



— A BRIEF OVERVIEW —

THE CURRENT CONCEPT OF CAMPUS SECURITY

by Cassidy Clevenger

Campus security has been of increasing concern for students, their parents, and college officials over the past forty years. A turning point for campus security was when the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act of 1990 (now referred to as the Clery Act) was established. Professor John Sloan wrote in “The Correlations of Campus Crime: An Analysis of Reported Crimes on College and University Campuses” (1994), that the Clery Act was passed by congress due to the steady increase in on-campus crimes from 1985-1989.

The Clery Act included many components, but the one of topical pertinence is related to the updated stance on colleges' and universities' duty to report crimes. The Clery Act requires any college or university receiving federal financial aid to publish all of their on-campus crime statistics. Due to this new mandate, it *appears* as though crime rates at colleges and universities are increasing, but the validity of this perception needs to be examined closer.

Professors Charles Chekwa, Eugene Thomas, and Valerie James-Jones discuss this further in "What are College Students' Perceptions About Campus Safety" (2013). They explained there are reports of violent crimes happening on campuses dating back to the 1400s; however, according to their research, crime rates have increased on college campuses, especially gun violence and violence against women. Additionally, DeMatteo and colleagues (2015) stated that since the Clery Act, sexual assault reports on campuses have increased by 44%. Conversely, however, the Office for Victims of Crime found there has been a 75% decrease in student reported violent crimes from 1995 to 2017. While in the deep end of the research

pool, I found much of the information to be contradictory, or at the very least, there were discrepancies in exact statistics. One would assume, due to the Clery Act, numbers should be fairly consistent across references, but this is simply not the case in governmental and scholarly sources.

One reason for this irregularity could be as benign as differences in definitions; some sources may be looking at charges, while others are looking at convictions. Or, with any sample size, there could be unaccounted for variables among participants. However, one of the most salient distinctions is found in the trends related to the ways campuses were (and are) reporting cases to law enforcement. Since 2005, the Office for Victims of Crime has noted the number of reported crimes related to assault and robbery have remained at a fairly constant rate, but there has been a significant surge in sexual assault reports, jumping from 5,522 reported sexual assaults in 2005 to 17,441 reports in 2014.

It is speculated by the Office for Victims of Crime that sexual assault has not truly increased by over 60%; instead, students are

now more likely to report the crime. Professor David DeMatteo and colleagues noted in "Sexual Assault on College Campuses: A 50-State Survey of Criminal Sexual Assault Statutes and Their Relevance to Campus Sexual Assault" (2015), that the efforts campuses have put into promoting victim advocacy and protection should be applauded, but there is still a disconnect between institutional policies and state/federal legislations. They believe, due to the debate on who should handle on-campus sexual assault cases—the institution or off-campus law enforcement—many victims are hesitant to report the crime. DeMatteo and colleagues (2015) estimated up to 70% of female students do not officially report the crime to law enforcement.

The Current State of Campus Security

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the following are the rates of specific types of crimes committed in 2017 on private, not-for-profit, 4-year university and college campuses.

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The first number is the rate of crimes just at private institutions, and the second number is the rate of crimes at all U.S. colleges and universities.

Hate crimes: 477/1143 (42%)

Violent acts against women: 5,078/16,977 (30%)

Criminal offenses: 14,014/38,100 (37%)

These numbers may be shocking and, as mentioned earlier, are not as straightforward as they seem. The U.S. Department of Education does not specify what constitutes these crimes; in fact, the only information provided about the data is that it was collected via their Campus Safety and Security survey, and they relied on the honesty of the independent institutions. Kelly Arney elaborated in, “Perceptions, Lived-Experiences, and Environmental Factors Impacting the Crime Reporting Practices of Private College Students” (2019) how getting an accurate depiction of crime rates on campuses is difficult due to low reporting; one study found that 87% of students who witnessed breaches in safety did not report the behavior to law enforcement. Furthermore, reporting appears to have decreased over the past eleven years. This low rate of reporting dramatically hinders a college or university’s ability to address criminal activity on campus.

What Can Campuses Do to Feel and Be Safer?

Sloan (1994) explained why crimes may be occurring on campuses, and does so by taking a social and ecological approach. Without delving too deeply into the semantics of what constitutes “community,” Sloan explores how campuses have a geographical community and social community, but still the students may lack a feeling of true connectivity and kinship to their peers. This suggests that when students feel more connected and involved with their micro, meso, and macro social systems on campus, students will be less incentivized to commit crimes on campus.

Similarly, Professor Daniel Doss and colleagues noted in “Quantitatively Assessing Reported Crime Versus Enrollment Among Selected Higher Education Institutions” (2017) that it is the responsibility of higher education campuses to maintain security for their students and faculty. Doss and colleagues recommend implementing something akin to the emergency management cycle (EMC), which is used to identify potential dangers and issue warnings to those who may be on campus. A system that can provide safety information can promote both safety as well as a sense of security.

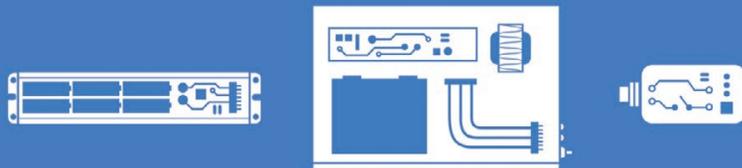
Katelyn Graham explained in “Accommodating Public Space to Uphold Rape Myths: The Dangers of Using Environmental Design



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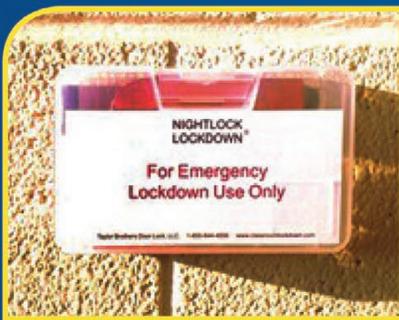
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[It is suggested] that when students feel more connected and involved with their micro, meso, and macro social systems on campus, students will be less incentivized to commit crimes on campus.

to Prevent Sexual Violence” (2017) how the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) model can help deter crime. The three legs of the model include natural surveillance, access control, and defensible space: *Natural surveillance* includes everything from adding lights, to limiting landscaping, to increasing foot traffic on campus; *access control* involves having designated entrances and exits, and closing certain spaces at certain times, such as at night; *defensible spaces* are the delineation between public and private spaces—these can be utilized via gates or fences. In Graham’s study, she found that female students felt safer and more empowered when CPTED designs were instituted on campuses.

Another option to increase campus security, as noted by John Hopkins’ executive director

of campus security, Edmund Skrodzki, is the use of security cameras. He has noticed a 43% decrease in on-campus crime since ascribing to this additional security measure. Research finds the locations that cameras may be especially impactful are the spaces where there is common nighttime foot traffic, such as paths leading to and from the library.

Closing Thoughts

When reviewing the research and going over this article, we may be tempted to be overwhelmed (or dismissive) of all the numbers. Most private institutions are places of breathtaking architecture, state-of-the-art technology, and a buzz of enriching student activity. It can be alarming to view these beautiful campuses as a potential breeding ground for crime, so

instead of confronting the issue, school officials may instead choose to focus their efforts and funding on landscaping or a new recreations center. The folly in this thought may come at a devastating price, however; each one of those numbers represent a student who was harmed or had something taken away from them.

There are inconsistencies in the statistics, so while they are important, they are imperfect. Yes, the Clery Act made great strides in promoting campus security, but some students still feel as though they cannot report crimes. With this knowledge, institutions must generate the type of environment that can protect its students and faculty, and be an advocate for those who may feel as though they cannot speak for themselves. Including architectural master plans that have security as the crux of their design will help minimize on-campus crime and promote a sense of empowerment for all campus residents and visitors.



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