

Does Environmental Design Matter?

FEAR OF CRIME AND VICTIMIZATION REDUCTION ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES



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INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Justice Statistics revealed that college campuses in America have low crime rates in general, however, perceptions of fear of crime among college students have increased gradually given the numerous campus shooting incidents that have occurred in the past decades.¹ Despite the negative perceptions of campus safety that might be attributed to by news coverage and incidents portrayed by media, students' fear of crime on campus has been argued in relation to the physical features of the campus. For instance, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) has been found to improve quality of life and fear of crime and incident reduction because CPTED could form a positive prospect-refuge relationship.²

Nevertheless, only a handful of studies examine the importance of CPTED on campus settings. Hence, this study aims to explore the relationship between students' perception of safety and exterior site features on college campuses such as lighting on paths or parking lots, presence of signage, emergency phones, and CCTV devices. The current study also indicated that there is a great need to address physical attributes and efforts to assure campus safety on college campuses and reduce vulnerability to victimization and fear of crime by providing a safe learning environment for faculty and students.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do site features on campus impact students' perception of fear and risk of victimization?
2. Does prospect, refuge, and escape increase students' perception of campus safety and crime reduction?

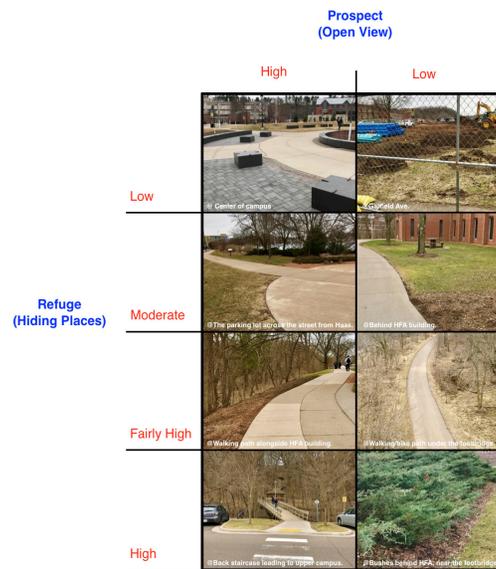
METHODS

The current study systematically examined 20 peer-reviewed journal articles³ published between 1992 and 2016. Keywords such as campus safety, CPTED, physical features, exterior site features, and environmental design were used to identify potential eligible studies to answer research questions. After given an initial review for each articles, two other researchers re-evaluate the quality of work to increase inter-rater reliability. Overall, 80 percent of reviewed observation have been conducted in the United States. Through the systematic review approach, a total of 19,793 participants and 336 universities were utilized to answer research questions in the final research pool.

FINDINGS

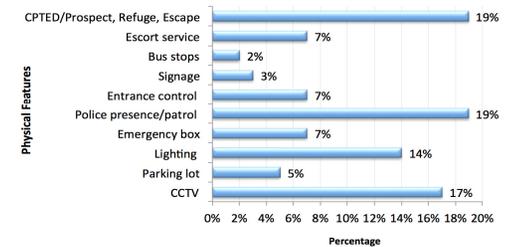
- Students who perceived positive site features on campus such as bright lighting at night, visibility of assistance phone systems and emergency blue call boxes, CCTV installation and police presence feel safer while on campus.
- Conventional approaches (e.g. preventative patrol, police visibility) more effectively shape students' attitudes toward campus security than technological methods (e.g. CCTV, controlled access, 24-hour alert system).
- Lighting, signage and the availability of emergency phones were reported as the most inadequate safety features on campus.
- In general over two thirds of students expressed feeling more unsafe at night compared to the daytime; in addition, female students reported more fearful feelings and concerns of safety than their male counterparts.
- The prospect-refuge hypothesis and environmental design are plausible explanations of individual's perception of safety.

Prospect-Refuge Model: Typology of Perceptions of Safety



Source: Fisher & Nasar (1992), p. 44

Impact Factors on Campus Safety



DISCUSSION

The study concluded that higher education institutions might be able to lower fear and victimization, reduce blind spots of hiding offenders, and prevent incidents through proactive environmental designs. Even though the current study limited its scope to review prior research, this study noted that only a handful of studies address the relationship between prospect-refuge hypothesis and CPTED and campus safety. More research should focus on this issue and prevent crime incidents on campus in this regard. Future research should also explore how increases in prospect and reductions in obstructions may increase the likelihood of escapability and survival when active shooter events occur as well as other victimizations.

REFERENCES

- ¹ Gregory & Patton (2014)
- ² Fisher & Nasar (1992)
- ³ Upon request

UWEC: Lighting Continuum



@Walking/bike path under the footbridge. @Bushes behind Haas Fine Arts, near the footbridge. @Behind Haas Fine Arts. @Back staircase bike rack on Putnam Trail. @Water Street crosswalk behind Haas Fine Arts. @Tunnel under McIntyre Library. @Footbridge. @Center of campus.