoretical implications.*

Keywords: campus crime, college student victimization, and social cohesion.

INTRODUCTION

Recently, according to data obtained from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), in each year between 1995 and 2004, college students aged 18-24 experienced an average of more than 463,000 incidents of violence, including more than 30,000 rapes or sexual assaults, 42,000 robberies, 106,000 aggravated assaults, and 284,000 simple assaults (Hart 2007). However, data from the U.S. Department of Education (2011) show that between 2005 and 2009, the number of Part I crimes¹ that occurred on college campuses fell nearly 21%. Although these figures reflect only those crimes known to police, analysis of NCVS data, which include both crimes reported as well as those not reported to police, confirms the recent decline in violent victimization among college students (Baum and Klaus 2005; Hart 2003, 2007). Despite

the downward trend observed in recent years, campus crime and college student victimization remains a top concern for many, including students, parents, faculty, staff, administrators, and those living in and around campus communities.

Administrative policies and campus security practices are designed to keep students safe by addressing many of the concerns related to campus crime. For example, in response to high-profile incidents of fatal attacks involving college students, like the 2007 events at Virginia Tech, schools have increased the number and responsibilities of campus police, enhanced rapid response communication networks to alert students and college staff at the onset of violent incidents, provided greater access to clinical records of students with psychological or behavioral problems, and proposed establishing special firearm training so that armed faculty and staff would be able to

assist law enforcement at critical times (Rasmussen and Johnson 2008). While college students are far more likely to experience a property crime than a murder or some other form of campus violence (Bromley 1992; Fisher, Sloan, Cullen, and Lu 1998; Fisher and Wilkes 2003; Fox and Hellman 1985; Henson and Stone 1999; Siegel and Raymond 1992; Sloan 1992, 1994; Volkwein, Szelest, and Lizotte 1995), when campus crime threatens the overall safety and security of students it often elicits some form of legislative or administrative response. Since only about a third of all violence experienced by college students is reported to police (Baum and Klaus 2005; Hart 2003, 2007), developing a fully informed response to this problem can be a formidable task.

Over the past several decades, the campus crime literature has grown substantially, addressing many aspects of this important social issue. Studies range from investigations aimed at improving our understanding of the nature and extent of campus crime and college student victimization (Baum and Klaus 2005; Fisher et al. 1998; Fisher, Cullen, and Turner 1999, 2000; Fisher and Wilkes 2003; Hart 2003, 2007; Hart and Miethe 2011; Pezza 1995; Sloan 1992; Sloan and Fisher 2011) to research that has identified important institutional, community, and student characteristics related to these events (Bromley 1992, 1994, 1995; Cass 2007; Fox and Hellman 1985; Volkwein et al., 1995). In addition, researchers have examined student behavior, lifestyle, and the effects of drugs and alcohol use on college student victimization (Dowdall 2007; Fisher et al. 1998; Gebhardt, Kaphingst, and DeJong 2000; Pezza and Bellotti 1995; Sloan and Fisher 2011), while others have focused on specific types of student violence such as rape and sexual assault (Bachman, Paternoster, and Ward 1992; Cass 2007; Karjane, Fisher, and Cullen 2005; Fisher et al. 1999, 2000; Fisher, Daigel, Cullen, and Turner 2003; Potter, Krider, and McMahon 2000). Legal and administrative responses to campus crime have also been examined (Fisher, Hartman, Cullen, and Turner 2003; Gregory, and Janosik 2002; Janosik 2001; Janosik and Gehring 2003; Janosik and Gregory 2009; Karjane et al. 2005; Potter et al. 2000; Smith 1988), and theoretical explanations of campus crime and college student victimization have been offered (Bachman et al. 1992; Barton, Jensen, and Kaufman 2010; Cass 2007; Fisher and Nasar 1992; Fisher et al. 1998; Fisher and Wilkes 2003; Mustaine and Tewksbury 1999, 2006, 2007; Robinson and Roh 2007; Tewksbury and Mustaine 2000). However, with the exception of a few noteworthy studies (see for example, Hart 2003; Fisher et al. 2000; Sloan, Fisher, and Cullen 1997), little is known about what factors influence college students' decisions to report campus crime to police and whether those factors are similar to ones observed in the general population. If we can improve our understanding of why college student victims report (or do not report) crimes to police, strategies designed to increase our awareness of campus safety and

security issues can be developed; and corresponding policies, programs, and procedures can be improved and implemented in a more efficient and effective manner.

Using data from a survey of students attending the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, the current study examines the issue of reporting college student victimization to police. Guided by social disorganization theory (Sampson and Groves 1989; Sampson, Raudenbush, and Earls 1997; Shaw and McKay 1942), the current study examines the influence of collective efficacy (Sampson 2004, 2006) among college students and its role in students' decisions to report victimization, while controlling for victim-, offender-, and incident-level characteristics of crime events related to reporting patterns among the general public. Results are discussed in terms of strategies for improving crime reporting among college students as well as the broader theoretical implications in the area of social disorganization. Before findings are presented, an overview of the literature is provided.

CAMPUS CRIME AND COLLEGE STUDENT VICTIMIZATION

An extensive research literature exists on campus crime and college student victimization (see for example, Fisher and Sloan 2007; Fox and Burstein 2010; Sloan and Fisher 2011). Within this broad area of study, many scholars have focused on investigating the extent and nature of campus crime as well as identifying correlates of crimes against college students. For example, using data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS), Hart (2007) noted that on average, each year from 1995 through 2004, college students between the ages of 18 and 24 experienced an estimated 460,000 violent victimizations². Although this figure translates into an average annual rate of more than 56 violent crimes per 1,000 students, other studies suggest that the prevalence of violence experienced by college students is substantially higher (Belknap and Erez 2007; Brantingham and Brantingham 1999; Fisher et al. 1998, 1999, 2000; Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski 1988).

In general, past research consistently demonstrates that college students are far more likely to experience a property offense than a violent crime (Bromley 1992; Fisher et al. 1998; Fisher and Wilkes 2003; Fox and Hellman 1985; Henson and Stone 1999; Siegel and Raymond 1992; Sloan 1992, 1994; Volkwein et al. 1995). For example, Sloan et al. (1997) found that college students are victims of theft at a level nearly five times greater than the level of violence; Fisher and Wilkes (2003) suggest that the level at which students fall victim to burglary is about twice the level of violence; and Fisher et al. (1998) indicate that college students are victims of non-violent forms of harassment at almost one and a half times the level at which they are victims of violence. In

2009, police recorded more than 88,000 property crimes on U.S. college/university campuses, including more than 11,000 burglaries, 74,000 larceny-thefts, and 2,000 motor vehicle thefts (FBI 2011).

Previous research has also identified a number of correlates of college student victimization. These risk factors include specific characteristics of the offender, the victim, and the offense and are similar in many ways to those observed among non-student populations. For example, with the exception of rape or sexual assault (Belknap and Erez 2007; Brantingham and Brantingham 1999; Fisher et al. 1999, 2000; Koss et al. 1988), male college students experience overall violence (Baum and Klaus 2005; Hart 2003, 2007) as well as some forms of non-violent victimization (Fisher et al. 1998; Fisher and Wilkes 2003) at rates higher than female students. College student violence is also typically intra-racial, involves persons of similar age, and is often committed by offenders who the victim does not know (Baum and Klaus 2005; Hart 2003, 2007). The major exception to these patterns involves sexual victimizations or stalking where most victims are more likely to report knowing their attacker (Belknap and Erez 1995; Crowell and Burgess 1996; Fisher et al. 2000, 2003; Fisher, Cullen, and Turner 2002; Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, and Martin 2007).

Students' risks of violent victimization also vary dramatically by location, time of day, and particular aspects of the social context in which the offense occurs. For example, in 2004, the rate of off-campus violence among college students was nearly 20 times the rate of on-campus victimization (Hart 2007). But when crime location was considered in conjunction with time, a different pattern emerged. That is, on-campus incidents involving violence were more likely to take place during the day (58%) than at night (37%), whereas incidents of off-campus violence occurred more frequently at night (72%) than during the day (26%) (Hart 2007). Finally, in an analysis of situational contexts of college student violence, Hart and Miethe (2011) found that minor assaults among males that occur in off-campus locations and in front of bystanders were the typical situations underlying the most prevalent contexts for violence experienced by college students.

Although many of the correlates of college student victimization are similar to those found in the non-student population, most empirical evidence suggests that college students are less likely to be victims of most types of violence than similarly aged non-students (Baum and Klaus 2005; Hart 2003, 2007). Another distinctive characteristic of college student victimization is the extent to which crime is reported to police. Levels and patterns of reporting crime to police among college students and the ways in which these levels and patterns are similar to, and distinct from, the general population are described in the following section in greater detail.

REPORTED PATTERNS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENT VICTIMS

Although much is known about the nature and extent of college student victimization, relatively less is known about factors that influence college student victims' decisions to report crime to police. Prior to the late 1990s, few studies examined reporting patterns associated with college student victimization, and those that did were based on small surveys³ conducted at a single university. For example, in a survey of nearly 1,000 residents of the Michigan State University community, Trojanowicz, Benson, and Trojanowicz (1988) found that 79% of self-identified crime victims indicated that they reported the incident to police. And surveys administered to students enrolled in the University of Alabama system of higher education revealed that between 40% and 66% of on-campus crime was reported (Sigler and Koehler 1993; Sloan et al. 1993, 1995). As researchers began utilizing data from large-scale and national-level studies of campus crime and college student victimization, a different picture of the nature and extent of crime reporting among college student victims emerged.

Sloan et al.'s (1997) study of more than 3,400 college students marked the first large-scale study of college students' victimization reporting practices. Results of their study revealed that more than the three-quarters of all crimes identified were *not* reported to campus police or security, including 82% of all violent crimes, 79% of thefts, and 78% of burglaries. Similarly, using data from the National College Women Sexual Victimization (NCWSV) study, Fisher et al. (2000) found that 95% of rapes involving college students were not reported to police. Not only did findings from these large-scale/national studies contradict previous research, but they also called into question the validity of official campus crime statistics produced under the *Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act* (20 U.S.C. 1092[f]) (Shafer 2007).

In 1995, a single question that identified respondents as being either a full- or part-time college student at the time of their interview was added to the NCVS's Basic Screen Questionnaire (NCVS-1). With this new information included in NCVS data, researchers were able to compare characteristics of college student victimization with victimization among similarly aged non-students, including patterns of reporting crime to police.

In the first study of violent victimization among college students produced from NCVS data, Hart (2003) found that 34% of all violence against college students was reported to police, including 12% of rapes and sexual assaults, 53% of robberies, 45% of aggravated assaults, and 69% of simple assaults. Overall, the level of reporting violence experienced by college students has remained stable over the past several years and is at a level that is significantly *lower* than similarly aged non-students

(Baum and Klaus 2005; Hart 2007). In other words, college students are less likely to report violence to police than their non-student counterparts. However, students and non-students generally provide similar reasons for why crime is not reported. These reasons include because the crime was considered a “private or personal matter,” because the violence was considered a “small/no loss,” and because it was “reported to another official” (Baum and Klaus 2005; Hart 2003, 2007).

Despite a growing understanding of the level of college student victimization reported to police, the reporting literature for college student victims is less developed than for the general public. Nevertheless, some factors that influence a college student victim’s decision to report an incident have been identified, especially for crimes of rape, sexual coercion, and other forms of unwanted sexual contact. For example, in one of the few national-level multivariate analyses of factors predicting crime reporting among college student victims, Fisher et al. (2003) found that intra-racial crimes against college students are more likely to be reported than inter-racial crimes; and incidents involving a weapon, an offender who was a stranger, and where the victim was a Black, non-Hispanic student, were more likely to be reported to police. Collectively, evidence from studies of college student victims suggests that levels of reporting are significantly less than the levels observed in the general population, which is described in greater detail in the following section.

REPORTING PATTERNS AMONG THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Of the estimated 4.3 million violent crimes committed against U.S. residents in 2009, about half were reported to police (Truman and Rand 2010). This figure is significantly higher than for property crime, where only about 2-in-5 incidents were reported. The current literature on patterns of reporting crime to police among the general public is robust, and identifies specific factors that influence a crime victim’s decision to report an incident. For example, certain victim characteristics have been linked to reporting behavior. Women are more likely than men to report victimizations (Birbeck, Gabaldon, and LaFree 1993; Conaway and Lohr 1994; Felson, Messner, and Hoskin 1999; Hart and Rennison 2003; Skogan 1976), intra-racial crimes are more likely to be reported than inter-racial crimes (Hart and Rennison 2003; Skogan 1976), and older or more affluent victims are more likely to report crime to police than younger victims or victims who earn less (Birbeck et al. 1993; Greenberg and Ruback 1992; Greenberg, Ruback, and Westcott 1982; Hart and Rennison 2003).

In addition to victim characteristics, certain offender characteristics have also been shown to affect a victim’s

decision to report a crime. For example, studies indicate that the victim-offender relationship matters. When the offender is a current or former spouse rather than someone they do not know or than someone identified as an acquaintance, victims are more likely to report a crime (Baumer, Felson, and Messner 2003; Felson et al. 1999; Hart and Rennison 2003; Lizotte 1985; Williams 1984). Crimes involving an armed offender compared to incidents involving an unarmed attacker are more likely to be reported to the police (Conaway and Lohr 1994; Hart and Rennison 2003; Williams 1984). Finally, studies of the general population suggest that the age, race, and number of offenders involved in a crime play a role in a victim’s decision to report a crime. Violence involving a Black, older, or multiple offenders is significantly more likely to be reported to the police than a crime where the offender is White, younger, or alone, respectively (Hart and Rennison 2003).

The literature also suggests that certain contextual factors related to an incident affect a victim’s decision to report a crime to police. For example, the severity of a crime is important; that is, crimes that are more severe are generally more likely to be reported than non-serious offenses (Bachman 1998; Birbeck et al. 1993; Goudriaan, Lynch, and Nieuwebeerta 2004; Hart and Rennison 2003; Kilpatrick, Benjamin, Veronen, Best, and Von 1987; Lizotte 1985; Skogan 1976, 1984). The location of an incident also matters. Williams (1984), for example, found that crimes that took place within the home are more likely to be reported to police than similar incidents that occurred in public. Finally, it is more likely that a violent victimization resulting in an injury is reported to the police than an incident where the victim is not injured (Hart and Rennison 2003).

Over the past several decades, various theories of victim decision-making have also been offered in order to explain reporting behavior (e.g., Black 1976; Gottfredson and Gottfredson 1988; Greenberg and Ruback 1992; Greenberg et al. 1982; Kidd and Chayet 1984). A growing body of research within this area emphasizes the importance of neighborhood characteristics on police notification in particular (e.g., Avakame, Fyfe, and McCoy 1999; Baumer 2002; Bennett and Wiegand 1994; Fishman 1979; Gottfredson and Hindelang 1979; Goudriaan, Wittebrood, and Nieuwebeerta 2006; Laub 1981; Ruback and Ménard 2001; Warner 1992), drawing heavily on the classic social disorganization theory (Shaw and McKay 1942).

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTERISTICS AND REPORTING DECISIONS

Shaw and McKay’s (1942) social disorganization theory represented a fundamental shift in thinking about crime and delinquency, focusing on “kinds of places”

instead of “kinds of people” as an explanation of the etiology of crime and deviance. In its earliest form, social disorganization theory suggested that neighborhood structural factors (e.g., economic status, ethnic heterogeneity, and residential mobility) disrupted a community’s ability to self-regulate, which in turn leads to increased crime and delinquency. A growing number of studies have examined the influence of police notification within the original social disorganization framework, but have generally not found support for a neighborhood structure-crime reporting link. For example, Warner (1992) found that racial heterogeneity and economic status of neighborhoods were not significant predictors of the likelihood victims would report robberies or assaults. Likewise, Baumer (2002) found that neighborhood disadvantage did not significantly affect the likelihood of police notification among robbery and aggregated assault victims. Similar studies conducted outside the U.S. have also failed to find support for the notion that more socially disorganized neighborhoods result in fewer crimes reported to police (Bennett and Wiegand 1994; Fishman 1979).

Over the past several years, the intervening effects of endogenous dimensions of neighborhood dynamics (i.e., social ties, social capital, social control, and social cohesion) have been incorporated into the original social disorganization perspective (Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Sampson 1988, 2003, 2004, 2006, Sampson and Groves 1989; Sampson, Morenoff, and Earls 1999; Sampson, et al. 1997). Although various scholars suggest these endogenous community dynamics could play an important role in crime victims’ decisions to report crime to police (Baumer 2002; Black 1976; Conklin 1975; Gottfredson and Hindelang 1979), to date, only one known study has formally tested this hypothesis. Specifically, Goudriaan et al. (2006) hypothesized that the lower the social cohesion observed in a neighborhood, the lower the likelihood that crime victims living within these neighborhoods would report an incident to police. Results of their study indicate that a significant relationship between social cohesion and reporting crime exists: with every one-unit increase in social cohesion scores⁴, there was a corresponding 19% increase in the likelihood that the crime would be reported.

The current body of literature reviewed above clearly demonstrates that much more is known about crime reporting patterns for the general population than for college student victims. A review of the literature also reveals that levels of reporting across the two groups are significantly different, while some of the factors that influence reporting decisions between the two groups are similar. And while a growing number of studies have investigated reporting patterns among the general population within various theoretical frameworks like social disorganization, similar progress has not been made with respect to improving our understanding of why

college student victims report crime to police. The current study begins to fill this gap in the literature.

CURRENT STUDY

Guided by social disorganization theory, the current study tests the hypothesis that college students’ decisions to report crime to the police is directly correlated with collective efficacy⁵. Specifically, it is expected that as social cohesion and social control increase, the willingness of student-victims to report crime to police will also increase, while controlling for other competing explanations of reporting behavior. Findings from this investigation are important for two particular reasons. First, if factors that influence crime reporting among college students can be identified, strategies that may increase crime reporting could be implemented. In doing so, campus administrators could develop a more comprehensive understanding of the nature and extent of college student victimization, and this in turn could aid in the creation and implementation of strategies designed to reduce campus crime. Results from this study are also important because of the potential theoretical implications. By focusing on the collective efficacy of a college campus, the scope of social disorganization might be better understood. The following section describes the data and methods used to test our hypothesis.

DATA AND METHODS

Data for the current study were collected from a systematic random sample of college students enrolled at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (N=160)⁶. Each respondent was provided an informed consent form approved by UNLV’s Institutional Review Board and a copy of the survey instrument, which consisted of three sections (see Appendix). The first section contained questions that captured demographic information. The second section contained questions pertaining to social cohesion and social control. The third section contained a vignette⁷ that described a hypothetical victimization and a question used to measure a student’s willingness to report the crime described in the vignette to police. The order in which the vignette and social cohesion/social control questions were presented was rotated across different versions of the survey to guard against potential bias created by question-order effect. Different versions of the survey were distributed to participants in a random manner. A description of the measures used is provided in the following section, beginning with the dependent variable.

Measures

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 5-point Likert scale, where (1) corresponds to ‘Certainly would NOT report the incident’ and (5) corresponds to ‘Certainly would report the incident.’ Table 1 provides descriptive statistics of the measures used in the current study and shows that on average, students would likely notify the police about the hypothetical incidents described in the vignettes ($M = 4.0$, $SD = 1.1$).

cohesion on a college campus. Respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale the degree to which they agreed with eight different statements aimed at measuring shared values and a willingness to help others (see Appendix for the specific statements included on the survey instrument). For each single item, responses were scored from 1 to 5, where (1) corresponds to ‘Strongly disagree’ and (5) corresponds to ‘Strongly agree.’ Combined, scores for the measure of social cohesion range from 8 to 40. On average, students surveyed indicated a relatively high sense of social cohesion based on the indicators used ($M = 29.7$, $SD = 5.5$).

Measures	Mean	SD	%	Min	Max
Dependent variable					
Likelihood a crime would be reported	4.0	1.1		1	5
Independent variables					
Social cohesion	29.7	5.5		8	40
Social control	14.7	2.9		4	20
Control variables					
Victim characteristics					
Age (in years)	20.9	4.1		16	40
Gender					
Male (reference category)			49.0		
Female			51.0		
Race/Hispanic origin					
White, non-Hispanic (reference category)				1	4
Black, non-Hispanic			56.9		
Other, non-Hispanic			10.0		
Hispanic, any race			23.1		
Offender characteristics					
Victim-offender relationship¹					
Stranger (reference category)				0	1
Non-stranger			50.0		
Incident characteristics					
Type of crime¹					
Aggravated assault (reference category)			25.0		
Simple assault			25.0		
Theft of property > \$300			25.0		
Theft of property < \$50			25.0		
Social factors					
Organizational membership					
No (reference category)			68.8		
Yes			31.3		
Full-time semesters completed	2.6	2.8		0	12
On-campus residence	24.1	39.9		0	100

¹Variable used in an equal number of vignettes administered to respondents randomly.

The independent variable in the current study is collective efficacy, which is comprised of two dimensions: social cohesion and social control. Measures of social cohesion were developed from similar measures used by Goudriaan et al. (2006), but modified slightly to gauge social

Respondents were also asked four questions related to social control. Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale the degree to which UNLV students would intervene in different situations involving campus crime (see Appendix for the specific

questions included on the survey instrument). As with the social cohesion items, items used to measure social control were scored from 1 to 5, where (1) corresponds to 'Certainly would NOT intervene' and (5) corresponds to 'Certainly would intervene.' Combined, scores for the measure of social control range from 4 to 20. Again, students expressed a relatively strong sense of social control as measured by the indicators used ($M = 14.7$, $SD = 2.9$).

The measures of social cohesion and social control were designed to reflect the two underlying dimensions of collective efficacy. Factor analysis was conducted on all 12 items to assess their factorability. Strengths of correlations between the items measuring social cohesion ranged between .3 and .7 ($p < .01$), indicating moderate to strong factorability. Although the strengths of correlations between the items measuring social control were somewhat weaker—ranging between .2 and .6—they were all statistically significant ($p < .01$). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was .84, above the recommended value of .6; and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2 = 783.31$, $p < .01$). Finally, two Eigen values of greater than 1 were observed. The first Eigen value showed the social cohesion factor explained 34% of the variance, whereas the social control factor explained 19% of the variance. Based on these results, none of the items used to measure collective efficacy were excluded.

Given the influence that victim-, offender-, incident-characteristics, as well as certain social factors, have on reporting crime to the police among the general population, control variables related to each were included in the current analyses. For example, a respondent's age, gender, and race and whether of Hispanic ethnic origin were included in the models below as rival explanatory variables. Age is a continuous variable ranging from 16 to 40 ($M = 20.9$, $SD = 4.1$). Gender is coded as 0 (Male) or 1 (Female). Most respondents are female (51%). Finally, race and Hispanic origin is captured through a series of four dichotomous variables: White, non-Hispanic (57%); Black, non-Hispanic (10%), "Other," non-Hispanic⁸ (23%); and Hispanic, any race (10%). For the multivariate models that follow, 'White, non-Hispanic' is the reference category.

In addition to being used to assess a student victim's willingness to report a hypothetical crime situation to police, each vignette contained two rival explanatory factors, one measuring victim-offender relationship and the other measuring crime severity. Victim-offender relationship is measured as a dichotomous variable that includes the categories (0) 'Stranger' and (1) 'Non-stranger,' whereas crime severity is captured through a series of four dichotomous variables: (1) 'Aggravated assault,' (2) 'Simple assault,' (3) 'Theft of property valued at more than \$300,' and (4) 'Theft of property valued at less than \$50'. For the multivariate models that follow, 'aggravated assault' is the reference category⁹.

Within the context of a hypothetical victimization, each vignette describes one type of crime and one type of victim-offender relationship. Since the victim-offender relationship measure consists of two categories, half of the respondents received vignettes where the offender's relationship to the victim is categorized as 'stranger' and the other half received vignettes where the relationship is categorized as 'non-stranger'. Similarly, since the type of crime measured consists of four categories, one-fourth of the sample received questionnaires with vignettes describing each crime type measured.

Finally, the current study controlled for competing social factors that might be correlated to collective efficacy and that are unique to the current sample. These factors include 1) whether students are members of a University-based organization, 2) the number of full-time semesters that students have completed at UNLV, and 3) the percentage of time respondents have lived on-campus while attending school. Organizational membership is coded as 0 (No) or 1 (Yes). Most respondents indicated that they are not members of a University-based organization (69%). The number of full-time semesters completed is a continuous variable ranging from 0 to 12 ($M = 2.6$, $SD = 2.8$). And finally, the percentage of time spent living on campus while attending UNLV is a continuous variable that ranges from 0% to 100% ($M = 24.1$, $SD = 39.9$).

Analytic Strategy

The current study uses multivariate linear regression to test the hypothesis that the higher the collective efficacy among college students leads to an increased willingness to report crime to police¹⁰. The analysis uses SPSS (Rel. 14.0) to produce three models. The first model is a partially specified model and includes only the two measures of collective efficacy: social cohesion and social control. The second model contains only the victim-, offender-, and incident-characteristics, along with the social factors believed to be competing explanations for reporting behavior. Finally, the third model is a more fully specified model and includes both the measure of collective efficacy as well as the control variables. This approach will help identify the influence of collective efficacy on reporting crime to the police independently from other possible correlates. In doing so, a more complete understanding of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables will be produced. Results from these analyses follow.

RESULTS

Three linear regression models that evaluate college student victims' willingness to report crime to police are presented in Table 2. Model 1 offers a basic way of examining the effect of two dimensions of collective

efficacy (e.g., social cohesion and social control) on a college student victim's reporting decision. Results show that only one dimension of collective efficacy significantly predicts reporting scores. Specifically, as a student's level of social control increases, their willingness to report crime also increases significantly, $b = 0.11$, $t(157) = 3.70$, $p < .05$. No measurable relationship between social cohesion and student reporting was observed.

Model 2 presents findings for a regression model evaluating the predictive value of victim-, offender-, and incident-characteristics, as well as social factors unique to the sample, on students' reporting patterns. Results from Model 2 show that almost none of the factors considered exert a significant effect on the student's willingness to report crime to police. The notable exception is crime severity. Net of other competing explanations included in the model, college students who are hypothetical victims

of a simple assault are less likely than aggravated assault victims to report the crime to police, $b = -0.42$, $t(148) = -1.66$, $p < .10$. Similarly, theft victims where the stolen property is valued at more than \$300, $b = -0.42$, $t(148) = -1.66$, $p < .10$, as well as where the stolen property is less than \$50, $b = -0.90$, $t(148) = -3.57$, $p < .05$, are significantly less willing to notify police than those involved in hypothetical aggravated assaults.

Finally, Model 3 presents regression output from the fully specified model analyzed, which explains a significant proportion of variance in reporting scores, $R^2 = .20$, $F(14, 145) = 2.55$, $p < .05$. Results show that once competing factors are considered in conjunction with collective efficacy, only the social control dimension of collective efficacy remains a significant predictor of reporting scores, $b = 0.13$, $t(146) = 4.34$, $p < .05$. Net of other factors considered, as students' levels of social

Table 2. Three linear regression models predicting students' willingness to report crime to police (N=160).

Measures	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>
Independent variables									
Social cohesion	0.00	0.02	0.15				-0.01	0.02	-0.29
Social control	0.11	0.03	3.70 **				0.13	0.03	4.34 **
Control variables									
Victim characteristics									
Age (in years)				0.00	0.02	-0.05	0.00	0.02	-0.04
Gender									
Male (reference category)									
Female				0.11	0.05	0.60	0.18	0.17	1.05
Race/Hispanic origin									
White, non-Hispanic (reference category)									
Black, non-Hispanic				-0.24	0.30	-0.81	-0.20	0.29	0.49
Other, non-Hispanic				0.09	0.22	0.42	0.14	0.21	0.64
Hispanic, any race				-0.17	0.31	-0.53	-0.15	0.30	-0.50
Offender characteristics									
Victim-offender relationship									
Stranger (reference category)									
Non-stranger				0.00	0.18	-0.01	0.00	0.17	0.01
Incident characteristics									
Type of crime									
Aggravated assault (reference category)									
Simple assault				-0.42	0.26	-1.66 *	-0.32	0.24	-1.33 *
Theft of property > \$300				-0.42	0.25	-1.66 *	-0.36	0.24	-1.49 *
Theft of property < \$50				-0.90	0.25	-3.57 **	-0.97	0.24	-4.03 **
Social factors									
Organizational membership									
No (reference category)									
Yes				-0.11	0.20	-0.57	-0.07	0.19	-0.36
Full-time semesters completed				0.02	0.04	0.56	0.04	0.03	1.12
On-campus residence				0.00	0.00	0.23	0.00	0.00	-0.38
Constant	2.29	0.59	3.86 **	4.37	0.54	8.09 **	2.45	0.81	3.01 **
F-statistic	7.05 **			1.25			2.55 **		
R ²	0.08			0.09			0.20		

* $p < .10$, one-tailed

** $p < .05$, one-tailed

control increase so does their willingness to report victimization to police. These findings offer limited support for the hypothesis that collective efficacy has a significant positive effect on police notification among college student victims, and are consistent with the suspected impact that social control has on reporting patterns among the general public (Baumer 2002; Black 1976; Conklin 1975; Gottfredson and Hindelang 1979).

In the fully specified model, the effect that crime type has on police notification decisions among college student victims also remains significant. Specifically, hypothetical simple assault victims are less likely than aggravated assault victims to report crime to police, $b = -0.32$, $t(146) = -1.33$, $p < .10$. Similarly, theft victims where the stolen property is valued at more than \$300, $b = -0.36$, $t(146) = -1.49$, $p < .10$, as well as where the stolen property is less than \$50, $b = -0.97$, $t(146) = -4.03$, $p < .05$, are both less willing than aggravated assault victims to notify police of the crime. These findings are also consistent with similar observations made in studies of the general public: the likelihood of crime reporting decreases as the severity of crime also decreases (Bachman 1998; Birbeck et al. 1993; Goudriaan et al. 2004; Hart and Rennison 2003; Kilpatrick et al. 1987; Lizotte 1985; Skogan 1976 1984). A discussion of both the policy and theoretical implications of these findings follows.

DISCUSSION

In many ways, colleges and universities attempt to attract prospective students by promoting a sense of community and by integrating a neighborhood feel. Not unlike communities that exist outside the academic setting, however, colleges and universities must address the issue of crime and criminal victimization. As noted above, it is estimated that college students experience about 460,000 violent crimes each year; yet only about one-third of these incidents are reported to the police—a level that is significantly less than what is reported among similarly aged non-student victims of violence or among the general population (Baum and Klaus 2005; Hart 2003, 2007; Truman and Rand 2010). The current study broadens our understanding of the factors that influence a college student victim's decision to notify police when a crime occurs. Specifically, within the social disorganization theoretical framework, the current study investigated the effects of collective efficacy on a student victim's decision to report crime to police.

Results indicate that only one of the two dimensions of collective efficacy has a significant effect on student victims' reporting decisions. While social control exerts a significant positive effect on student victims' reporting decisions, a similar relationship is not observed for social cohesion. Similarly, only one of the competing explanatory factors modeled in the current analysis (i.e., crime type)

was significantly associated with a student's willingness to report a crime.

Overall, findings may reflect a growing sense of student apathy seen on college campuses (see Bjornsen, Scepansky, and Suzuki 2007). That is, the absence of interest or concern toward campus crime—with the exception of incidents that are viewed as very severe—may explain why factors that have been shown to affect reporting behavior among victims of crime in the general public differ from those observed among college students. Although the nature of the sample limits generalizing these findings to all college students, current findings could have important policy implications for campus administrators and security officials.

In order for campus officials to design and implement policies aimed at reducing crime, they must have a broad understanding of the nature and extent of criminal victimization experienced by students. This means that officials must be aware of campus crimes that are both reported and unreported to police. Therefore, in order to improve police notification among college student victims, campus administrators need to be aware of factors that influence reporting behavior. Results of the current study suggest that if campus officials rely on information about police notification produced from studies of the general population to develop improved notification strategies, then these approaches may be misguided. Indeed, not only does collective efficacy appear to have limited influence over reporting decisions among college students, but other factors that influence the general public's decision to report crime also appear to have little effect. These factors include the age, gender, race and Hispanic origin of a victim, the victim-offender relationship, or other social factors such as whether a student is involved with University-based groups, the number of semesters he/she has attended, or the length of time that he/she has lived on campus while attending. In short, evidence from the current study suggests that campus policy officials must continue to investigate what factors influence students' decisions to report crime to police, if comprehensive crime-fighting policies are to be developed.

In addition to policy implications, if findings from larger studies of college students confirm the current results, then there are theoretical implications that should be considered. Although scholars have recently used social disorganization as the theoretical framework to demonstrate the significant influence of neighborhood dynamics on reporting decisions among the general population (Goudriaan et al. 2006), given the current findings, making similar conclusions about college students might be problematic. Other social norms may explain the current findings. For example, contemporary American society is dominated by the norms of minding one's own business (Batson, Duncan, Ackerman, Buckley, and Birch 1981; Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, and Neuberg 1997; Stürmer, Snyder, and Omoto 2005). This

normative explanation has been used to understand and explain actions related to a variety of crime contexts, such as bystander intervention (Hart and Miethe 2008; Luckenbill 1997; Miethe and Deibert 2007; Miethe and Regoeczi 2004). It could also be the dominant explanation for the observed results in this study. In particular, college student victims may simply choose not to report crime to police because they feel that doing so would violate some social norm of campus life, not because there is a greater sense of collective efficacy. In short, findings from the current study suggest that the scope of social disorganization theory may not sufficiently explain police notification decisions among college students.

Campus crime is an important social issue, and findings from the current study suggest the dynamics of police notification among college student victims may be different than those that exist for the general population. Given the potential political and theoretical implications of the present findings, additional research on this issue is warranted, especially in light of some of the study's limitations. These limitations and recommendations for future research are discussed below in the final section.

Limitations and Future Research

As a basis for studying the effects of collective efficacy on college students' decision to report crime to police, the data used in the present study have several limitations that restrict our substantive conclusions. For example, these data were obtained from a non-generalizable sample of students attending a single university. The sample size ($N=160$) was also not large enough to permit a more robust analytic approach. In addition, the models used in our analysis do not contain all of the variables that past research suggests are relevant to crime reporting among the general population, nor do they contain all the variables included in the social disorganization framework, which guided this study. As a result, despite explaining a moderate amount of variability in reporting scores ($R^2 = .20$), the models used in the current investigation may not be properly specified. Finally, the current study uses vignettes to present hypothetical victimizations to respondents and asks them to indicate the likelihood that they would report the incident to police. Despite their growing popularity in social science research, the use of vignettes (see Abelson 1976; Finch 1987; Schoenberg and Ravdal 2000) to gauge whether a student would "likely" report an incident to police is somewhat problematic as some research has called into question the validity of the vignette technique (Eifler 2007). What students say they would probably do in light of a hypothetical victimization may not accurately reflect their true behavior in real-life circumstances. Clearly, more research in the area is needed.

Future research on patterns of reporting crime among college student victims should continue to investigate the

theoretical link between reporting behavior and the campus community, and should consider alternative explanations to the "neighborhood" effects examined in the current study. For example, a number of physical features associated with situational crime prevention can be found on college campuses (i.e., emergency call boxes, video surveillance cameras, lighted parking garages, etc.). Future research should look into the extent to which environmental characteristics related to the design of college campuses facilitate (or hinder) reporting among college student victims. Alternatively, more attention could be given to the role that normative behavior (i.e., empathy or altruism) plays in police notification. In addition, future research should consider whether factors identified as having a positive influence on reporting are consistent across the type of authority to whom incidents are reported. Recall that national figures show that violence against college students is often not reported because it was "reported to another official" (Baum and Klaus 2005; Hart 2003, 2007). In the future, investigations into reporting behavior among college student victims should consider other types of officials to whom crime is reported. Finally, over the past decade, our understanding of crime reporting patterns among college students has become clearer as a result of a growing number of large-scale/nation-level studies. Much of what we thought we knew about college student victimization based on studies conducted as single universities and with small samples of students has changed. In order to make similar advances in the area of crime reporting behavior among college students, similar large-scale/national-level investigations must be undertaken. Comparisons between colleges of different sizes, and of different typical class sizes, private versus public, or different levels of student population diversity might all provide further insight into reporting patterns of college student victimization.

Endnotes

¹ Part I crimes include murder and non-negligent manslaughter, negligent manslaughter, forcible and non-forcible sex offenses, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson.

² Violent victimization includes rape and sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, and simple assault regardless of whether the crime was completed or attempted or whether it was reported to police.

³ Although not a direct study of reporting patterns, in a national sample of higher education students, Koss et al. (1987) found that only 5% of rape victims reported the incident to police.

⁴ Social cohesion scores were based on respondents' level of agreement, measured on a 5-point Likert scale, with the following statements: (a) I feel an attachment to this neighborhood, (b) I feel at home in this neighborhood, (c) I have a lot of contact with the people who live next door, (d) I have a lot of contact with other neighborhood residents, (e) I feel responsible in part for the neighborhood being a pleasant place to live, (f) people are nice to each other in this neighborhood, (g) I live in a pleasant neighborhood with a sense of solidarity, (h) people in this neighborhood hardly know each other and (i) I am satisfied with the composition of the population in this neighborhood (Goudriaan et al. 2006).

⁵ Within the social disorganization framework, collective efficacy is an endogenous dimension of neighborhood dynamics that mitigates the influence of neighborhood structural determinants on crime and delinquency and is defined as the linkage of mutual trust and the willingness to intervene for the common good (Sampson et al. 1997). That is, collective efficacy is a social construct with two specific dimensions: a social control dimension and a social cohesion dimension. The social control dimension focuses on the likelihood that "neighbors could be counted on to take action under various scenarios..." (Sampson 2004:108); whereas social cohesion is measured by "items that capture local trust, willingness to help neighbors, and shared values" (Sampson 2004:108).

⁶ Respondents included full- or part-time freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students admitted to the University at the time the survey was administered. Every 5th person exiting various buildings on campus (e.g., the main library, Student Union, a dormitory, and the student recreation facility), on different days of the week, and different times of the day, were approached and asked to participate in the survey.

⁷ Each vignette was a short story about a hypothetical situation in which a respondent was asked to imagine him/her self. Each vignette contained two variables: One measured variation in victim-offender relationship and the other in crime severity. These two variables are described in greater detail in the section below. Other than variations in victim-offender relationship and crime severity, the remaining context of the vignette was held constant. See Finch (1987) and Schoenberg and Ravdal (2000) for more information on the use of vignettes in social science research.

⁸ "Other," non-Hispanic category includes individuals who describe themselves as an Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian, Aleut, or Eskimo. "Hispanic" is a measure of ethnicity and may include persons of any race.

⁹ The victim-offender relationship measure is a dichotomous variable, the measure of crime severity contains four categories, and the collective efficacy questions and the vignettes were presented in two different orders. This resulted in a total of 16 versions of the survey instrument. Specific versions of the survey were administered randomly to respondents.

¹⁰ The dependent variable is treated as an interval-level measure in the current analyses. This permits the use of linear regression as the primary analytic technique. Ordinal regression was considered, however, the sample size was too small to produce stable estimates (Norusis 2004).

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Appendix 1

<p>University of Nevada Las Vegas College of Urban Affairs Department of Criminal Justice</p>	
<h3>2007 Collective Efficacy and Crime Victim Survey</h3>	
<p>Section 1: Demographics. Please provide the following demographic information.</p> <p>Q1: What was your age on your last birthday? Age: _____</p> <p>Q2: What is your gender? <input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female</p> <p>Q3: What is your race and ethnicity? <input type="checkbox"/> American Indian, Aleut or Eskimo, non-Hispanic <input type="checkbox"/> Asian, or Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic <input type="checkbox"/> Black, non-Hispanic <input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic, any race <input type="checkbox"/> Other, non-Hispanic _____ <input type="checkbox"/> White, non-Hispanic</p> <p>Q4: While attending UNLV, what percentage of the time have you lived off campus and/or on campus? On campus _____ % (0%-100%) Off campus _____ % (0%-100%) <i>Note: Total must add to 100%</i></p> <p>Q5: Including summer semesters, how many semesters have you completed at UNLV? Full-time semesters: _____ Part-time semesters: _____</p> <p>Q6: Are you currently a member of a university based organization or club? (mark as many as apply) <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, a Greek organization <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, an intramural team/club <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, student government <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>	<p>Section 2: Social Cohesion and Social Control. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. Place an 'x' in the box that corresponds to your answer.</p> <p>Q7: You feel an attachment to the campus. <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither disagree nor agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree</p> <p>Q8: You feel at home on campus. <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither disagree nor agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree</p> <p>Q9: You have regular contact (once a week) with other students outside of class. <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither disagree nor agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree</p> <p>Q10: 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. <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither disagree nor agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree</p> <p>Q11: You feel that most of the people are nice to each other on the campus. <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither disagree nor agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree</p> <p>Q12: You feel that the social interactions that you have on campus make it a socially pleasant place to attend. <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither disagree nor agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree</p> <p>Q13: Most of the people on campus have friends that also attend UNLV. <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither disagree nor agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree</p> <p>Q14: You feel that most of the people on campus are similar to you and that you belong. <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree <input type="checkbox"/> Neither disagree nor agree <input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Continue with Section 2 on back side </p>



Section 2: Social Cohesion and Social Control (Continued). Please indicate the degree to which UNLV students would intervene for each of the following questions. Place an 'x' in the box that corresponds to your answer.

How likely is it that UNLV students...

Q15: would physically try to intervene if they witnessed a student being assaulted on campus?

- | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Certainly would NOT intervene | <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Probably would NOT intervene | <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Uncertain as to whether students would intervene | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Probably would intervene | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Certainly would intervene |
|---|--|--|--|---|

Q16: would physically try to intervene if they witnessed the property of another student being stolen?

- | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Certainly would NOT intervene | <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Probably would NOT intervene | <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Uncertain as to whether students would intervene | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Probably would intervene | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Certainly would intervene |
|---|--|--|--|---|

Q17: on campus would call campus police if they saw another student being assaulted?

- | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Certainly would NOT intervene | <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Probably would NOT intervene | <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Uncertain as to whether students would intervene | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Probably would intervene | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Certainly would intervene |
|---|--|--|--|---|

Q18: on campus would call campus police if they saw property of another student being stolen?

- | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Certainly would NOT intervene | <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Probably would NOT intervene | <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Uncertain as to whether students would intervene | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Probably would intervene | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Certainly would intervene |
|---|--|--|--|---|

Section 3: Victimization. Please indicate the degree to which you would likely report the criminal victimization described below to campus police. Place an 'x' in the box that corresponds to your answer.

DIRECTIONS: Imagine yourself in the following hypothetical situation. Please do not assume anything beyond that which is described in the story. Once you have finished reading the passage, please answer the following question.

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 is parked nearby. You notice that another car has stopped right behind it, and that the driver is yelling at the person for taking their parking spot. You walk over and ask if everything is alright because you recognize the person yelling as someone you know from class. The angry driver tells you to mind your own business. You try to calm the driver down, but it doesn't work. Over the next few minutes, the situation escalates, and the driver eventually punches you in the face, gets back into their car, and drives away. As a result of the incident, you end up with a bloody nose and a black eye.

Q19: 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 campus police?

- | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Certainly would NOT report the incident | <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Probably would NOT report the incident | <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Uncertain as to whether you would report the incident | <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Probably would report the incident | <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Certainly would report the incident ^{vi} |
|---|--|---|--|---|

About the authors:

Timothy C. Hart received his Ph.D. in criminology from the University of South Florida. His areas of interest include survey research, applied statistics, geographic information systems (GIS), and victimization. Prior to joining the faculty at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Dr. Hart worked as a statistician for the Bureau of Justice Statistics, a program analyst for the Drug Enforcement Administration, and a research analyst for the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Dr. Hart serves as the Statistical Analysis Center director for the state of Nevada and is the founder and co-editor of *Crime Mapping: A Journal of Research and Practice*.

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