AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF UNIVERSITY SAFETY THROUGH AN

EXAMINATION OF STUDENTS" SELF-PERCEPTIONS OF CAMPUS AND

COMMUNITY VIOLENCE LEVELS AND STUDENT

LEARNING INFLUENCES

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The purpose of this study was to explore areas of research in regards to how students learn about violent crime on university campuses and what level of awareness they hold regarding their personal safety. A combination of databases was used to measure reported rates of violent crime on campus and in the community and these were compared with students" self-perceptions of safety and personal exposure to violence through an online survey distributed to 7,000 students at eight diverse universities throughout the United States. The survey determined that students were more aware of

their personal safety than most researchers were giving them credit for. The students were largely dependent upon and trusting in their university to provide them with the information they needed to keep them safe. The university"s internal and external communications messages (emails and news media coverage) were a large factor in determining how safe a student felt. Overall, there were few differences in perceptions of safety from demographics (except year of schooling). There was however strong consistencies in perceptions of universities per university, suggesting that the university itself is actually the greatest factor determining students" self-perceptions of safety and that the university"s safety perception was largely determined by through media coverage. The university proved such a strong factor that it even outweighed a students" personal experience with violence as a key factor in how safe a student felt. I believe that this exploratory study now indicates that future research in the field should focus on universities" safety images and whether or not this is making students feel artificially safe or unsafe as a result.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The news coverage from Yale University in recent months regarding the murder of a graduate student in a campus laboratory illustrates the confusion, frustration, and various conflicts of interest that arise when violence occurs on university campuses. Students expressed surprise and concern that such a thing could occur in a secure laboratory but despite not knowing who the murderer was initially, most of them reported that they did not feel in danger. The university administration had been quick not to characterize this as an act of campus violence, thereby trying to avoid the tragic label that has stigmatized universities such as Virginia Tech, but instead declared it to be just a case of typical workplace violence (Eaton-Robb, 2009; Zuckerman, 2009; and Arnsdorf, Miller, Korn, & Needham, 2009). Even before they had any suspects or had any idea of what was really going on, police had already moved to keep students from being concerned about their safety by declaring this to be targeted, and not just a random act of violence (Korn & Needham, 2009).

The issue of campus violence is important in that there are a variety of myths and misconceptions about the true safety level of America's universities. No one seems to know fully what the true violent crime rates are on campus. Students, parents, and

administrators seem determined to keep it that way. Those that try to determine how safe a particular campus is tend to run into roadblocks and confusing reporting statistics.

<p style="text-align: center;">Violence</p>

What this illustrates is the notion that there is often a culture of naivety on university campuses regarding student safety that leads to students being less aware of the threats they face. Students and parents want to believe that students are absolutely safe on campus and university administrators work hard to support this belief. However, it is very difficult to determine just how safe university campuses really are today due to an inconsistency in reporting rates of violence. An examination of recently published studies on the rate of violence on campus shows this wide range of reporting. The Clery Act (1990) mandates that all universities report all on-campus crime to a central clearinghouse run by the Department of Education at http://ope.ed.gov/security. Many campus police officers report that not only do they receive pressure from their administrations to encourage students reporting violent crimes to not file official reports in order to keep their official statistics low, but that even when they do report them, the federal language of the Clery Act does not correspond to various state"s definitions of what constitutes a violent crime (Hollis, 2006). What this means is that since most laws regarding violence are written on a state level with separate language than that found in the federal act, most universities have discretion to essentially report crime rates based upon their own individual interpretations of what constitutes a violent crime, which vary widely (Lipka, 2009; Hollis, 2006). This study also examined how safe neighborhoods surrounding university campuses are. The FBI provides rates of major crimes reported to law enforcement per city in its annual reports (http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm) on the

subject. For the purposes of this study I only examined the categories of violent crime included in both reports: Murder, Sexual Assault (forcible), Aggravated Assault, and Robbery.

Scholars researching violent crime on campus struggle to determine actual rates. For instance Flack et al. (2008) found that 33.8 percent of female college students (and 7.1 percent of males) report unwanted sexual contact during their college years while Fisher, Cullen, and Turner (2000) found the rates for women to be between 20 and 25 percent. Additional studies have shown rates above 50 percent with occasional articles supporting the idea that it could be as high as 95 percent. Ironically, 58 percent of men report participating in sexual violence with 14 percent reporting raping women while at university (Zawack, Abbey, Buck, McAuslan, & Clinton-Sherrod, 2003). The numbers get even fuzzier when I look at other forms of non-sexual violence. The only definitive types of violence rates that can be determined are those regarding mass violence acts with only 14 reported acts of mass shootings on U.S. campuses in the last two decades (Fox, 2008).

I suspect that this range of findings is a result of two things, the limited nature of most studies (they typically focus on a sample of students from one university) and the myths that surround violence that make it difficult for some students to understand whether or not they had been the victim of a violent crime. Prior research (Hollis, 2006) indicated that while many students interviewed claimed not to have been the victim of violence, they did report violent acts committed against them which met the legal definition of a violent crime. They simply were not aware, even in cases where they had been drugged and raped, that a violent crime had been committed against them. With the

number of differing definitions going around, I believe this illustrates some of the issues in the field that still need to be addressed:

1. If it is not possible to get accurate statistics on how safe campuses really are, then a good starting point might be to determine how safe students feel and what their exposure to violent crime is;

2. A comprehensive study of multiple campuses needs to be done to examine a large population of students; and

3. Research needs to be done to better understand how aware students are, not only of their own safety, but what constitutes a threat to that safety and what factors violence myths may be playing in these misconceptions.

<div align="center">Myths</div>

One aspect of university culture that I believe is contributing to this problem is the issue of violence myths. The most common definition of violence myth is that a violence myth is any attitude or belief that is generally false, but a person or society holds to be true of a violent crime victim (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

Essentially, one way in that people are able to convince themselves that violence only occurs to other people and could never occur to them is through the perpetuation of common violence myths. Understanding the prevalence of myth beliefs is essential to understanding how students are shaping their opinions regarding their own safety when they here of violence occurring to others on campus. Those that have a high tendency to believe myths, such as victim blaming, will often feel that they are not personally at risk because the victim must have done something wrong. One of the most common violence myths are the rape myths. Measured by the Burt (1980) Rape Myth Acceptance Scale

(RMAS), or the more recent Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA) (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994), rape myths beliefs are measurable. What Burt, and the myth researchers that followed him have discovered is that since violent crimes often involve victims who are scared to come forward and tell others about it, it is easy for people to convince themselves that the problem is not common. This can be measured by asking about a person's beliefs in ideas that suggest that the problems only happen to certain people, or that the victims of sexual violence are usually to blame for what happened to them.

These same scales have also been modified to measure interpersonal domestic violence myth acceptance as well with research conducted by Schwartz and DeKeserdy (2000). Their research showed that men who were violent against others often believed that they were justified in doing so as a result of witnessing the behavior from parents or from peers in male university groups such as athletics and fraternities. There does not appear to be any research done on violence myths in regards to mass violence dangers on university campuses. In the two years since the Virginia Tech shootings, there has been considerable newspaper coverage of how safe campuses are. Ironically enough, they are focusing on the one area of campus violence that a student is least likely to encounter but yet has been getting the most attention in the media (Fox, 2008). Regardless, this attention has forced universities to reconsider their policies on portraying universities as safe campuses as parents and students have forced universities to state what they are doing to protect students rather than denying that the problem exists. Numerous data suggest that there is a hidden danger on campus of students who feel over-stressed and ready to strike out (Fogg, 2009; Hollis, 2009; Davis-Joseph, 2008). Despite this, the

incidents of mass violence have been low enough to presumably lure people into complacency about the risks.

Overall, what these myths lead to is a sense of complacency about a student"s personal safety. In addition to reaction of the Yale students who did not appear to feel threatened after a student was murdered on campus by a (at the time) unknown person, other universities where violence is known to occur often fall victim to the same complacency. At the university that has become synonymous with campus violence, Virginia Tech had a fatal stabbing/ decapitation in a student lounge which demonstrates this. Less than two years after their infamous campus shootings, students still expressed surprise and disbelief that a violent act could actually occur on their campus. Despite having happened previously, they were shocked by the second act and never thought it could happen again (Moxley, 2009; Associated Press, 2009; Schulte & Vargas, 2009). What all this suggests is that in order for universities to combat violence on campuses, they will first need to understand the full extent of and find ways to combat violence myths amongst students and faculty.

Learning Influences

To further understand how students are learning about their personal safety on campus, it is essential that I examine how various learning factors, such as university emergency communications, news media coverage, and conversations with friend and family are influencing students" self-perceptions of safety on campus.

The university can easily be seen as a community learning organization. There is a wide variety of students, faculty, staff, and visitors that come and go from university campuses on a daily basis. Each category of culture group (i.e., traditional student, adult

student, faculty etc…) can be further broken down into a wide range of cultural sub-groups (based upon the range of demographic factors present at each university). One of the things that have not been examined in any of the research done on campus violence thus far is how different cultural sub-groups construct knowledge of their personal safety on campus. In other words, do full-time residential students at a large public university view their safety differently than adult students at a rural private institution etc…? If so, the question becomes, if one group is more aware of safety concerns on campus than another, can I determine what learning influences have brought them to that level of awareness? In other words, are older students more heavily influenced by personal life experience? Is one group more influenced by events in the media or by family and friends? Finding answers to these questions could help university planners better organize their public awareness efforts by knowing what influences are most effective at reaching various demographics of students.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to determine what students across various university and demographic types feel about their personal safety levels on campus, how likely they are to believe in common violence myths, and what learning factors are most influencing their decisions in this area.

This study attempted to answer the following research questions.

1. What perceptions do students carry with them regarding campus violence and their own personal safety?

2. How do violence myths shape their understanding of campus violence?

3. What demographic factors, such as campus context and personal demographics shape their understanding of campus violence?

4. How do students" self-perceptions of safety on campus compare with the official crimes statistics for their campuses and surrounding communities?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the field of education by exploring whether or not an examination of university safety culture can influence how students perceive their safety on campus. It also examines the variety of variables that determine how students construct their knowledge of campus safety. The practical value of this will be to allow university planners to better tailor their violence prevention methods to the learning methods that students are most utilizing.

The theoretical contribution of this project is that it creates new ideas about the learning influences of students and their acceptance levels regarding violence myth beliefs.

Theoretical, Conceptual, and Epistemological Framework

My epistemological framework for this project was constructivism because I was largely attempting to determine how students constructed their own meanings about their safety from all of the information being delivered to them by a variety of sources. Crotty (2006) states that Constructivism is how we construct our meaning based upon our interactions with others (p. 42). This is important because the primary issue that I examined was how we construct the idea of our personal safety based upon what we learn, or choose to learn from others that we interact with in the university environment.

Who students choose to learn from and how they construct these perceptions and misconceptions is an area of research that needs to be further explored.

My personal theoretical framework is the idea that younger students at most universities are unaware that they are at risk of becoming victim to acts of violence on campus as a result of the fact that their primary learning influences are through family and friends. Most family is far removed from day-to-day university life and is unaware of the dangers. The misconceptions regarding safety on campus are perpetuated through friends and accepted as fact with those younger students who actually fall victim to violent crimes remaining largely silent for fear of disbelief, personal denial, and embarrassment. As students age and gain more life experience, my theory was that they would use their experiential learning to better understand the true nature of the danger levels and therefore I expected older students with regular contact with the university (such as graduate assistants) to have had a higher knowledge of awareness of campus safety concerns. However, I further believed that those most removed from the campus daily activities (such as adult commuter students) would actually be less aware of safety issues due to their limited time spent on campus. When I began this study, I was not certain exactly what I expected to find and where the best balance lies between age, experience on campus, and learning influences; this was ultimately one of the purposes of doing this study.

My theoretical framework for this project is actually a combination of educational, anthropological, and mass communication theories. The predominant theory used to help me determine how various members in an organization learn is the Social Learning Theory. Social Learning Theory is important to this project in that it builds

upon the Constructivist ideals stated earlier and gives students credit for constructing their own beliefs through interactions with others. It emphasizes that students are not passive recipients of knowledge, but choose whom in their environments to listen to. "People are not simply reactors to external influences. They select, organize, and transform the stimuli that impinge upon them" (Bandura, 1977, p.vii). The theory also recognizes that a person's actions also influence their decision making process therefore making older students with more experience more likely to be aware of their true level of personal safety on campus. Social Anthropological power theories and psychological/ sociological standards represent my beliefs in why certain people are more or less likely to believe others when told of violence myths. The Spiral of Silence theory is the final theory that I am using to explain how violence myths are perpetuated on campuses. The Spiral of Silence theory has been traditionally used as a mass communication theory that suggests how large media outlets can control public opinion by making those with dissenting opinions feel marginalized. It is applicable here in that the main theme of the theory is that a person is less likely to speak up or voice their opinion on a subject if they feel that their opinion is not that of the majority for fear of feeling isolated from the majority. This process then repeats itself in an inward spiral until eventually only one side of the argument is being heard. (Noelle-Newumann, 1993). I believe this to be the fundamental theory explaining how violence myths are perpetuated on campus. Students hear that violent acts, especially sexual assaults only happen to "certain types of women" or that the woman somehow must have done something wrong. These myths are so pervasive that the victim then believes them herself and keeps silent about what happened, therefore beginning the spiral. I believe that this is really one of the keys to

reducing the problem of violence of campus. Removing the myths allows victims to come forward; more victims coming forward would result in more discussion and awareness of dangers; the spiral would then theoretically reverse.

My conceptual framework draws upon the literature included in the next chapter and includes several presumptions:

1. There is a false sense of security on college campuses;

2. Violence myth beliefs are one of the contributing factors leading to this false sense of security;

3. Personal experience and outside life experience will be the greatest influences as to how safe a person feels on campus; and

4. Greater awareness of these issues will prove of use to students, parents, and university administrators in providing students a realistic understanding of safety levels on campus and allow them to prepare themselves accordingly.

I think that it is important for me to re-emphasize that last point here in that it is not my goal to create a sense of fear on campus; far from it. As a former soldier, I know that living in a heightened state of readiness at all times wears a person down quickly and causes unnecessary emotional trauma. I am already beginning to see signs of this on campus where many professors have become so terrified of any emotionally unstable student that they appear to be living in a combat-like state of readiness at all time. This is detrimental to the cause of having a safe and emotionally healthy campus. We need to create a realistic picture of campus safety so that students can take realistic steps to protect themselves but not scare them so much that they never leave the house. My final assumption here is that this balance is possible. Not enough information can either lead to

the feeling of naivety often witnessed by new freshmen or the level of terror witnessed by a growing number of professors today. The solution I feel is most effective is to have enough information to make informed and safe choices.

Explanation of Key Terms

Murder is the taking of a human life by the direct actions of another person.

Sexual Assault in this case refers to unwanted sexual contact or intercourse. In this study, statutory rape and incest are not being included.

Aggravated Assault is most commonly defined as an assault or threat against another involving a dangerous weapon.

Robbery is defined as the taking of property from another by use of force or intimidation.

Higher Education (Colleges and Universities) and On Campus It is important to define these terms as they are used interchangeably in this project. For the purposes of this project, the terms higher education, colleges, and universities will all refer to four-year or higher institutes of post-secondary education unless otherwise stated. On campus technically refers to incidents that occur on campus. As the majority of violent crimes involving college students actually occur overnight off campus, this term is being used rather loosely in this since to include all college students, wherever the crime may be occurring. On campus is where they learn about safety and where I know they are all return to receive their education and therefore it is being used primarily for convenience purposes here.

Violence Myths is the concept that I believe will cause the most confusion in this project. Violence myths are any commonly held set of beliefs surrounding violence or

violence victims that are incorrect and widespread. Examples range from the belief that "a campus shooting could never occur here" or "only women engaging in risky behavior can be raped". These myths are one of the major variables examined in this project.

Self-Perceptions of Safety This concept is rather straightforward. It is a major variable however, and is best defined as how safe a student feels on campus in a variety of given situations. A self-perception safety score was established with the first 15 questions in the survey instrument.

Learning Influences is the third major variable examined (with demographics being the fourth and final variable). What this project sought to determine is what outside learning factors are influencing a student"s decisions regarding safety perceptions and where they are getting their information that they are using to construct their own meaning of personal safety. Examples of influences will be: university safety messages, friends and family, and personal experience, etc.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature review for this project will be divided up into the main categories corresponding to the three primary dependent variables in this study. 1. Self-perceptions of campus safety; 2. Beliefs in common violence myths; and 3. Social learning influences for university students. The independent variables in this study are the demographics and published crime statistics sections. This section will also conclude with a section on similar projects done and how mine contributes to the field. As previously stated, there were 15 questions on the survey questionnaire that pertained to each of the first two variables, and ten items each for the remaining two variables. Selection of those questions came largely from what is identified in this literature review.

Campus Violence Perceptions

Before beginning to discuss perceptions of campus safety, it is important to first determine how safe university campuses really are. This is actually more difficult then it may seem. The Clery Act of 1990 was enacted by Congress in order to force universities to publish their crime data in a public manner, the act has three evident flaws:

1. According to anecdotal information from a number of university law enforcement officers interviewed for this project, the law is vague and easy to get around;

2. Most universities handle violence complaints as academic rather than criminal matters (thereby avoiding having to report them) and pressure others to report the crime off campus so that it does not get added into their statistics; and

3. Few people are aware of and actually check the official statistics. In addition to being inaccurate, it is also difficult to find the information itself. The central holding point for Clery Act data is the Department of Education‴s security website at http://ope.ed.gov/security. Reporting numbers vary widely based upon the university‴s individual reporting procedures (Lipka, 2009). Ultimately what the universities find is that they are faced with a paradox: "the law requires them to publish the numbers, but students and their families do not seem to read them" (p. A1). Parents and students are demanding to know how safe their campuses are but are finding confusing and misleading data from official sources.

There do not appear to be any reliable sources of data regarding how much violent crime really occurs on college campuses. A new source of data that involves some form of triangulation of data from multiple sources appears to be needed but is not currently being provided. This adds to the confusion and allows myths about personal safety on campus to build, with no good data to argue against them.

This has also allowed some to go to the opposite extreme and act as if going off to college is more dangerous than going off to war. Regardless, in the wake of Virginia Tech, combined with the lack of hard data, there is the possibility of creating unwarranted panic as well. There are many reports of students fearing to seek counseling in order to avoid being expelled for being emotionally unstable. (Fox, November 14, 2008). Many companies are now beginning to exploit these fears, allowing these fears to continue such

as companies producing training DVD''s for parents to teach their children how to prepare for campus shootings or the popularity of bullet-proof backpacks in the last couple of years (Fox, November 14, 2008).

What this amounts to is that there is a lack of knowledge regarding violent crime on campus and what to do about it (both from the perspectives of universities and from students and their families). This is leading to an unwarranted sense of security for most and unnecessary levels of fear for others. For the purposes of this section of the literature review, I attempted to examine the levels of violent crime reported by students in various studies and how students perceive their safety levels on campus with the goal of better understanding this variable and explaining how I used this to produce items for the survey instrument.

One final word on why it can be so difficult to find accurate crime reporting information is that over the years we have come to believe that universities are supposed to be safe places to send our youth. It takes considerable effort to overcome these assumptions. Many would argue that "to some extent, administrators, parents, employees and students simply did not want to acknowledge that problems existed in places that should perhaps be resistant to such social malaise" (Hummer, 2004, p. 391). There has been a collective denial on the dangers of university life for quite a few years now, and these misconceptions have led to widespread violence that often goes unnoticed or unreported.

Sexual violence levels and student perceptions

There are various studies that have been conducted on the number of violent attacks on students in order to determine how pervasive the problem of on campus

violence truly is. As previously stated, there does appear to be a wide variety of results from these studies due largely to the wide variety of question types and populations studied. One of the goals of this study therefore was to attempt to find the most general categories that have been well tested and distribute the instrument to the widest variety of demographics reasonably practical. One of the most recent studies regarding interpersonal sexual violence on campus is the article previously cited by Flack et al. (2008) on the "red zone" risk indicating that 33.8 percent of female students reported some form of unwanted sexual contact during their college years. The highest percentage of these occur during their freshman and sophomore years. This echoes earlier studies, such as those by Ostrander and Schwartz (1994) and Schwartz and DeKeserdy (1997) that both found higher proportions of rape, especially acquaintance rape, during the first few weeks of a female student"s freshman year. This was explained by a number of psychologists and victims in my thesis (Hollis, 2006) as being a result of having not yet learned how to recognize and prevent these acts. Many of the women indicated in the 2006 study that they were simply unaware that men were capable of something like that. They also felt they were not adequately warned or prepared to react to it in time. Many male students also indicated that they intentionally prey upon women during this vulnerable time, knowing that they have not yet experienced enough to recognize the signs of trouble. This further justifies my rationale for examining learning influences, especially experiential learning in determining how experience correlates with a person"s self-perceptions of safety on campus. It also illustrates how one of the issues that need to be addressed is how to better train incoming students. Hollis (2006) also conducted a summative study of public awareness and orientation exercises regarding sexual assault

prevention. The study found less than five percent of programs increased awareness of the problem and none of the programs changed behavior of male or female participants. In one study on sexual assault prevention it was found that even with prevention programs that show promise in shifting attitudes, no evidence has ever been found that indicates any programs actually reduce the level of sexual violence on their campuses (Clinton-Sherrod, Gibbs, Vincus, Squire, Cignetti, Pettbone, & Igoe, 2003). Clearly we do not yet understand how to teach students (of either gender). It should be noted as well that not only females are victims of sexual assault. A recent informal conversation with a county prosecutor indicated that approximately 10 percent of sexual assault victims are male. Flack et al. (2008) found that 7.1 percent of their male respondents reported having at least one unwanted sexual encounter during their university experience (p. 1184). Recent military studies of college age military personnel have indicated that nearly half of their reported cases of sexual assault involve male victims (Olsen, 2009, p. 36) although this is likely largely attributed to the heavier proportion of males in the military. The literature has found sexual assault rates among female college students ranging from about 5 percent to 95 percent of the total population. The majority of these studies seem to indicate that slightly more than half of women report unwanted sexual acts at some point in their university experience. However, studies that hid their true purpose and asked about specific acts that legally constituted rape, between 75-85 percent of women could be said to have been raped during their college experience. At the other end of the spectrum, researchers such as Fisher, Cullen and Turner (2000) state the numbers as being between 20-25%. The wide range of findings make it difficult to find a real number.

An additional reason for this confusion could be explained by the fact that college women appear to be at higher risk of sexual assault then the general populace. The largest survey I have found regarding sexual violence against U.S. women in general indicate that roughly 18% of women reported being the victim of attempted or completed rape (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998). Similar studies have indicated that college women are more likely to report more than 50% such as in the Koss, Gidycz, and Wisniewski (1987) survey which reported rates of 54%. Additionally, repeated studies of men have shown a high tolerance and participation to sexual violence, including 58% of men reporting some involvement in sexual violence, with 14% reporting completed rape (Zawack, Abbey, Buck, McAuslan, & Clinton-Sherrod, 2003). I believe that this also justifies having some items in the instrument geared towards men to determine their own views on the acceptability of the use of violence against others. This is not a U.S. problem, as data also show that rates are similar in both the United Kingdom and Canada (Bohner, Jarvis, Eyssel, & Siebler, 2005).

Some existing useful instruments to determine propensity for sexual violence are the Attraction to Sexual Aggression Scale (ASA) by Malamuth (1989a, 1989b, 1998) which was designed to attempt to determine self-reporting and the likeliness of a male to commit an act of rape or sexual aggression; the Hierarchical-Mediational Confluence (HMC) model (Voller, Long, & Aosved, 2008) which explores the two primary reasons why offenders commit acts of sexual violence (hostile masculinity and sexual promiscuity/ impersonal sex) (p. 235); and the Lalumiere model (Lalumiere, Harris, Quinsey, & Rice, 2005) which suggests that those with antisocial traits were most likely to offend. While this might sound like common sense, there is actually some debate in the

field as to whether or not offenders are violence specialists or prone to violence in general. Voller et al. examined these arguments and determined that nearly all convicted rapists, especially those in university settings and those with no prior conviction histories had also committed at least one non-sexual criminal offense (p. 236).

Other acts of violence and student stress levels

Essentially, it is difficult to find accurate information on rates of violence on campus in regards to individual violence. Mass violence acts are easier to get information on in that they tend to be more difficult to hide. An article by James Allen Fox in 2008 identified 14 mass shootings between 1990 and 2008 alone (Fox, July 9, 2008, p. A43).

My prior research on campus stress levels suggest that not only do we have a heavily stressed student body, but 10 percent of graduate students at Texas State University-San Marcos felt threatened or scared of someone in their class (Hollis, 2009). The research findings were similar to a 2004 survey at the University of California at Berkeley where more than half of students felt so hopeless or depressed that they had a hard time functioning (Fogg, 2009, B12). The study at Texas State showed numbers between 60 to 70 percent depending on the phrasing of the question. In his article on the study, Piper Fogg discusses how many of these graduate students, when interviewed indicated suicidal and homicidal tendencies (p. B12). It is difficult to determine whether or not students today are more stressed out then in the past or if they are simply being reported more frequently today. Either way, a heavy portion of the university population does appear to be in dangerous mental health territory.

Studies done to try and determine the rates of domestic and stranger non-sexual interpersonal violence are relatively few. One study in the *Journal of Criminal Justice*

(2007) found that "22 percent of the respondents reported that they had been victims of at least one type of violent crime…since enrolling on campus" (Jennings, Gover, & Pudryznska, 2007, p. 200). While this number is substantially lower than other data found, it is one of the highest I have found in a random survey. What it does emphasize though is that student recognition and reporting of violent crime is usually underepresentative of reality due to embarrassment and often due to a lack of recognition of what constitutes a crime. Many studies that ask students if they are a crime victim receive low levels of affirmative responses even though other questions on the same instrument indicate that they had been victimized.

Additional studies justify the need for both international and local diversity in the research on this topic. Schwartz and DeKeserdy (2000) examined the problem of interpersonal violence by men against women at universities throughout Canada and found that violence rates are reported twice as frequently at public universities than at private/ religious institutions. Other scholars have reported that this is more likely due to fears of embarrassment on religious universities in regards to sex acts (whether voluntary or forced). The smaller size and less likeliness of remaining anonymous are also likely factors.

Summary and how this relates to my project

Determining the true extent to which students feel safe on campus is an important first step in determining what needs to be done regarding improving this awareness level. The literature clearly indicates that there is very inconsistent data available in regards to how pervasive violence is on campus and how aware students are of it.

One thing that does appear to be clear however is the idea that even when students are aware of violent crime on campus they do seem to feel that they will be immune to it. I believe that this is a result of the myths surrounding violent crime which will be addressed in this next section.

Common Violence Myths

The justification for this section of the dissertation is to compare the above ideas of how safe students feel on campus with how likely they are to believe in common violence myths. The advantage to this is that myth belief is often an indication of justifications for their beliefs in regards to self-perceptions of safety on campus. In other words, by examining myth prevalence, I can hopefully begin to see what is influencing a student"s self-perception of safety on campus. By then examining the third variable on learning influences I can begin to see how these myths have come into fruition.

The literature regarding violence myths tends to focus on sexual violence. Many of the questions do appear to be relevant to be generalizable to assess myth beliefs on violence in general. Others simply measure violence bias against female victims. Given that the rape myth acceptance scale was first written nearly 30 years ago, and attitudes surrounding female sexual behavior have changed, I had to re-examine some of the commonly used questions in the scales to determine which are most relevant today.

Sexual violence myths

Rape myth acceptance is the most recognized of any of the violence myths utilized in this project. The most straightforward definition I have found so far regarding the definition of rape myth is any attitude or belief that is generally false, but a person or society holds to be true of a rape victim and/ or rapist (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). The

Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS) was published in 1980 but there is various literature surrounding rape myths dating back to the 1970‟s. I pulled some of my questions from the Burt (1980) instrument in that it is the most well-tested of all the instruments. However, a number of the questions make use of presumptions and perceptions of women that may have been accurate in 1980 but would be seen as offensive questions today. In 1994, Lonsway and Fitzgerald also introduced the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA) which is an improved version of RMAS. Unfortunately, it is also somewhat dated in terms of social stereotypes of women and therefore I examined a combination of recent studies that have produced significant findings using variations of the above.

Some of the data that have come from the above instrument developments between 1980 and 1999 were represented in Payne, Lonsway, and Fitzgerald‟s (1999) often cited article summarizing the results of six studies conducted with an updated hybrid of the IRMA and RMAS. Their study showed significant results with these instruments, therefore both instruments are still proving useful.

Payne, Lonsway, and Fitzgerald‟s (1999) article is most useful in summing up the definitions of violence myths. While they did focus on rape myths, I believe that their findings are also useful across all violence myth spectrums. They did explain that these myths were actually similar in nature to stereotypes about victims (p. 30) and that this overgeneralization is what can cause so much harm. Some of the common myths that they identified are those that suggest "women routinely lie about rape" (p. 30), and only "certain kinds of women are victimized" (p. 31). The researchers also contributed to the field in two ways: They examined all major rape myth acceptance scales and tested 95 of

the most significant items. They then shortened the IRMA to 20 questions, creating the

IRMA short form (IRMA-SF). The seven stable components of the rape myths they

categorized are: "1. *She asked for it;* 2. *It was not really rape;* 3. *He did not mean to;* 4.

She wanted it; 5. *She lied;* 6. *Rape is a trivial event*; 7. *Rape is a deviant event*" (p. 59).

These domains are important in that they address the main themes that arise from the

prior instruments and give an idea of what categories future questions should fit into.

They address the areas of self-blame/ victim responsibility, denial, intent, and

trivialization of the problem. These factors are also relevant for many non-sexual

domestic violence scales and some of them came from instruments that measured general

levels of violence acceptance. Some additional categories that the researchers eventually

rejected but might prove useful are "*she caused it by…, she led him on, she*

miscommunicated, only certain types of women are raped, rape only happens in very

specific places/ situations" (p. 64).

The most current major study to use Burt‟s (1980) instrument was actually a

Japanese study which not only provided international validity of the instrument, but also

updated it somewhat for a more modern audience. The primary purpose of the study was

to determine if victims were being „re-victimized‟ through the process of reporting the

crime and seeking help as a result of biases by health care and emergency workers. Burt‟s

scale, and an additional scale, the Scale of Egalitarian Sex Role Attitudes (SERSA-S)

were used. The findings were surprising in that nurses were actually the most likely to

accept rape myths than any other emergency workers (Uji, Shono, Shikai, & Kitamura,

2007, p. 392). This is significantly different than the anecdotal information that I received

in interviews with victims and would argue that it was likely the result of cultural

differences and gender assumptions. This does however, justify the asking of questions that relate to how both men and women perceive women and their roles and how this perception correlates with their belief in gender-specific violence myths. The study also illustrates the likelihood that Japanese gender norms may be influencing the outcomes as would be expected. The questions that seemed to score the highest were those that blamed the victim if she let things get out of hand. This strengthened the likeliness in my research that various demographic categories, such as region and nationality of the respondent would likely be powerful factors determining the answers to questions in regards to rape myths.

The structure of my instrument allowed for 15 questions on violence myth acceptance, therefore suggesting no more than four questions per type of violent act were included in addition to one question on violence acceptance in general. In order to narrow down the list of hundreds of potential items regarding rape acceptance myths, I looked for the most generic that represent the majority of the categories identified in the IRMA-SF. Ideas that naturally come from the readings are: *If a woman is assaulted while intoxicated, she is at least partially responsible, a large number of sexual assaults are falsely reported to get back at men, most rapes occur only in certain places or to certain types of women.*

In order to elaborate on where these myths are coming from it is also important to look at the literature regarding the frequency of attacks and correlations with other factors. One of the issues that leads to self-blame and others blaming the victim is the high likeliness that a victim will know their attacker (47.7%) and the high likelihood that alcohol will be involved (81.4%) (Flack et al., 2008, pp. 1184-1185). These correlations

are often confused with causation, therefore leading to victim blame. It has already been established that the majority of rapes are caused by acquaintances of the victim (therefore suggesting that Flack et al.'s number might be low) and that alcohol inhibits a person's ability to defend themselves from attack. Both of these also lead to the issue of not only blaming the victim but justifying the crime, therefore they are good issues to address in the survey instrument to determine a person's belief in these myths. It is also important to note that the 80 percent of these women who were intoxicated often put all or part of the blame on themselves (Schwartz 1999). This is also reflected in countless other studies and interviews with sex crimes victims. The myths surrounding this subject are so pervasive that the victims continue to believe them even after they have been victimized. This also lends to the justification of the inclusion of an item to measure this on the final instrument.

Other interpersonal violence myths (domestic and stranger)

Schwartz and DeKeserdy (2000) gave a good indication of one of the myths common in domestic violence incidents (and some stranger violence incidents) with male aggressors and female victims. They indicated that one of the rationales used by men in their study who reported using violence against women was that male peers often encouraged other males to strike out against women who challenged rejected them or failed to live up to their ideas of female roles in society.

Socialization and group membership both seem to be determining factors in prevalence for interpersonal violence. Additionally though, it is important to remember to address the myth that only women are victims of violent crimes. While 25 percent of women are victims of assault, so are about 1 in 14 men (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000) and

additionally, the majority of violent crime victims involving college students are actually white males (with the most frequent violent crimes being simple assaults) (Carr, 2005, p. 306).

Bell (2008) also reinforces this concept when he reviews prior studies on domestic violence on campus and finds that the patriarchal and fraternal systems that tend to dominate on campuses have created a culture where it is socially acceptable for men to assert power over women in a university setting. Bell also asserts that a history of family violence is a predominant cause of dating violence on campuses. This assertion is backed by the research of Gover, Kaukinen, and Fox (2008) who also found that prior abuse victims or those that grew up in households with well defined gender roles or violence against women in the household were far more likely to imitate that behavior in their own domestic relationships.

Summary and how this relates to my project

Violence myths are an important component of this project in that belief in these myths allows students to not only dismiss their own personal safety but to ignore or dismiss the complaints of others who need help. I have received anecdotal information from a number of campus police and psychological officials that indicate that the first response a violent crime victim receives will determine whether or not that person seeks any further assistance. Therefore, breaking down myths will allow people to better empathize with victims and allow victims the comfort to come forward, leading to a greater understanding of the true extent of the problem on campus. As Banyard, Plante, and Moynihan (2004) discussed, it is easier to get bystanders to get involved if they realize the negative impact these crimes are having on their victims. Additionally, we

need to get male students to speak up about the truths they do know, "Male silence about violence about women is complicity" (DeKeseredy, Schwartz, & Alvi, 2000).

Ultimately, the aim of examining the myths variable in campus violence awareness is in breaking down what Lindle (2008) referred to as "the consequences of imagined safety" (Lindle, 2008, p.28). Essentially, Lindle states that parents feel safe when dropping their kids off at school, whether it be K-12 or higher education, and there is an assumption that the school or university will take care of everything. This is not always a fair assumption at the K-12 level and if parents and students do not overcome this by the time the reach college, it will naturally lead to this dangerous „red zone" situation where young college students become easy victims for predators. We need to examine the learning flaws that are leading to this false sense of security and discover which methods of learning are effective at breaking through to them early on. The university is a community with a number of different types of members and the solution is likely going to involving finding educational and information sharing techniques that involve all of them.

<div align="center">Social Learning and Community Learning in College</div>

The literature so far has discussed the topic that I are trying to teach various members of the university community about, how to recognize and protect themselves from violence on campus. Universities however have a variety of audiences to reach in order to be effective in any educational effort. A typical university is a community involving students (young and adult, residential and commuter), parents, friends, faculty, staff, community leaders, and neighbors. In order to learn how to teach this entire community about safety on campus, I need to investigate how this community learns; in

particular, what influences do students and other university community members turn to in constructing their views and beliefs surrounding violence and safety on campus.

How students learn about campus safety culture and personal safety

It would seem necessary to look at how students learn. As students do learn from their own experience and stay in constant communication with and react to the experiences of others, I believe that two theories are key to determining how students do learn; social learning theory and experiential learning.

There appears to be virtually nothing written in the literature about how universities as a community learning organization learn effectively and just as little on how to effectively communicate with university students and educate them on personal safety. The fact that the practice in this field has resulted in almost 100 percent failure in educating students on this subject (Hollis, 2006) is likely the reason for this; no one has successfully come up with a solution to the problem. This does though give greater justification for this project; someone needs to find some answers.

The social learning theory angle of this project is two-fold: 1. How do students learn about safety; and 2. How do social and gender constructs learned through family and social organizations shape the learning? In Bell''s 2008 dissertation on social learning theory and intimate partner violence on campus, he notes a number of prior studies which have mentioned the known causes of violent tendencies such as a witnessing or being the victim of parental violence and membership in all male organizations such as fraternities or athletics. Bell also indicates that his interpretation of other seminal research indicates that the acceptance of domestic violence and other violence against women on campus was largely ignored due to the patriarchal systems in place in university administrations

(p. 9). This, in combination with a patriarchal role on campus supported through athletics and fraternal organizations, is credited with shaping men"s beliefs that violence against women is somehow acceptable on college campuses (Voller, Long, & Aosved, 2008). It is important to note that most of the studies being referenced here were done in Canada in the late 1980"s and early 90"s. They were important contributions in that the problem had not really been recognized before, but I have taken into account the differing roles and balance of women in college today when designing my instrument. This is not to suggest that the same problems are not a contributor to the current problem of violence on campus, but most of the findings cited bad parenting and women"s financial dependence on men. The greater numbers of women on campus today and much greater financial independence mitigates many of these factors.

The primary contribution to Bell"s (2008) work is his incorporation of the four elements of social learning theory into an understanding of why people commit violent crimes, "differential association, differential reinforcement, imitation, and definitions" (p. 17). The key element here that is most relevant to this project however, is the additional element of reinforcement of criminal behavior. It is my belief that the primary reason why violence continues to occur on campus today and is able to escalate is through a combination of factors, university policies that often result in a lack of punishment for aggressors, and the continuation of violence myths, the concept that it is somehow not wrong to use violence against others, especially women, has become the social norm for a large number of men on university campuses today.

How universities teach about safety

Universities have tried a number of programs to address the issue ranging from freshman orientation (Sochting, Fairbrother & Koch, 2004) to e-mail alerts and even bystander training (Epstein, 2002) and sports/ fraternity group training (Barnett & DiSabato, 2000) all with virtually no real change in behavior.

In addition to public awareness, many universities have also started more carefully screening out students with violent tendencies or recorded history of violent crimes. Many public universities in Texas have been resistant to do so however. My own checks of universities in Texas found only one major university, The University of North Texas, to actually be doing basic criminal background or sex offender checks on students during the application process. As previously cited, in the post-Virginia Tech environment, a number of students have also been screened out based upon violent tendencies and behaviors and have often resulted in an overreactions. This leads us into the human resources component of this project.

How faculty and other university community members learn about safety on campus

The HRD component of this study examined the field of how graduate student workers and faculty are being trained to spot potentially dangerous students and educate students about their own safety issues on campus. I believe that this area, while often overlooked, actually provides some of the best opportunities for intervention in this problem in that faculty and TA"s are those who have the most contact with both the university and students and who also have their years of personal experience to draw upon. They are the ones actually tasked with teaching students and therefore are potentially the best tools to actually reach the students or at least give administrators

better ideas for how to reach these students. One of the groups being measured in this survey was specifically graduate student workers. Researchers have already measured a number of the questions in this project against various faculty and staff members (Brydan & Fletcher, 2007 & 2009) A significant number of students employees were reached by the instrument and therefore I was also able to examine the differences in responses between student workers, faculty and staff, and students with no access to HRD influences.

Mass media influences in perceptions of campus safety

One additional factor that provided important information during this study and was asked about on the instrument was the influence of the mass media. I anticipated that high profile incidents in the news would greatly influence the results found in the study and this theory proved to be warranted in this results. Two of the theories being used in this study (the Spiral of Silence and Social Learning theories) are both largely communication theories and the Spiral of Silence specifically assumes that the media have a great power in influencing decision making. In addition to asking respondents about media influences, it also became necessary to examine student and local newspapers to determine if there have been any violent events on campus in recent weeks that may be influencing student responses.

Summary and how this relates to my project

While there is not a wide variety of literature on this subject, it is still an important area. I believe that this lack of literature supports the idea that it is not something that most scholars have thoroughly examined and therefore is a field of inquiry that allowed my study to contribute to the field of knowledge.

Similar Studies and How My Project Contributes to the Field

A review of similar projects has indicated that there are three potential flaws or gaps in knowledge in this field that are addressed in my study: 1. Most of the existing studies are campus specific; there are few studies that examine the problem of violence on campus from the perspective of multiple universities or multiple countries; 2. Most of the existing studies are too focused on just one type of violence, there do not appear to be any that examine violent acts in general, they simply focus on sexual, interpersonal, or mass violence specifically without examining connections between the three; and 3. There do not appear to be any studies asking the question why? Why is there violence on campus, why are students often unaware of the problem, and how do students learn to construct their views on the issue?

Fear of violence on campus

An article in *Crime Delinquency* in 2007 was the first instance of an examination of self-perceptions of fear on campus in the post Virginia-Tech environment. The authors examined how students were again turning to Clery Act crime reporting data, not to find out about interpersonal violence, but to find out about acts of mass violence and stranger violence. Wilcox, Jordan, and Pritchard (2007) attempted to determine how effective the Clery reporting had been at presenting useful information for students who had utilized the databases. Similar to my study, the authors attempted to discover whether or not there were any correlations between a person's self-awareness of safety on campus and their actual levels of danger based upon official crimes statistics per campus. The authors found out however, that due to the inconsistency in reporting, there was no way to

determine if student‟s self-perceptions of safety were reflective of the actual danger level on their campuses. Some useful data that they did come across however, was that there does appear to be some naivety of youth in place in that many students are not reporting that they are afraid of crime even when they report that they are aware of a number of violent offenses occurring on campus (p. 232). The second finding is that the Clery Act has little effect in that not only are students unaware of and fail to check their campus crime statistics but that campuses were also found to be making a concerted effort to distort this information. This study was quite comprehensive and useful, mostly due to what it states about students denial about their safety even though they are personally aware of violent crimes occurring on their campus. I believe this to support the notion that the violence myths are so ingrained that even students who witness or are aware of violent acts on campus do not believe that they could fall victim themselves. I believe this is also evident in many of the interviews of students and faculty following the Virginia Tech massacre where students stated that they knew this individual was threatening and dangerous but never thought he was capable of doing something like that. This article justifies the need to dig deeper into the connection between self-perceptions of dangers and beliefs in myths. It indicates an alarming disconnect between what appears to be obvious signs of danger and a student‟s self-perception of their personal safety.

Interpersonal violence

Perhaps the best project done on the issue of violence on campus was the 2005 Campus Violence White Paper by the American College Health Association (Joetta Carr). The paper is a combination literature review and statistical compilation of various reports on interpersonal violence on campus. It also notes that there is a wide variety in

reported statistics and actually gives contradictory numbers throughout the white paper. They state that 3 percent of the 16 million college students in the United States are victims of crime each year (p. 305) yet they also project that approximately 20 percent of college women will be raped during their university years (p. 306). Given that they also state that men are twice as likely as women to be victims of violent crime and that two-thirds of all violent crime involves simple assaults (p. 306), then clearly these numbers just do not add up. They do mention an important number though that needs to be addressed in this study. "Approximately 93 percent of [violent] crimes against students occurred off-campus" (p. 306). This is important in that while I am referring to campus safety throughout this project, the project itself is focused on the safety of college students regardless of where they are physically at the time of the crime. The educational and awareness efforts are primarily taking place on campus and that is the one central place where they all go and hence the reason this study is focused there. The authors also make note that the primary causes of violence on campus are the result of rape myths, sex role issues, lack of support or punishment, and male membership groups such as sports or fraternities (p. 308).

It is also important to note that the authors point out that gay, lesbian, and bi-sexual orientation makes a person far more likely to experience violent crimes on campus therefore making it an important item to consider in the final instrument.

The suggestions of the authors are rather limited but they do mention the importance of social marketing programs as an attempt at reaching students through existing social networking outlets. They acknowledge as well though that most programs

attempted thus far have not resulted in any measurable changes in violence levels on campus (p. 315).

Social learning theory

The most comprehensive (186 question instrument) study done on social learning theory and intimate partner violence appears to be the 2008 dissertation by criminology student Keith Bell. I have previously discussed his findings on the motivations for why males may feel comfortable and encouraged to commit violent acts against and generally be aggressive towards females on college campuses. I concur with his findings even if they are largely based on dated studies. I do believe however, that when we examined campus violence from a wider perspective (not just interpersonal violence) I found that there are other factors in play today such as the stress levels of students (Hollis, 2009).

However, being such a comprehensive study, there are instrument items and methodological techniques from this study that I believe might be valuable contributions to my own study. His demographic categories are similar to the ones that I have already chosen with the exception that he does include information about fraternity/ sorority and athletics involvement which could prove useful but were not used here to limit the cumulative number of items (p. 139). Many of his questions are geared towards his field of criminal justice, but others appear to be useful such as: "Physical violence is a part of a normal dating relationship; In dating relationships, physical abuse in never justified" (p. 140). The remainder of his questions dealt with family background or how likely the respondent would be to engage in violent crime against a partner which goes beyond the scope of my study.

Faculty, staff, and student worker perceptions

Canadian researchers Brydan and Fletcher (2007 and 2009) did a series of studies at university campuses in Western Canada (predominantly Ontario) that examined safety practices and beliefs among various staff and faculty members. This is relevant to my study in that it also looks at how non-students in the university community learn about safety issues on campus and also examines how those with the most and longest contact with the university culture feel about their own personal safety and what proportion of them respond accordingly. The major findings were that females felt victimized more often than males and that staff felt more frequently victimized and were more frequently aware of threats than faculty. No explanation was given as to why however, it may be an interesting area of further research.

The greatest contribution to this series of studies however, was that it utilized many excellent survey items proved useful for my project. The open-response portion of the studies revealed that many professors felt scared of their students, especially in regards to having to break them bad news about their grades. One professor mentioned that they frequently had witnesses assist them in their office when meeting with students about bad grades and felt unsafe when alone in their office or in the bathroom. The professor commented that they locked their doors frequently when alone and felt that campus police were no help in resolving their issues with students as they often did not seem to take the problems very seriously (Brydan & Fletcher, 2009). Two potential items that came out of this topic that might be useful in follow-up studies would be questions of: *do you lock your doors when alone* and *do you have confidence in campus police/ security to handle any concerns that you bring to them?* The same 2009 report indicates

that other faculty feels that some students may feel sexually intimidated by their professors.

The 2007 study simply compared all faculty and staff on one small university campus and examined the results by gender. Some of the items that they were able to get significant results from were "*I have called campus security, I have walked with another individual for safety, I have carried something to defend myself, I have carried keys in a defensive manner, I have avoided specific areas of campus at night, and I have avoided walking past strangers*" (Bryden & Fletcher, 2007). All of these scored higher with females but with the exception of avoiding certain areas at night, there were a strong number of positive male responses as well.

Additional useful information from this study were indicators that there was a wide range of satisfaction levels for the effectiveness of campus security, the slim majority of males and females felt safe on campus, and significantly more men than women felt comfortable counseling students about sexual aggression (39% versus 17%). There was also an interesting split in how male versus female employees viewed the safety levels of the campus compared to their peer campuses (44% of females ranked it similar to their peers, 33% of males indicated it was less safe) (Bryden & Fletcher, 2007). Staff members also reported no significant gender differences in rates of victimization in regards to dating violence, sexual harassment, and physical assault.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

What the bulk of the literature has found is that there is a significant problem of violence on college campuses today. A number of educational approaches have been tried to address the problems but none seem to have been successful. Two gaps in the research

are apparent though: 1. Few people seem to be looking at violence in all its forms at various universities throughout the country; and 2. No one appears to be examining why students are not learning through the public safety educational programs being offered. There seems to be a feeling of "we are offering the programs and they are just not paying attention until it"s too late". No one really seems to be investigating why these programs are not being successful.

This is where my project helps fill in the gaps and provide a contribution to the field. I not only examined self-perceptions of safety, but also be compared these data with the belief in myths (by both genders) to see how one may be correlated with the other. I also examined learning influences by demographic type and determining which types of learning influences are most and least effective at breaking down the myths and providing students with a healthy level of understanding surrounding their personal safety and what they should be doing to protect themselves.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

As stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this study is to determine how students across various university and demographic types feel about their personal safety levels on campus, how likely they are to believe in common violence myths, and what learning factors are most influencing their decisions in this area.

Specifically, the questions being addressed are:

1. What perceptions do students carry with them regarding campus violence and their own personal safety?

2. How do violence myths shape their understanding of campus violence?

3. What demographic factors, such as campus context and personal demographics shape their understanding of campus violence?

4. How do students" self-perceptions of safety on campus compare with the official crimes statistics for their campuses and surrounding communities?

To achieve this goal, a survey instrument was distributed to students at a variety of universities throughout the United States that sought to determine what these various demographic categories of students feel about their personal safety, violence myth perceptions, and learning influences.

Analyses was done on these data to determine patterns and significance in regards to the differences in safety self-perceptions, self-reported beliefs in violence myths, and learning influences across various demographics. As an exploratory study, this study examined only one to two universities of each Carnegie classification in order to determine if there is a difference between representative university types. The primary analysis focused on the differences between student demographic categories within each university.

The survey instrument developed for this project attempted to solicit information regarding students self-perceptions of safety on campus (SPS), beliefs in common violence myths (BVM), their rankings of various learning influences which have led the students to construct their opinions on the first two variables (LI), and demographic information (DEMO) thereby resulting in four variables to be analyzed. Scores were generated for Self-perceptions of Safety (SPS) and Beliefs in Violence Myths (BVM) by averaging the item scores for each category.

Additionally, research on each campus" official crime statistics was gathered along with official UCR crime statistics for the surrounding community. The most recent reporting for each was 2008. In addition to 2008 data on the four categories of violent crime reporting (murder, sexual assault, aggravated assault, and robbery), data were examined from 2006 to 2008. The purpose of this was to create four separate official crime reporting statistics: 1. University reported violent crimes for 2008, 2. University reported violent crimes averaged over the last three years, 3. FBI Uniform Crime Reporting data for the same four categories for 2008 for each community surrounding

each university, and 4. UCR data for communities averaged over the last three years. The purpose to providing the average data is that it made it possible to examine whether or not 2008 is representative of their ongoing violent crime rates. Each of these numbers will be compared to the Self-Perceptions of Safety (SPS) score to determine if relationships exist.

These survey data were gathered from a cross-section of students at universities and colleges in the United States. It utilized a convenience sample based upon e-mail addresses obtained through the university"s respective websites. The reason for this methodology is that an online survey was the most efficient and expedient method for obtaining research from a wide variety of demographics. None of the existing instruments I have found have adequately addressed the issues being examined here; therefore the creation of a new measurement instrument was necessary. According to DeVellis (2003), it is sometimes necessary to "quantify a particular phenomenon before tackling the main research objective" (p. 1). My qualitative research methods attempted thus far has given me an idea of the extent of the problem, but only a survey can tell me whether or not the problem is truly extensive enough to justify proceeding on further. My qualitative research and the research of others suggest there might be a problem; a survey helped me determine how widespread the problem might be and whether or not specific learning techniques or demographics might hold the answers that will allow us to solve the problem.

Primary and Supplemental Research Questions and
How They Will be Addressed in the Study

The primary research question is how do students across various university and demographic types perceive their safety levels on campus and how these perceptions are influenced by their beliefs in violence myths, their learning influences, and various demographic backgrounds. I addressed this by first answering a series of supplemental questions which was combined to provide an answer to this primary question. By breaking down the primary question into supplemental sections, it was easier to gain insight into the larger question. A list of these questions and how they were addressed is as follows:

Path analysis was conducted on the data to determine the following.

1. Is there a significant relationship between Belief in Violence Myths (BVM) AND Self-perceptions of Safety (SPS)?

2. Is this relationship moderated by Race, Gender, Age, Carnegie Category (DEMO), or Learning Influences (LI)?

3. Is there a relationship between official crimes statistics (UCR and CLRY) and Self-perceptions of Safety (SPS)?

The Self-Perceptions of Safety Score (SPS) is a score based upon a number of items selected for their determination of how safe students report feeling on campus. The specific questions were determined by a factor analysis of all Likert-scale questions on safety. A specific series of related questions was selected that best matches this description. Those scores were then be ranked from 1-4 (with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree). The scores were then averaged per student giving me a score of 1-4 for each student that indicates how safe they feel on campus. A score of 1 is the

equivalent of feeling very unsafe. 2.5 is the equivalent of a neutral feeling. 4 means that the student reports feeling very safe.

The Belief in Violence Myths Score (BVM) was also taken from one of the categories determined by factor analysis. The category that contained the questions derived from existing Violence Myth scales was selected. Averaging procedures identical to that used by SPS was utilized. The score was then used to measure how likely a student is to believe in common myths regarding violence on campus. A score of 1 indicates a student who appears to believe that violence only happens to others who do something wrong. A score of 4 indicates a student who believes that anyone could potentially become a victim of violence and does not tend to blame the victim.

Learning influences (LI) and Demographics (DEMO) items were predominantly examined individually. The goal of LI"s is to determine which factors are influencing a student the most and if any of these factors lead to higher or lower SPS and BVM scores. Demographic categories were used for the same purpose.

In order to answer the second question on how violence myths shape their understanding of campus violence, I utilized the Belief in Violence Myths Score (BVM) identified above, to compare students based upon their beliefs in violence myths. These scores were then compared against all demographic categories and SPS scores to answer this second question.

To answer question three regarding demographic factors, I simply examined each of the variables (SPS, BVM, PEV, and LI) against each demographic category to identify trends in variable scores based upon demographic information.

To answer the fourth and final question on how SPS scores compare with official crime statistics, I used a multi-part solution. The first part was to identify and calculate cumulative violent crime rates from the Department of Education website per campus being studied. The second part involved going to the FBI Uniform Crime Reporting web site to identify the violent crime rates for the surrounding communities that each campus was located in. I referred to the Department of Education"s website to determine if each campus was located in an urban or rural area in order to determine whether or not to use the FBIs city or county crime statistics. SPSS software was then used to determine if there was a significant relationship between these three variables. Additionally, in a pilot study to this project, 275 universities from all 50 states were separately examined and relationships were tested between the type of university, reported campus crime rates, and reported community crime rates.

The results of all of these tests are reported in Chapters 4 and 5.
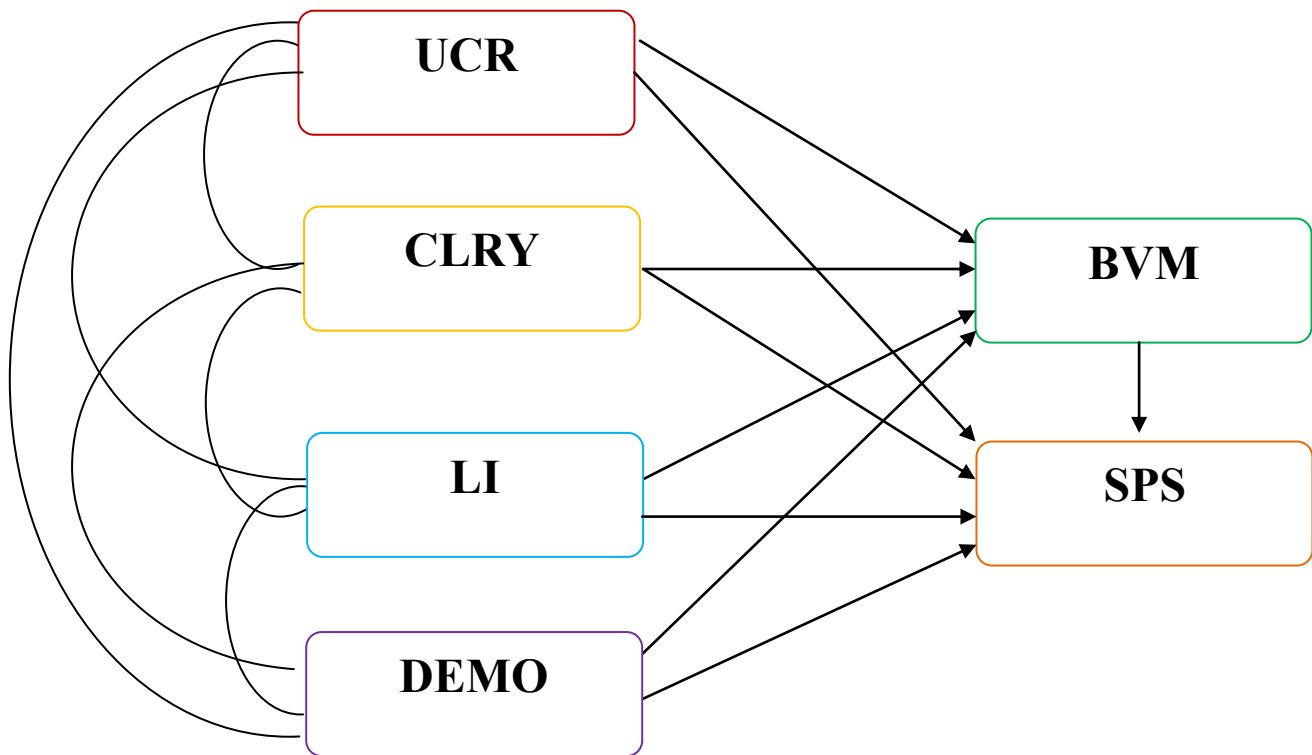
Figure 1. Sample Path Analysis for Campus Safety Project.

UCR: Uniform Crime Reporting statistics. Official FBI crime statistics measuring Homicide, Rape, Aggravated Assault, and Robbery for communities surrounding each campus.

CLRY: Clery Campus Crime Reporting statistics are reports on the same categories reported on each individual campus.

SPS: Self-perceptions of Safety score from survey instrument.

BVM: Beliefs in Violence Myths is the violence myth score from the survey instrument.

LI: Learning Influences questions measure how students construct knowledge regarding their personal safety as solicited from the survey instrument.

DEMO: Demographic categories from the survey instrument.

Population Selected

The universities selected for this study were primarily convenience samples that represented the greatest range of university types and geographic regions readily available. The primary limitation in the search for participating institutions was the availability of readily attainable e-mail address lists. A web search of all available universities revealed eight universities that accurately reflect the goals of the project and have readily available e-mail lists. At least 800 addresses were obtained from each university in order to attempt to receive at least 200 responses per university. This allowed me to compare results both between universities and within university populations.

Given the limitations of the study, it was not be possible to get a true representation of all campuses. In order to attempt a rate of 200 responses per university (to test variance within the student population as well as between universities) and to ensure that all major types of universities are represented, in most cases only one university per type were used. There is an abundance of Texas universities selected in an attempt to determine if region or university type is most relevant in one selected region, but the same will not be evident in other universities selected. The current list of universities selected is: Texas State University-San Marcos (TX), University of Washington (WA), University of Iowa (IA), Saint Lawrence University (NY), Southwestern University (TX), Texas Christian University (TX), Texas Women's University (TX), and Northwest Nazarene (ID). An illustration of these universities and explanations for why they were chosen is included below:

Universities selected for study:

- Northwest Nazarene University
- Southwestern University
- St. Lawrence University
- Texas Christian University
- Texas State
- Texas Women's University
- University of Iowa
- University of Washington

Texas/ Oklahoma Universities (to compare various universities by Carnegie classifications from one region):

Southwestern University (Small, Lib Arts, Pvt.)
Texas Christian University (Medium, Private)
Texas State (Large, Public)
Texas Women's University (Medium, Female)
University of Iowa (Large, Research, Publ)

Large Universities (30k students or more)

Texas State
University of Iowa
University of Washington

Medium Universities (5k-29k)

Texas Women's University
Texas Christian University

Small Universities (<5k)

St. Lawrence University
Southwestern University
Northwest Nazarene University

Public Universities

Texas State
Texas Women's University
University of Iowa
University of Washington

Private Universities

Northwest Nazarene
St. Lawrence University
Southwestern University
Texas Christian University

Universities with Religious Affiliation (* = strong affiliation)

*Northwest Nazarene University
Southwestern University
Texas Christian University

- Texas Women's University is unique in that it is the only university in this study with a predominantly female student population.

- St. Lawrence University is unique in that it has been listed as one of the 50 most expensive universities in the United States. (*Chronicle of Higher Education)*

- Five universities were chosen in order to sample a wide range of Carnegie classifications from within the Texas/ Oklahoma region.

- Other universities were chosen to have a balance between large, medium, and small universities as well as public and private, liberal arts and research universities, and secular and religious institutions.

Figure 2. Universities Selected for Study.

Students were randomly selected from each university by using a random letter generator that produced two random letters that were then input into the online e-mail directory system and repeated until the required number of addresses was obtained. As an exploratory study, I make no representations that the above universities in any way represent all universities of their type. I am simply attempting to gauge whether or not there are patterns evident for future research.

<div align="center">Justification and Method of Item Selection</div>

The survey method was used for contacting the students selected for participation. MRInterview software was used to develop the survey. Initial emails and two reminder emails were sent to the students selected.

An initial list of items was created from the literature review section of this project. Some of the questions were updated to reflect changes in social norms since the implementation of the selected instrument. A combined list of potential items was then narrowed down to the final list through a series of processes. Step one was for the researcher to eliminate obviously redundant, offensive, or other questions that might be culturally confusing using the researcher's personal experience. Step 2 was to pose the list to a panel group of student affairs administrators and university police personnel for their input and modification. Step 3 was to take the remaining questions to a general audience of undergraduate and graduate students and parents to solicit their feedback and ensure that the questions were easily understood. A number of questions were eliminated through this process and the remaining questions have passed all three levels of scrutiny.

This result of this was 15 questions that would measure self-perceptions of safety on campus. The items gauge student perceptions of their safety on campus, in their

residence, and also note their personal safety practices. The questions for both SPS and BVM include items that gauge perceptions of safety from four perspectives: general safety, personal safety (non-sexual), personal safety (sexual), and safety from mass violence.

For Variable 2 (BVM) on beliefs surrounding violence myths, the items were narrowed down to 15 questions. These items also addressed all four areas of safety mentioned above.

The items for LI (learning influences) and DEMO (demographics) were also based upon the panel suggestions and include 10 items each. This results in a total of 50 items being on the survey instrument.

Final Instrument Questions

A copy of the proposed survey is included here and also attached as Attachment A. The number of items on the instrument is 50 (15 items for SPS, 15 items for BVM, 10 Items for LI, and 10 items for DEMO). Additional data for each community was added for UCR and CLRY crime reporting data for the categories with a raw number generated for rates of murder, sexual assaults, aggravated assaults, and robberies (combined) per 1,000 students/ residents over a three-year average (2006-2008).

Safety Survey

Table 1

Survey Items

Safety Self Perceptions (SPS)   (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree)

1. I feel safe on campus.
2. I feel safe in the neighborhoods surrounding my campus.
3. My university is located in a safe community.

Table 1 Continued

4. I would feel comfortable reporting suspicious behavior to campus police or other university authorities.
5. I carry something for personal defense (pepper spray, keys held in a defensive manner, stun gun, knife, firearm etc…).
6. I lock my doors when I am alone.
7. I always walk with others at night.
8. I avoid walking in specific areas of campus or the surrounding neighborhoods at night.
9. I feel safe at home (campus or off-campus residence).
10. The safety level of my campus is similar to that of peer institutions.
11. I have felt physically threatened or endangered by someone from my college/ university.
12. I feel safe walking alone on campus after dark.
13. I feel safe walking alone in my neighborhood after dark.
14. I believe that appropriate action would be taken if I reported a violent crime to university police or authorities.
15. If I witnessed a violent crime I would report it.

Beliefs in Violence Myths (BVM) (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree)

---

1. We do not have a violence problem at our college or university.
2. Anyone could potentially be the victim of a violent crime.
3. A campus shooting could never occur here.
4. Some acts of domestic or interpersonal violence are justifiable.
5. I do not believe that any of my friends are capable of hurting or assaulting someone.
6. It is not my responsibility to intervene or report it if I witness a violent act.
7. I could potentially be the victim of a violent crime.
8. If a person is assaulted while they are intoxicated they are at least partially responsible.
9. The news media tends to exaggerate the levels of violence on campus.
10. Many cases of sexual assault are over-reported or exaggerated.
11. Most sexual assault victims were engaged in risky or questionable behavior when they were attacked.
12. If a friend told me that they had been the victim of a violent crime I would be inclined to believe them.
13. I would be comfortable counseling a friend or fellow student on what they could do if they were a victim of a violent crime.
14. Minor assaults, fights, and alcohol offenses should be handled privately by the university.
15. Minor crimes often lead to escalating violent behavior.

Table 1 Continued

Learning Influences (LI)   (Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree, Strongly Agree)

---

1. Friends and family heavily influence my decisions regarding my personal safety.
2. University-provided information sources heavily influence my decisions regarding my personal safety.
3. Outside information sources heavily influence my decisions regarding my personal safety.
4. Personal life experience heavily influences my decisions regarding my personal safety.
5. I have had personal experience with violence during my time as a university student.
6. I have known someone who has been a victim of violent crime during their university years.
7. I have never heard of any violence here.
8. There have been reports in the news media of violence at our university.
9. I have spoken with friends and/ or family about safety concerns.
10. I have known someone who has used violence against others during their university years.

Demographics (DEMO)   (Single Response Grid Boxes)

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1. Please select the university you currently attend.

Northwest Nazarene University
Saint Lawrence University
Southwestern University
Texas Christian University
Texas State University
Texas Women's University
University of Oklahoma
University of Washington
Other/ No Answer

2. Please choose the description that most closely represents what year of schooling you are in.

1st year – Freshman
2nd year – Sophomore
3rd year – Junior
4th year – Senior
Master's Student
Doctoral Student

Table 1 Continued

Non-degree seeking student
No Answer

3. Please indicate your age.

 <numeric response>
Prefer not to answer

4. Please indicate your gender.

Female
Male
Transgender or other
Prefer not to answer

5. We recognize that sexuality is a highly personal question and your response is of course voluntary but it would be highly helpful in our study.

Heterosexual (straight)
Homosexual (gay or lesbian)
Bi-Sexual
Other
Prefer not to answer

6. Ethnicity questions are chosen from the current U.S. Census categories, with the exception of the Hispanic category which was added due to multiple requests. We recognize that the categories are rather limiting, but they are the best that we have been able to find so far.

White
Hispanic or Latino
Black or of African decent
American Indian, First Nations Member, or Alaskan Native
Asian
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
Multi-racial
Other race not included here
Prefer not to answer

7. Are you employed on campus?

Not employed on campus.
Student worker (administrative, office, clerical, or service fields)
Undergraduate Research Assistant or equivalent position

Table 1 Continued

Resident Assistant (dormitory or student apartment employee)
Graduate Teaching or Research Assistant or equivalent position
Employed in category not listed here
No answer

8. Are you a military veteran or currently in the military?

No military service
Veteran (any prior military service)
Current military (Including military cadets)
No answer

9. Do you reside on campus or in university-run housing?

No, I do not live in university housing
Yes, I live in on campus university housing
Yes, I live in off campus university housing

10. Are you a criminal justice, criminology, or administration of justice student?

Yes
No

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The original research questions for this study are the following:

1. What perceptions do students carry with them regarding campus violence and their own personal safety?

2. How do violence myths shape their understanding of campus violence?

3. What demographic factors, such as campus context and personal demographics shape their understanding of campus violence?

4. How do students" self-perceptions of safety on campus compare with the official crimes statistics for their campuses and surrounding communities?

In order to answer these questions, I first needed to analyze the data collected by the survey instrument. Secondly, I needed to compare the official crime statistics with students" perceptions of safety. Path analysis and correlational analysis was conducted on the data to determine the following:

1. Is there a significant relationship between Belief in Violence Myths (BVM) AND Self-perceptions of Safety (SPS)?

2. Is this relationship moderated by Race, Gender, Age, Carnegie Category (DEMO), or Learning Influences (LI)?

3.   Is there a relationship between official crimes statistics (UCR and

CLRY) and Self-perceptions of Safety (SPS)?

Descriptive Statistics of the Survey Respondents

The survey was distributed to 7,013 students at eight universities with a combined response rate of 12.68% (n=889). The potential impacts of this low response rate will be discussed in Chapter 5. The response rate varied per university as illustrated in Table 2. For analysis purposes, students who indicated that they did not attend classes on the main campus were deleted giving us 873 final respondents.

Table 2

Raw Response Rates per University

University	No. of Respondents	No. of Surveys Sent	Response Rate
Texas State University	174	923	18.85%
University of Washington	172	984	17.48%
Texas Christian University	137	837	16.37%
St. Lawrence University	107	928	11.53%
Southwestern University	95	811	11.71%
Texas Women's Univ.	90	855	10.53%
University of Iowa	75	892	8.41%
Northwest Nazarene Univ.	37	783	4.73%
Total:	887	7013	12.68%

It should be noted that there are a number of factors that likely led to the variance of response rates. Texas State students likely recognized a local e-mail address and were more likely to respond to an internal survey. The University of Washington and the surrounding community recently went through a significant security scare where six local police officers were murdered (four immediately after the survey was launched). This was reflected in the comments section of the survey. Texas Christian University (as well as Texas State, University of Washington, and University of Iowa) had multiple written responses indicating that there had been stories in the media that were causing them to

feel less safe than normal. St. Lawrence students indicated disbelief (and in one case serious anger) that I could even suggest that there might be violent crime on their campus. Finally, Northwest Nazarene students indicated that they do not regularly use e-mail on their campus and also have a high number of distance students (seemingly contradictory statements) that might explain their particularly low response rate.

In order to determine how well our selected universities and respondents compared to national demographics, demographic data for each university were obtained from the National Center for Education Statistics. This information is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Demographics per University (from 2007 National Center for Education Statistics)

University	Total Enrolled	Men	Wom.	White	Hisp.	Black	Asia Pac. Isl.	Amer Ind.
NW Nazarene	1836	765	1075	1365	53	12	25	13
Southwestern	1294	510	784	995	180	36	58	9
St. Lawrence	2319	1038	1281	1603	73	58	50	22
Texas Christian	8668	3625	5043	6472	626	443	219	40
Texas State	28121	12347	15774	19276	6016	1424	611	170
Texas Women"s	12168	1073	11095	6888	1726	2278	762	101
Univ. of Iowa	29117	13797	15320	23352	796	726	1054	144
Univ. of Washington	40218	19107	21111	21430	1809	1222	8688	478
Total:	123741	52262	71479	81381	6199	11279	11467	977
Percentages:		42%	58%	66%	5%	9%	9%	1%

I also examined the NCES demographics for all undergraduate and graduate students at four-year universities in the United States to compare and determine if our potential

population from the selected universities was representative of the nationwide university student population (Table 4).

Table 4

National Demographics of University Students

	U. graduate Number	U. graduate Percentage	Graduate Number	Grad Percent	Total	Percent
Men	3,957,171	44	910,273	40	4,867,444	43
Women	5,029,096	56	1,383,281	60	6,412,377	57
Total	8,986,267	100	2,293,554	100	11,279,821	100
White	5,597,054	62	1,283,224	56	6,880,278	61
Black	1,052,166	12	230,233	10	1,282,399	11
Hispanic	778,936	9	122,039	5	900,975	08
Asian Pac. Islander	535,082	6	109,168	5	644,250	06
Amer. Indian	81,785	1	13,439	0	95,224	01

Table 5

Demographics of Respondents to Safety Survey

Freshman	n=165	18.9%	White	n=678	77.7%
Sophomore	n=143	16.4%	Hispanic	n=92	10.5%
Junior	n=188	21.5%	Black	n=26	3.0%
Senior	n=196	22.5%	Amer. Indian	n=16	1.8%
Master's	n=105	12.0%	Asian/ Pac Isl.	n=69	7.9%
Doctoral	n=58	6.6%			
Other/ Unknown	n=18	2.1%	Military	n=44	5.0%
Total:	n=873	100%	Crim. Justice	n=35	4.0%
Undergraduate	n=692	79.3%	Campus Housing	n=437	50.1%
Graduate	n=163	18.7%	Campus Employ.	n=286	32.8%
Female	n=605	69.3%	Male	n=263	30.1%

To summarize how well our respondents represent a national sample of university students, Table 6 was created to show the national student demographics, the

demographics of the selected universities, the demographics of respondents, and the over

and under-representation of each demographic group in this study.

Table 6

Over and Under Representation of Demographics in Study (all numbers are percentages of total population)

	National Demographics	Universities Selected	Respondents	% of Over or Under-Representation
Men	43	42	30.1	-12.9
Women	57	58	69.3	+12.3
White	61	66	77.7	+16.7
Hispanic	08	05	10.5	+2.5
Black	11	09	3.0	-8.0
Asian/ Pac. Islander	06	09	7.9	+1.9
American Indian	01	01	1.8	+0.8

The universities selected for this study did roughly represent the demographics of all

students nationwide. The variety of university classification as specified in chapter 3 also

shows that each major type of university was reasonably represented as well. There was a

clear disparity in the demographics of respondents however. Women were over-

represented by 12.3 percent and whites were over-represented by 16.7 percent. Black

students were under-represented (8.0%) and Hispanic, Asian/ Pacific Islander, and

American Indian students were slightly over-represented. The over-representation of

Whites and Women may simply reflect the nature of the study. With a focus on campus

violence, and particularly sexual violence, women can be assumed to be more interested

in the subject. I can not speculate on why white students were so much more likely to

respond.

Factor Analysis

In order to validate the categories selected for analysis, a factor analysis was run

on all Likert-scale questions to determine factor loading. Factors of two, three, four, and

five were run with five factors providing the most promising results. As a result of the

factor analysis, I was able to create five scores (the average score of the respondents in

each category). Table 7 shows the results of the analysis and the items associated with

each factor. Items loading below .450 were excluded.

Table 7

Dimensions of Student Perceptions of Safety, Beliefs in Violence Myths, and Learning

Influences

Factor	
Items	Loading

I: Self-Perceptions of Safety (SPS)

I feel safe walking alone on campus after dark.	.782
My university is located in a safe neighborhood.	.731
I feel safe when I am on campus.	.729
I feel safe when I am in the community around my campus.	.728
I avoid walking in specific areas of campus or the surrounding neighborhoods at night.	-.694
We do not have a violence problem at our university.	.579
I feel safe in my home (on or off campus residence).	.529
I have spoken with friends and/ or family about safety concerns.	-.509
The safety level of my campus is similar to that of peer institutions.	.452
I carry something for self defense (pepper spray, keys held in a defensive manner, stun gun, knife, firearm etc…).	-.450

II: Personal Experience with Violence (PEV)

I have known someone who has been the victim of a violent act at this university.	.763
I do not know anyone who has been the victim of a violent act during their university years.	-.717

Table 7 Continued

I have had personal experience with violence during my time as a university student.	.689
I have known someone who has used violence against others during their university years.	.688
I have felt physically threatened or endangered by someone from my university.	.514

III: Belief in Violence Myths 1 – Victim Blaming (BVM1)

Many cases of sexual assault are over-reported or exaggerated.	.698
Most sexual assault victims were engaged in risky or questionable behavior when they were attacked.	.627
If a person is assaulted while they are intoxicated, they are at least partially responsible.	.564
The news media tends to exaggerate the levels of violence on our campus.	.491

IV: Belief in Violence Myths 2 – Not Me, Not Here (BVM2)

Anyone could become potentially become the victim of a violent crime.	.833
I could potentially become the victim of a violent crime.	.824
A campus shooting could never occur here.	-.583

V: Learning Influences (LI)

Conversations with friends and family have heavily influenced my beliefs regarding my personal safety.	.690
The information my university has provided me with has helped me better understand safety issues on campus.	.625
Outside information sources (such as the media) have heavily influenced my decisions regarding my safety beliefs and practices.	.517

The factor analysis provided five factors, but subsequent testing has shown that the first three categories are most useful to this study. The first category, Self Perceptions of Safety (SPS) is as predicted, an analysis of how safe students feel on campus. The second category, Personal Exposure to Violence (PEV) was unanticipated but has proven to be a

valuable category in determining how much violence students have been personally exposed to during their academic careers.

<div align="center">Predictors of University Crime Rates</div>

Before analyzing data from the survey instrument, a brief pilot study was conducted to determine if there are any relationships between a university's published (Department of Education) crime rate and the type of university. In other words, is the published crime rate (VCRMRT/ CLRY) related to some other factor, such as the size of the university? To answer this question, 275 universities were randomly selected from a national list of four-year universities. The official crime rates for each university were obtained from the Department of Education Crime Statistics web site. Each university was then classified according to various Carnegie classification categories.

Analysis showed two main findings. The first was that there was a significant relationship and negative correlation between the size of a university and its published crime rates. In other words, the larger the university, the lower its published crime rate (Table 8). It should be noted here that 24% of universities reported zero violent crime on campus in 2008. When regression was run on this data, there was a significant relationship found (Table 8) between campus population and violent crime rate. The graphic representations of this however (Figure 3, Figure 4, Table 8, & Table 9) appears to indicate that only about half of universities fit this negative correlation pattern. The other half appeared to have a true random distribution rate of violent crime.

Table 8

Campus Population as a Predictor of Published Violent Crime Rates

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Regression	11.638	1	11.638	8.047	.005[a]
Residual	394.814	273	1.446		
Total	406.451	274			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Campus Population

b. Dependent Variable: CampVCrimeRate275

Table 9

Correlations between Violent Crime Rates and University Population.

		CampVCrimeRate275	Campus Population
CampVCrimeRate275	Pearson Correlation	1	-.169[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.005
	N	275	275
Campus Population	Pearson Correlation	-.169[**]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	
	N	275	275

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
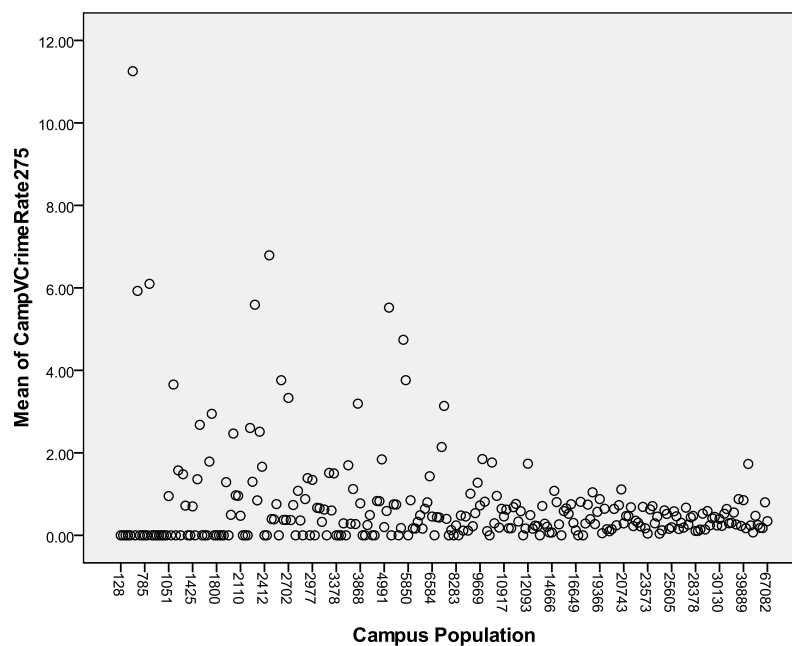
Figure 3. Means Plot of Published Violent Crime Rates and Campus Population.
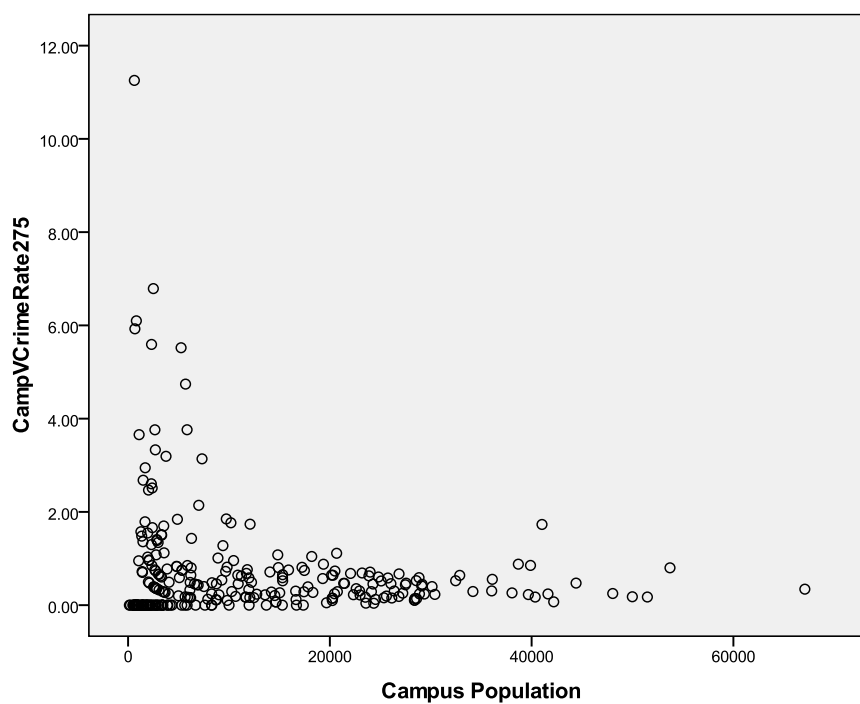
Figure 4. Campus Violent Crime Rates versus Campus Population.

The second finding was that public universities were significantly larger than private universities (p.<.001) and that liberal arts universities were significantly smaller than public research universities (p.<001). This finding allows us to conclude that large, public, research universities generally have lower published crime rates than small, private, liberal arts institutions. The universities included in this study reflect those findings. Large, public, research universities have low reported violent crime rates (mean: 0.36 violent crimes reported per 1,000 students). The small, private, liberal arts universities included in the study had higher corresponding published violent crime rates (mean: 2.90 violent crimes reported per 1,000 students). Two of the mid-sized universities, one public and one private actually had the lowest published rates (0.16 and 0.11 respectively).

Multiple Regressions for Self-Perceptions of Safety Score (SPS)

Multiple regressions were conducted to determine predictors of students Self-Perceptions of Safety (SPS) score. A sample size of 873 was used. Based upon literature, 12 factors were tested to determine their role in predicting SPS. The amount of variance explained (R^2) was 0.337. Path coefficients for the model are presented in Figure 5. Of these 12 factors, six were found to be significant at or below the .05 level. Table 10 shows the regression results for each factor.

Table 10

Regression Weights for the SPS Multiple Regressions

Factor	b	S..E.	C.R.	Sig.	r
Violent Crime Rate	.075	.010	7.690	< .001	.247
Personal Exposure	-0.269	.025	-10.748	< .001	-.310
Violence Myths	.055	.030	1.867	.062	.054
Reports of Violence	.120	.017	-6.944	< .001	-.216
Uni Housing	.028	.026	1.091	.275	.035
Year of Study	-.015	.012	-1.301	.193	-.048
Gender	.238	.031	7.754	< .001	.227
Ethnicity = White	.108	.036	3.019	.003	.086
Sexuality	-.009	.029	-.299	.765	-.008
Veteran = No	.135	.069	1.955	.051	.056
Campus Employ	.022	.010	2.119	.034	.063
Age	.005	.002	1.938	.053	.068

The most significant predictors of a student‟s self-reported predictors of safety on campus are: The published violent crime rate of the university (UCR), a student‟s personal exposure to crime (PEV), reports of campus violence in the local news media, the student‟s gender, the student‟s ethnicity, and whether or not the student was employed on campus.

The analysis also found 35 significant covariance relationships between the factors studied. Table 11 illustrates the significant relationships found.
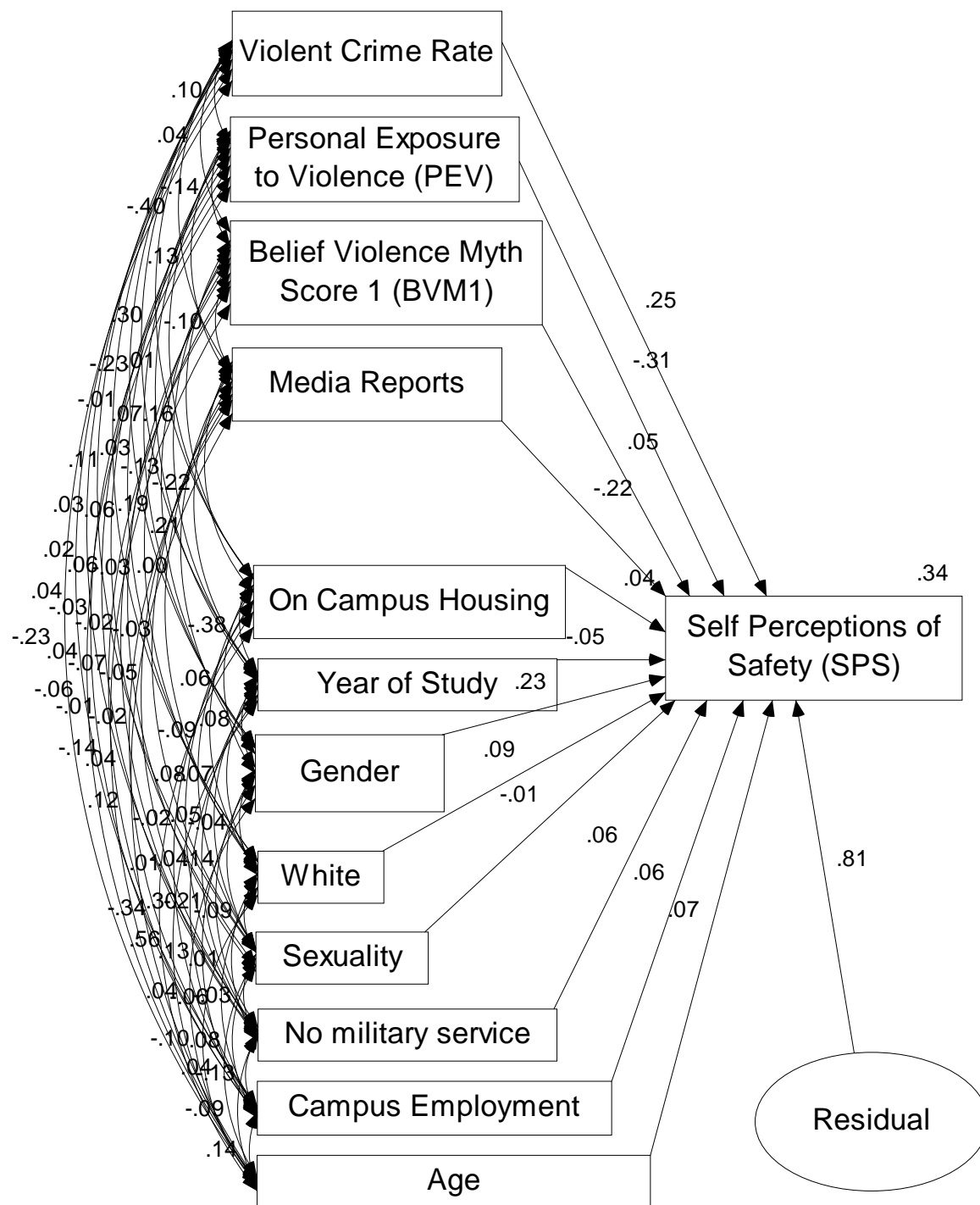
Figure 5. Visual Representation of Multiple Regressions for Predictors of SPS.

Table 11

Significant Covariances

Factor 1	Factor 2	b	S.E.	C.R.	Sig.	r
Campus Employ.	Age	1.650	.395	4.173	< .001	.143
Age	Veteran = No	-.158	.057	-2.744	.006	-.094
Age	Ethnicity = White	-.310	.109	-2.834	.005	-.097
Age	Year of Study	7.110	.493	14.424	< .001	.563
Age	University Housing	-1.725	.181	-9.531	< .001	-.343
Age	Violence Reports	.854	.250	3.411	< .001	.117
Age	BVM	-.546	.137	-3.997	< .001	-.137
Age	VCRMRT	-3.035	.466	-6.515	< .001	-.227
Campus Employ.	Veteran = No	-.044	.011	-3.918	< .001	-.134
Campus Employ.	Sexuality	.062	.026	2.421	.015	.082
Campus Employ.	Gender	.095	.026	3.722	< .001	.127
Campus Employ.	Year of Study	.744	.087	8.550	< .001	.303
Veteran = No	Gender	-.023	.004	-6.034	< .001	-.209
Veteran = No	BVM	-.008	.004	-1.957	.050	-.066
Sexuality	Ethnicity = White	-.020	.007	-2.778	< .01	-.094
Sexuality	Gender	.034	.009	3.989	< .001	.136
Sexuality	University Housing	.026	.011	2.279	.023	.077
Ethnicity = White	Year of Study	-.050	.023	-2.129	.033	-.072
Ethnicity = White	University Housing	-.025	.009	-2.725	.006	-.093
Ethnicity = White	VCRMRT	.080	.025	3.244	.001	.111
Gender	Year of Study	.069	.028	2.477	.013	.084
Gender	BVM	.050	.009	5.574	< .001	.192
Year of Study	University Housing	-.407	.039	-10.446	< .001	-.378
Year of Study	VCRMRT .	322	.054	5.950	< .001	-.230
Year of Study	BVM	-.113	.029	-3.892	< .001	-.133
Year of Study	PEV	.073	.034	2.160	.031	.073
Year of Study	VCRMRT	-.658	.099	-6.624	< .001	-.230
University Housing	Violence Reports	-.138	.022	-6.382	< .001	-.221
University Housing	BVM	.056	.012	4.787	< .001	.164
University Housing	VCRMRT	.347	.040	8.613	< .001	.305
Violence Reports	BVM	-.049	.017	-2.924	. 003	-.100
Violence Reports	PEV	.076	.020	3.868	< .001	.132
Violence Reports	VCRMRT	-.663	.060	-11.009	< .001	-.402
BVM	PEV	-.045	.011	-4.195	< .001	-.144
PEV	VCRMRT	.105	.036	2.930	.003	.100

Additional Correlations and Relationships between and within Each University

Some of the regression, correlation, and covariance findings in the multiple regression analysis warrant further exploration before moving on to the discussion section of this study. To begin with, I will explore the six key variables identified as the major predictors of Self-Perceptions of Safety (SPS). The university"s violent crime rate was entered in from their official Department of Education statistics and therefore did not vary within each university. Personal Exposure to Violence (PEV) however did have some additional significant correlations. Primarily, a student"s exposure to violence changed significantly based upon grade level (Table 12 & Figure X).

Table 12

Personal Exposure to Violence per Grade Level

PEV

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8.477	9	.942	2.585	.006
Within Groups	314.523	863	.364		
Total	323.000	872			

What I see from this is that there is a substantial and significant rise in how much violence a student is exposed to during their undergraduate careers. What I also see is a drop off between seniors and graduate students. This could be attributed to a number of factors, including the possibility that those exposed to violence during their undergraduate careers are least likely to move on to careers in graduate school. I have also previously demonstrated (Figure 6) that PEV varies widely between universities and does have a significant correlation with the University"s violent crime rate (*r* .100, p.

<.01, r^2 .01) with small effect. When I correlate PEV with SPS however I do get a moderate negative correlation (r = -.317, p. <.001, r^2 = .10). This suggests that while there may be a minimal relationship between a university''s violent crime rate and how much crime a student is exposed to, there is a much greater relationship between a student''s personal exposure to violence and how safe they feel on campus.
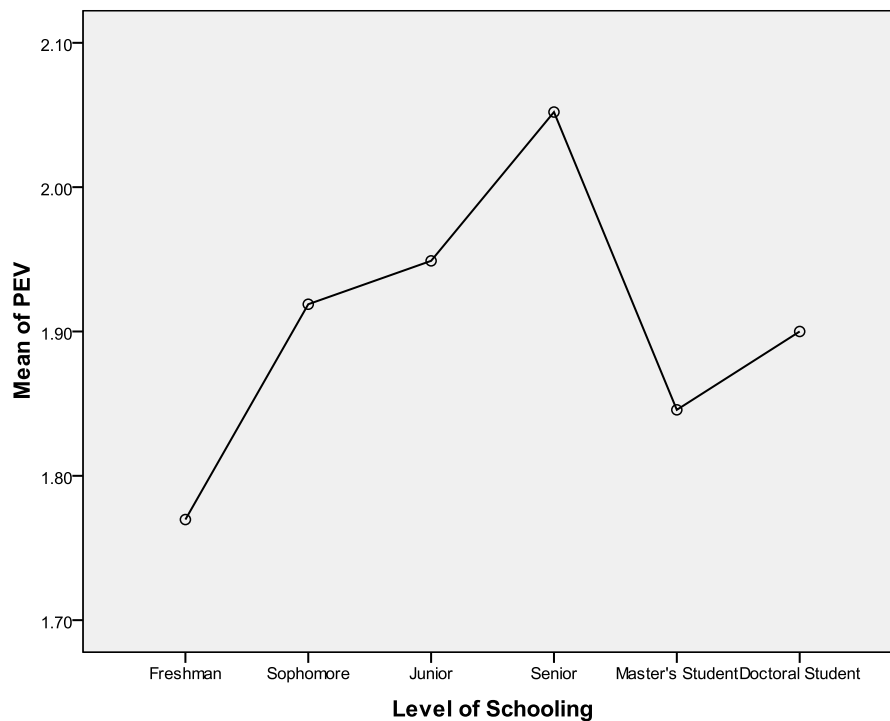
Figure 6. Personal Exposure to Violence per Grade Level.

Another factor that proved an important predictor of SPS in this study was whether or not there were recent reports of campus violence in the local new media. This also holds up under correlational examination with those agreeing with more negative news report resulting in lower Self-Perceptions of Safety on campus (r -.371, p. <.001, r^2 .138).

Gender-based correlations were surprising in this study. While there were statistically significant relationships between Gender and SPS and Beliefs in Violence Myths (BVM1), there was no relationship found between gender and Personal Exposure to Violence (PEV) (Table 13). This appears somewhat contradictory to the literature which suggests that women are more likely to be exposed to violent crime during their university years but perhaps could be explained by the questions that asked about violence involving friends and acquaintances. There was a significant but minimal difference in Self-Perceptions of Safety and Gender.

Table 13

Correlations between Gender, SPS, PEV, and BVM1.

		SPS	PEV	BVM1	Gender
SPS	Pearson Correlation	1	-.317**	.170**	.218**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	873	873	873	873
PEV	Pearson Correlation	-.317**	1	-.144**	.029
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.391
	N	873	873	873	873
BVM1	Pearson Correlation	.170**	-.144**	1	.192**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	873	873	873	873
Gender	Pearson Correlation	.218**	.029	.192**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.391	.000	
	N	873	873	873	873

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In regards to ethnicity, the only relationships found between SPS and ethnicity was with white students and Hawaiian/ Pacific Islanders. The relationships were minimal (Table 14).

Table 14

Relationships between SPS and Ethnicity

		SPS	White	Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
SPS	Pearson Correlation	1	.081*	-.097**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.017	.004
	N	873	873	873
White	Pearson Correlation	.081*	1	-.089**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.017		.009
	N	873	873	873
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	Pearson Correlation	-.097**	-.089**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.009	
	N	873	873	873

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Additionally, there was a significant relationship found between SPS scores based upon whether a student was white or not ($f = 5.757$, $p < .05$) (Figure 7).

The final predictor of SPS found on the path analysis was campus employment. No significant correlations can be found between campus employment, SPS, PEV, or BVM1. There were also no significant relationships found between veteran status or sexuality and SPS, PEV, or BVM1.
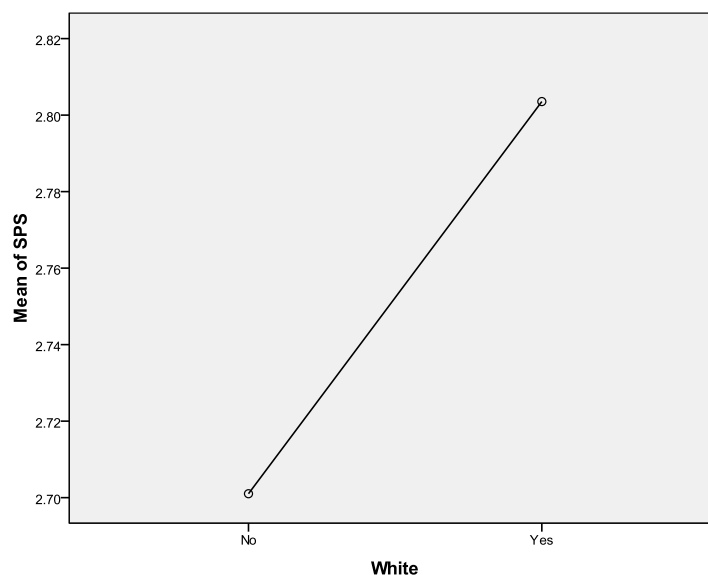
Figure 7. SPS Based Upon Ethnicity Category: White.

Learning Influences

One of the primary goals of this study was to determine how students were learning about their safety on campus. Initial analysis of each learning influence question per school year shows that the responses to most questions remains constant during their undergraduate years. Three questions proved the exception however:

The first item: *The information my university has provided me with has helped me better understand safety issues on campus* showed a significant ($f= 2.095$, p < .05) and steady decline in mean score from 2.90 at freshman year to 2.69 at senior year. (1= Strongly Disagree, 4=Strongly Agree). The second item: *Personal life experience has substantially impacted the way I behave in regards to protecting myself from violence* also showed a significant ($f= 2.442$, p < .05) rise in mean score that also continued on throughout graduate students. Mean score at freshman year was 2.90. At senior year it was 3.06, and for Doctoral students it was 3.19. The item: *I have had personal experience with violence during my time as a university student* did not show statistical significance.

The plot however, did show a substantial jump in mean score between freshman and sophomore years and junior and senior years (Freshman: 1.53, Sophomore: 1.71, Junior 1.71, and Senior 1.81). This topic is further addressed in the sections on the PEV score and this question is a component of this score. The final significant item (f =2.622, p < .01) of this section was the item: *I have known someone who has been the victim of a violent act during their university years* also showed a steady increase in mean score during the undergraduate years. (Freshman: 1.99, Senior 2.38).

The second findings from this section seem to focus on two areas. Area one indicates a strong belief that the information they are getting from their university is sufficient for keeping students safe on campus. It should be noted that this belief consistently declines with years of schooling. These findings also indicate that personal experiences with violence are more prevalent the longer a student has been in school.

The learning influences questions do vary widely and significantly between universities (Table 15).

Table 15

Learning Influences per University

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Conversations with friends and family have heavily influenced my beliefs regarding my personal safety	Between Groups	17.381	8	2.173	4.069	.000
	Within Groups	461.288	864	.534		
	Total	478.669	872			

Table 15 Continued

The information my university has provided me with has helped me better understand safety issues on campus	Between Groups	20.007	8	2.501	4.760	.000
	Within Groups	453.913	864	.525		
	Total	473.920	872			
Outside information sources (such as the media) have heavily influenced my decisions regarding my safety beliefs and practices	Between Groups	6.943	8	.868	1.436	.177
	Within Groups	522.021	864	.604		
	Total	528.964	872			
Personal life experience has substantially impacted the way that I behave in regards to protecting myself from violence	Between Groups	13.949	8	1.744	3.204	.001
	Within Groups	470.211	864	.544		
	Total	484.160	872			
I have had personal experience with violence during my time as a university student	Between Groups	5.360	8	.670	1.141	.333
	Within Groups	507.206	864	.587		
	Total	512.566	872			
I have known someone who has been the victim of a violent act during their university years	Between Groups	22.804	8	2.851	3.151	.002
	Within Groups	781.526	864	.905		

Table 15 Continued

	Total	804.330	872			
I have never heard of any violence here	Between Groups	112.315	8	14.039	26.241	.000
	Within Groups	462.251	864	.535		
	Total	574.566	872			
There have been reports in the news media of violence at our university	Between Groups	300.529	8	37.566	66.464	.000
	Within Groups	488.339	864	.565		
	Total	788.868	872			
I have spoken with friends and/ or family about safety concerns	Between Groups	61.431	8	7.679	10.737	.000
	Within Groups	617.909	864	.715		
	Total	679.340	872			
I have known someone who has used violence against others during their university years	Between Groups	18.533	8	2.317	3.978	.000
	Within Groups	503.105	864	.582		
	Total	521.638	872			
My beliefs regarding violence have changed since I began my university studies	Between Groups	15.001	8	1.875	2.584	.009
	Within Groups	626.937	864	.726		
	Total	641.938	872			

While this chart does show significant relationships between universities, there are no discernable patterns detectable in graphed results of each question. This leads me to believe that individual learning influences are more dependent upon the university then demographics within each university. Some examples of these means plots are below (Figures 8, 9, 10, &11).
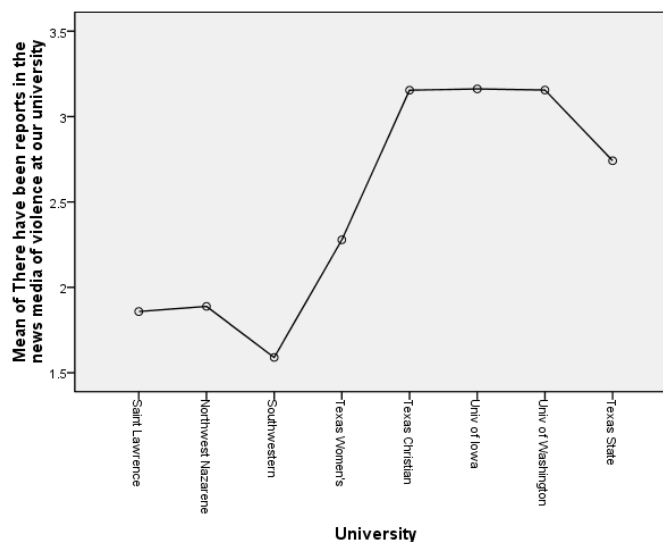

Figure 8. Means Plot of Media Reports of Violence per University.
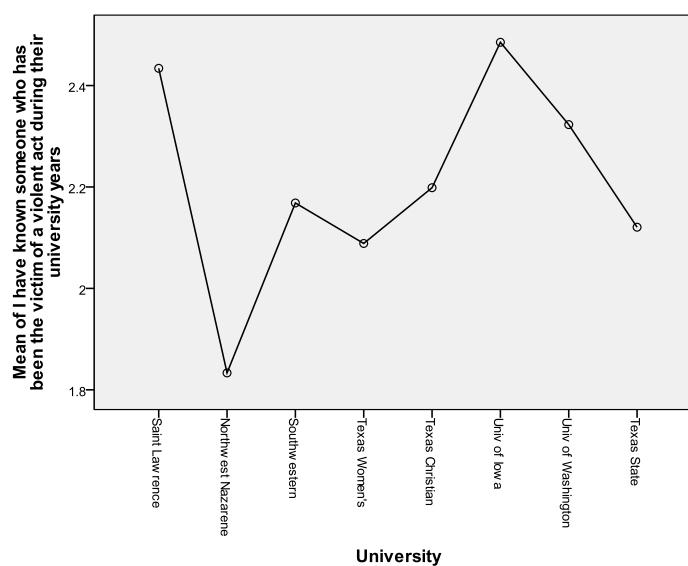

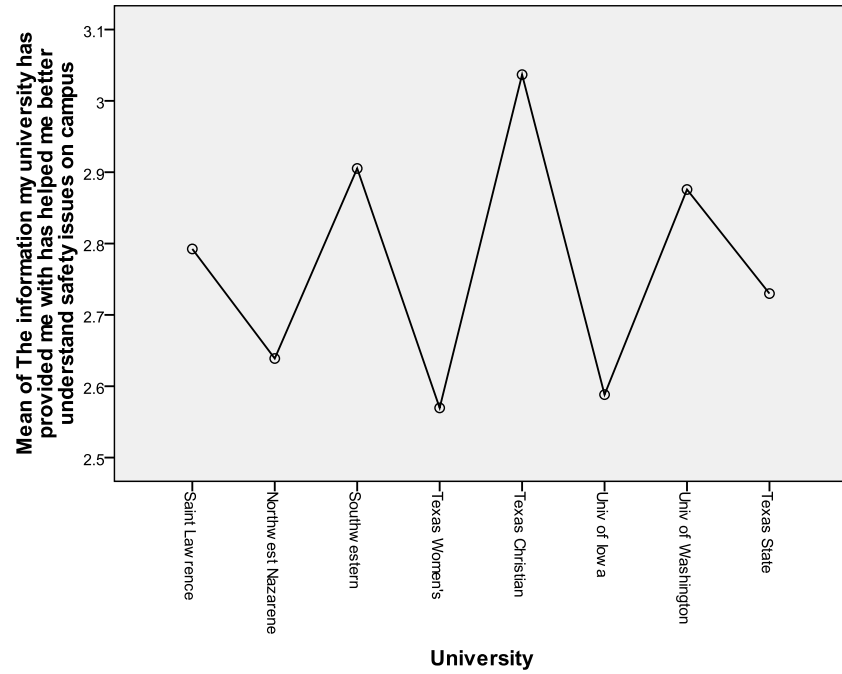Figure 9. Means Plot of Known Someone Victim of Violent Crime per University.

Figure 10. Means Plot of University-Provided Information per University.
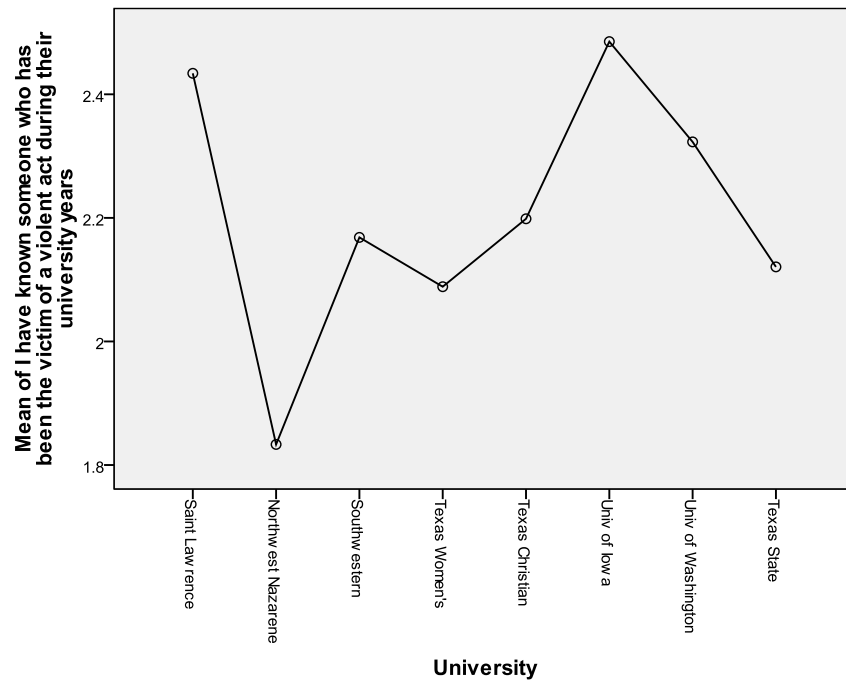
Figure 11. Means Plot of I Have Known Victim per University.

Path Analysis

As a result of the correlational studies, a number of variables were determined to be variables that predict SPS score. A path analysis was then conducted to see how the more significant variables are mediated or moderated by the others (Figure 12). One of the early assumptions of this study was the idea that Belief in Violence Myths (BVM1) is a significant component of a student"s SPS. Through the path analysis I can also see that gender, ethnicity, and media exposure to violence also moderates the BVM relationship to SPS. This model accounts for 23.6 percent of the variance in SPS. Age did not prove to be a significant moderator of BVM1. Gender appears to be the strongest moderator of BVM with a standardized regression weight of 0.190 (with men more likely to believe in violence myths). As was discovered with the multiple regressions, Personal Exposure to Violence (PEV) and the university"s violent crime rate (VCRMRT) appear to be the strongest predictors of SPS with standardized regression weights of -0.338 and 0.364 respectively (n=858). Gender also appears to be the largest predictor of BVM (.19) (Table 16). This reflects the literature which states that men are most likely to believe in victim-blaming violence myths due to social upbringing and male peer group membership (i.e. athletics and fraternal organizations) that often promote hostile beliefs against women.
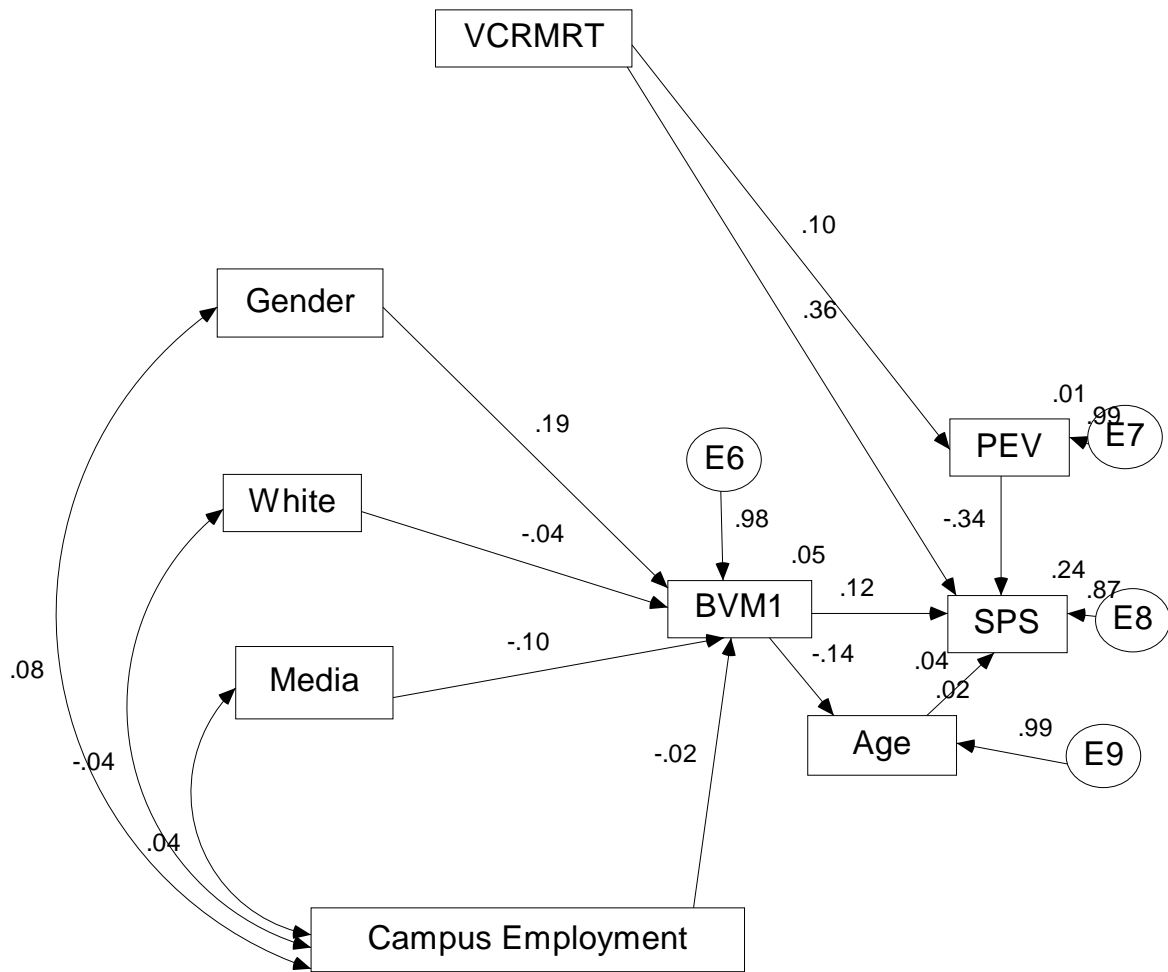
Figure 12. Path Analysis of Self-Perceptions of Safety (SPS) Score.

It should also be noted that while there was a strong correlation noted between university population and violent crime rate, when CAMPPOP was substituted for VCRMRT it proved to not be as strong a fit. Therefore, VCRMRT (campus violent crime rate per 1,000 students) was utilized in the path analysis.

Additionally, Age was examined as a predictor of SPS but surprisingly, only a very small (.02) relationship was found. I expected this to be more significant but the results do not indicate that safety self-perceptions change within this selected group of students. The relative homogeny (in regards to age) of the majority of the student

respondents may be contributing to this. The bulk of the respondents were of traditional (18-22) student ages.

For the path analysis shown in Figure 12, there are 153 df. Using the online power calculator by Preacher and Coffman (http://people.ku.edu/~preacher/rmsea/rmsea.htm) a sample size of 100 is required for a power of .80.

Table 16

Standardized Regression Weights

Variable	Predictor	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	Sig.	Std B
BVM1	Media	-.096	.018	-2.877	.004	-.099
BVM1	Employment	-.024	.012	-.714	.475	-.035
BVM1	Ethnicity	-.037	.041	-1.098	.272	-.032
BVM1	Gender	.190	.036	5.671	$< .001$	.196
PEV	VCRMRT	.102	.012	3.008	.003	.100
Age	BVM1	-.137	.503	-4.035	$< .001$	-.134
SPS	PEV	-.338	.026	-11.274	$< .001$	-.336
SPS	BVM1	.117	.031	3.894	$< .001$	.116
SPS	VCRMRT	.364	.009	12.125	$< .001$	.361
SPS	Age	.039	.002	1.300	.194	.037

Additional Tests

To further explore the relationships discovered in the multiple regression and path analysis tests, some independent correlational tests were run. When correlations are run between the published crime rates of each university in the study and three measures of student‴s safety, significant results are found (Table 17).

SPS (Self-Perceptions of Safety)

The three constructs measured (SPS, PEV, and BVM1) were obtained through factor analysis to described earlier in this chapter. The most significant results however came from the analysis of Self Perceptions of Safety (SPS) and the University‴s

published Violent Crime Rate (VCRMRT/ CLRY). These found a moderate correlation

(.323) between the two variables. However, this is actually a negative correlation in that

the higher the SPS score, the safer the student feels on campus. In other words, what I

find is a correlation that suggests that the higher the published crime rate of the campus,

the safer students report feeling. (R^2 of 0.104). I would suggest that this largely represents

some unaccounted for variable due to the unexpected nature of the finding.

Table 17

Correlations between University Violent Crime Rates and Student Safety Factors

		VCRMT	SPS	PEV	BVM1
VCRMT	Pearson Correlation	1	.323**	.100**	.044
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.003	.191
	N	873	873	873	873
SPS	Pearson Correlation	.323**	1	-.317**	.170**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	873	873	873	873
PEV	Pearson Correlation	.100**	-.317**	1	-.144**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000		.000
	N	873	873	873	873
BVM1	Pearson Correlation	.044	.170**	-.144**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.191	.000	.000	
	N	873	873	873	873

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

PEV (Personal Exposure to Violence)

Additionally, I found a moderate and significant negative correlation (-.317)

between Personal Exposure to Violence (PEV) and Self-Perceptions of Safety (SPS).

This suggests that the more a student reports having personal experience with violence on campus, the less safe they feel on campus.

Personal Exposure to Violence showed a significant but small relationship to actual university published crime rates (.100). Belief in Violence Myth Scores also showed significant but weak negative correlations with Self-Perceptions of Safety and Personal Exposure to Violence Scores.

BVM (Belief in Violence Myths)

The factor analysis for BVM showed that most of the items tested the violence myths that focused largely on victim blaming tendencies. The results suggest that, as predicted, there is a significant and positive correlation (.170) between beliefs in these myths in that those who place the fault on violent crime victims are less likely to believe that they could potentially become victims themselves. This is also reflected by the negative correlation (-.144) between BVM and PEV in that those who have actually been exposed to violence are less likely to blame the victim.

These correlations show that for the eight universities included in the survey students at the large, public, research universities have lower Self-Perception of Safety scores (SPS) than those at the smaller, private, liberal arts university. It also shows a negative correlation between SPS and the actual published violent crime rates. This suggests that universities with higher published crime rates have students that feel safer on campus. It also suggests that students with higher personal experience with violence feel less safe on campus.

Furthermore, in an attempt to better understand the relationship between these factors and the individual universities being studied, a One-Way ANOVA was conducted

comparing SPS, PEV, and BVM1 for each of the universities. There was a significant difference between universities in each category (Table 18).

Table 18

SPS, PEV, and BVM1 Scores between Eight Universities Surveyed

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SPS	Between Groups	51.192	8	6.399	28.918	.000
	Within Groups	191.190	864	.221		
	Total	242.383	872			
PEV	Between Groups	8.886	8	1.111	3.055	.002
	Within Groups	314.114	864	.364		
	Total	323.000	872			
BVM1	Between Groups	8.250	8	1.031	3.948	.000
	Within Groups	225.699	864	.261		
	Total	233.949	872			

Despite this significant difference per university, there appears does not appear to be any patterns based upon the type of university (Figures 13, 14, & 15). This suggests that while there are significant differences between universities, the eight universities studied do not give us any evidence to suggest that this difference can be attributed to the classification of the university.
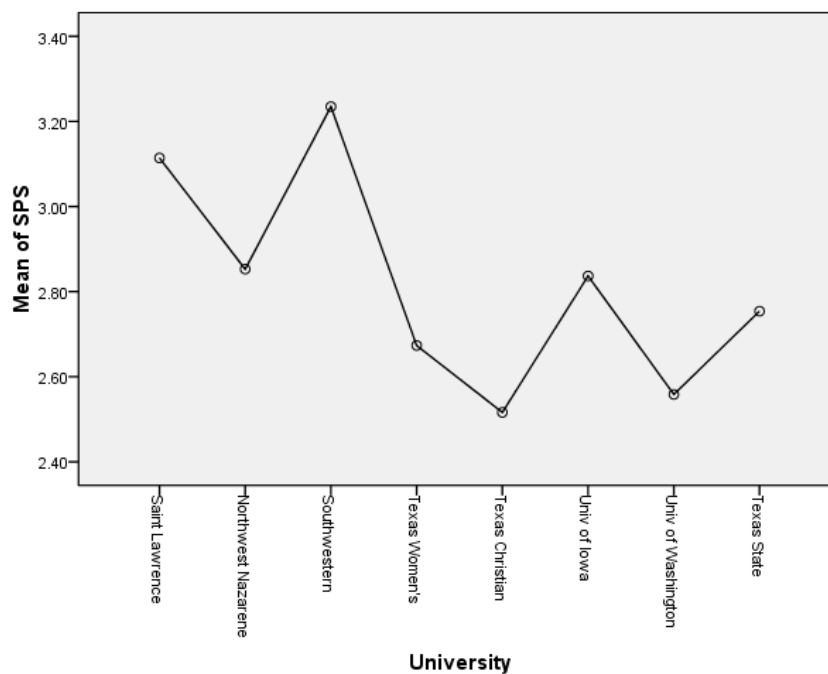
Figure 13. Means Plot Comparing Self-Perceptions of Safety per University.
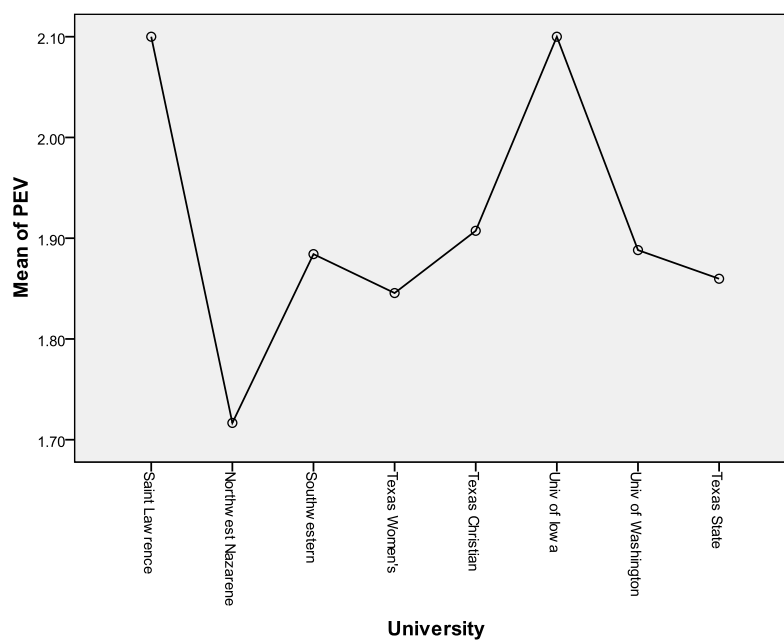
Figure 14. Means Plot Comparing Personal Exposure to Violence per University.
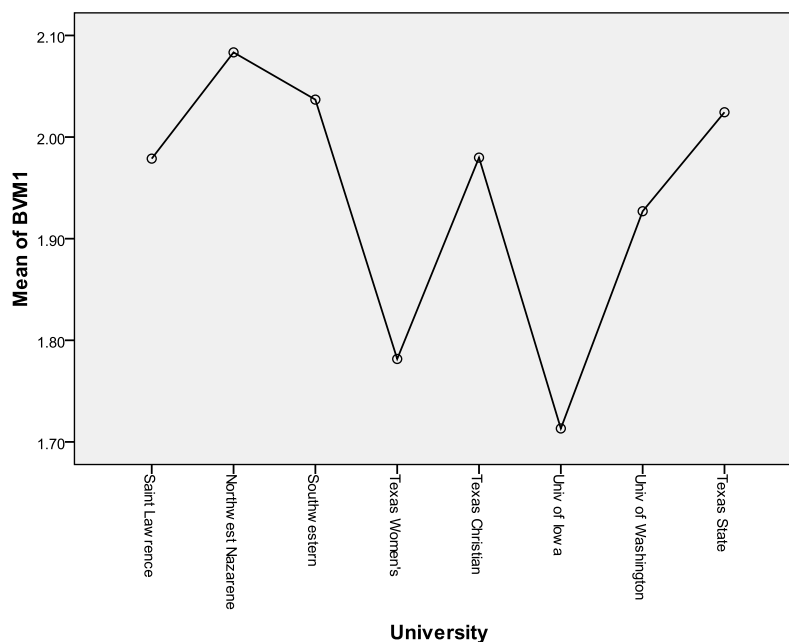
Figure 15. Means Plot Comparing Beliefs in Violence Myths per University.

Learning Influences

Table 19 breaks down the findings on Learning Influences per question and ranks them from greatest to least influential. It should be noted here that due to the variety of how the questions were phrased, the results may not be quite so easily ranked. It does however appear that personal life experience, conversations with friends and family, and reports in the media are the strongest influencers on how students construct their views on personal safety.

Table 19

Learning Influences Ranked by Mean Score (from greatest to least influential).

1.0 = Strongly Disagree	2.5 = Neutral		4.0 = Strongly Agree
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal life experience has substantially impacted the way that I behave in regards to protecting myself from violence	873	3.07	.745
Conversations with friends and family have heavily influenced my beliefs regarding my personal safety	873	2.91	.741
There have been reports in the news media of violence at our university	873	2.60	.951
Outside information sources (such as the media) have heavily influenced my decisions regarding my safety beliefs and practices	873	2.46	.779

Table 19 Continued

I have spoken with friends and/ or family about safety concerns	873	2.31	.883
My beliefs regarding violence have changed since I began my university studies	873	2.19	.858
I have known someone who has used violence against others during their university years	873	1.77	.773
I have had personal experience with violence during my time as a university student	873	1.70	.767
I have never heard of any violence here	873	1.70	.812

These results are somewhat predictable and do not reflect any substantial change from the literature. The one item that does jump out is the media influences question which I believe is reflected in a number of the comments in Appendix C under the subsection on university communications where students indicated that they were scared of the high volume of emails and media coverage of some high profile violent acts on their respective campuses.

Summary

This exploratory study of violent crime on campus has only touched the surface of the problem. There appears to be greater differences between universities rather than within universities in regards to learning influences and perceptions of safety. This suggests that the individual university safety culture is likely the greatest predictor of how safe a student feels and how safe a student actually is on campus. Written responses to this survey instrument also echo this idea. Many of the open-ended responses were geared towards issues of physical security "I believe that we are especially visible… with no obvious sign of campus police" and "my campus is safe but it is in a high crime neighborhood". There were additional multiple comments about a lack of lighting, policing, and emergency phones. There were also several comments that indicated that they did not believe that violent crimes were taken seriously by the university "police were extremely unhelpful and rude when my sister was physically assaulted", "my personal experience is that university police do not follow up on violence complaints". Physical security was also listed as a positive factor in safe campuses "I go to a small, private liberal arts school. I think that this close community greatly increases safety because it is difficult for a student to not be known". Similar statements also indicated that perhaps one reason why liberal arts universities tend to have higher Self-Perception of Safety Scores despite also having higher rates of published violent crime.

I believe the data discovered does allow us to answer the research questions and opens up many new directions for future research.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The initial research questions presented in this dissertation are:

1.   What perceptions do students carry with them regarding campus

        violence and their own personal safety?

2.   How do violence myths shape their understanding of campus violence?

3.   What demographic factors, such as campus context and personal

        demographics shape their understanding of campus violence?

4.   How do students" self-perceptions of safety on campus compare with

        the official crimes statistics for their campuses and surrounding

        communities?

What Perceptions Do Students Carry with Them Regarding Campus Violence and Their Own Personal Safety?

A positive surprise in this study has been that students are more aware of their

personal safety on campus. The mean of all SPS scores was 2.78 (slightly above neutral).

This number gradually declined from freshman to senior years as their Personal Exposure

to Violence score gradually increased. The differences in scores between universities

however were much more profound (Figure 16 & 17). While the SPS scores for students

at Liberal Arts universities was higher than those at large research universities, the PEV

90

scores were more scattered. What this demonstrates is that for the 873 respondents from the eight universities studied, students do appear to feel safer at smaller, Liberal Arts universities despite the higher published crime rates (Figure 16). Despite this, the odds of a student having personal experience with violence does not appear to be predictable based upon university type alone (Figure 17).
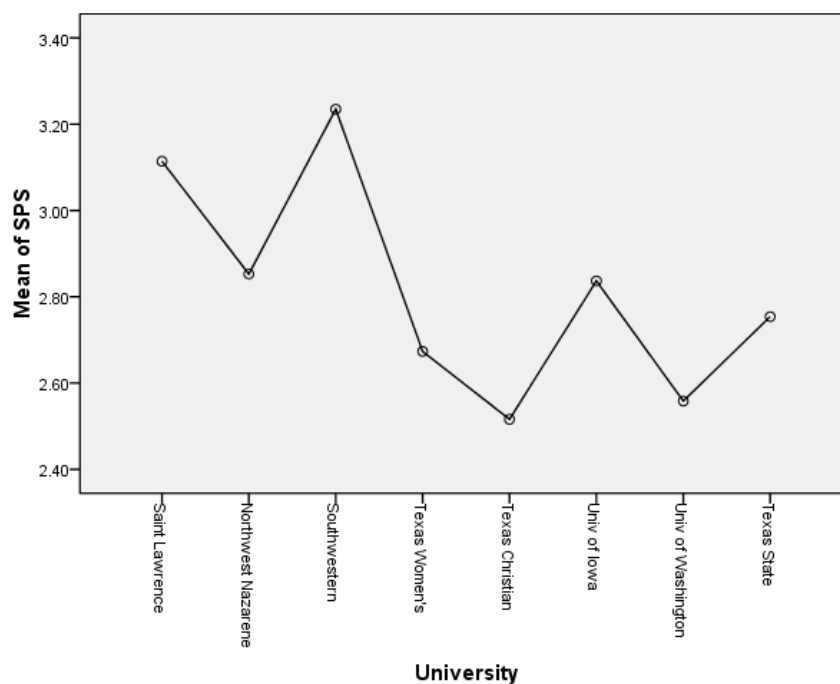
Figure 16. Means of SPS per University.

The literature on this does support the initial findings that students are more likely to be exposed to violence during their freshman or sophomore years. Fleck et al. (2008) wrote about the "red zone" indicating that a female student was most likely to become victim of a sexual assault during the first two semesters of these first two years (Figure 17). Our PEV scores showed a jump in mean between those years indicating that this was likely occurring. One interesting note in the PEV scores though also showed an

equivalent jump between Junior and Senior years which is not accounted for in the
literature.
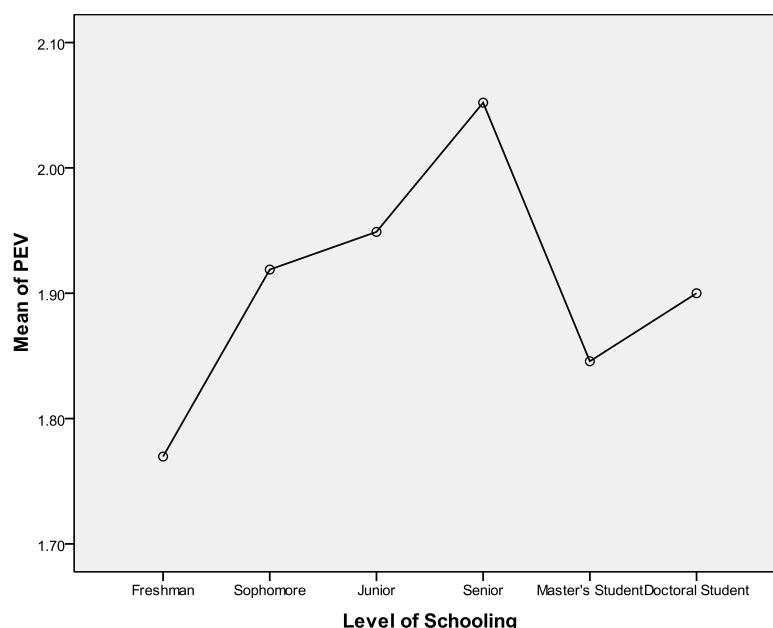
Figure 17. Means of PEV per Grade Level.

The level of rise is dramatic when presented in a visual format. It appears clear that for
the students who responded to our survey, there was substantially more exposure to
violence as a student progresses through their undergraduate years.

Something equally concerning is the steep drop in rates from undergraduate to
graduate years. As I did not specifically address it, it is difficult to determine what is
causing this drop. It could be something as benign as graduate students being older and
forgetting what their undergraduate years were likely. The demographics data however
indicates that most of the graduate students responding to the polls were of an age that
suggests they came straight from their undergraduate programs.

Therefore, what I fear this is representative of is the idea that those who were
exposed to violence at the undergraduate levels are less likely to continue their education

at the graduate level. This should be further explored as one potential reason why there is a substantial gender imbalance (over-representation of males) in a number of graduate programs.
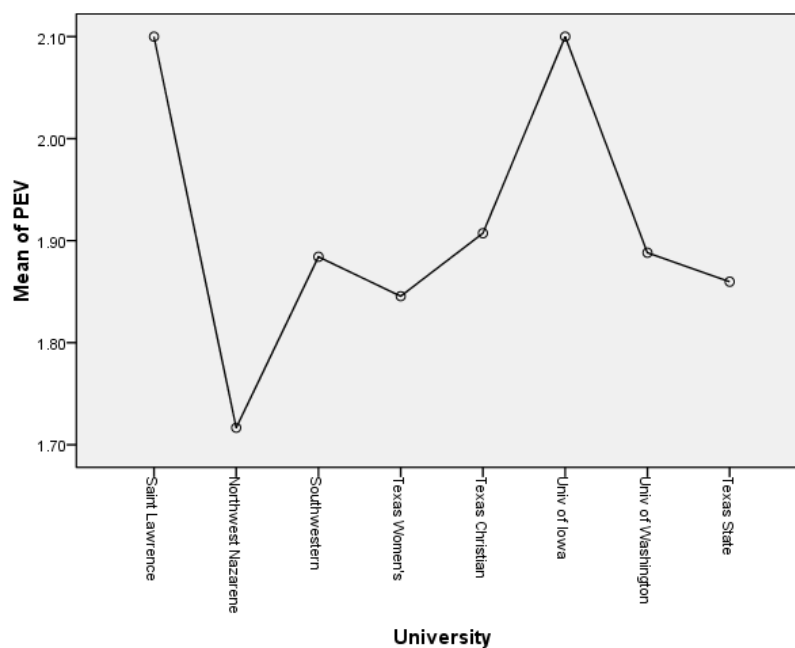
Figure 18.Means of PEV per University.

Overall, the findings from the SPS, PEV, and LI sections of the survey seem to indicate that students feel relatively safe on campus and that perception of safety level declines depending upon a number of factors. The SPS level declines when PEV increases or when there are reports of violence on campus in the news media. Several students also stated in the open-response section of the survey that stories in the news media were causing them concern about their safety. Our LI section also highlighted that students were reliant upon the university to provide them with the information they needed to feel safe. The mean scores here are subject to semantics. There could be a variety of factors influencing each score. My estimation of the score"s meaning is based upon my personal experience with the subject matter. Essentially, with a mean score of

2.80, this indicates to me that most students felt that this information was accurate. This faith in the university however, did decline with age, with freshmen averaging a score of 2.90 and seniors 2.69. Friends, family, and other outside influences did not appear to have any significant relationships on students.

This is somewhat supported by the literature in that Hummer (2004) supported my assertions that students and parents do not want to think about the "social malaise" (p. 391) of violent crime on campus and do not want to acknowledge the problem. Students appear to be largely aware of the safety situation on campus, and this awareness improves with time. Unfortunately, it appears that many students are learning the hard way as their personal experience with violence also grows during their university years. The students come in with some knowledge but also appear to come in with the assumption that the university will provide them with the information they need to be safe.

How Do Violence Myths Shape Their Understanding of Campus Violence?

The answer to this question was also a pleasant surprise and I believe reflects the importance of conducting research from multiple perspectives. My prior qualitative thesis research on the subject supported the bulk of the literature indicating that students were highly inclined to believe in victim-blaming myths. I only tested this aspect of violence myths in that the other two categories commonly found in the literature (male-dominated peer group membership, and beliefs in gender roles) (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999) were beyond the scope of this research. My findings indicated very low scores on victim-blaming beliefs with a mean score of BVM1 of 1.95 across all populations. There were predictable declines in myth beliefs with age (r =-.134, p < .001, r^2 .01). There were higher instances of myth beliefs by gender (f =25.269, p < .001) (Female mean: 1.88,

Male mean: 2.14). There were also differences in beliefs based on whether or not a student lives in campus housing (although this could be attributed to age as well) (f =8,974, p < .001) (Off campus housing mean: 1.86, On campus housing mean: 2.03).

Essentially, age, gender, and specific universities were the major factors involved in how likely a student was to believe in violence myths although the overall rate was very low. This also supports the idea that university culture is playing a role in this factor as well. Uji, Shikai, and Kitamura, 2007) indicated that culture was the most likely predictor of tendencies towards myth belief. They demonstrated that male dominated cultures tended to have higher beliefs. The means plot comparing BVM1 scores between universities did show significance (f= 3.948, p < .001) but the means chart does not show a discernable pattern (Figure 19).

The three smallest universities studied (Saint Lawrence, Northwest Nazarene, and Southwestern) did show consistently high levels of BVM. The medium and large universities represented the complete range of represented scores. It is difficult to determine from only eight universities whether or not there are any consistencies based upon university type. The significance may be anomaly or it could be accurate if more universities were included in the study.
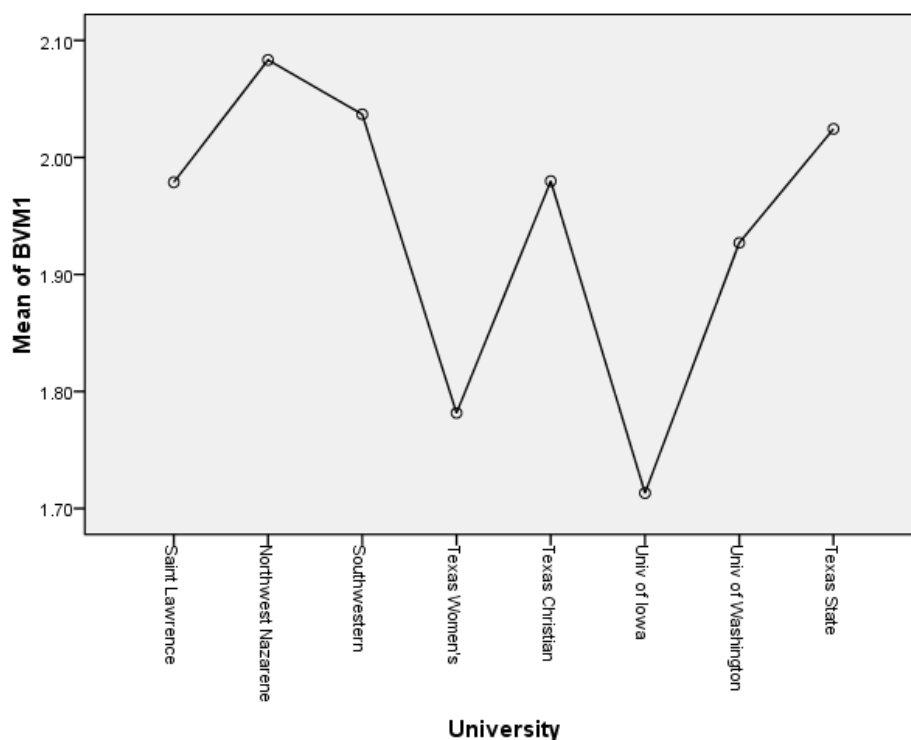
Figure 19. Means Plot of BVM1 between Universities.

What Demographic Factors, Such as Campus Context and Personal Demographics Shape Their Understanding of Campus Violence?

Demographics did play a role in SPS and PEV, but again, the specific university seemed to be the largest determining factor in determining how safe a student felt on campus.

Sexuality was not a significant factor in either SPS or PEV, although homosexual students did appear to have higher levels of PEV.

Gender was a factor in SPS but not PEV. There was a significantly lower feeling of safety among female students ($t= -7.633$, $p < .001$) but no significant differences in PEV. I did find minimal changes in SPS during undergraduate years (Figure 20). I see much more dramatic changes however, with PEV during undergraduate years.
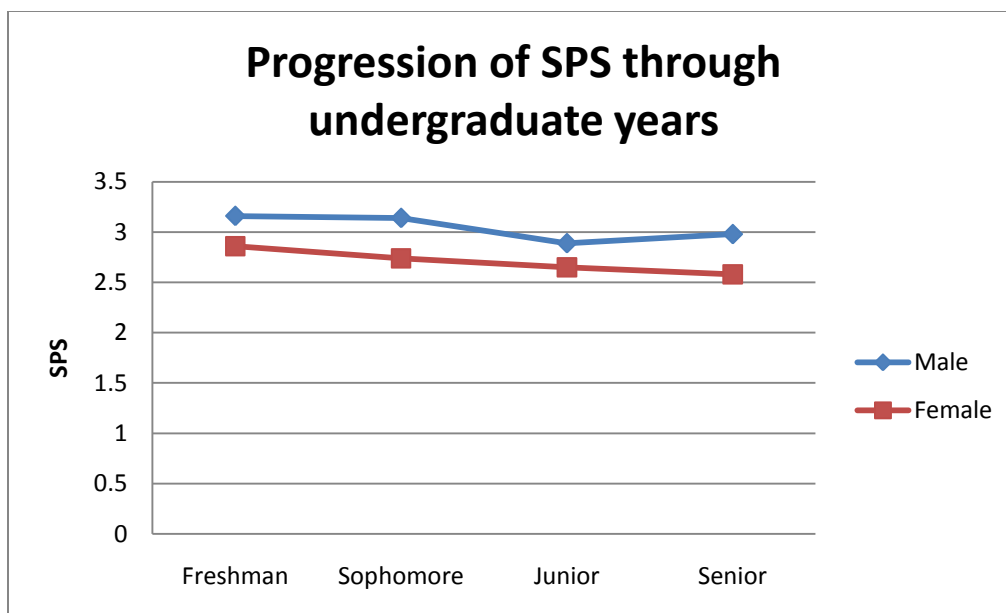
Figure 20. Progression of SPS through Undergraduate Years.
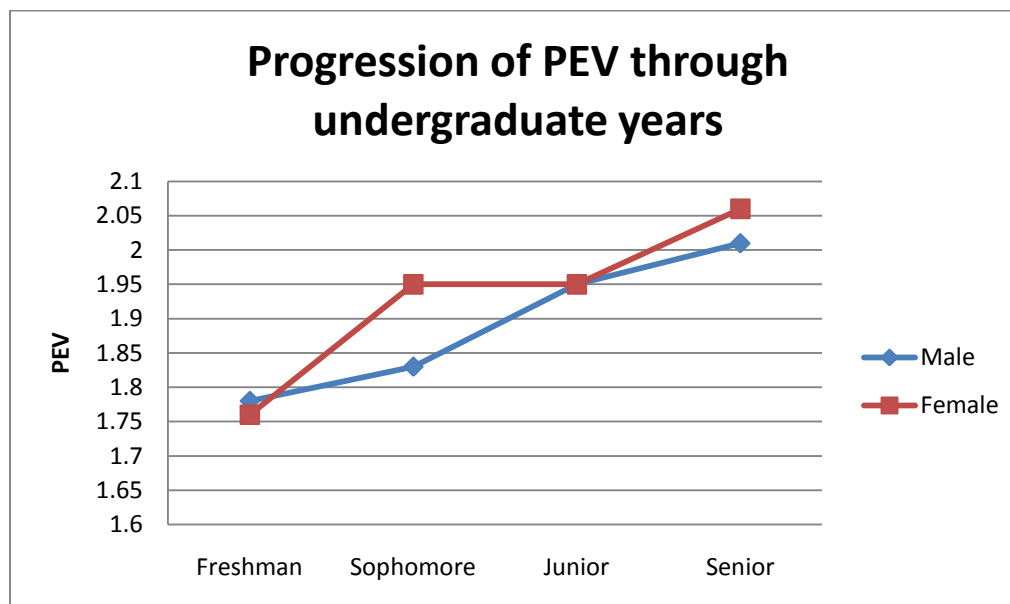
Figure 21. Progression of PEV through Undergraduate Years.

The progression of PEV for female students between freshman and sophomore years reflects early assumptions that students" naivety during their first year of study makes them more vulnerable to violence (Figure 21).

Ethnicity was the same with significant differences found only for white and Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander students (f= 5.757, p< .05) for SPS but no differences for PEV.

Essentially, while there were predictable differences in safety self-perceptions by gender, age, and ethnicity categories, there were few differences in personal experience with violence between demographic categories. This is somewhat surprising in that the Tjaden and Thoennes (2000) indicated that women, minorities, and homosexuals were substantially more likely to be the victim of violent crimes. Nothing from this study suggests that demographic factors have a large role in how safe a student feels on campus other than male students feeling slightly safer than females. White students also felt somewhat safer than minorities. Ultimately, as with the other research questions, the largest factor in SPS and PEV was the university itself. The reason for this remains unclear, but it does appear once again that university culture may be responsible for how safe students actually are as well as how safe they perceive themselves to be.

How Do Students" Self-Perceptions of Safety on Campus Compare with The Official Crime Statistics for Their Campuses and Surrounding Communities?

This question was addressed heavily earlier as a justification for the study. There was no prior research found on the subject. As previously stated, there was a notable positive correlation (r= .323, p <. 001, r^2 0.10) between a university"s reported crime rate and how safe a student feels on campus. FBI crime statistics were analyzed for the surrounding communities and found no relationship between community crime rate and

student safety. Most universities had lower crime rates then the surrounding communities with two exceptions for universities in small towns that had higher rates (St. Lawrence and Southwestern) compared to their surrounding communities. Despite this, students at the University of Washington (Seattle) and Texas Christian University (Fort Worth) both indicated on multiple occasions in their comments that they felt their universities were located in unsafe neighborhoods (Appendix C).

It does appear interesting that the positive correlation exists. There are a few possibilities for why this might be however. 24 percent of universities reported no violent crimes at all in 2008. The remaining universities seem to report violent crime rates corresponding to their peer institutions with larger universities reporting small crime rates and smaller, Liberal Arts universities reporting higher violent crime rates. Despite these rates, students typically reported feeling safer on these smaller campuses, largely due to the perceptions of safety at these smaller campuses where someone unusual would be more likely to stand out.

<div align="center">Limitations of the Study</div>

As was noted in Chapter 4, the response rate for this study was quite limited at 12.68%. Some universities responded better than others, but the highest rate achieved was 18.85% at Texas State University. Given the power analysis of 100 respondents needed, and the strong statistical significance found in many tests, I believe that the results I got are reflective of the mainstream/ traditional student population across university types and demographics. I do not believe that the results of the study would be entirely reproducible, but I do believe that the major findings would be consistent if the

survey was conducted at additional universities. The core findings are consistent across all universities.

It is also important to reiterate here that this project was intended as an exploratory study. Over the course of the last 50 years, a quick key word search revealed over 10,000 academic studies have been conducted on the subject of university campus violence. Despite this, no literature has found any evidence of significant reductions in campus violence levels during this time period. The nature of the violence has changed as the cultural norms of the country have changed. Media exposure and communication about violence have had some effects on how students perceive their safety levels as well. The intent of this study was to determine where future research in this field should go. The next sections will address the conclusions I have reached in regards to that.

Summary

Ultimately, I believe that study leads us into the most important points of discovery from this study.

1. Physical safety (lighting, policing, size of campus and isolation from urban areas) appear to be the largest influences in how safe a student feels on campus.

2. Students generally feel safe on campus and rely heavily on and trust universities to provide them with the information they need to feel safe on campus.

3. Students do gain more experience with violence during their undergraduate experience. As they gain this experience, their perception of safety and faith in their university to keep them safe drops accordingly.

4. Internal and external communication is an essential part of how safe a student feels on campus. Reports in the news media and excessive warning e-mails from the university contribute to lesser feeling of safety on campus.

5. The campus safety culture appears to actually be the most important factor in how safe a student feels on campus. Safety self-perceptions vary very little between demographics (except for age) but vary widely between universities.

6. Actual violence levels appear to be random between campuses but published statistics are highly misleading on the subject. Official statistics do not appear to be representative of actual violence or self-perceptions of safety rates and appear to be created purely to match those of their peer institutions, especially with the larger institutions.

<div align="center">Implications</div>

There are five primary implications of this study that impact theory and practice in higher education and campus safety.

Primarily, the value of this project is that it produced a new instrument that measures student self-perception of safety and their personal exposure to violence on campus. There were no other instruments discovered in the literature which provides this. The existing instrument would however need to be modified to only include the items that scored above .450 in the factor analysis as outlined in Chapter 4. The personal exposure to violence items would also need to be reworded to determine which exposure to violence occurred on the campus being studied as opposed to other campuses the student may have attended.

The theoretical value of this project is that I believe it does alter the literature on student beliefs in violence myths. I would suggest that this study needs to be replicated more to verify this, but it does appear that students have become much more aware of their personal safety and are far less likely to blame the victim of violent crimes then prior studies would indicate. I would hope that this is a sign that student perceptions and awareness has recently begun changing.

The third impact of this study is that it reinforces what mass communication theorists had been warning of regarding the power of maintaining control over the university's public image and internal communications. I believe this raises the greatest ethical dilemma in this study. If more control is exercised over the release of information regarding violent crimes on campus, then students will be less aware of the dangers they face. Conversely, too much communication about violence is apparently making some students (and faculty) hyper vigilant and scared when they do not necessarily need to be. This is an ethical issue that I believe university planners need to begin discussing.

The fourth implication that I believe warrants further study is the idea of why there is a positive correlation between violent crime rates and self-perceptions of safety. This correlation does not appear to follow common sense, and while I have offered some potential explanations, I believe that this is an area that deserves further investigation to determine why such a significant relationship exists between these two variables.

The final major implication of this research is that it does illustrate the need to replicate this study in order to determine if it is generalizable. The conclusions drawn in this chapter offer up some powerful suggestions regarding what might be going on in terms of violent crime perceptions on campus. Unfortunately, due to the small sample

size for both students and number of universities, it is impossible to determine at this stage if these findings are representative of just these eight universities or whether or not these universities are truly representative of universities nationwide.

Areas of Further Research

As an exploratory research project, one of the primary goals of this project was to determine which direction future research in campus violence should go. Secondly, the goal was to see if the right questions are being asked in this field. As the bulk of the findings from this study indicate that the individual university is the largest factor in safety, I believe that future research should focus on this problem. It would be interesting to see if the data on Liberal Arts institutions versus large research universities would hold up under a larger study. If more universities were studied, it might be possible to find patterns between universities that were not apparent from the eight studied here. There is a disparity in safety scores amongst universities that need to be addressed.

The second area of future research that I believe needs to be explored is in how universities educate students about safety, especially upon entry to the university before freshman year. As a student progresses through their undergraduate career, their Personal Exposure to Violence Score increases steadily. Upon advancing to graduate school however, this number decreases. There are two possible reasons for this. One is that students in graduate school have forgotten about the violence experienced as undergraduates. The most likely reason though is that those who were exposed to violence as undergraduates are less likely to continue on to graduate school due to those bad experiences. A review of admissions data for the University of Texas indicates that roughly 70 percent of freshmen are females. By graduation, this number has dropped to

50 percent. (Large universities have had to start admitting 70 women for every 30 men in order to ensure 50/50 graduation rates). Women are clearly leaving college at substantially higher rates than men. By the time students reach the doctoral levels, the numbers are closer to 70 percent male, indicating that this dismal retention of female students in academia continues on all the way from freshman to doctoral levels. Why are so many female students leaving school before their male counterparts? There are likely many reasons, but I suspect that negative experiences with violence at the university is an important factor in this. This also highlights the importance of further research in this field. We simply should not be losing students due to something as preventable and needless as violence.

APPENDIX A

COPY OF SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Hidden Question - Holds Respondent ID Number (0 - 50000)

Greetings!

This survey is an exploratory study to help us better understand how safe students feel on university campuses and what factors are influencing those feelings. We are particularly interested in how students feel regarding the threat of physical violence on their campuses and in the communities surrounding these campuses.

The results of this study will be used to guide university planners in learning how to improve safety awareness programs.

Participation is entirely voluntary and all information gathered is confidential. No personally identifiable information will be kept on participants other than voluntary demographic statistics. Students were selected at random from a cross-section of universities throughout the nation. If you choose to participate, you are free to quit the survey at any time.

If you wish to participate, please click on the "continue" button below.

Thank you for your time and I apologize for any inconvenience.

Michael Hollis, PhD student in Education,
Texas State University, mh1275@txstate.edu

Dr. Robert F. Reardon, Supervising Assistant Professor,
Texas State University, rreardon@txstate.edu

TXST IRB Exemption No. EXP2009P2170

Page 2 of 5

The questions on this page are designed to determine your level of comfort with the safety level on campus and in the surrounding communities.

Please choose the answer that best reflects your opinion of each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel safe when I am on campus				
I feel safe when I am in the community around my campus				
My university is located in a safe neighborhood				
I avoid walking in specific areas of campus or the surrounding neighborhoods at night				
Our campus or community police officers are easily and comfortably approachable				
I feel safe in my home (on or off campus residence)				
The safety level of my campus is similar to that of our peer institutions				
I feel safe walking alone on campus after dark				
I carry something for personal defense (pepper spray, keys held in a defensive manner, stun gun, knife, firearm etc...)				
I have felt physically threatened or endangered by someone from my university				
I believe that appropriate action would be taken if I reported a violent crime to university police or authorities				

I lock my doors when I am
alone at home

The questions on this page are designed to test commonly held beliefs that are often
reported in studies of this nature. Some of the questions may be difficult to answer or
seem confusing. Please just provide us with your best estimation of how you feel about
each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
We do not have a violence problem at our university				
Anyone could potentially become the victim of a violent crime				
I could potentially become the victim of a violent crime				
A campus shooting could never occur here				
Some acts of violence are justifiable				
I do not believe that any of my friends are capable of hurting or assaulting someone				
It is not my responsibility to report it if I witness a violent act				
If a person is assaulted while they are intoxicated, they are at least partially responsible				
The news media tends to exaggerate the levels of violence on campus				
Many cases of sexual assault are over-reported or exaggerated				
I do not know anyone who has been the victim of a violent act at this university				
Most sexual assault victims				

were engaged in risky or questionable behavior when they were attacked

I would feel comfortable counseling a friend or fellow student on what they could do if they were a victim of a violent crime

Minor assaults, fights, and alcohol offenses should be handled privately by the university rather than through the legal system

Minor crimes often lead to escalating violent behavior

LI

Page 4 of 5

The questions on this page are intended to solicit information on what the major learning influences are in your life, especially in regards to determining your viewpoints on campus safety.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Conversations with friends and family have heavily influenced my beliefs regarding my personal safety				
The information my university has provided me with has helped me better understand safety issues on campus				
Outside information sources (such as the media) have heavily influenced my decisions regarding my safety beliefs and practices				
Personal life experience has substantially impacted the way that I behave in regards to protecting myself from violence				
I have had personal				

experience with violence
during my time as a
university student

I have known someone who
has been the victim of a
violent act during their
university years

I have never heard of any
violence here

There have been reports in
the news media of violence
at our university

I have spoken with friends
and/ or family about safety
concerns

I have known someone who
has used violence against
others during their university
years

My beliefs regarding
violence have changed since
I began my university
studies

Page

YearOfStudy
Page 5 of 5

This final page of questions will help us determine how demographics are effecting the results of our study. These are the final questions being asked in the study. They are voluntary but will be very helpful. Thank you for your assistance with our research.

Please choose which level of schooling you are in.
 Freshman
 Sophomore
 Junior
 Senior
 Master's Student
 Doctoral Student
 Other Graduate Student
 Non-degree Seeking Student
 Other
 No Answer

Age

Please indicate your age.
(0 - 125)
Gender
Please indicate your gender.
 Female
 Male
 Transgender or Other
 No Answer

Sexuality
We recognize that sexuality is a highly sensitive question but it is has also proven highly relevant in studies of this nature. As are all the questions here it is entirely voluntary but a response would be very helpful.

Please indicate your sexual orientation.
 Heterosexual (Straight)
 Homosexual (Gay or Lesbian)
 Bi-Sexual
 Other
 No Answer

Ethnicity
Ethnicity categories are largely chosen from the current U.S. census categories. We recognize that the categories are rather limiting, but they are the most universally accepted ones at the moment. You can check more than one response.
 White
 Hispanic or Latino
 Black or of African Descent
 American Indian, First Nations Member, or Alaskan Native
 Asian
 Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
 Multi-racial
 International (non-U.S. student)
 Other race not included here
 No Answer

EmploymentCampus
Are you employed on campus or by the university?
 Not employed on campus
 Student Worker (service industry, office, clerical, or administrative fields)
 Undergraduate Research Assistant or equivalent position
 Resident Assistant (dormitory or student apartment employee)
 Graduate Teaching or Research Assistant or equivalent position
 Employed in category not listed
 No Answer

Veteran
Are you a military veteran or currently in the military? (choose all that apply).
 No military service
 Veteran (any prior military service)
 Current military (including military/ ROTC cadets)
 No Answer

UniHousing
Do you reside on campus or in university-run housing?
 No, I don't live in university housing
 Yes, I live in on-campus university housing
 Yes, I live in off-campus univerisity housing
 No Answer

MainCampus
Do you attend the majority of your classes on the main campus (if your university has multiple campuses)?
 Yes
 No
 No Answer

Criminology
Are you a criminal justice, criminology, or administration of justice student or have an employment background in law enforcement?
 Yes
 No
 No Answer

OpenEnded
Finally, if there is anything that you feel we should have asked but didn't, or have anything else to add that might help us with our research, please feel free to say it here.

APPENDIX B

COPY OF EMAILS

Copy of First Email Sent to Participants

As part of a larger project to improve campus safety and reduce violent crime we are conducting a brief survey of students to determine the full extent of how safe students feel on campus. We are also soliciting information about how safety issues are impacting students" lives and the best means of communicating with students about these issues.

We are particularly interested in better understanding how students" views of the safety levels of their campuses compare with those of university administrators. The results of this study will be used to guide university planners in improving the design of safety awareness programs.

The link below will take you to the survey. It should only take a few minutes to complete and all information is confidential. No personally identifiable information will be kept and participation is entirely voluntary.

http://survey.education.txstate.edu/mrIWeb/mrIWeb.dll?I.Project=CAMPUSSAFETYSURV&I.user1=

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Michael Hollis, PhD student in Education, Texas State University
Dr. Robert Reardon, Assistant Professor, College of Education, Texas State University

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Copy of Second Email Sent to Participants

This is a follow up to an earlier e-mail regarding our survey. Thank you if you have already responded, but if not, we would really appreciate it if you could assist us with completing this research.

As part of a larger project to improve campus safety and reduce violent crime we are conducting a brief survey of students to determine the full extent of how safe students feel on campus. We are also soliciting information about how safety issues are impacting students" lives and the best means of communicating with students about these issues.

We are particularly interested in better understanding how students" views of the safety levels of their campuses compare with those of university administrators. The results of this study will be used to guide university planners in improving the design of safety awareness programs.

The link below will take you to the survey. It should only take a few minutes to complete and all information is confidential. No personally identifiable information will be kept and participation is entirely voluntary.

http://survey.education.txstate.edu/mrIWeb/mrIWeb.dll?I.Project=CAMPUSSAFETYSURV&I.user1=

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Michael Hollis, PhD student in Education, Texas State University
Dr. Robert Reardon, Assistant Professor, College of Education, Texas State University

Copy of Final Email Sent to Participants

Final opportunity to participate in campus safety survey.

Thank you if you have already responded, but if not, we would really appreciate it if you could assist us with completing this research.

As part of a larger project to improve campus safety and reduce violent crime we are conducting a brief survey of students to determine the full extent of how safe students feel on campus. We are also soliciting information about how safety issues are impacting students" lives and the best means of communicating with students about these issues.

We are particularly interested in better understanding how students" views of the safety levels of their campuses compare with those of university administrators. The results of this study will be used to guide university planners in improving the design of safety awareness programs.

The link below will take you to the survey. It should only take a few minutes to complete and all information is confidential. No personally identifiable information will be kept and participation is entirely voluntary.

http://survey.education.txstate.edu/mrIWeb/mrIWeb.dll?I.Project=CAMPUSSAFETYSURV&I.user1=

Thank you for your time and assistance.

Michael Hollis, PhD student in Education, Texas State University
Dr. Robert Reardon, Assistant Professor, College of Education, Texas State University

FEEBACK FROM RESPONDENTS

The final item on the survey instrument was an open-ended question soliciting

feedback from participants on anything they felt that we should have asked but did not.

This question was intended to find hidden safety issues that we had not considered. Due

to the wording however, it would appear that many respondents took that to mean, "how

could we improve the mechanics of the survey"? Regardless, there were some useful tips

received during this process. In the interest of fairness, I will present all responses here

(All responses are posted without editing and categorized by most common themes):

Physical Security and Policing Concerns

I go to a small, private liberal arts school. I think that this close community greatly
increases safety because it is difficult for a student to not be known.

drunk rednecks and bro dudes high on their machismo get drunk and call you "faggot".
You can either walk or away or tell them to shut up. if you tell them to shut up they'll try
and fight you. it sucks, but it's easy enough to just walk away. idiots. and this is just man
on man violence. I feel terrible for what women have to worry about.

Drunken violence and rage have occurred more so than not - especially among boys.

We need more lights on campus. Maybe some safe phones throughout campus with the
blue lights on top where if there was an emergency it would call 911 immediately....

security is more worried about underage drinking than violent crime. they are retarded.

The police were extremely unhelpful and rude when my sister was physically assaulted.
They refused to help and even said that if she pursued pressing charges, that they would
charge her with disturbing the peace (because she yelled when she was hit). I believe this

is the biggest problem at our university--the local police are power-hungry, rude, uncaring, and overall unsympathetic to all people under the age of 35.

I can't believe whoever put together this safety didn't ask ONE fucking question about pedestrian safety, arguably our most prominent safety issue. We have major roadways that run through campus where rolling stops and vehicle right-of-way is the norm; despite crosswalk signage or STATE LAW. The mindset of drivers is that pedestrians should watch for them. This is the prevailing mindset because they are commanding a ton of rumbling steel versus the pedestrian. Sorry, motorist-centric mindset wins every time. Many areas adjacent to campus have NO sidewalks and are poorly lit. This survey was obviously conducted by people who have some knowledge of safety issues, little knowledge of TX ST's safety issues and absolutely no knowledge of pedestrian issues.

I would feel SO much safer if the campus was better lit at night. I regularly have to walk past the prayer garden at night and it is not lit at all. It's pitch black in there and the bushes make it a perfect location for trouble to get started.
This is not the only area on campus though. Our campus is generally just really dark at night. The other schools I visited when I was considering colleges all had excellent lighting and also installed telephone stations that you could press a button to talk with security. Security was also more present on campus. I think NNU is not taking student's safety seriously enough and I think that if changes are not made there will be serious consequences in the future.

Cops should probably patrol the area at TWU when it's dark or at night, that's the time most criminal behavior arises.
More lighting around campus. I hate that the campus is always so dark, especially in areas that have a lot of trees around them. It can be scary.

You did not include questions that target a large segment of the student population - commuter students. A significant population of both undergrad & grad students commute to the main campus, not "other" campuses. I finisged my udergrad ,taking classes during the day/evening. Many of my gras classes were eveinign classes, but increasing less time is required to be on campus as a commuter grad student, especially for those employed full time.

Missed Questions:
1. Do you feel your University should do more to increase security on Campus?
2. Does your University have Emergency/panic stations setup frequently through out campus?
3. Does your University have security cameras frequently/strategically across campus?
4. Does your University display signs warning of surveillance at entry of campus, like "Smile your on camera"?
5. Do you feel the Police should do more to increase security on off campus?
General Comments:
I am not from the NW. In the NW gun rights are strong and public/political will is week.

The police are limited with what they are allowed to do legally. University security has been cut due to economic issues.
Remote camera and emergency stations would assist in cutting down on staffing costs and still provide security.

My campus is generally safe, but it is in a neighborhood that has a high-crime rate. There are many homeless people and drug dealers that the cops don't even bother. I don't feel safe walking around in the day and at night it is much worse, and I am very big and strong. You have to worry about being robbed at gunpoint by people who prey on college students.

Do you know where the emergency phones are around campus?
Do you think the campus police could handle/respond to a violent act when it is happening?

 A map of the campus area asking which areas students feel are less than safe/hang outs for shady characters ... like the far north end of the ave, or the rite aid bus stop
How much of the crime in campus area is caused by non students?

The campus does not have adequate lighting at night. I feel this needs to be addressed. There is also a big difference in asking if one feels comfortable on campus in general versus during the day or at night. It would be helpful to have two different questions instead of a blanket statement "I feel safe on campus" to agree or disagree with.
I would also appreciate seeing the police officers out more at night. I always feel safer when I see that they are around and not just at the station.

My personal experience is that the university police do not follow up on violence complaints.

Additional questions would be:
Whether we feel that the UW and Seattle police have done everything they can to prevent assaults and robberies from happening.
Whether we feel safe with the amount of UW and Seattle police on duty.

TCU desperately needs to put more lights around campus. When I walk at night, I can hardly see parts of the sidewalks because half of the lights bulbs are blown out or there is not sufficient light. Additionally, I do not feel like there is a clear divider of campus and the surrounding area. I am afraid that the wrong people are just easily able to walk onto campus.

There needs to be more lights around campus. I really do not feel safe walking around campus. There also needs to be more police in general to patrol the campus. Also the Froggy 5-0 system needs some modifications, such as the people driving the cart need to have the cell phone number of the person who they are picking up so they can let them know when they are there. Many a times froggy 5-0 does not come on time and leaves the

student stranded in dark! There needs to be more of the posts that have the emergency button on them!

More blue police liGhts

I don't think this can be fixed but harassment by people driving by as I walk to class has been my only discomfort. During the morning and afternoon I've had people yelling things to me and about me from their cars and it makes me anxious and nervous to walk on certain sides of campus.

I think it would be helpful to know where all the emergency sites are located on campus. I also would like to see security outside at night. I never see them when I'm on campus at night.

The number of drunk, belligerent students (especially men) that roam the campus on weekends often makes me feel unsafe.

IMPROVE THE SAFETY ON CAMPUS! There have been far too many rape and gun shooting cases here in San Marcos. When I saw Quita Culpepper come up her after that last girl supposedly got raped, that's when I knew things were getting out of hand. There just needs to be more cop presence or something, especially over there by the rec and on the way to Harris next to Blanco. Walking over there at night is a scary thing.

I feel extremely unsafe walking home after my night class ends at 9:30. It's worse on the weekends (nights). I never walk anywhere (if I can avoid it) and if I'm staying in that night, my apartment is always locked.

How to improve safety on campus: better lighting in general and more blue lights with emergency call buttons.

You try asking about protection during the evening classes. I believe I have only seen one officer patrolling in my 2 years of study at TWU. Since the majority of students at TWU are women, I believe that we are especially vulnerable and at risk for possible attacks during the evening classes with no obvious sign of campus police.

I realize that the university has budget issues, but the night ride should run when it's dark, not just after 8pm. Also, weekends and holidays (such as Veteran's Day) when a lot of people are still on campus studying, etc.

I feel that Ave, 15th, and other local area security is very weak. UPenn has a very good program of posting security/walk home people at street corners around campus. It is a deterrent and provides a more accessible walk home program

I think information about safe walks and safe rides should be more available, and the rides and walks themselves should be in higher available numbers.

there should be more bobcat bobbies so they can respond faster, its creepy standing alone in the dark for 10 minutes.

I am vision impaired and due to my limited vision, it would be much easier if the bobcate shuttle could pik me and oter students (especially students who are disbleed) at Commons, which is across the street from Flowers hall. I have almost gottne run over by the students on their bycicles. I have a special request for tomorrow evening. I've a final exam at 5:00 PM, and will have to walk across camputs to catch the Bobcat Shuttle bus North to Austin, and I do not feel safe walking across this campus after dark. I wanted to know if the Bobcat Bobbies could assist me in one of their vans, carts, whatever, to get me to the LBJ Student Center to catch my bus back to Austin. More transportation and assessability needs to be provided for all disable students on this campus.

Colleges should not put their freshmen dorms in the inner city areas.

I almost always feel safe on campus, even if I'm walking alone at one AM. I feel like since this is my campus, my home, it is inherently a safe place for me to be. I think that if I was ever attacked, I would be able to effectively fight my attacker off and escape unharmed.

Please add more street lights around campus. There are very few on campus and the few that are there turn on and off.

I think questions such as monitoring around campus. Sufficient use of cameras outside the buildings?
Also, I don't see enough Police campus around and if they have a nice attitude torwards the students. Are the police campus approachable people? Classrooms safety? The instalations of the building are they safe? (for example, I think the locker rooms are not the safest place on campus. Anyone who is not mentally ok can observe when there is not much movement around and enter when a girl is alone. Use of hallway cameras? I also don't think teachers and students are really paying attention that certain discrimination issues could trigger someone to become violent torwards others.

The problems on campus with crimes are primaily at night and the general consensus on students i know is that the situation will not be remidied by the UW police. The increase in repoting of violent crimes has students on edge and it effect our desicions to stay late and study or attend lectures that might put us in a compromising position.

I feel safe on campus, but not so much on the ped mall or in the core downtown area at night. I try to avoid it by walking on streets nearby with fewer drunk people that might harass me. I carry a whistle from RVAP and applaud their efforts in equipping and educating women about how to protect themselves and get help.

Should ask whether the test-taker walks, drives, uses the bus etc. during questionable hours. I walk most places but I do have my car on campus (I use it sparingly since gas is pricey).. So if i'm going to stay at the library late, I will drive there/home to be safe.

I love the poles located around campus that you can run to and press an emergency button in case of emergency. It really makes me feel like I can walk anywhere on campus and that if there is an emergency I do not have far to go. They are located strategically across campus.

I think it would have been relevant to ask if I am familiar with the location of the emergency phones located around the campus.

Needs to be more lighting and patrol on surrounding grounds

You could probably ask about how campus lighting impacts a person's perceptions of safety. I think our campus is over-lit at night, but I have not been involved in any violence on or off campus at night.

I wish you would address the campus police to be monitoring vehicles which don't have a TCU parking sticker on campus. That means they do not have a reason to be there and action should be to approach and find out why they are there. It is an active proventitive way to see who is stalking students. All offenders should be charged formally through government law enforcement if they are involved in any violent activity. There are no fences and limiting barricades to anyone wandering on campus. The parking lot by Brite Divinity School has no protection and very little light. Lighting is the first measure to take against crime in all cases whether it be burglary or viiolent acts. Please use more lighting.

I like the panic button that has been put up in front of Sterry hall. I'd like to see more in place around campus. Also, it would be nice to have more visible patrolling officers at night. The scariest place to be on campus is in the parking garages, I'd like to see those have more panic buttones, be better lit, better patrolled and better monitored.

Parking Lot safety- bus routes late at night leave people alone at bus- stops and members of the community wander in the university parking lots waiting for students after hours to take advantage of them (cash, gas, a ride).

I think that there needs to be more lights in some areas of Campus. And when you attend night class as alot of people do, it's hard to find parking without the danger of getting a ticket that is in safe waking distance at night. Maybe more access to red spaces would be better, classes start at 5, and its not dark then but at 8 when you get out it is dark. and in the fall it's really dark.

Are ALL campus parking lot security lights working?

I think an important issue is how safe are the parking garages at night. I feel that they are not safe. Specifically, the Alkek parking garage could be better lit. I do not feel safe walking to my car after a long night of studying.

University and Seattle police should coordinate better with businesses in the University District to community police and crack down on drug dealing and violence. Developers and/or slum landlords should not be able to rent out property that is projected to be demolished for a new development. It inherently becomes run-down and often encourages crime because of landlord neglect.

I have often wondered how the emergency stations that I see throughout the campus would be effective at all in an emergency where you were being assaulted. If someone was chasing you or physically assaulting you, they could get you before you ever got to an emergency station. Also, if you are being chased, or threatened, there isn't any protection, so you would just have to push the button and wait. Having those all over campus doesn't really make it feel a whole lot safer.

The Nightride service has been an extreme disappointment after they left a friend of mine completely alone, late at night, at a shuttle stop, completely defeating the purpose of the "safe" transportation option. Since then I would rather walk alone (although this still makes me nervous), as I would rather not be a sitting duck for criminals.

The number of parking spaces is inadequate compared to the number of parking stickers sold. Although I have paid to park in the lots, I am unable to do so every time. This forces me to park in a remote parking area in a surrounding neighborhood that I am unfamiliar with. This is unexceptable and gives the preception that money first, safety last. More safe parking structures need to be created and police patroled.

I believe that armed robbery is the biggest problem in and around campus, but most robberies are committed by non-students, who live near the University.

Recently there has locally (Seattle and surrounding areas) been policemen (and women) murdered (five in the last month). It would seem every last resource has been used to aprehend the killers, at the expense of fighting all other crime. It would also seem that almost nightly there is a robbery within a block or two of campus (areas still patroled by campus police), and it is rare that anyone is ever caught, let alone convicted. These robberies are almost always at gunpoint or knifepoint, yet there is never a police presence to combat criminal activity near UW. If a cop's wife were robbed, I'd bet my life they'd catch the suspect within hours. This is ridiculous. We don't pay them to be subjective and bias towards crimes against their families. If that were the case, they can pay their own damn wages.

I feel safe walking around my campus at night being a girl...I think all of the lighting helps me feel safer.

The TCU police have always been helpful and willing to do most anything to make you feel safe. I've reported suspicious cars to them before and the response was incredible. I know I can count on them.

Things such as sexual assaults which occur on campus are definitely not overly talked about...if anything, we don't really hear enough about them! Also, the security team is very unapproachable and that could make things difficult if someone did need help at some point!!!!

I personally think our campus is pretty safe, but I do think there aren't enough security/emergency things (the blue ones) around our campus. Compared to other universities in out country, we're one of the universities that has a fairly good amount, but there can always be more for student safety!

i feel extremely unsafe in the area surrounding campus, i would hope that seattle or university police would patrol the greek system more regularly!

I feel that much of the trouble/concerns regarding safety around UW campus comes from the lower section(s) located near the school. That is to say, the areas known as the "Ave" along 45th Street are usual hot-spots for most attention and gossip. Also, I feel that women are more concerned about this than their male counterparts are, but usually take this in stride as a norm for daily activity at the UW. A separate action/plan or anything of the like should be made to get their views heard, as I have heard personally from my female friends that they hate walking alone at night while at the University, and wished that they'd had a (male) friend accompany them. None of my male peers have said this.

how safe do you feel the university parking garages are ex pleasant street .do you feel there is sufficient lighting in those places?
should campus police be more visible at night

I kept expecting to see a question about lighting on campus. The areas which I avoid on campus are the areas with anything below excellent lighting. It could be a useful measure regarding the risk the certain individual is willing to take as lighting tends to be a generally accepted safety factor.

I do not feel safe at night because there is not enough lighthening, especially in the quad area and the surrounding areas of the library. I know it may be expensive to increase lightening, but I do think that there should be more police officials around these areas, or volunteer students that take students from one side of campus to the other side of campus when it starts getting dark. If students see there is more police officils or staff they feel safer.

I would like more security in the parking garages.

I find the campus police non-visible. It would benefit the students if they would get off their butts, out of the building and out of their cars and walk around campus. Maybe this would help the students feel a little safer.

I can not remember ever seeing a security person on campus up until after the reported sexual assult at the Pleasant street garage a few months ago. Since then I think I have

seen a security person once possibly twice. I'm not saying that we should have guards posted around campus but I guess I wonder if there should be more obvious patrols. And lighting and cameras in the parking garages should definately be improved, its ridiculous how dark it is in the garage.

I feel that there should be better lighting in some of the surrounding streets on campus. Although I feel fine walking in them or feel that I could defend myself, others may not or feel threatened by a dark street

The place I feel the most unsafe is the laundry in the basement.

I feel that the lighting on the campus needs to be better. I believe the parking lots need to better lit and need more parking so students don't have a long walk to their classes.

I think that it would be very helpful if there was a campus security shift which posted security personnel in places which are frequently used after dark to offer the service of walking people who are alone to their car or to their dorm after dark. I was recently in the library until late on a Friday night and felt very nervous about walking from the library into the dark parking garage nearby.

I lived on campus for two years and really didn't feel safe walking alone at night. There's not enough lighting on campus and not enough security around places where it's needed. The only times i needed to be out at night was when i had to park REALLY far away from where i lived because there is NO parking where it's really needed OR i had to walk a far distance to get my meals. The layout of the campus needs to change as far as these two things go for it to really be safe at night because girls get raped and mugged and one time of it happening is enough to make us all feel unsafe.

The lack of appropriate lighting near parking is a safety concern. Especially when lamps are out, the lighting is not fixed immediately.

the parking lots at Bobcats stadium were not listed as night safety issues, they should be better patroled

Most criminal reports from the university are about the incidents happening in the west side of U District (Area surrounded by 15th Ave., 8th Ave., NE 45th Street, and Pacific Ave.) Given the density of UW students living in the neighborhood, off-campus security concerns should be taken seriously as well.

I have friends drive me to the E1 parking lot after dark because I am fearful of being attacked, as are they. Also, I have stopped bringing my laptop to school (even though I would like to bring it) and carrying valuable things such as my ipod, camera, etc. on days when I am on campus after dark.

Very concerned about lack of security lighting on campus. there are many areas of very low or no security lighting - raising the possibility of violence against students. As a

parent of teenage girls considering college, I would consider the lack of adequate security lighting a major factor in college selection. I am also very concerned that a university with over 90% female population would appear to be so insensitive to the need for adequate security lighting on campus.

I am legally blind. I use a lightweight white blind cane. I have always felt safe on campus and surrounding neighborhoods. My complaint is this; walking on campus at night is dangerous due to poor lighting. Sometimes I have to stay late and study at the Alkek Library. When I walk from the library to the parking lot across from Jones Dining Hall to be picked up by my daughter, the lighting is almost non-existent. I can't see the pathways at all. I am so afraid of falling. If an assailant wanted to rob,rape or do worse, I would not be able to identify them.I can't run for obvious reasons. What choices do I have? I did take the RAD seminar offered on camnpus which has given me some new ideas and skills on how to help protect myself but, I still need to be able to have a clearer view of my surroundings..

Communications and University Policy Issues

stop sending those reports for eveything that occurs. it scares the shit out of me.

I would feel safer if the automated phone calls about incidences didn't come two hours after the automated text message has already told me the coast is clear.

The absurdity of having non-legal drinking aged people within a bar fully knowing that they will be drinking while on the premises. 21 means 21--except in Iowa City. Lots of the issues with violence could be solved with a better alcohol policy!

I feel as if the school gets carried away with punishing minor disciplinary actions than taking care of the real problems. People with a bias on the case will NEVER take care of the problem correctly.

The University of Washington is very successful at informing us of safety dangers while keeping fear at bay. The UWPD is very good at sharing information and making me feel safe.

I am Afghan, first generation.
I think it's critical to distinguish between inter-student violence and outsider-student violence that typically occurs during robberies etc. This was not well reflected in the questions you chose, but it appeared at different points that you were referring to one or the other.
At the University of Washington, where I attend school, I do NOT feel threatened by other students at all, but I DO feel threatened by outsiders who may come onto campus or who we run into in the areas surrounding the campus where we live.
I do think our campus itself is actually very safe, even though it is open to all to enter, probably due to the quantity of people at all hours of the day and the University police (UWPD) presence. BUT, as soon as you walk off campus, you feel much less safe. Thanks!

I have lived in Ft.Worth all my life and I have heard of crimes but hardly ever at TCU. Within the time I have attended TCU I have recieved over 10 emails about some type of violent crime. I personally carey a knife for my protection but I would be affraid of letting my sister attend the University due to the crime rate. I believe one simple thing that could be done is at the police station have available mace or pepper spray for the female students.

University pd and student life do not seem to take threats from mentally ill students seriously citing protecting their rights as the reason. They also do not want outside agencies to be informed of problems on campus.

The only problem I have is that I don't believe the university or the community takes hate crimes seriously.

I feel like I shouldn't walk on the streets in the U-district to get to the bus that takes me home for fear that I would be assaulted and/or robbed. This should not be the case!! As a medical student, my computer and books are my life; without them, my studying cannot happen! I should not have to be fearful of this nor constantly wonder if I should get a concealed weapons permit in order to protect myself. Has the university contacted the city of Seattle to try and get help from other police forces to patrol the area?

Firearms/ Self-Defense Suggestions

Yes. Would you likely die if there were an active shooter on campus like Virginia Tech or Columbine? The only way to stop a bad guy with a firearm is for a good guy to have a firearm. The police are here to take pictures and file a report, they can not protect me 24/7.A female's best chance in a physical altercation with a male is with a firearm. Would you feel safer if allowed to carry a concealed firearm on campus?
A criminal does not obey law anyway, so banning firearms from campus only serves to make law abiding citizens helpless victims.

Gun laws by responsible citizens: should this be allowed on campus?   My answer is yes. No reason why those who abide by the law and have a State and F.B.I background check on them and a proper license for conceal and carry shouldn't be allowed at school. These same students - and myself - carry off campus and are never in trouble. Girls who are assaulted haven't been involved in "risky" business - the fact is, TCU has disarmed (and the school system as a whole) the student body, leaving it vulnerable to attack. TCU is responsible - as is Virginia Tech and Colorado state for the outcomes that have occurred, especially since the administration is the reason students aren't prepared for assault.

You didn't ask how we felt about using violence in self defense

Perhaps a question regarding self-defense; as a black belt in Taekwondo, I feel that everyone should have access to basic self-defense technique.

have you ever participated in a self defense course?
do you feel the self defense course offered by the university is enough to keep you safe?

I was surprised at the lack of questioning about our own history of participation in self-defense classes, as well as awareness of University-sponsored self-defense classes, etc. (in addition to carrying pepper spray/carrying keys in a defensive manner, etc. as was covered in the survey)

I used to work for a private investigator. Also, being one who is trained to handle firearms properly and to maintain control in high stress situations, I feel that allowing concealed carry liscense holders to carry on campus, especially at night would be highly beneficial. also, education on the legal means of becoming licensed would keep honest people honest and safer too.

I feel like we should be asked if a required self-defense course for both males and females would be helpful and I think it would.

perhaps a question on concealed weapons permits. I know that I have applied for one and its something others are thinking about

Education about self defense and how to survey one's surroundings for risk is very important. Unfortunately, this is not often provided by schools, public or private. Furthermore, when females seek self defense courses, they are often given less realistic scenarios or less rigorous physical activity because of their gender. Treating females as frail during self defense courses leads to unrealistic expectations of violent situations and one's own preparedness to handle a violent situation. Self defense courses should be realistic and challenging, otherwise they perpetuate rape culture and a culturally constructed gap between men and women.

Nothing was mentioned about self-defense/safety awareness classes. I took one such class at my university, and I found it extremely enlightening. I not only learned specific ways to defend myself, but I also learned to be a lot more alert to what happens around me.

Identifying Potential Flaws with Instrument

What the hell is with these questions? If you want to improve safety, surveys aren't going to do a damn thing, especially ones with questions that dodge around the cause of local violence. Look, you're not going to change peoples minds with a survey, all you can do is identify the problem and protect yourself against it with education and security, and both of those things are top notch at St. Lawrence.

you might consider dropping the sexuality question

I think this survey is poorly written...although I understand your concerns about our safety...there are certain things some of us don't have opinions on because we don't have experience with what you are asking about...this forces one to answer with a false

posibve or false negative when in reality we had no opinion. The results will be innacurately weighted. One of my objective concerns is enough lighting in certain areas on campus...like on the east side of PBB and north of that is very dark. I had a friend visitng and she thought the same thing. I would not want to attend classes at night there on a regular basis...and having evening exams...make me uncomfortable...I usually call my boyfriend and he "walks" me to my car (stays on the phone with me until I am in it and on my way to my apartment).

I feel like you could have benefited from a neutral choice. Things aren't so black and white as agree/disagree.
I Feel very safe on campus. I also think there should have been a "neutral" option on the survey, because for some questions I neither agreed or disagreed.

You did not ask if you have previously lived on campus. I lived in the dorms for 2 years and just moved off campus for the fall/spring semesters this year.

You need to rethink the wording for questions like "could this potentially happen here" because anything can potentially happen anywhere. Rather rewrite "rate the probability of this happening here".

I do not live in university housing now but have in the past

many of the questions asked about information that is not readily available and was highly subjective.

"If a person is assaulted while they are intoxicated, they are at least partially responsible" -- This question is too ambiguous. If an intoxicated person starts a fight then they are partially/fully responsible but if they are assaulted randomly while drinking (mugged by stranger in a previously safe area for example) they probably aren't at fault.

"I would feel comfortable counseling a friend or fellow student on what they could do if they were a victim of a violent crime" –- Split this question up. Friends aren"t necessarily fellow students and visa versa.
"Some acts of violence are justifiable" –- Are you talking about self defense here?
"Most sexual assault victims were engaged in risky or questionable behavior when they were attacked" –- Risky as in voluntarily dancing topless at a party? Risky as in walking to their car in a parking garage at night?

There was no neutral answer which is a real flaw. Some of the questions could and should not be answered with the four choices give as well.

I felt some questions were difficult to answer with agree/disagree. There were a few questions on the second page of the survey (third page on the site) that required a sometimes selection.

I think there should have been an option to check "I don't know" because there were some things I didn't agree or disagree.

Do you feel that your university does everything it could do to protect it's students? example: enough lighting at night, cameras, etc.
How likely am I to report a crime if it involves someone I know, if this person turns out to be the offender.

what has your university done to inform you of how to be safe in and around your surroundings.

add a "neutral" column

I use common sense when walking on campus. I don't walk where it is unlit or I feel unsafe. The question concerning this was difficult to answer.

interesting that you did not ask about women's studies impacts or whether being a a women's school/state school changes our feelings (like I felt safer at TCU than here or less safe than UNT?) AM

I am a distant learning doctorate program student at TCU. I did attend orientation and was on campus during orientation and felt perfectly safe while on campus.

I attend the Houston Campus.

I did live on main campus for 4 years, so the data on the last page (which is current) doesn't correlate directly with my responses, since I answered those questions as I would have last year, while still living on campus.

Your questions are too broad and leads me to question what the real purpose of this survey is.

Where's the button for "I don't know?"

I am married to a police officer.

Perhaps a question or two about theft may be relevant in a survey about campus safety.

Because of my age, the experiences which I reported in this study span a great number of years, not just the last few years. I have been a university student on and off for 40 years!

using the term "strongly"

Those being surveyed should have the option to not answer a question instead of answering yes or no, it might skew the data.

To elaborate on the question "My campus is comparably safe to other surrounding college campuses"-I answered "Disagree" because my campus is definitely the safest. It is a closed campus- and the other surrounding three colleges are only partially closed.

You really need a neutral button. There were questions asked that did not apply to me at all. By me putting either agree or disagree on these questions I am slightly skewing your results.

You should have asked if I felt safe in the day time compared to night when it's dark.

In as much as violence can potentially affect every one of us at any time, this survey should be heavily targeted to the evening students and especially students living on campus. Be that as it may every student (day or evening) as well as all professors should contribute to this survey. If this is not being done, I urge you to do so. If it is being done, my compliments.

I think asking about the students' perception of the Advocates program would be important in addressing questions of sexual violence, domestic violence stalking. As an Advocate, I am always trying to make the program better and it might be helpful to see how it is perceived in our campus community.

The question about violence in the news media, after 4 years of school, something is bound to be in the news media. The question made our campus sound bad but it seemed like a really vague question. One kid got in a fight at 1 in the morning a few months ago and was on the news.

Perhaps ask:
 whether or not the student regularly has a sober friend take them home.
 whether or not the student feels they place themselves into risky situations often.

In one question, it asked if I had even been a victim or known someone who was a victim as a university student. I have been a victim of assault while a student, but it was not at my university, and I do not want my answer to be misconstrued as the incident occuring at my school. I think it would be more beneficial to your research to allow for that clarification.

Victim-centered Responses

Criminals look for victims. I do not and never will put out the victim vibe, therefore I generally do not worry.

Crimes committed by athletes should not be handled "internally." The victim of rape should not be made to feel it is her (usually) fault!

TCU needs to take sexual assault cases more serious on campus.

I used to work for the University of Iowa Police Department.
I have been physically assaulted twice on campus, both assaults occurred at night while walking home. Once I was alone and once I was with friends. Both University Police and City Police were notified but neither Department ever contacted me regarding an investigation. Violence after dark on campus is the biggest problem the University faces and I don't feel that enough is being done to fix it.

I personally feel that the majority of assaults are, in part, the result of a lack of personal awareness of surroundings.

you asked "Minor assaults, fights, and alcohol offenses should be handled privately by the university rather than through the legal system" Not only do I disagree with this, but I think this is not the job of the university. I don't think safety is the responsibility of the university, but it is our (the students) responsibility and that of law enforcement officers. While safety is important, we shouldn't be coddled, we are adults.

I experienced some hazing while I was in the Military, and I feel much of the hazing strongly depends on the nature of the indivisual being hazed. The "they can sense fear" axiom relates to this concept. Show no fear and they will leave you alone. However, not everyone can expect to have this mindset all the time. So, in regards to hazing, there tends to be a "willingness" by the victum. I think empowering people by educating them through an acknowledgement of thier possible "willingness" to being hazed would greatly benfit in the prevention of these types of situations.

Our school is very safe and I have never had an encounter with anyone who has concerns about campus safety.

I feel that I am really the one who needs to be aware of my surroundings and not take chances by walking alone at night irregardless of whether or not I am on campus. This is a nation wide issue, not just the U of I. The world is a changing place and we all need to be mindful of our surroundings and be prepared to call for assistance if we or others are in danger.
It will not stop the violence, but if all people were to dress respecfully and act morally and responsibly, treating others as they wish to be treated, it would make a difference! Thank you for all of your efforts!

Are there outlets for helping a student who has been affected by violence? Does the campus security ensure safety? Not on my campus.

Unrelated and Other Responses

On the self-defense weapon topic, I carry a knife at all times, but it's not because I need it for self defense. It's because I live in Idaho, and knives are useful.

I go to a TWU and we have a 95% woman enrollment rate. There is very little (if any) violence on our campus and I think it's because of that. Are you studying who is

committing the violent offenses? Is it equally distributed between men and women or is it mostly men? Why do you think that is?

i think you have done a nice job of allerting people of sexual attacks on campus

Maybe ask about theft, as I think this is a more prominent issue on campus than violence.

Do you attend the majority of your classes on the main campus (if your university has multiple campuses)?
- I responded yes to this although my campus does not have multiple campuses, otherwise I don't see a proper response since I do have all classes on the main campus.

Which university do you attend?

You asked if we were ever a member of the military. You did not ask if participants were employed in law enforcement. Do you think that LE officers may have a much different view of the questions you asked than those who have not had the training, experiences, and observations that influence the opinions of LE officers?

Theft is an issue.

I feel like most violent acts/sexual violations occur on the weekends, especially nearby the bars on my campus.

I am the Director of the Student Safety team at my university. I work closely with the Security and Safety department at my school and therefore know more about the security on my campus than most.

southwestern is incredibly safe. i love it so much because of that.

The campus I attend is the Round Rock Higher Education Center. I consider it a very safe campus. Please keep it that way.

I took violence to also mean incidents of sexual assault, which there have been too many of on my campus in recent months.

I lived in on campus housing for three years.

I would just like to say school shootings COULD happen anywhere and when I look around our classrooms I realize no precautions have been taken for this situation. Even small details such as the doors don't close in a way where you could block your door. It's a scary thought, and these thoughts distract from learning. Also, as a woman, the sexual assault scare is there and I am afraid to study on campus at night and walk to the library and all that. I don't know how this safety could be improved, but there has to be a way. These are just my personal thoughts/observations but I know many others share my views and I am really happy this survey is going around.

snickerdoodle

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VITA

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