Katy Baumer  
Ms. Johnson  
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Safety on Campus

Student safety on university campuses is an issue that is discussed in many academic journals. It is a concern for both the student attending the university and the administration. Crime occurs on campuses for many reasons such as drug consumption, lack of security provided at parties and social events, and a lack of student awareness of safety on campus.

A main issue discussed in a majority of the academic journals was the university’s responsibility for keeping their campus safe. Bonnie Fisher, author of *Crime and Fear on Campus*, explains from her research on court cases concerning campus safety that “the courts generally determined that educational authorities owed to its students the duty of a parent to a child” (Fisher 87). Fisher also states that the university has an obligation to warn students about known risks and to provide them with security protection (Fisher 88). The Campus Security Act of 1990 directly states that the school must provide the prospective and current students and employees “by appropriate publications or mailings (i) through direct mailing to each individual through the U.S. Postal Service, campus mail, or computer network; and (ii) publications provided directly to each individual” (Fisher 95).

In *Student Perception of Campus Safety at a Large Rural University*, the authors Kimberly Santucci and Robert Gable agree with Fisher. They refer to specific, detailed methods that universities should implement to manage the safety of the students. Santucci and Gable discuss escort services, safety brochures, strict guidelines for residence halls, and suggestions for
walking around campus (Santucci. 2-3). In Student Privacy versus Campus Safety: Has Recent Legislation Compromised Privacy Rights, author Christopher van der Kaay agrees with Gable, Santucci, and Fisher. Van der Kaay explains that it is the institution’s responsibility to provide their students with the proper information necessary about safety on their campus (Van der Kaay 3).

It has also been said if the universities are properly informing their students about safety and if they are protecting students, the existence of fear and crime should be less of an issue on campus. However, in the majority of the journals, student fear was a very prominent issue. Fisher provides information from respected newspapers that “students and faculty are increasingly fearful and at risk of victimization” (Fisher 86). A real-life example was also used in Fisher’s document to demonstrate a prospective student’s concern for her safety. After her arrival at California State University in San Diego, she was sexually assaulted and murdered in her dormitory room. This case was taken to court against the university because the mother alleged that her daughter had asked the school’s staff about crime and safety on campus prior to enrolling (Fisher 88).

Santucci and Gable also agree with Fisher again. They surveyed five hundred and twenty-nine students and found that, “females felt less safe than did males on campus and in residence halls” (Santucci 1). The results also suggested that parking lots and pathways were the more hazardous areas on campus, and that lighting in dark areas was inadequate. Also, emergency telephones at several institutions researched were not placed in the most appropriate places (Santucci 3).

Specifically, the results from Santucci and Gable’s survey imply that the issue of women’s safety is a concern of many women attending universities because of sexual assaults.
Coincidently, Fisher also addresses this topic. She reported that the number of women who were raped or sexually assaulted during their college years ranged from four to twenty-five percent. This is such a drastic difference in percentage because many rapes and sexual assaults go unreported, and Fisher states that these types of unreported incidents account for ninety percent of the rapes on campus. Furthermore, a poll of undergraduates nationwide in 1987 showed that only thirty-one percent of all on campus sexual assaults that occurred were reported to the police.

Patricia Martin and Robert Hummer authors of Fraternities and Rape on Campus agree with Fisher that rape and sexual assault are a major concern on college campuses. They state that “rapes are perpetrated on dates, at parties, in chance encounters, and in specially planned circumstances” (Martin 457). They also discuss how gang rape is a problem in fraternity houses.

In a fraternity house, a student’s safety can also be compromised when partying and drugs are present. This is another issue that is widespread throughout colleges and universities across the nation. In Age of First Intoxication, Heavy Drinking, Driving after Drinking and Risk of Unintentional Injury among U.S. College Students, Ralph Hingson and co-authors Timothy Heeren, Henry Wochsler, Michael Winter, and Ronda Zackocs believe that alcohol is a major problem at colleges because of the poor decision making a student makes while intoxicated. They focused on 12,550 students who were over the age of nineteen and gave them a survey. They found that “those who first drank prior to age nineteen were significantly more likely to be alcohol dependent and frequent heavy drinkers, to report driving after any drinking, driving after five or more drinks, riding with a driver who was high or drunk and, after drinking, sustaining injuries that required medical attention” (Hingson 1). They found that each year, more than two million college students, ages eighteen to twenty-four, drive after drinking, and more than three million rode in an automobile with a drinking driver. Drinking and driving not only put the
persons riding in the vehicle in danger, but it also is a potential problem for other drivers on the road. Also, more than a half million students are injured, and over 1,400 die from alcohol related unintentional incidents per year, most of them from accidents that involve drinking and driving (Hingson 1). Commonly, people who drink are more likely to engage in physical fights, which again place students in danger.

Other statistics concerning student safety from Hingson, Heeren, Wechsler, Winter, and Zacko include: Out of 2,894 students surveyed, 13% were seriously injured in the past year that they sought medical attention but had not been drinking, 2% sustained injuries of that severity within six hours of drinking, 44% believed they could consume two to four drinks in an hour and drive safely, more than 36% thought they could drink two to four drinks in an hour and drive legally, and 3% thought they could drive legally after five or more drinks (Hingson 4).

Authors Stuart Usdan, Joseph Schumacher, and Jay Bernhardt of Impaired Driving Behaviors Among College Students: A Comparison of Web-Based Daily Assessment and Retrospective Timeline Followback agree with Hingson, Heeren, Wechsler, Winter, and Zacko on the severity of alcohol related injuries and crimes. They found that there was “a direct positive correlation between quantities of alcoholic beverages consumed and the frequency and severity of reported alcohol-related problems” (Usdan 1). Moreover, they found that more than two million U.S. college students drove after drinking during a year.

When alcohol is present at fraternities on campus, Hummer and Martin discuss how sexual assaults jeopardize students’ safety. They found that over 90 percent of all gang rapes on college campuses involve men who are in fraternities. They state that, “fraternities are a physical and sociocultural context that encourages the sexual coercion of women” (Martin 458). This statement was quoted from a man in a fraternity describing the type of men that e fraternity
wants, "Men are sought who have good personalities, are friendly, and have the ability to relate to girls" (Martin 461). An example of how alcohol can endanger students is presented in Hummer and Martin's document. An 18 year old woman at Florida State University was gang raped and then dumped in a neighboring fraternity house. When the woman was discovered, her blood alcohol level was 0.349 percent, which was more than three times the legal limit. The fraternity was found guilty and banned from the campus by the university and the fraternity's national organization for five years (Martin 459).

The government has tried to take more control over campus safety by passing laws that require the universities to report all crime incidents that take place on campus. Fisher addresses this in her document. The nation's first campus security reporting law was the Pennsylvania College and University Security Information Act of 1988. This act was the first step in establishing safer campuses. The federal Student-Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act of 1990 was also passed. The most important act was passed by Congress in 1990 and was called The Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act. It was a protection law that would "educate students, parents, and employees as to the magnitude of crime on campus so that they could make informed choices about their own security" (Fisher 91). It required all postsecondary institutions that receive federal funding to distribute statistics on campus crime annually including: murders, rapes, robberies, aggravated assaults, burglaries, and motor vehicle thefts. Institutions must also report the number of on campus arrests for specific crimes such as drugs and weapon possessions (Fisher 92).

However, according to van der Kaay, "Schools across the country may be hiding... their crime statistics to project an image of saity and tranquility at their institutions" (Van der Kaay
3). This would be giving the students a false sense of security. By law, the university is responsible for providing their students with information pertaining to crime on campus.

All of these authors researched important information. Martin and Hummer made great arguments about fraternities and alcohol. Authors Hingon, Heeren, Wechsler, Winter, Zackocs, Usdan, Schumacher, and Bernhardt researched statistics about drinking and driving and the effects of alcohol on decision making. Van der Kaay uses his research to support how universities protect their images by not reporting crime. Fisher, Santucci, and Gable provide evidence of the lack of security on campus, student’s fear, the university’s responsibility for protecting their students, and women’s safety. All of this information is very important material surrounding campus safety across the nation.
Works Cited


