

Centre of Excellence in Policing and Security

Collective Efficacy and Violence in Australia

*Chief Investigators: Professor Lorraine Mazerolle,
Professor Ross Homel, Dr Rebecca Wickes*

Brief description:

In collaboration with international colleagues in Harvard University and from the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Social Contexts of Pathways into Crime (SCoPiC) program, the project explored the role of collective efficacy in the community context, to examine how collective efficacy contributes to the spatial distribution of crime. The Australian research component explored the role of social ties and collective efficacy in explaining community variations in violence in Australia. Using data from 2,859 residents across 82 communities in the City of Brisbane, coupled with official reported crime data provided by the Queensland Police Service and Australian Bureau of Statistics census data for 2001, researchers employed multi-level statistical models to depict the relative importance of social ties and collective efficacy in predicting between neighbourhood levels of violence in an Australian context. Investigative models included in-depth measures of social relationships and community-based crime prevention programs and findings were contrasted with studies of collective efficacy in Chicago and Stockholm. The similarity in results suggests the generalizability of collective efficacy as an important community-level process that explains the spatial variation in levels of violence across urban communities, providing a valuable evidence base for future policy and the understanding of crime and violence.