93-1J-CX-0049

175504

THE ON-CAMPUS VICTIMIZATION PATTERNS OF STUDENTS:

IMPLICATIONS FOR CRIME PREVENTION BY STUDENTS

AND POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS*

Bonnie S. Fisher
Department of Political Science
University of Cincinnati

John J. Sloan III
Department of Justice Sciences
University of Alabama at Birmingham

Francis T. Cullen
Division of Criminal Justice
University of Cincinnati

Chunmeng Lu
Department of Political Science
University of Cincinnati

accepted in:

Crime Prevention: Where Have We Been & Which Way Should We Go? 1997.

Steven P Lab (editor)

Cincinnati: Anderson Publishing Co.

Introduction

Safety and security on college and university campuses have risen to the top of Congressional and state-level policy concerns and have fueled students' and parents' demands for the implementation of additional crime prevention strategies on campus. Several events prompted these actions. First was a flurry of civil lawsuits, starting in the mid 1980s, by student victims or their families against post-secondary institutions for damages due to on-campus victimizations. The courts in several cases found colleges liable for a foreseeable on-campus victimization and ordered these institutions to pay considerable amounts in damages (see Smith and Fossey 1995). Second were student right-to-know efforts around the country, which Howard and Connie Clery led after a fellow student brutally murdered their daughter at Lehigh University in 1986. These efforts succeeded in pressuring Congress and twenty state legislatures to mandate that these institutions publicly report their crime statistics and campus crime prevention and security procedures (Griffaton 1995; Lu 1996). Media coverage of campus crime rounds out the events that elevated campus crime to the top of lawmakers' agendas and that continues to capture Congressional attention (Lively 1996; Schmidt 1996). In the last few years the media (especially *The Chronicle of Higher Education*) has drawn a spotlight to campuses suggesting that on-campus crimes--especially violence--are markedly increasing. Their anecdotes portray the campus as a place rife with violence and disorder and a place where students are not only packing books but also packing guns (Lederman 1995, 1994b,1994a,1993; Matthews 1993).

If these claims are correct and campuses are dangerous places where violent crime is widespread and increasing at an alarming rate and where students are arming themselves, the implications for the types and content of crime prevention programs, services, and measures offered by post-secondary institutions may be more than merely providing educational programs, victim services, and restricting access to buildings. The implications for students, too, may be more than merely attending crime prevention seminars or locking doors. If these claims are incorrect, then there may be a misunderstanding by students, their parents, and campus administrators as to the incidence and the types of crimes that happen on campuses. A possible mismatch between the type and frequency of on-campus crimes, the frequency and content of crime prevention programs and services implemented, and the

types of crime prevention measures student take may exist. As a result, students may not be protecting themselves in a way that reduces their vulnerability to frequently occurring crimes, and campus administrators may not be properly or effectively addressing campus crime problems that may also leave students at risk and the school potentially liable.

To understand more adequately what types of crime prevention programs, services, and measures may benefit college and university students, this chapter examines the incidence and nature of on-campus incident-level information collected during the 1993-1994 academic year from a random sample of 3,742 students at 12 randomly selected four-year colleges and universities in the United States. We begin the chapter with a brief discussion of the crime prevention challenges campuses face because of students' lifestyles. To give the reader a sense of crime prevention activities on campuses today, we then turn to a description of what various colleges and universities have implemented to help prevent crime on their campuses and of what students have done to reduce their risk of victimization. Next, we present the results of our analyses that examined the frequency and nature of on-campus victimizations, the crime prevention behaviors of students, and the crime prevention programs, services, and measures implemented or adopted by selected schools. We end the chapter with a discussion of the need for more campus crime prevention, the implications for the content of crime prevention efforts, and the limits of crime prevention.

The Campus As A Community: Its Crime Prevention Challenges

Some individuals run a greater risk of victimization than others. Researchers have shown that certain lifestyle and routine activity characteristics significantly predict an individual's risk of criminal victimization: demographic characteristics (e.g., young--under 30--, college educated, males, white, high income), being an attractive target (e.g., the ownership of valuable consumer goods), engaging in public activities (e.g., going to bars, spending time away from the residence), lacking in guardianship (e.g., not engaging in safety precautions), and being close to offenders (see Miethe and Meier 1994). College students' lifestyles and activities while on campus at times are characterized by these high-risk factors.

First, the college population is youthful--those under 18 years old to 24 year olds made up 62 percent of the undergraduate population (more than seven and one-half million students) and 25 to 34

year olds made up 46 percent of the graduate population (close to 780,000 students) in the fall 1993 (U.S. Department of Education 1995). Results from the 1993 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS) showed that these age categories had among the highest violent victimization rates compared with other age categories. Those who ranged in age from 16 to 19, for example, had the second highest violent victimization rate (116.8 per 1,000 persons in this age group), followed by those aged 20-24 (97.7 per 1,000), and then those aged 25-34 (60.9 per 1,000) (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1996). Results from the 1992 NCVS showed that those aged 20-24 years old, for example, had the highest theft victimization rate (106.9 per 1,000 students in this age group), followed by 16-19 year olds (94.8 per 1,000), and by 25-34 year olds (73.4 per 1,000) (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1994).[1]

The shear number of college students and the property that they bring with them--purses, wallets, backpacks, portable computers, compact disk players and disks, bicycles, and motor vehicles--provide an ample supply of suitable targets for would-be offenders. The number of targets changes every term, especially in the fall, when a new supply of suitable targets arrives on campus.

Second, many students attend entertainment events on campus (e.g., dances, parties, athletic games, movies, museums, concerts, or plays). Many students, those who are under the legal drinking age and those who are of legal drinking age, couple these functions with alcohol and/or drug use. In a recent national survey, 80 percent of those 17 to 25 year olds reported using alcohol in the past year and just more than 60 percent reported using alcohol in the past month. Both percentages were the second highest users compared with all the other age groups. The drugs of choice among this age group were marijuana and hashish, with close to 23 percent reporting usage during the past year and 11 percent reporting usage during the last month--the highest percentage among all age groups (U.S. Department of Justice, 1994).

Third, although the above figures do not reflect all college students, the college years are notorious for the recreational use of, and experimentation with, alcohol and drugs (Powell, Pander, Nielsen

---

[1] In the 1993 NCVS results, property crimes include thefts. The former are now considered household-level crimes and not individual-level crimes, and as a result, are reported as rates per 1,000 households and not as rates per 1,000 individuals. In the 1992 NCVS, thefts were considered individual-level crimes, and rates per 1,000 individuals were reported.

1994). Our earlier work reported that college students spend any average of two nights per week partying on or near campus (Fisher, Sloan, and Cullen 1995). Studies have also shown that binge drinking is common among college students. These studies also have revealed that students who are not binge drinkers at schools with high binge rates are more likely than students at school with lower binge rates to experience problems including being hit, pushed, or assaulted and experiencing an unwanted sexual advance (Wechsler, Davenport, Dowdall, Moeykens, and Castillo 1994). Other researchers have also reported that binge drinking is associated with a higher incidence of physical and sexual assault (Wechsler and Isaac 1992). Powell, Pander, and Nielsen (1994) argued that the use of alcohol and drugs could lead to crimes ranging in seriousness from simple acts of vandalism to aggravated assault, sexual assault, or rape.

Fourth, students are often poor guardians of themselves. Some students may study or attend a party into the very early morning hours and then walk to their residence or motor vehicles alone or take shortcuts through isolated, poorly lighted areas to arrive home faster or get to an early morning class. Students could be attractive targets for would-be robbers or rapists lurking in the shadows of poorly lit areas or seeking refuge in dense vegetation (Fisher and Nasar 1995).

Students also are often poor guardians of their property. Walking away from their belongings or leaving the door to a dormitory room or office unlocked or propped open is common for students, if only for a minute to obtain a drink of water, go to the restroom, or go into someone else's room.

The campus setting and calendar do not provide guardianship at all times for various reasons. Many college campuses are park-like settings with permeable boundaries. Campuses are typically accessible during all hours; they are "open" 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. There are long periods, such as Spring Break or Summer Break, where most of the students are not on campus, thus leaving those who remain and their property vulnerable to criminal victimization.

Finally, the student and his or her property are only part of understanding the crime prevention challenges of the campus. Their proximity to the perpetrator or perpetrators also adds to these challenges. Siegel and Raymond (1992) reported that close to 80 percent of victimizations committed against students were by fellow students. They also reported that students who had committed multiple

4

crimes since enrolling in college reported the most frequent drug and alcohol use of all other students and reported using alcohol and drugs at the time that their most serious crime was committed. For those students who live in university-operated housing, proximity to the offender may raise some concern, especially with respect to physical and sexual assaults, vandalism, and threatening and harassing behavior.

Other scholars have suggested that campus employees, especially those who have access to master keys, may be possible perpetrators of theft and that people not related to the campus commit many thefts on campus (see Smith and Fossey 1995; Powell, Pander, and Nielsen 1994). We, however, could not find any data summarizing employee or nonstudent thefts against students or any studies that examined this phenomenon.

The unique lifestyle and routine activity characteristics of the campuses' largest group of people--students--create an environment in which different types of victimization may frequently occur at different places on campus or at the same place--"hot spots of crime"--at any hour of the day or the evening by a variety of perpetrators (see Fisher and Nasar 1995; Wilkins 1996). This scenario poses challenges for both personal-level and institutional-level crime prevention efforts. Coupled with this challenge is the challenge of developing and implementing crime prevention programs, services, and measures for a highly transient youthful population who may live on campus or off campus, and who may spend an hour or two or much more on campus one day to seven days a week on campus for a varying tenure that may last a day or two to many years until a degree is completed. Campus administrators cannot ignore these challenges as they compete to attract and recruit students, maintain enrollments, reduce their liability, and fall under the scrutiny of concerned parents and students, campus-safety interest groups, and state and federal legislation.

Responses by Post-Secondary Institutions to On-Campus Crime

Colleges and universities have considerable discretion over the type and number of crime prevention strategies that they employ to reduce opportunities for victimization. Following is an overview

of on-campus crime prevention strategies that schools have implemented to make their campuses safer.[2]

Common strategies employed by schools include: educational information and programs, access control

and target-hardening measures, services, and campus-wide efforts.

Educational Information and Programs

Many colleges and universities provide printed information concerning ways to reduce the risk of

personal and property victimization and a description of their security policies and procedures following

the mandates of the Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act of 1990 (Lu 1996). Distributing this

information is accomplished in several ways: requiring new students to attend a crime prevention seminar

(e.g., Georgia Tech and the University of Arkansas); distributing crime prevention pamphlets and

brochures at high volume student-pedestrian sites on campus such as the Student Union or restroom

stalls (e.g., Xavier University and The Ohio State University); and posting information electronically on

World Wide Web home pages or maintaining an on-line discussion forum of campus safety issues for

those who have access to the Internet (e.g., New York University and the University of Denver).

Access Control and Target-Hardening Measures

Because the campus is "open" 24 hours a day, many schools use various means to control

access to classroom buildings, residence halls, department offices, and laboratories. While some schools

have an "open-door" policy as to the main entrance--students and visitors can come and go as they

please--other schools restrict access through various strategies. For example, some schools like

Northern Illinois University require all students to show identification for entry so that security monitors

allow only residents and their guests access to the residence hall; student residents must sign in all guests

and escort guests continuously while in the dormitory. At other schools, like Willamette University and

Wellesley College, residence halls are locked 24 hours a day and access is limited to those who have

keys or to those who have been issued electronic key cards. Still other schools not only limit access to

---

[2] Almost all of the information used in this section was obtained from the Internet using the
NETSCAPE program and the search engines YAHOO and EXCITE. We searched using the terms
"campus crime," "student victimization," "campus security," and "campus law enforcement." We were
able to visit the home pages of those colleges and universities that had created a World Wide Web home
page and gather information about the types of crime prevention programs, services, and measures
offered or adopted by the respective school.

residence halls but also keep classroom buildings locked when classes are not in session. Here, students can gain access by obtaining an "After Hours Pass" from their professors. At Brown University, access to buildings is controlled by installing alarms on doors and windows to keep them from being propped open. Finally, some schools use surveillance cameras as a means to monitor access to the campus and its buildings. At Columbia University, selected academic buildings have key card access and alarm monitoring systems combined with video surveillance 24 hours a day.

Crime Prevention and Victim Services

Campuses also offer various crime prevention and victim services for students. To deter theft, some schools, including Columbia University, have an engraver that students can borrow to mark all of their valuable property with a unique identification number (typically their social security number) registered with campus law enforcement. Others have registration services for motor vehicles and bicycles. At Purdue University, for example, students who park in university-designated parking lots must register their cars with the campus parking authorities. If the car is stolen, this fact can be broadcast to campus and local law enforcement officials. Campus escort services operating after dark are commonly offered by schools and some schools have available shuttle bus services or "campus taxis" that take students to their destinations on or near the campus. Most schools provide counseling and mental health services after any type of victimization. The University of Missouri-St. Louis, for example, offers a "rape hot line" for students to call to report a rape, a victim counseling service, and medical services for rape victims at the campus women's center.

Campus-Wide Efforts

Some campuses (e.g., the University of Alabama at Birmingham and Carnegie Mellon University) have created campus "crime watch" programs where keep an eye out for opportunities for crime and for suspicious persons. Linked with campus police or security by telephone and FAX, members alert each other of reported incidents and work with campus officials to help identify and apprehend suspects.

Schools have also modified the physical environment to reduce the opportunities for victimization. The University of Alabama at Birmingham, for example, undertook an extensive effort during 1993-1994 to remove overgrown vegetation, cut back trees and bushes, and remove potential hiding places on campus

for offenders (see Sloan et al. 1995). UAB also routinely checks and upgrades overhead street and pathway lights, as well as those in parking lots and decks. The University of South Florida annually perform security surveys to evaluate the safety of their buildings and grounds to identify strengths and weaknesses of the present security systems, to identify crime risks, to develop and rank solutions to reduce crime risks, and to strengthen security (Richards 1996).

Although crime prevention efforts by schools are apparently widespread, little is known about the crime prevention efforts of college students including to what extent they engage in crime prevention behaviors and what types they do adopt. Related to understanding students' crime prevention behaviors is understanding the nature and extent of their on-campus victimization. Both pieces of information have implications for the need for additional crime prevention efforts, the content of crime prevention efforts and the limits of crime prevention.

College Students' Crime Prevention Behaviors: Extent and Types

Very little is known about the extent and types of crime prevention measures actually used by college students while on campus, in part because researchers are just beginning to examine the extent and the nature of on-campus victimization among students (see Fisher, et al. 1995). Sloan et al. (1995) recently completed a two-year panel study of campus victimization at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Their case study sheds some light on these issues.

Sloan et al. (1995) asked student members of their panel about the extent to which they engaged in crime prevention behaviors while on the UAB campus. Across the two-year period of the study, very few students reported that they "always" practiced crime prevention behaviors while on the campus, and there was little change in reported activities over time. Among the most popular forms of crime prevention were two types of target-hardening and risk management behaviors: More than 90 percent of the students reported that they "always" locked their cars, motorcycles, or bicycles when leaving them unattended, and close to 70 percent of the students reported that they "always" kept their keys in hand in a defensive manner when walking to their cars. Other risk management behaviors were not as popular as carrying keys defensively. For example, one-half of the students reported leaving their property unattended while on campus, and were thus ripe for theft victimizations. Carrying protection devices was

8

not as popular among the students as the two behaviors above mentioned. Close to 70 percent of the students at both time periods reported that they "never" carried a personal protection device (e.g., weapon, mace, or peppery spray) while on campus. Most of the students did not use crime prevention services offered by the school. For example, close to 90 percent of the students indicated that they had "never" used the campus escort service. Overall, Sloan et al. (1995) concluded that students routinely failed to engage in crime prevention behaviors while on campus.

Unlike the abundance of information concerning what schools are doing to prevent crime on their campuses, little is known about what students do to reduce their chances of victimization. We now turn to the description of the methods of the current study. We then present the results of our analyses in an attempt to discern the patterns of on-campus student victimizations and the extent and the nature of crime prevention efforts undertaken by students and by post-secondary institutions in our sample.

Methods

Our analyses are part of a larger analysis of the nature and incidence of college student victimization. We collected data for the study using a structured-telephone interview modeled after the redesigned National Crime Victimization Survey (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1993). Using this interview, we collected detailed information about the victimization incident, including its type and location (whether it occurred on or off campus and the specific location where the incident occurred), time of day it occurred, and the number and perceived characteristics of the offender(s). Our bounding period was "since school began in the fall 1993."

We also asked all the students about their crime prevention activities while on campus, and of those who lived on campus, we asked them to indicate the presence of specific types of on-campus residence crime prevention measures. From this information, we developed a fairly complete assessment of the incidence and of the nature of students' victimizations and the type of crime prevention activities used at the individual level. To supplement institution-level crime prevention information obtained from the

students, we also surveyed campus officials at the sampled schools to assess the extent and nature of the crime prevention programs and services available on campus.[3]

Sampling Design

The population of schools for this study included all four-year institutions (N=2,142) appearing in the Department of Education's *State Higher Education Profiles* (1993) compilation of post-secondary institutions. We stratified all the schools on two variables: total student enrollment and location. The four sizes of enrollment categories were: 1,000-2,499; 2,500-9,999; 10,000-19,999; 20,000 or more. We did not include school with less than 1,000 students because most of them were religious schools (e.g., Bible colleges or Yeshivas), or specialty medical schools, and only 6 percent of post-secondary students in the United States were enrolled in these schools (U.S. Department of Education 1993). School location was divided into three categories: urban, suburban, and small town/rural based on location designations found in *Peterson's Guide to Four-Year Colleges and Universities*.

Using the 4x3 matrix (size of enrollment by location), we randomly selected one school from each stratum. We then contracted with the American Student List Company to generate a random sample of the names and telephone numbers of undergraduate and graduate students enrolled at each school. The size of the sample from each school was computed using the formula for a simple random sample. Completed interviews were obtained from 3,472 undergraduate and graduate students enrolled as full-time or part-time students when school began in the Fall term of 1993. Our overall response rate was 71 percent.

Sample Characteristics

More than 87 percent of the sample members were full-time students. Most of the sample members were seniors (25 percent), followed by first-year students (21 percent), juniors (20 percent), sophomores (17 percent), graduate students (15 percent), and certification program students (2 percent). More than one-half (56 percent) of the sample members were women. About three-fourths (76 percent) of the sample members were white, 13 percent were African-American, 8 percent were Asian-Pacific

---

[3] For detailed information about the methods of the larger analysis (e.g, the individual-level and incident-level instruments) see Fisher, et al. 1995.

Islanders, and 1 percent said they were Native Americans (3 percent of the sample members refused to tell us their race). Seventy three percent of the sample members were between 17 and 24 years of age and 17 percent were between 25 and 34 years old. About 40 percent of the students lived on the campus. Among these students, close to 87 percent said they lived in a traditional dormitory while the remainder lived in married student housing, fraternities or sororities, or co-op type housing.

Analysis and Results

In this section of the chapter, we report the results of our analyses. We begin by examining the extent and nature of on-campus victimizations. Following this, we report the on-campus location where the victimization occurred, the spatial and temporal distribution of on-campus student victimizations, and the perceived characteristics of the offender(s). We then report on the crime prevention activities of students while on campus and the types of crime prevention measures available in on-campus residences. We end this section by reporting on the extent and nature of crime prevention programs and services provided by the schools.

The Extent and Nature of On-Campus Victimizations

For all crimes that occurred on campus, Table 1 shows that 23 percent of the students experienced at least one victimization within the bounding period and of the students who were victimized, 30 percent experienced more than one victimization (the latter statistic is not in table 1). Looking across the victimization sectors, Table 1 shows that personal sector victimization was the most common among the students; twelve percent of the students experienced a personal sector victimization. Other types of victimizations were not as common: 8 percent experienced a living quarters sector victimization, 6 percent experienced harassment (either verbal or telephone call), 5 percent suffered a vandalism victimization, and a mere 1 percent were the victims of some type of threat.

Within the personal victimization sector, students were more than four times more likely to experience a crime of theft than to experience a crime of violence while on campus. Among the crimes of theft, personal larceny without contact was the most commonly experienced victimization; close to 11 percent of the students reported having been the victim of theft compared with a little over 2 percent of the students reported having been the victim of violence. Among living quarters sector offenses, burglary was

most common, with 3.5 percent of the students experiencing either a completed or an attempted burglary. Threat of physical assault was the most common type of threat, although a somewhat rare event. Finally, among harassments, about 4 percent of the students experienced a verbal harassment, making it the most common form of harassment.

--Table 1 About Here--

Almost all (93 percent) the on-campus victimizations happened during the school year and not during a scheduled break (e.g., Christmas break) when few students typically are on campus (table not shown, see Fisher, et al. 1995).

The Spatial and Temporal Distribution of On-Campus Victimizations

The two most common locations for on-campus victimizations were the students' living quarters and inside a school building (e.g., the library, a laboratory, or a classroom building) (table not shown--see Fisher, et al. 1995). For example, 22 percent of all personal sector crimes occurred in the living quarters and 42 percent occurred in a school building (most of which involved personal larceny). A closer look at personal sector crimes reveals an interesting pattern: violent crimes were more likely to occur in students' living quarters (43 percent) while thefts were more likely to occur in a school building (45 percent).

More than one-half (51 percent) of the threats occurred in the students' living quarters and 75 percent of the harassments also occurred there. One exception to this pattern was for vandalism where the most common location for victimization was a parking lot or parking deck.

We also found very little variation in the time of day when the victimization occurred. The most common time for students' victimizations was between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. That is, during the daytime hours there appear to be "hot times" for student victimizations (see Wilkins 1996). Exceptions to this pattern were the time period during which the most number of rapes and assaults occurred: between the hours of 2 a.m. and 4 and between the hours of 9 p.m. and 12 a.m, respectively (table not shown, see Fisher et al. 1995).[4]

---

[4] Robbery is not discussed because one on-campus robbery precludes any discussion of a temporal pattern.

12

Characteristics of Offenders

Most of the victimizations involved a single offender: 80 percent of the violent victimization, 79 percent of the harassments, 76 percent of the threats, 74 percent of the living quarters crimes, and 51 percent of the vandalism (table not shown, see Fisher, et al. 1995). The vast majority of lone offenders were male and were perceived as a student by the victim. Further, a significant proportion of the lone offenders were perceived by their victim to have been drinking or on drugs or both during the victimization.

Multiple offender victimizations were not common, except vandalism (49 percent) of the victimizations). The multiple offenders' pattern was similar to the single offender pattern: a majority of the offenders were males, and were perceived as students and to have been drinking, taking drugs, or both by the victim.

Crime Prevention Activities By On-Campus Residents While On Campus

Prior research on the crime prevention activities of students has shown that most students did not routinely engage in behaviors that would reduce their chance for victimization (see Sloan et al. 1995). This study, however, was limited to a single institution, and thus the generalizability of the results is limited. Accordingly, we were interested in examining the extent to which Sloan et al.'s results held true for a larger sample of students enrolled at multiple institutions.

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that, by and large, students rarely engaged in crime prevention activities. For example, a large majority of the students in our sample indicated they had "never" attended non-mandatory campus sponsored crime prevention workshops. Additionally, a large proportion also indicated they rarely used avoidance strategies like avoiding areas of campus during the day or at night.

It was also the case that few students engaged in risk management behaviors. For example, more than three-fourths (77 percent) of the students reported that they "never" carried mace, almost all of them (98 percent) indicated that they "never" carried a firearm while on campus, more than one-half (56 percent) of the students reported that they "never" carried their keys in a defensive manner, 57 percent said that they "never" asked another person to walk with them to their destination after dark, and 86 percent indicated that they "never" used services like campus escort.

Finally, when it came to using target hardening measures, our results showed that students were more likely to use this strategy than either avoidance or risk management strategies but their use of the former was occasional. For example, close to 69 percent of the students indicated that they "sometimes" or "never" asked someone to watch their property while they were away. Among the students living in on-campus housing, a majority (55 percent) reported that they "sometimes" or "never" locked the door(s) to their living quarters while they remained in their dorm, fraternity, sorority, or co-op.

Target hardening measures were popular among the students who had access to a car and/or bicycle during the school year. Nearly all of the students (90 percent) who reported having access to a motor vehicle said that they locked the vehicle when parking it on or near the campus, and over 75 percent of the students who had access to the use of a bicycle during the academic year indicated that they locked the bicycle or took the front wheel when parking the bicycle on or near the campus.

--Table 2 About Here--

On-Campus Residence-Level Crime Prevention Measures

As shown in Table 3, the most frequent type of crime prevention available in on-campus housing involved access control. Some 40 percent of the students residing on campus indicated that there was a security guard on duty at their residence; 36 percent indicated that the residence used students to monitor access to the building; 30 percent of the students indicated that the residence provided card key access to the building or to their room. Finally, among students who did not live in graduate or married student housing, 30 percent indicated that their residence hall had a "sign-in/sign-out" policy for visitors. Only 8 percent of the students indicated their residence used surveillance cameras in the lobby, while nearly 44 percent of the students indicated their residence used additional locks (e.g., deadbolt locks).

--Table 3 About Here--

Institutional-Level Crime Prevention Activities

As the results in Table 4 show, all of the schools reported that they offered rape awareness programs, general crime prevention education, and alcohol and drug awareness programs. However, far fewer of the schools organized a "crime watch" program or offered self-defense classes. Additionally, few

schools required participation by their students in the different programs. For example, only one-third of the schools required students to participate in the school's alcohol awareness program.

Turning to institution-level crime prevention services, the results in Table 5 shows that only two services—on-campus escort services after dark and the availability of a property engraver—were universally offered by the schools. The next most common services offered (in descending order of frequency) included emergency "blue light" telephones, motor vehicle registration, bicycle registration, counseling for crime victims, daytime on-campus escort service, and nighttime off-campus escort service.

The type of surveillance and security measures used by the schools varied with just over two-thirds (67 percent) of the schools having security desks in their campus dormitories and doing a security inspection or evaluation of campus housing or buildings, while one-fourth of the schools reported that they had installed surveillance cameras in the dorms or at other places on campus, or that the school had a security check at the campus entrance(s).

Physical design measures were employed by many of the schools. Seventy-five percent of the schools reported they had upgraded campus lighting and had reduced hiding places by cutting back shrubbery and other vegetation. One-half of the schools reported they had conducted a security inspection of campus buildings and one-third of the schools indicated that they had a fenced boundary.

Finally, most of the schools had addressed alcohol usage on campus by banning its use at sporting events (67 percent), while one-third of the schools had also banned the consumption of alcohol in on-campus residences.

--Table 4 About Here--

Discussion and Conclusion

Overall students' victimizations were relatively rare, and when they occurred, they were relatively minor in nature, typically involving theft of property from the students and occurring in either students' living quarters or while they were in a school building. We also found that student victims were likely to be victimized by a lone offender who was perceived by the victim as a fellow student; offenders were also perceived by most victims to have been under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or a combination of the two. Finally, our results indicated that students did not routinely engage in either avoidance or risk

15

management strategies to reduce their chances of victimization, but were more likely to engage in certain forms of target hardening activities like locking doors, vehicles, or bicycles than in the other two types of crime prevention.

These empirical patterns have implications for crime prevention on college campuses. Below, we address two issues: First, is more crime prevention on campuses necessary? Second, when campus crime prevention is undertaken, what should its content be?

Is More Crime Prevention Necessary?

In light of the current concerns over crime on campus, college and university administrators must be sensitive to media depictions of student victimization as "widespread and violent" (e.g., Matthews, 1993). They must also comply with various state-level and federal-level initiatives designed to disseminate information about crime and crime prevention activities on their campuses. As we previously discussed, schools have implemented a variety of institutional-level crime prevention strategies. At the same time, crime prevention consumes resources—money and time—that might be allocated to competing needs within any given institution. The challenge for any school, therefore, is to use resources judiciously in its attempt to ensure a safer environment for its students.

One consideration is whether student victimization is a serious problem or has been exaggerated. Our data provide no definitive answers, but they may be useful in setting some broad parameters in assessing this issue. As noted, slightly less than a quarter of the sample reported being victimized at least once, with nearly 70 percent of these victims experiencing a theft-related offense. Based on these results, it would seem that the threat posed by crime on most campuses is far less than the media would portray. Thus, in any given academic year, most students will be safe from crime and very few will suffer a physical attack.

From another vantage point, however, our data suggest that student victimization is a problem that warrants attention. Again, the incidence of victimization in the sample for our study's bounding period was not high: less than a quarter of the students were victimized in a six-month period. But if this rate were calculated for the four or five years students typically spend at a school, a clear majority of the students would experience some crime victimization during their college tenure. Moving to the aggregate

16

level, relatively modest prevalence rates, when calculated over a large student base, can produce high numbers of crimes. For example, with the victimization incidence rate of 23 percent found in our study, a school of 10,000 students would experience 2,300 crimes in a single six-month period. Even if most of these crimes are nonserious, the sheer number of illegal acts might be cause for genuine concern.

Furthermore, although serious victimizations are rare, they do occur and can have potentially devastating effects. How preventable these serious crimes are remains an important research question, however, precisely because they are relatively rare events. Still, it would be imprudent of us to suggest that crime prevention measures not be employed that focus specifically on these offenses--at least not until the ineffectiveness of these measures can be definitively shown. Indeed, in the case of serious crimes, it can be argued that even small savings in crime through prevention efforts can be justified when juxtaposed to the harm victims suffer.

In summary, our data caution against the current tendency to portray student victimization as a social problem of enormous proportions. College campuses, however, are not ivory towers fully free from petty thefts and, occasionally, serious crime victimizations. Administrators thus need to take a balanced perspective on student victimization. In particular, we would caution against seeing student victimization as a crisis, and then blindly allocating more and more resources to crime prevention in an effort "to do something about the problem." Instead, we would recommend that administrators take a more sustained and judicious approach in which they pay more attention to how crime prevention resources should be allocated and how best to make students more effective co-producers of safety on campus.

The Content of Crime Prevention

To allocate crime prevention resources more effectively, campuses might benefit by implementing information systems that can identify not only how much victimization occurs on campus but also where and when different types of crime occur most frequently. This approach, which criminologists call identifying the "hot spots" for crime, would allow administrators to target security and other crime prevention resources in a more focused way (see Sherman, Gartin, and Buerger, 1989; Wilkins, 1996). In theory, at least this approach yields more "bang for the buck" by allocating crime prevention resources where they potentially will do the most good.

Identifying such "hot spots," however, requires implementing an information system capable of accurately measuring the spatial and temporal distribution of crime on campus. One information source is the crime reports recorded by the campus security/police department. These "official statistics" ideally would be supplemented with a campus victimization survey that would detect offenses not reported to the campus authorities. Although victimization surveys are potentially costly to conduct, omitting victimization data is risky since the crime patterns revealed by this data source will overlap with, but not be identical to, those revealed by official statistics. Victimization surveys can also provide additional information about such things as the victim's activities before the incident, crime prevention behavior before and after the incident, perceived offender(s) characteristics, and needed victim services. This type of information can be useful to administrators when tailoring crime prevention efforts and campaigns, and victim services to effectively use their limited resources.

The uneven spatial and temporal distribution of crime found in our data have implications for what should be the content of the crime prevention information that schools share with students. To begin with, we do not have evidence from our study that broadly worded appeals to students to take crime prevention seriously have no value in raising their consciousness about crime. We do know, however, that despite the presence of campus crime prevention resources at the schools we surveyed, many students did not routinely engage in crime prevention activities. How might this situation be changed so that students become more sensitized to co-produce safety in their environment?

One way to approach this question is to consider students as exercising "rational choice" in deciding whether to allocate their time and psychic energies to crime prevention. In our study, the students seemed, more or less, to make choices that maximized their returns from crime prevention. Thus, we found that students indicated that they engaged in target hardening activities for "big ticket" items, such as locking their vehicles or their bicycle, but they were less likely to do so for other types of property that usually were of less value. In short, they invested their crime prevention where it seemed to matter the most.

Our data suggest, however, that students' rationality may be limited by their lack of specific information about their victimization risks. Although it may generally make sense to protect more valuable

18

possessions, our data suggest that many theft-related victimizations--the predominant form of crime on campuses--involve other types of property and could have been prevented had students taken better precautions. In many instances, these precautions would have been as simple as students' asking someone to watch their property while they were away for a few minutes or locking their door while in the residence hall. In turn, students might have been prompted to take these simple precautions if they were given specific information that many such crimes occur; that is, the "rationality" of crime prevention might have been clarified. With more serious crimes, such information as the roles that alcohol and drugs play in terms of the offender's behaviors may also be used to inform students about acting in their best interests to reduce their chances of becoming a victim to violence.

In this same vein, information on the spatial and temporal distribution of crime on campuses might reveal that particular sites on campus--for example, a residence hall or library--have especially high rates of victimization, especially for certain types of crime. In the case of the library, administrators might post reminders to students to be careful about leaving their property unattended. In effect, the goal would be to prompt students to use their crime prevention "resources" in places where and during times when the risks empirically were high.

At the University of Alabama at Birmingham, for example, the undergraduate library recently experienced a large number of thefts of property. In response, the library staff adopted a situational approach to crime prevention; they posted a reminder sticker on every table, carrel, and study room in the library informing the students of this fact and reminding them not to leave their property unattended. In effect, the library was identified as a "hot spot" for theft, and the campus authorities undertook a specific program to make users aware of that fact. In this case, specific information, rather than global appeals to participate in crime prevention, was employed to sensitize students to where they needed to be most on guard against theft crimes.

Finally, crime prevention information might benefit from sharing another finding of our study: most criminals on campus, it seems, are other students, who often are under the influence of alcohol of drugs. This insight suggests that students should keep in mind that the most likely people to steal their books, possessions in their room, or physically attack them are fellow students. Furthermore, situations in which

19

students come into contact with others who are "drunk" or "high" are likely to increase the risks of victimization.

The Limits of Crime Prevention

We end with a work of caution: although we see crime prevention as a worthy enterprise, it is not a panacea for the student victimizations that occur on campuses. From the broader criminological literature, there is extensive research showing that while crime prevention can help to make social environments safer, it is only one factor in determining the risk of crime victimization (see Miethe and Meier, 1994). In particular, college administrators should pay attention to the factors that lead students—or those who come on to campuses from the larger community—to become offenders. Thus, the "root causes" of crime, which can involve the individual traits and lifestyle characteristics of students and the situations they encounter on campus at different locations, are factors that must be understood and addressed by any comprehensive strategy to make colleges and universities safer.

Furthermore, administrators should beware that even well-intentioned crime prevention efforts—leaving aside, for example, efforts that are politically inspired and largely symbolic in content—may prove unproductive and ineffective. Even in the best of circumstances, reducing crime is difficult—an enterprise in which success is often punctuated with disappointments. The challenge, then, is for administrators to develop crime prevention programs that are based on the existing research and are shaped by the specific victimization patterns and offending characteristics besetting their schools. In this way, crime prevention can move from broadly-based appeals to be careful about crime to programs whose resources are invested strategically to make the specific campus in question safer. This approach may require tedious data collection and analysis, but it has the decided advantage of being the "best bet" to reduce the on-campus victimization of students.

In short, crime prevention efforts on campus are more than just "implanting" the latest generic crime prevention program, measure, or service. Researchers have convincingly argued theoretically and shown empirically that such an approach does not necessarily result in reducing crime; in fact, the opposite may happen, and indeed it has happened (Rosenbaum 1988, 1987).

20

REFERENCES

Bureau of Justice Statistics. 1996. *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1993.* Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Bureau of Justice Statistics. 1994. *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 1992.* Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Fisher, B.S. and J.L. Nasar. 1995. "Fear Spots in Relation to Microlevel Physical Cues: Exploring the Overlooked." *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency.* 32(2): 214-239.

Fisher, B.S. and J.J. Sloan. 1993. "University Responses to the Campus Security Act of 1990: Evaluating Programs Designed to Reduce Campus Crime." *Journal of Security Administration* 16(1): 67-79.

Griffaton, M.C.. 1995. "State Level Initiatives and Campus Crime." Pp. 53-78 in *Campus Crime: Legal, Social and Policy Perspectives,* edited by B.S. Fisher, and J.J. Sloan. Springfield, IL: Charles Thomas Publisher.

Lederman, D. 1995. "Colleges Report Rise on Violent Crime." *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* February 3, A31-A42.

_____. 1994a. "Weapons On Campus ." *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* March 9, A21-A22.

_____. 1994b. "Crimes on the Campuses: Increases in Reported Robberies and Assaults." *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* February 2, A31-41.

_____. 1993. "College Report 7,500 Violent Crimes on Their Campuses in First Annual Statements Required Under Federal Law." *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* January 20, A32-43.

Lively, K. 1996. "Drug Arrests Rise Again." *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* April 26, A37.

Lu, C. 1996. *The Extent and Patterns of Compliance with the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act of 1990 Among Post-Secondary Institutions: A National Study.* Ph.D. Dissertation. Cincinnati, OH: University of Cincinnati.

Matthews, A.. 1993. "The Ivory Tower Becomes an Armed Camp." *New York Times Magazine* March 7, 38-47.

Miethe, T.D. and R.F. Meier. 1994. *Crime and Its Social Context: Toward an Integrated Theory of Offenders, Victims, and Situations.* Albany, NY: State University of New York.

Powell, J. W., M.S. Pander, and R.C. Nielsen. 1994. *Campus Security and Law Enforcement (2nd ed.).* Boston, MA: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Richards, E.R. 1996. "The Security Survey: Creating a Proactive Foundation for Campus Crime Prevention." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 12(1): 45-53.

Rosenbaum, D.P.. 1988. "Community Crime Prevention: A Review and Synthesis of the Literature." *Justice Quarterly* 5(3): 323-394.

_____. 1987. "The Theory and Research Behind Neighborhood Watch: Is It Sound Fear and Crime Reduction Strategy?" *Crime and Delinquency.* 33: 103-134.

Schmidt, P. 1996. "Lawmakers Told That Colleges Fail to Comply With Campus-Crime Law." *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* June 14, A37.

Sherman, L.W., P. Gartin, and M. Beurger. 1989. "Hots Spots of Predatory Crime: Routine Activities and the Criminology of Place." *Criminology* 27:27-56.

Siegel, D.G. and C.H. Raymond. 1992. "An Ecological Approach to Violent Crime on Campus." *Journal of Security Administration* !5(2):19-27.

Sloan, J.J., B.S. Fisher, and D.L. Wilkins. 1995. *Crime, Fear of Crime and Related Issues on the Campus: Final Report.* Birmingham, AL: University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Smith, M.C. and R. Fossey. 1995. *Crime on Campus: Legal Issues and Campus Administration.* Phoenix, AZ: The Oryx Press.

Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act. 1990. Public Law No. 101-542. (1990) amended by Public Law No. 102-26, 10(e) (1991) 20 USC 1092(f).

United States Department of Education. 1995. *Digest of Education Statistics 1995.* Washington D.C., U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

United States Department of Education. 1993. *State Higher Education Profiles, 3rd edition.* Washington D.C., U.S. Department of Education.

Wechsler, H. and N. Issac. 1992. "'Binge' Drinkers at Massachusetts Colleges: Prevalence, Drinking Styles, Time Trends, and Associated Problems." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 267(16): 2929-2931.

Wechsler, H., A. Davenport, G. Dowdall, B. Moeykens, and S. Castillo. 1994. "Health and Behavioral Consequences of Binge Drinking in College. A National Survey of Students at 140 Campuses." *Journal of the American Medical Association* 272(21): 1672-1677.

Wilkins, D.L.. 1996. "The Spatial and Temporal Distribution of Crime on a University Campus: A 'Hot Spots" Analysis." Unpublished master thesis. Department of Justice Sciences, University of Alabama-Birmingham.

Table 1. On-Campus Victimization Counts, Percents, Rates per 1,000 Students and Percent and Number of Victims by Sector and Type of Crimes

Type of crime	Percent and number of victims % (n)	Percent and number of victimizations % (n)	Rate per 1,000 students
All Crimes	**23.0** **(799)**	**100.0** **1127**	**324.3**
Personal Sector	**12.5** **(434)**	**65.1** **(520)**	**149.8**
Crimes of Violence[1]	*2.6* *(89)*	*12.9* *(103)*	*29.7*
Rape[2]	0.4 (13)	1.8 (14)	4.0
Sexual assault[3]	1.2 (41)	3.9 (44)	12.7
Robbery	0.0 (1)	0.0 (1)	0.3
Assaults	1.2 (43)	3.9 (44)	12.7
Aggravated assaults	0.3 (9)	0.8 (9)	2.6
Simple assaults	1.0 (34)	3.1 (35)	10.1
Crimes of Theft	*10.7* *(370)*	*37.0* *(417)*	*120.1*
Personal larceny with contact	0.5 (18)	1.6 (18)	5.2
Personal larceny without contact	10.1 (351)	3.74 (380)	109.4
Motor vehicle theft	0.1 (2)	0.2 (2)	0.6
Motor vehicle burglary	0.5 (17)	1.5 (17)	4.9

Table 1. On-Campus Victimization Counts, Percents, Rates per 1,000 Students and Percent and Number of Victims by Sector and Type of Crimes. . . Continued

Type of crime	Percent and number of victims % (n)	Percent and number of victimizations % (n)	Rate per 1,000 students
Living Quarters Sector	**3.8** **(131)**	**12.9** **(145)**	**41.5**
Burglary	3.5 (120)	11.5 (130)	37.2
Living quarters larceny	0.3 (12)	1.3 (15)	4.3
Vandalism Sector	**5.1** **(177)**	**16.8** **(189)**	**54.4**
Threat Sector	**1.1** **(37)**	**5.5** **(44)**	**12.7**
Robbery	0.0 (1)	0.0 (1)	0.3
Physical assaults[4]	1.0 (35)	3.1 (35)	10.1
Simple assaults	0.2 (7)	0.6 (7)	2.0
Vandalism	0.0 (1)	0.0 (1)	0.3
Harassment Sector	**6.2** **(214)**	**20.3** **(229)**	**66.0**
Verbal	3.6 (125)	11.8 (133)	38.3
Telephone	2.6 (92)	8.5 (96)	27.6

1 Both completed and attempted victimizations are included in the counts. Rape, sexual assault and aggravated assault include attempts as per their respective definitions and footnote 1 in table 1 in *Criminal Victimizations in the United States, 1993.*

2 The percentage of males who reported being raped was .32 (n=5), and the rate was 3.25 per 1,000 males (5/1541). The percentage of females who reported being raped was .36 (n=7), and the rate was 4.66 per 1,000 females (9/1931).

3 The percentage of males who reported being sexually assaulted was 1.04 (n=16), and the rate was 10.38 per 1,000 males (16/1541). The percentage of females who reported being sexually assaulted was 1.29 (n=25), and the rate was 14.5 per 1,000 females (28/1931).

4 Respondents' description of the incident did not allow us to classify the assault as a simple assault or an aggravated assault.

Table 2. Crime Prevention Activities By Students While On Campus

Type of Crime Prevention Activity	Always % (n)	Frequently % (n)	Sometimes % (n)	Never % (n)
General Information				
Attended non-mandatory campus-sponsored crime prevention workshop	0.82 (28)	2.24 (77)	15.07 (517)	81.87 (2809)
Avoidance Strategies				
Avoided specific areas of campus during the day	1.52 (52)	1.78 (61)	4.64 (159)	92.06 (3153)
Avoided specific areas of campus at night	11.60 (393)	9.09 (308)	20.93 (709)	58.37 (1977)
Risk Management				
Carried mace, pepper-spray, a screamer, etc. (not including a firearm)	11.04 (379)	4.66 (160)	6.73 (231)	77.56 (2662)
Carried a firearm	0.38 (13)	0.64 (22)	1.08 (37)	97.90 (3359)
Carried keys in hand in defensive manner	10.05 (345)	10.75 (369)	23.33 (801)	55.88 (1919)
Asked someone to walk you to your destination after dark	8.93 (305)	10.16 (347)	24.04 (821)	56.87 (1942)
Used campus sponsored crime prevention services like campus escort	0.85 (29)	2.16 (74)	10.70 (367)	86.30 (2960)
Target Hardening				
Asked someone to watch your property while you were away	14.31 (489)	17.07 (583)	44.50 (1520)	24.12 (824)
Locked door of dorm room, room in fraternity/sorority, or room in co-op while remained in the building[1]	28.09 (393)	16.94 (274)	29.09 (407)	25.88 (362)
Locked motor vehicle when parking on or near the campus[2]	90.80 (2408)	3.47 (92)	2.83 (75)	2.90 (77)
Locked bicycle/took front wheel when parking on or near the campus[3]	75.55 (720)	4.20 (40)	3.04 (29)	17.21 (164)

1 Only those students who lived in a traditional dorm, married student housing, a co-op, or a fraternity or sorority on campus are included (n=1355).

2 Only those students who have access to a motor vehicle during the school year are included.

3 Only those students who have access to a bicycle during the school year are included