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## Left in the dark: University of Central Florida students' perception of safety on campus

Amber Krauss  
*University of Central Florida*



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LEFT IN THE DARK: UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA STUDENTS'  
PERCEPTION OF SAFETY ON CAMPUS

by

AMBER LYNN KRAUSS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major Program in Sociology  
in the College of Sciences  
and in The Burnett Honors College  
at the University of Central Florida  
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Thesis Chair: Dr. Amy Donley

## **ABSTRACT**

The last few years a struggle of feeling safe has become more of an issue with all the tragedies that have taken place on college campuses throughout the years. Tragedies like Columbine then Virginia Tech and most recently the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting in Connecticut. This research focuses on student's perception of safety and the issues with violence on campus. The question is how the students, faculty, and staff will react if an incident like this occurs on the University of Central Florida campus.

The intent of this thesis was to explore the student body of UCF students and their perception of safety on campus. Students were questioned on previous victimization and campus related crime. Findings suggest that women overall are more fearful on campus compared to men. Sadly, only about 5.6 percent of my sample knew about the Clery Act. This act states all public schools must post all crimes committed on or near campus on a public website. This was questioned with a simple yes or no answer. By conducting this study I hope to find a better understanding on how UCF student's view safety on campus.

## DEDICATION

For my amazing mother who has done nothing but push me to the best person I can be. For dealing with me when I am most stressed and supporting me no matter what. When times get hard, and they have, you are always there to show me the light at the end of the tunnel. You are and always will be my role model. You are an inspiring women and I am blessed to call you my mom.

To my sister Dixie, your words (although they are not always positive) give me motivation, our struggles give me desire to be stronger, and our relationship reminds me that family comes first no matter what! We are all we have and we have to make mom proud!

To Jessica, you are more than a best friend to me you are a sister. No matter how many fights we get into you always have my back. You always make me see the positive in every situation. You tell me “It will be okay” more than you should. Having you in my life has made the hard times easier. You have been there for me when no one else was. I can’t wait to see what the future brings to us!

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Within the past few decades, crime on college campuses has become a growing issue. As children many people grow up thinking that school is a home away from home or at least somewhere where bullying or bad grades is the worst that will happen. Recently, however, there have been shootings at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University which ended in suicide, even the Terrorists attacks of 9/11. Many may now wonder, when and where are we actually safe?

In reaction to some recent shootings, universities around the nation have instituted safety measures to prevent, or respond to, a shooting event on campus. The University of Central Florida (UCF) is one such university. The current study examines the impact these safety measures have had on UCF students' perception of safety. Specifically, the research examines if students fear being on campus and if the recent school shootings, or the media's coverage of them have impacted their perceptions of safety while on campus.



## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The mass media has increasingly drawn attention to campus crime and highlights a serious problem that has taken place on some campuses. These reports are not lost on parents, students, faculty and staff members (Barton, Jensen, & Kaufman 2010). Recent events such as the shootings at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University which involved mass shootings leaving at least five dead on each campus and ending with the perpetrator committing suicide, have received a lot of media attention and may have altered the way people view the place where they live, work, and/or study. Unfortunately, these attacks have little impact on research and scholarly attention to campus safety (Sulkowski and Lazarus 2011).

Baker and Boland (2011) claim that colleges and universities have started to examine and implement safety measures due to the recent decade of on campus shootings and sexual assaults. In an analysis of college campus safety, 22% of 564 students reported being a victim of at least one type of crime. To lower the percent of victimizations on campus findings suggest that simply adding or changing certain campus structures such as lighting or central walkways can greatly reduce the chances of victimization on campus (Jennings, Gover, & Pudrzynska 2007). By adding extra measures of safety provided by the school such as extra lighting may help reduce the risk because of increasing the chances of an attacker being seen. Research has also considered college students' perceptions of safety on their campuses. This research has considered issues such as victimization, fear of crime, opinions about campus police, and how aware students are about the crime reports mandated by the Clery act.

## **THE CLERY ACT / SAFETY MEASURES**

The Crime Awareness Act and Campus Security Act, later renamed the Clery Act (after Jeanne Clery) after a 19-year-old student was raped and murdered while she slept in her dorm room. This act aims to educate students about campus crime and ongoing events that threaten the safety of those on campus. It requires colleges and universities that receive federal funding to disclose information about campus crime. Failure to do so results in fines or suspends federal funding when universities are habitually noncompliant. The Clery Act mandates crime reporting by campus officials on crimes that occur on campus (Sulkowski and Lazarus 2011). Unfortunately, and despite the mandates of The Clery Act, underreporting is a huge problem (Wilcox, Jordan, & Pritchard 2007).

When individuals are fearful of crime, they may undertake a variety of precautions or behavioral constraints in order to feel safer or to try and actually be safer. (Jennings et al. 2007). These efforts can include many safety measures such as carrying mace or avoiding certain campus buildings. Baker and Boland (2001) surveyed 460 undergraduate students and 158 faculty and staff and found that 69% of students and 54% of faculty and staff did not walk alone when on campus. In addition they found that 55% of students and 43.3% of faculty and staff carried their keys in a defensive manner (Baker and Boland 2001). Fletcher and Bryden (2009) found that over half of the 229 surveyed female employees in their study reported that they mapped out their route on campus with safety in mind. Finally, Jennings et al. (2007) found that many female students take precautionary measures which include restricting their participation in programs such as clubs or organizations on campus because they typically meet later during the day.

### FEAR OF CRIME

Rader and Crossman (2011) found fear of crime was higher for women than men like most studies but for different reasons: men were expected to be “real” men and real men do not fear crime. Fear of crime in general has and always will be a huge issue among college students. Fear of crime, is hard to measure. Wilcox et al. (2007) defined different senses of the mind which deal with emotional feelings, behavioral components, and cognitive instincts but are summarized as having crime specific techniques. This can be connected to fear in certain points of the day or certain places such as fear of crime during the evening would in most instances being higher than fear of crime during the day. All of these senses play a particular rule in fear of crime and are different for every person.

Most victims after being interviewed or examined are asked about the victimization. They may be asked questions about where it occurred, what they were doing before the victimization happened, and if they knew the offender. Nearly 85% of the victims who reported being victimized knew the offender before the victimization occurred (McCreedy and Dennis 1996).

Tomsich, Gover, & Jennings et al. (2011) state that fear of crime on campus is moderate-to-high among college students overall. Fear of crime during the night is much higher than crime during the day when assessed with college students (Jennings et al. 2007). However, data show an increase in fear of crime overall and fear of crime at the individual level are connected to property crime (Dull and Wint 1997) because once victimized of property crime one’s perception of fear expands to cover any crime.

#### VICTIMIZATION

Jennings et al. (2007) reported that more than half of crimes committed on campus were theft and burglaries with ten percent consisting of violent crimes. Dobbs et al (2011) found on average, throughout the academic year around 3% of the female students experience an attempted or completed rape. Rape is less likely to be reported due to the mistaken but common and ingrained belief that the woman, either through actions or dress, “asked for it”. “It is widely demonstrated that rape is a major public health problem on college campuses, with research suggesting that that 3% of college women are raped during a 9-month period and one fifth to one fourth of all women experience a completed or attempted rape during their 4- to 5-year college careers” (McMahon 2010:3).

Personal victimization seems to be an underlying issue around the campus. As previously stated rape is one of the crimes less likely to be reported. At the beginning of the fall semester freshmen, mainly women, are at the greatest risk for threat of rape, this can be referred to as the “Red Zone” (Flack et al., 2008:5). Considering Greek week which is huge for anyone ins Greek life or what people refer to as rush week are when fraternities and sororities become new members. During this week there are always parties and events that follow. This can lead to unwanted sex by someone they may have just met or don’t know at all. There are many well-known campus events happening from fall to winter break such as “rush”, college football, homecoming week, and it is also when basketball season begins. All of these events usually involve a lot of people and normally involves a lot of alcohol. Flack et al. (2008) defined unwanted sex as “any direct physical contact that an individual perceives as both sexual in nature, and as unwelcome.” In their findings they found that 59 first-year female students and 62 second-year female students reported to being victimized of unwanted sex. Females in the sense of Routine Activities Theory are considered suitable targets. This means that females who go to

bars and clubs may put themselves at a greater risk of be victimized. Adding other sources such as alcohol, loud music, and crowds of people may mean the risk of being victimized.

### PERCEPTION OF CRIME ON CAMPUS

Wilcox et al. (2007) found 15.5% of college students thought of the campus being unsafe. Tomsich et al. (2011) found that at night students' perceptions of victimization are almost double of that during the day. They also wanted to examine the reasons behind these fears and how they impact students and faculty. Questions centered on whether the student had been victimized and if so, what type of victimization occurred. The research found that 7% of the student respondents had in fact been victimized of one type of crime on or near campus. In addition, indirect victimization was measured, such as whether the respondent knew someone who was a victim of a crime committed on campus and found that 24% of the students who responded knew someone who had been a victim of campus crime.

In addition, Tomsich et al. 2011 examined other questions including safety measures presented by the campus, students' opinions about campus police and students' perception of campus safety. In other words, researchers assessed overall perceived risk of crime. Students' perception of campus police were found to be positive when it came to effectiveness of preventing crime (Tomsich et al. 2011). Fisher and May (2009) found that 90% of students concluded that university safety officials were visible when it came to campus safety.

Most students are not aware that the Clery Act requires colleges and universities across the United States to report campus crime as well as incidents that occur in residential and commercial areas contiguous to campus (Dobbs et al. 2011). The students, faculty, and staff should be aware of campus violence and make more of an effort to engage in activities that bring

attention to ensure the safety of others (Fletcher and Bryden 2009). Finally, “safety is integral to protecting the rights and maintaining the health of students. Steps toward making campuses safe havens for students, staff, faculty and administration should be considered a priority” (Fletcher & Bryden 2009:2). The current study will examine UCF’s students’ fear of crime on campus.

Since little research has been done to connect the perception of student safety with campus affiliations, such as clubs on campus and sorority and fraternities, this research will also be measuring the perception of fear and how it corresponds to school organizations such as fraternities/sororities and clubs/student organizations.

## **THEORETICAL ORIENTATION**

Routine Activity Theory has a few basic descriptions. First, this theory focuses on the situation of the crime(s). In addition, this theory is not affected or contributed based on social causes. This theory can be looked at in three main parts but in no specific order. Part one is a motivated offender or someone who sizes a moment to commit a crime or may just be at the right place at the right time, part two is a suitable target which can be anyone at any given place and part three the lack of a capable guardian (Cohen and Felson 1979). A capable guardian can be referred to a friend, family member or someone who can witness or intervene and a motivated offender (Barton et. al 2010). These three factors all come into play when applying this theory to a crime.

Using Routine Activity Theory rationales, Barton et. al (2010) found that crimes are more likely to happen when offenders encounter targets and guardianship that is absent or lacking. Therefore, routine activities theory can be applied to this research because this theory can be assumed that crime can be committed by anyone who may have the opportunity. People who have specific “routine” activities may put themselves at a greater risk to be victimized.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

What impact have the safety measures that UCF has implemented had on students' perception of safety?



## **HYPOTHESES**

- Hypotheses 1: Women are in more fear on campus than men
- Hypotheses 2: A large proportion of the older students' will have a positive perception of safety on campus than the younger students
- Hypotheses 3: Students' who are involved in Sorority or Fraternities will have a better perception of safety compared to those who are not involved in Greek life
- Hypotheses 4: Students' who are involved in clubs or other organizations will have a better perception of safety compared to those who are not involved in extracurricular activities.

## **METHODS/SAMPLE**

The data collected from this study came from an online anonymous survey originally created examining the impact that the safety measures that UCF has implemented had on students' perception of safety. The survey was distributed through Qualtrics, an online surveying system. The link to the survey was distributed by previous and some randomly chosen professors and emailed to students. Students were notified that the survey is voluntary and anonymous. After all of the surveys are administered, the data was then statistically analyzed in SPSS. This study consisted of 308 college students from the University of Central Florida. The response rate could not be determined due to the anonymous survey link that was sent out.

## MEASUREMENTS

*Demographics.* The measure for the student's class standing is freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, or graduate student. The measurement for race will have the question modeled from the 2010 U.S. Census which includes White/Caucasian, Black/African American, Latin/Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and other which is where they typed their own response. The age question is a fill-in because students are typically close in age this will allow for some variance. To measure students' sex they had the option to choose male or female. The other variable will be age. Age can be a factor because of experience, knowledge, and relationships. This variable is measured by the respondents themselves and is open-ended for them to type their appropriate age.

*Dependent Variables.* Dependent variables are students' perception of safety. In the current study data will be issued to examine if the safety measure efforts by the University of Central Florida's have really helped the students' perception in a positive aspect. Respondents were asked to rate their fear of crime on campus with likert scale questions which include how safe the respondent feels on campus and rating it from lesser to greater fear. The likert scale will range from never (1) to all of the time (5). This scale will also be used to measure their perception of fear such as how fearful are you of being victimized while walking on campus at night? Students were asked about safety preventatives that were used while on campus such as holding keys in a defensive manner, walking with a cell phone at all times, and locking their car doors before leaving. These questions were likert scale which measured from never (1) to all of the time (5).

*Independent Variables.* The independent variables would be membership in organizations and clubs on campus including fraternity and sororities. Respondents were asked questions about their involvement in these groups on campus and questions that measure their perception of fear on campus.

*Control Variables.* The control variables will be the students living situation. Respondents will be asked about their living situation by simply asking where they live and if there is campus affiliation or no campus affiliation.

## RESULTS

Table 1 shows demographics which were measured using frequencies and measure of central tendency. The data shows that the average person that took the survey was a white female about 20 years old, was a freshman, and belonged to a student organization, but not a fraternity/sorority. The data also showed that about 33 percent were freshmen. There were more students who were in a club/organization versus fraternity/sorority.

Table 1 – Demographics (N = 308)

Characteristic	Percentage
<b>Sex</b>	
Male	25.5
Female	74.5
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
White	69.4
Black/African American	9.5
Latin/Hispanic	10.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	7.5
Other	2.7
<b>Age*</b>	20.57
<b>Class standing</b>	
Freshman	32.7
Sophomore	25.5
Junior	18.4
Senior	21.1
Graduate Student	2.4
<b>Club/Organization</b>	47.1
<b>Fraternity/Sorority</b>	17.2

\*Note: Number presented is a mean.

Students were asked in the survey to rate some of the safety preventatives which are on campus. Overall, the students reported that the preventatives were “good”. The questions were measured on a likert scale which ranged from poor (1) to excellent (5). Police response while on

campus had the highest mean score, 3.15. The lowest mean was the lighting on campus with a 2.86 which was measured fair.

Table 2 - The Ranking of Safety Preventatives on Campus (N = 308)

Measure	Median	Mean	Std. dev.	Range*
Lighting on Campus	3.00	2.86	.967	1-5
Police Response	3.00	3.15	.879	1-5
Pathway Safety on Campus	3.00	3.11	.932	1-5
Information Maps on Campus	3.00	3.10	.993	1-5

\* 1=Poor; 2=Fair; 3=Good; 4=Very Good; 5=Excellent

Next, students were asked about their own usage of some of the safety measures that are present on campus. Table 3 shows that the majority of students' have not used the safety measures on campus such as calling or using campus police or using the blue emergency phones that are located on the campus. About 88.2 percent of students reported not using the campus police for anything. The "Blue" phones offered on campus provide immediate help. It is a phone that lights up and can call emergency officials if necessary. Ninety seven percent of students stated that they have not used the blue phones. This can be interpreted as a good thing because this may mean that students may not need to use the blue phones or the campus police.

Table 3 - Usage of Safety Measures on Campus

Measure	Percentage
Calling or Using Campus Police	
Yes	11.8
No	88.2
Used "Blue" Phones offered on Campus	
Yes	3.0
No	97.0

While on campus victimization is something that is rarely if never reported to officials. Students were asked to answer yes or no when asked about victimization on campus. When they were asked about what type they had to pick the letter which matched the variable of victimization. Almost all students reported to not being victimized on campus. Of that 4.7 percent who were victimized about 71.4 percent of victimization involved theft and about 14.3 percent was sexual assault.

Table 4 - Victimization on Campus (N = 308)

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Students Victimized on Campus	
Yes	4.7
No	95.3
Sexual Assault	14.3
Theft	71.4

In addition to safety measures offered on campus, students were asked about personal safety precautions that they employed while on campus. Overall, the students reported that they used safety measures “sometimes”. These questions were measured on a likert scale which was ranked from never (1) to all of the time (5). Locking car doors while on campus had the highest mean score (4.58). The lowest mean was holding keys in a defensive manner with a 3.00 which is measured as sometimes. Holding a cell phone when alone on campus and locking car doors both had a median of 5.00 which is measured “all of the time”.

Table 5 - Safety Measures Used on Campus (N = 308)

Measure of Safety	Median	Mean	St. dev.	Range *
Holding keys in a defensive manner.	3.00	3.00	1.407	1-5
Check the back seat of the car.	3.00	3.10	1.408	1-5
Locking car doors	5.00	4.58	1.004	1-5
Walk with more than one person.	3.00	3.19	1.093	1-5
Holding a cell phone when alone on campus	5.00	4.14	1.164	1-5

\*1=Never; 2= Rarely; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=All the time.

Different safety measures offered for UCF students such as the UCF alert were asked about throughout the survey. The UCF Alert is an alert sent out from UCF to all students through email and some through text on their cell phone. These alerts include a suspicious package found on campus telling the students to avoid certain areas, weather updates about severe weather in Central Florida, theft or burglary on or near campus. Table 6 shows that the majority of students receive the UCF alert. Students' reported that about 92.3 percent receive the UCF alert through text or email and 33.7 percent of students stated that they did not feel safer receiving the UCF alert.

Table 6 - UCF Alert on Phone or Email (N = 308)

Measure	Percentage
Students currently receiving UCF alert on their phone or email	
<b>Yes</b>	92.3
<b>No</b>	7.7
Students who felt safer receiving these alerts	
<b>Yes</b>	66.3
<b>No</b>	33.7

Students were then asked questions about personal perception of safety while on campus. The questions were measured on a likert scale from never (1) to all of the time (5). Overall, females reported being more afraid when on campus than male students. Male students had the



highest mean score, 4.47 of feeling safe in the classroom. Table 7 shows that with a mean score of 1.20 male students are less afraid of being sexually assaulted on campus.

Table 7 - Males vs. Females Perception of Safety on Campus (T-test)

	Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
I am afraid of being sexually assaulted					
Male	1.20	-10.505	292	.000*	75
Female	2.47				219
I am afraid of being attacked by someone					
Male	1.95	-5.36	292	.000*	75
Female	2.63				219
I feel safe in the classroom					
Male	4.47	1.534	292	.126	75
Female	4.31				219
I feel safe walking alone on campus at dark					
Male	3.92	7.615	292	.000*	75
Female	2.81				219

Notes: \*p < .05 = Significant

\*1=Never; 2= Rarely; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=All the time.

Some questions were asked about previous research, for example, if students had knowledge of the Clery Act before attending UCF. This question was measured with a yes or no answer and also asked students about their knowledge of the Clery Act. The Clery Act which is a federal statute requires all universities and colleges to disclose information publicly about crime on campus and/or near campus. Table 8 shows that that the majority of students have no knowledge of the Clery Act. Around 5.6 percent of students reported having knowledge of the Clery Act.

Table 8 - Knowledge of the Clery Act (N = 308)

Measure	Percentage
Yes	5.6
No	94.4

Other questions were asked about personal perception of safety on campus. The questions were measured with a likert scale which was ranked from never (1) to all of the time (5). Table 8 shows that students who are members and non-members of a sorority or fraternity have common perceptions of safety while on campus. “I feel safe in the classroom” had the highest mean score (4.38). Non-members reported to feeling safe in the classroom “often”. The lowest mean was “I am afraid of being sexually assaulted” with a 2.12 which measured as “rarely”.

Table 9 - Sorority/Fraternity Perception of Safety on Campus (T-test)

Measure	Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
I feel safe walking alone on campus after dark					
Member	2.92	-1.175	289	.241	50
Non Member	3.14				241
I feel safe in the classroom					
Member	4.20	-1.487	289	.138	50
Non Member	4.38				241
I am afraid of being sexually assaulted					
Member	2.22	.636	289	.526	50
Non Member	2.12				241
I am afraid of being attacked by someone with a weapon					
Member	2.54	.732	289	.465	50
Non Member	2.43				241

Notes: \*\*p < .05 = Significant

\*1=Never; 2= Rarely; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=All the time.

Again, personal perception of safety was measured by a couple of questions that were asked in the survey. The questions were measured with a likert scale which was ranked from

never (1) to all of the time (5). The data was analyzed using a T-test which showed that none of the variables were significant. Table 10 shows that students who are members and non-members of a club or organization have common perceptions of safety while on campus. “I feel safe walking alone on campus after dark” and “I feel safe in the classroom” students’ who are members and non-members reported about the same mean. The lowest mean was “I am afraid of being sexually assaulted” with a 2.06 measured rarely.

Table 10 - Club/Organization Perception of Safety on Campus (T-test)

Measure	Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	N
I feel safe walking alone on campus after dark					
Member	3.09	-.117	293	.907	139
Non Member	3.10				156
I feel safe in the classroom					
Member	4.34	-.227	293	.820	50
Non Member	4.36				241
I am afraid of being sexually assaulted					
Member	2.24	1.469	293	.143	50
Non Member	2.06				241
I am afraid of being attacked by someone with a weapon					
Member	2.56	1.804	293	.072	50
Non Member	2.35				241

Notes: \*\*p < .05 = Significant

\*1=Never; 2= Rarely; 3=Sometimes; 4=Often; 5=All the time.

Finally, students were asked in the survey to rate their perception of safety on campus. The question was measured on a likert scale which was ranked from poor (1) to excellent (5). All of the ages reported that their perception of safety on campus was “good”. Ages were grouped from 18-20, 21-25, 26-40, and 41-60. Excellent being the best measurement of perception was ranked highest by ages 26-40 at a percent of 14.3.

Table 11 - Ages and Perception of Safety on Campus (N = 308)

<b>Measure</b>	<b>Ages</b>	18-20	21-25	26-40	41-60	Sig. (2-sided)
						<b>.225</b>
Poor		<b>2.0</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	
Fair		<b>16.6</b>	<b>22.4</b>	<b>42.9</b>	<b>40.0</b>	
Good		<b>42.7</b>	<b>31.6</b>	<b>42.9</b>	<b>60.0</b>	
Very Good		<b>31.2</b>	<b>32.9</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	
Excellent		<b>7.5</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>14.3</b>	<b>0.0</b>	

Pearson Chi-Square Value 15.311

## **DISCUSSION**

Based on the data collected Hypotheses 1 is supported, it showed that women are more fearful of crime on campus than men. This hypothesis was the only one supported by the data. Hypotheses 2-4 were not supported.

Data showed that some of my hypotheses were not significant but I did not take into consideration other outlying factors. For instance, hypotheses 2, I figured since the older students may be more aware of police on campus and safety measures implemented on campus. However, the older you may be more aware of other violent acts on public, private, living facilities as well as up to date on the latest news. Other reasons to explain this might be that older students typically pay attention to the media and the crimes in everyday life, their perception might be skewed because they are more knowledgeable of crimes being committed on a daily basis.

Routine Activities Theory plays a great role in the victimization of sorority members. Although the data showed that most members were generally not that afraid of victimization being a sorority member is a great example of a suitable target. Out of the 308 surveyed students about 14 percent reported to being sexually assaulted. The Greek life has many great aspects to become a member as well as some concerning factors. When the fraternities and sororities get together alcohol is usually involved and they are not normally in a large group. They have mixers to meet each other, get paired up for homecoming, and have parties at their houses. Victimization can easily happen if your capable guardian such as a sorority sister is off with another boy or is too drunk to handle the situation.

On a positive note, it was nice to see that of the 92.3 percent of students who receive the UCF alert on their cell phone or email 66.3 percent reported feeling safer because of these alerts.

Also, with the exception of the lighting on campus most students felt that the safety preventative on campus were good.

When considering the school there are many factors that come into play for implementing certain safety precautions on the campus. Most if not all have to be approved by a suitable member(s) who have authority. Changes could be made like better lighting on campus. The data showed that students ranked lighting on campus as “fair” with a mean of 2.86. Generally, the students ranked every other safety preventative as good but what can UCF do to improve that to very good or even excellent? As a student certain requirements are placed in order to sign up for classes every semester. I would recommend students being asked to take a short survey asking their opinion on these matters and asking what they think UCF should do to better the school as a whole.

The University of Central Florida could benefit from this data and learn changes they may need to address. I would like the officials of UCF to get more involved in a positive light like asking students opinions of these situations and giving them a voice. Although pleasing everyone probably won't happen, the chance to change someone's perception of safety while on campus will be rewarding. As stated before “Steps toward making campuses safe havens for students, staff, faculty and administration should be considered a priority” (Fletcher & Bryden 2009:2).

## **AFTERTHOUGHT**

After I was done collecting my data an incident on the UCF campus took place. An incident that could have not only impacted everyone but taken many lives. I woke up to a text that said “\*UCF Alert \* Tower one evacuated due to suspicious death. Police on scene. Councilors on way” and another “\*UCF Alert\* Suspicious device found in Tower 1. Evacuation remains in effect, garage G closed.” A 30 year old student by the name of James Oliver Seevakumaran planned an attack that if he had executed his plan might have killed hundreds. His plan was believed to be in action the early morning of March 18 after pulling the fire alarm to gather everyone in the hallways and outside of the building. It is assumed that he eventually wanted to open fire killing hundreds of students.

Once back in his room, his roommates were the first targets. One of the roommates was out of town, one of the other roommates left after hearing the alarm, and the third standing face to face with Seevakumaran while holding an assault rifle. The roommate having a chance to flee into his room immediately dialed for 911. Getting ahold of Seminole County, he eventually got connected to the UCF police station. Within minutes of the call armed forces were on scene. When authorities got to Tower 1 where Seevakumaran lived and after searching all of the rooms they found his roommate safe in his room and Seevakumaran dead on the floor. It was too late for Seevakumaran who apparently had one fatal gunshot to the head.

After investigators searched the room they found a few interesting items. What they found they couldn't believe, about four homemade explosives, two rifles, over a thousand rounds of ammo, and what looked to be like a check list with times to execute everything on the list. The last thing to not be crossed off was pull the fire alarm.

While this was all happening once officials were on scene Tower 1 was evacuated. This particular building holds around 500 students. These students were not allowed to return until late that evening. A student and resident Antoinette Thompson of Tower 1 quoted out of an article from CNN said “the way they handled it was disappointing because it started as a fire alarm, nobody said what was going on with a bomb and the shooting. So we were left in the dark.” This quote tells a lot about how most of the students were feeling during this attack which was left in the dark. Although I’m not sure how telling them would lighten the mood of the situation it might lead to more fear or panic.

Unfortunately, only one life was taken but thankfully there wasn’t any massacre or hundreds of students killed like past school shootings. I feel that a lot can be contributed to this positive outcome like his roommate and his fast thinking as well as police officials from Orange County and UCF. We don’t know how the situation might have changed had officials told students what was actually happen. Would their perception be more positive towards safety on campus or would it be more negative?

This thesis was very important to me because I feel that a lot of crime is on campuses across the nation constantly. Personally, I feel safe on campus because of the recent event and how UCF officials reacted to the situation. Crime on campus is becoming an issue and is one issue that is always going to be hard to solve. I hope that more safety preventatives and safety awareness programs will continue to be implemented on campuses across the nation.

If I had to do this thesis over again I would have liked to ask these questions after the event with Seevakumaran and get the students perception of safety after a terrible incident like this. I would ask other questions like if you do live on campus are you comfortable with your surroundings? Has this recent event impacted your perception of safety on campus in a positive



or negative way? There is so much more I want to learn about safety on schools. I just hope that students who feel alone will talk to someone rather than putting innocent people in danger. I hope that more students will see how hard police work when on campus and that they do care about student safety.

## **APPENDIX: SURVEY**

1. Are you at least 18 years or older?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
2. Do you know what the Clery Act is?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
3. Before attending UCF did you research crime statistics about the school?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
4. Do you currently receive UCF alert on your phone or email?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
5. If yes to above, do you feel safer receiving this updates?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
6. Have your perceptions of safety changed since attending UCF?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
7. How would you rank your perceptions of safety since attending UCF?
  - a. 5- poor – 1Excellent
8. I feel safe walking alone on campus at dark
  - a. 5- all the time – 1 – Never
9. I feel safe in the classroom
  - a. 5- all of the time – 1 – Never
10. Which structure are you most afraid of victimization?
  - a. Garage, classroom, student union, dorm room, none of the above
11. Have you ever been victimized on campus? (Sexual assault, theft, harassment, etc.)
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
12. If yes to above, by whom?
  - a. Student
  - b. Faculty or Staff Member
  - c. Other
13. If yes to above, what type of victimization?
  - a. Sexual assault
  - b. Theft
  - c. Harassment
  - d. Bribery
  - e. Other:\_\_\_\_\_
14. If yes above, where?
  - a. In classroom
  - b. Outside the classroom
15. Have you ever witnessed a crime on campus?

- a. Yes
  - b. No
16. If yes above, did you report it?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
17. Have other sources (alcohol or other drugs) been involved with the victimization on you or something you witnessed
- a. Yes
  - b. No
18. Have you ever used the safety measures on campus (campus police, emergency phones, etc.)?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
19. If yes above, how would you rate the help you received
- a. 5- Excellent – 1- poor
20. I am afraid of being attacked by someone with a weapon
- a. 5- All of the time – 1- Never
21. I am afraid of being sexually assaulted?
- a. 5- All of the time – 1- Never
22. How would you rate overall safety on campus? (Lighting, police response, pathways)
- a. 5- excellent – 1- poor
23. How often do you use safety measures when on campus? (Holding keys in a defensive manner, locking your car door, checking your back-seat, etc.)
- a. 5- All of the time – 1- never
24. Are you a member of any student organizations or clubs, not including fraternities or sororities?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
25. If yes to above, did you learn any safety precautions from this program to protect yourself?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
26. If yes to above, do you feel safer on campus because of your organization or club?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
27. Are you a member of a fraternity or sorority?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
28. If yes to above, did you learn any safety precautions from this program to protect yourself?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
29. If yes to above, do you feel safer on campus because of your sorority or fraternity?
- a. Yes
  - b. No

30. What is your current class standing?
- a. Freshmen
  - b. Sophomore
  - c. Junior
  - d. Senior
  - e. Graduate Student
31. Where do you live?
- a. On campus housing
  - b. Off campus housing (campus affiliated)
  - c. In a house or apartment (not campus affiliated) with roommates
  - d. In a house or apartment with parents
32. Sex
- a. Male
  - b. Female
33. Age \_\_\_\_\_
34. What is your racial/ethnic background?
- a. White/Caucasian
  - b. Black/African American
  - c. Latin/Hispanic
  - d. Asian/ Pacific Islander
  - e. Other:\_\_\_\_\_

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