Campus Security: How Has the Focus Changed?

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Abstract

As a part of the Indiana University Bicentennial edition of the journal, authors Lisa Landreman and JJ Thorp reflect on their 1988 SPA IU Journal article *Campus Security: Changing the Focus.* To further knowledge in the area of campus safety, they analyze the current landscape on campus security and outline continued concerns facing campuses today.

Keywords

Campus Security, Student Safety, Clery Act

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TRIGGER WARNING: This article discusses campus safety and includes language around sexual assault and sexual violence

Introduction

In 1988 we wrote *Campus Security: Changing the Focus* that argued the need for college students to take more responsibility for their own safety. At the time the Clerys were leading efforts to develop new security legislation following the 1986 rape and murder of their daughter Jeanne in her residence hall room at Lehigh University. The Clerys sent a mailing declaring that "students are powerless to provide for their own security" (Landreman and Thorp, 1988, p. 22), a sentiment consistent with public discourse at the time. Following our own observational research and case law review we concluded that "it makes no difference what kind of policies, educational opportunities, or safety features campuses build into its environment...if the campus community does not buy in...the risk of violence or injury will increase" (Landreman and Thorp, 1988, p. 23). For the bicentennial edition of the IUSPA journal we were asked to consider how the landscape for campus security has changed and its relevance today.

Current Landscape

Since 1988, the landscape of campus crime and safety prevention efforts have changed dramatically. The *Student Right-to-Know* and *Campus Security Act* became law in November 1990 with bipartisan support (S.580, 1990). Renamed the *Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act* (CSA) in 1998, the law requires higher education institutions to distribute an annual security report that includes security policies, campus crime statistics and crime prevention efforts. Amendments to the CSA 1990 has focused more explicitly on sexual assault than the original legislation and expanded the reporting mandate to include hate crimes, consistent with federal guidance resulting from student Title IX activism, "BlackLivesMatter, #MeToo, and #TimesUp movements, and the testimony of Dr. Blasey Ford in the Kavanaugh hearings that changed the public discourse on sexual violence (Graham and Konradi, 2018).

Technological changes that have permeated the US over the past decades are increasingly used to enhance campus safety efforts. Many campus building security systems include online locks that can exclude selected individuals' entry in real time, and auditable off-line locks to know who accessed a space and when. Video capabilities are also being used for facial recognition, authentication, and verification. This technology can provide notification to campus security about who is entering campus buildings almost instantaneously.

Nationwide emergency notification systems are used to send text and voice alerts to students and university stakeholders in emergency situations. Technology can digitize the popular "if you see something, say something" mantra, making it much easier to actually "say something" (Parent, 2018, para. 5). By replacing the proverbial "tip line" with a smartphone, campuses receive more calls and better information from the campus community. Smart-notified "safe walks" are now available on smart phones, replacing campus escort programs. Students can map out their route and estimated travel times on Google Maps and select friends, family, and security personnel to be notified. If the student does not push a button during the trip to confirm their safety, their contacts will be notified (Parent, 2018).

Technology is also being used to monitor students' social media. Informed by data scientists, linguistics, scalable technology, and AI-powered language engines, companies are being contracted to search Twitter and Facebook for digital signals that are potential threats to the campus community and immediately notify an emergency response team.

Safety Prevention efforts have also been enhanced. Bystander education programs emerged in the 2000s to empower students to engage in active surveillance of their environment and social norms. These programs help students develop strategies to identify and intervene in situations before racist or aggressive sexual behavior occurs. These programs have been administered in peer education programs, video campaigns, and required pre-enrollment online modules on alcohol education and sexual violence prevention.

Continued Concerns

Despite the attention and improvements to security policies and practices, campus safety remains a concern, with many strategies creating new challenges. Although campus crime reporting and awareness of campus security policies has greatly enhanced since the CSA 1990, there is no evidence that students use this information to make admissions decisions or change their behavior, nor has campus crime decreased (Gregory & Janosik, 2003). Shafer (2007) analyzed sexual assault rates on campuses both before and after the passage of the CSA 1990, and found almost no difference (as cited in Graham and Konradi, 2018). In other words, the Act did not itself prevent campus violence.

Case in point, in 2015, two unescorted MIT students entered 11 unlocked rooms in a Boston University residence hall. One of them sexually assaulted a woman asleep in her residence hall room until she awoke and screamed. The victim sued the university and administrators, arguing that the university gave students a false sense of security in the residence hall and failed to enforce security policies that could have prevented the attack (Khan, 2020). Students reported that, "security is so lax that residents easily swipe their friends into the dorm with their key fobs, and many unauthorized guests sleep in the common areas" (Krantz, 2018, para. 4). This case is reflective of the same issues and arguments that motivated our 1988 article.

The number of deaths caused by shootings on college campuses has also increased. The shooting tragedy at Virginia Tech in 2007, which led to the deaths of 33 people, brought attention to a number of issues that continue to be debated on campuses, in law enforcement agencies, the media, and federal and state legislatures. Some of these include access to firearms on campus, availability of mental health services, and emergency response protocols and communication (Greenberg, 2007).

Emergency notification systems and bystander prevention programs have provided enhanced communication to security personnel and the knowledge and skills for students to enact "see something, say something." These improvements have done nothing to prevent the staff and students with unacknowledged racial and gender biases from imposing their bias in their surveillance and interventions of their potentially dangerous settings/interactions (Graham & Kornadi, 2018). Revelations of the #Metoo, Occupy, and #BlackLivesMatter movements (and many other justice movements) have resulted in critiques of the failure of judicial systems, where issues of systemic and institutional racism, classism, and sexism were at the forefront. When colleges and universities adopt messages of "danger" and focus on what potential victims could do to protect themselves, they often ignore the role of students in perpetrating crimes against one another and the lack of effort to challenge cultural norms that contribute to implicit bias. Societal prejudices coalesce with the unspoken beliefs that the campus community, which remains primarily white and middle class, are most vulnerable to aggression from perceived "outsiders," and they tend to be people of color (Graham & Konradi, 2018). The pervasive myths that frame students of color as more threatening or dangerous affects White students' bystander lens (Graham & Konradi, 2018). These implicit biases complicate the ability to train campus communities on effective ways to enact prevention education that includes how students can take responsibility for their own safety without blaming the victim or perpetuating systemic oppression. While technology offers the promise of improved

crime prevention, a reduction of campus violence is difficult to correlate and it does not eliminate implicit bias.

Additional concerns have emerged with the application of new technologies such as facial recognition and location tracking that give rise to ethical questions about their use. Questions such as: How are we training the staff who respond to these situations in ways that balance the security concerns with the recognition that often these are students and other members of our community who warrant dignity and respect? How are we addressing concerns of implicit bias? How much information is too much information to collect? Who has access to this information and how is it being protected? Who decides who has access to information? How do we balance the need for security with the desire for developing trusting communities and maintaining individual privacy, freedoms, and agency?

Despite the increased legislation, improved safety awareness campaigns, and implementation of a myriad of technological strategies to assist with crime prevention, the challenges of upholding college students' safety remains a relevant topic, with old challenges continuing alongside the introduction of new concerns. For students to be motivated to follow safety policies and recommendations they must perceive their safety is at risk, which contradicts the "at home" feeling we strive to create on campus. Individuals make their own threat assessment in making decisions about how to respond to policies and practices designed to enhance their safety. If students question the validity of the warning or level of risk they are less likely to follow university recommendations (Madden, 2015).

Higher education institutions will always have a duty of care for their students. Security systems and prevention programming have been important enhancements to this duty, but it has not diminished the importance of students' need to take responsibility for adhering to safety and security policies and recommendations. The messaging, however, has been complicated by our increased awareness of the implicit biases inherent in the messages of "safety," and the members of our community asked to enforce and participate in safety interventions. Colleges need to strive to create caring, trusting, and safe campus communities that cultivate students' sense of belonging. When achieved, the conditions for a learning environment where students can thrive and succeed are enhanced. Working to dismantle the legacies of power, privilege and oppression and their influence on individuals' behavior, institutional policies, and campus norms is required to ensure these communities include all students. Finding ways for "both/and" conversations—of community and proactive safety in a world that strives for social justice—is key. Efforts by faculty and staff to teach and mentor students about the context of the world and their responsibility in it are paramount. Universities are influencers of culture and can reinforce the careful and complex interplay between community, individual responsibility, safety, security, and freedom.

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