

Campus Focus Groups Report: Safety Perception and Experiences of Violence

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Introduction

Background

Although University campuses form their own sort of communities, they mirror the larger society of which they are a part. Foubert and McEwen (1998) estimated that only 12% of sexual assaults were reported to the police in 1995, based on a comparison of the U. S. Department of Justice National Crime Victimization Survey and FBI Uniform Crime Reports for that year. Similar to the larger community, some research suggests that incidences of violence on campus also go unreported. Although the University of Louisville campuses have a low reported rate of violent crimes against women, the University has taken a *proactive approach* to the issues of violence against women on campus. An application was submitted to and subsequently funded by the Department of Justice, Violence against Women on Campus Program to support the creation of a comprehensive program on campus designed to address violence against women issues. A coalition of campus community members, many representing campus groups or departments that have been involved in sexual assault prevention for almost twenty years, took part in the grant application process and the initial design of the PEACC Project (Prevention, Education, Advocacy on Campus and in the Community).

Goals of the PEACC Project

The goals of the PEACC Project include: create an environment of trust, safety, and understanding for female students and victims of violent crimes; develop a multi-disciplinary coordinated university response to identify and better respond to violent crimes against women; heighten university and community awareness about these crimes; establish and/or increase university-based victim services; facilitate training and education programs about the issues at all levels of the University; and enhance of accountability of offenders within the University and community.

By working in collaboration with internal departments/offices, community organizations, and governmental agencies, the PEACC Project hopes to facilitate the establishment of a multi-faceted, multi-tiered approach to prevention and intervention concerning incidents of violence against women on campus. Some of the on-campus partners involved with this comprehensive plan include: the Provost's Office, the Department of Justice Administration, the Women's Center, the Kent School of Social Work, the Department of Public Safety, and the Office of Student Life. Partnerships with community organizations include: The Center for Women and Families, the former Jefferson County Government Office for Women, the Louisville Metro Police Department, the County Attorney, and the Commonwealth Attorney's Office.

Brief Description of the PEACC Project

The PEACC Project has provided violence against women programming for the faculty, staff, and students at the University. The Project began with four main initiatives: public awareness, improved training for professionals, coordinated efforts in advocacy for victims, and review of related University policies and procedures. PEACC staff have provided speakers on a number of topics, including, "Who is a Victim, Who is a Perpetrator?"; "Domestic Violence in the Workplace"; and "Stalking - When Does Attention Become a Crime?"

At the beginning of the PEACC Project, staff included a full time program director, a full time project coordinator, a part time Health Science Campus liaison, and a part time administrative assistant. The staffing pattern has since changed due to reductions in funding levels. Currently, there is a full time program director and a part time administrative assistant. The program director provides direct assistance and referrals to victims in addition to their other activities related to campus awareness and programming.

The PEACC Project won statewide recognition at the June, 2003, *Summit on the Economic Status of Kentucky's Women*, as the only campus based violence prevention program in the Commonwealth. The federal Violence Against Women Office in the Department of Justice recently notified the University that the PEACC Project will be re-funded through 2005, bringing the total federal funding for PEACC since 1999 to just over \$1.1 million. For additional information about the program, to view results of the previous campus-wide survey, and to learn about future events, please visit the PEACC website located at <http://www.louisville.edu/provost/womenctr/peacc/>.

Prevalence of Violence against Women

Intimate partner violence is primarily a crime against women. In 1998, females were the victims in 72% of murders that took place as the result of intimate partner violence and were the victims of about 85% of all nonlethal relationship violence. Women age 16 to 24 experienced the highest per capita rates of intimate partner violence at 19.6 victimizations per 1,000 women (Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics).

Locally, domestic violence has been the largest crime-related call for service for local police, representing over 36,000 calls for service each year. One out of three women will be abused at some point in their lives. A person is murdered in the state of Kentucky once every four days in a domestic violence related incident.

Rape continues to be a major type of violence perpetrated against women of all ages with a 1 in 4 risk estimate for college age women (this estimate is 1 in 5 if attempted rape is not included). Koss (www.vawprevention.org, viewed 7-30-02) reports that life time prevalence rates of above 15% have been supported. Tjaden and Thoennes (1998) found that 17.6% of women reported having been raped and that 76% of those women raped and/or physically assaulted after age 18 were attacked by current or former husband, a cohabiting partner or a date. In a national sample of 3,472 college students, 8.3% of the women reported being raped in the previous 6 to 9 months, with 4% occurring off campus (Fisher, Cullen, & Lu, 1998).

Effects of Violence

Intimate partner violence has a serious, negative impact on many aspects of women's lives, including physical health, mental health, and economic well-being. There is general agreement that battered women represent a significant proportion of all emergency department patients (Kurz, 1987, 1990; McLeer & Anwar, 1989; Ochs, Neuenschwander, & Dodson, 1996; Rand, 1997; Stark & Flitcraft, 1979, 1996). Up to half of all battered women are abused during pregnancy, with physical abuse often beginning or escalating in pregnancy (Helton, McFarlane, & Anderson, 1987) and sometimes resulting in increased morbidity in both mothers and infants (Martin, English, Clark, Cilenti & Kupper, 1996; Parker, McFarlane, & Soeken, 1994). Plichta (1996) reported that battered women were significantly more likely to define their health as fair or poor; were more likely to have been diagnosed with sexually transmitted diseases and other gynecologic problems; and to say they had not received needed medical care.

Axelrod, Myers, Durvasula, Wyatt, and Cheng (1999) found that women who had experienced relationship violence reported significantly more depression and anxiety than non abused women, and that 58% of a community sample of battered women ($N = 415$) evidenced significant PTSD symptoms. It has also been found that symptoms of depression and anxiety increase as the severity of physical attacks escalate (Cascardi & O'Leary, 1992; Orava, McLeod, & Sharpe, 1996). Straus and Gelles (1990) have reported that seriously assaulted women experience twice the number of headaches, four times the rate of depression, and five and one-half times more suicide attempts than women who are not experiencing violence in their lives.

The *National Women's Study* (Kilpatrick, 2002) examined the impact of rape on mental health and found that rape victims were 6.2 times more likely to experience PTSD than women who were not victims of violent crime (31% vs 5%). Thirty percent of all rape victims had experienced at least one episode of major depression.

Shepard and Pence (1988) found that many of the battered women in their study were employed but work performance and absenteeism were affected by the abuse experienced. Similarly, a study by Browne, Salomon, and Bassuk (1999) reported that

only one third of women who had been victims of domestic violence were able to keep their full-time jobs for six months or longer during the year following a report of domestic violence. Moe and Bell (2004) found that the violence interfered with ability to find and maintain employment even among women who had substantial education and had developed lucrative careers prior to abuse. In a survey conducted by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, 44% of cities surveyed identified domestic violence as the primary cause of homelessness (Waxman & Reny, 1997).

College women who have been raped are more likely to drop out especially if it was an acquaintance rape and the attacker is also on campus (Sampson, www.cops.usdoj.gov, viewed 8-1-02). Consequences of sexual harassment and other types of victimization include school-work related problems, such as, decreased morale, increased absenteeism, lower grades, decreased satisfaction with career goals, and damage to interpersonal relationships on campus (Paludi, 1996). In one study, 29% of female graduate students reported a loss of academic or professional opportunities and 14% reported lowered grades or financial support as the result of sexual harassment on campus (Schneider, 1987).

Purpose and Objectives of Research

This current research is a follow up and extension of the campus wide survey of faculty, staff, and students that was conducted during Fall 2000 and Spring 2001. The previous survey utilized a stratified random sample and relied almost exclusively on quantitative methodology.

In contrast, the research detailed here used qualitative methodology, specifically focus groups, to address in more detail some issues raised in the primarily quantitative survey.

One finding of the previous survey was that although many students reported experiencing a range of violence in their lives (usually not occurring on campus), they were not aware of and did not utilize relevant resources available to them on campus. This finding has raised questions about how best to make students aware of available resources and what attitudes or barriers may exist to resource utilization.

The overall purpose of this research was to gather information regarding campus safety perceptions and awareness of available resources from groups who are generally considered to have been traditionally under represented (i.e., African-American students, International students). One non-student group, physical plant staff, was included because it is believed they may provide other important and unique perspectives on the issues at hand. The information collected will ultimately be used to inform and improve future content and format of information provided to students and other regarding resource availability. See Research Methodology section below for full details on participants and recruitment.

Research Methodology

Focus groups were used to gather the needed information. Five focus groups consisting 4 to 10 women were conducted. Open ended questions were used for the purpose of the structuring and encouraging the discussions (See Appendix A for Focus Group Questions).

Participants

Participants were female adults age 18 and over who were students or physical plant staff members at the University of Louisville. Although our goal was to hear from as many different members of the campus community as possible, budgetary restraints limited the actual number of focus groups conducted. Therefore, we met with our campus partners and prioritized five groups out of a wide range of possible groups under discussion (i.e., students with disabilities; student athletes; faculty) for recruitment. One focus group was held for each of the following groups of *women*: African American students; Health Science campus students (female students from a variety of disciplines); Gay, Bisexual, Lesbian and Transgendered (GBLT) students; International students; and physical plant staff. Staff and students were not invited to participate in the same focus groups. Our goal was to recruit at least eight women for each planned focus group.

Recruitment was accomplished by direct appeal and by use of the “snowball” technique (i.e., Padgett, 1998) through asking appropriate campus organizations to assist in identifying students or staff who may be able to address the topics of the focus groups. For each group we wished to recruit, we met with the corresponding appropriate campus organizations (i.e., historically Black sororities for African American student group, commonGround for GBLT student group, etc.) to explain the project and invite members to participate in a focus group. Potential participants either signed up at that time or called in at a later time to volunteer. Flyers with project and contact information were also made available at various places on campus as appropriate (See Appendix B for Recruitment Flyer). Compensation was offered to participants in the form of a \$25 honorarium to acknowledge the contribution of their time to this project; participants were paid in cash at the time of the focus group.

Procedure and Format of Focus Groups

Each focus group consisted of 4 to 10 women. Open ended questions were used for the purpose of the structuring and encouraging the discussions (See Appendix A for Focus Group Questions).

All Belknap campus focus groups were held in the Department of Justice Administration conference room except for the physical plant staff group, who requested that we meet with them in their conference room. The Health Science focus group was convened in a

conference room on that campus. All locations afforded privacy to the participants. None of the focus groups lasted more than 90 minutes.

After welcoming the participants to the group and giving them a brief overview of the project goals, an informed consent form was provided and any questions answered. Participants' attention was drawn to the nature of any group setting and how this relates to confidentiality issues. It was emphasized that they were being asked to participate in a focus group, which is not in any way a therapy group, and that personal disclosures of any kind were not required or expected.

The focus groups were audio taped and transcribed for later analyses. Open ended discussion about the designated questions was encouraged and occurred. Although participants were also encouraged to hand in any additional written comments, none were received.

Description of Participants

In order to protect privacy, detailed demographics were not recorded. However, some general observations can be made about the composition of the various focus groups. Although a wide age range was exhibited, most students appeared to be close in age to what is generally considered to be traditional for students (in their twenties). The one group of staff appeared generally to be older as might be expected, and was mostly Caucasian. While most students fit the University's commuter profile and lived off campus, dorm residents were represented in each group. The African American and International groups were composed of undergraduate and graduate students. Professional dental, medical, and nursing students were represented in the Health Science Campus group. The International group included women from a diverse group of countries: China, Equador, Canada, India, Pakistan, Africa (as stated by student), and Dubai.

Protection of Human Participants and Confidentiality of Data

Informed consent procedures were described in the above section. (See Appendix E for Informed Consent Form). Since it was possible that participants *might* experience psychological discomfort from group participation, a number of safeguards were put into place to reduce potential risks.

First of all, it was stated to participants that they were **not** being asked to disclose their own experiences of victimization or any other personal details. However, it is always a possibility that someone may want to disclose an incident or may become upset by the discussion. In either case, Dr. Bledsoe and Dr. Sar were present to speak with any participant individually and make appropriate referrals. A trained graduate research assistant was on site as well. Both Drs. Bledsoe and Sar have been trained in group techniques and have conducted various types of groups, including focus groups. Care

was taken to gently redirect any discussion that moved toward overly personal disclosure. Finally, to address the issue that a participant might become upset or want to disclose at a later time, a listing of contact persons and resources was provided to all participants at the end of the focus groups (See Appendix D for Resource and Contact List). Contact information for Drs. Bledsoe and Sar was included on this Resource and Contact List. No participants appeared upset during the focus groups, and no one has contacted either Dr. Bledsoe or Dr. Sar subsequent to the focus groups.

In order to safeguard the data and to help insure confidentiality, access to the tapes and transcripts is limited to Drs. Bledsoe and Sar and one trained graduate student. The graduate student signed a confidentiality agreement (See Appendix F for Confidentiality Agreement) and received research ethics training.

Type of Data Collected and Questions Used

With focus groups, the data collected consists entirely of the comments, observations, and opinions shared by the participants during the focus groups and is qualitative in nature. Records were kept regarding how many students participated in each focus group (i.e., 7 African American women). However, no other specific demographic information was collected from participants since probability sampling was not employed.

A set of ten open ended questions were constructed in collaboration with other campus partners in order to structure the focus groups and to encourage discussion. See Appendix A for a complete list of the questions. Examples of these questions include:

- § What factors do you think might influence how safe students feel on campus? Do you think these opinions would generally be shared by others across campus?
- § Do you think there is under reporting of violent crimes against women on UofL's campus? Please share any ideas you have why this is or is not a problem.

Results

Overview of Analytic Approach. A qualitative approach, primarily grounded theory and content analysis, was used to analyze the transcriptions of the focus group discussions. No quantitative statistical analyses were used as this type of approach is not relevant to focus group data. Using grounded theory, data was examined for emerging identifications and definitions of issues from the participants' point of view, as well as, any suggestions made by students that might improve awareness of existing resources. First, details of information provided by each focus group will be provided, including many quotes from participants to illustrate the information.

Health Science Campus students (HSC)

- § HSC students spent time discussing panhandlers: Were they dangerous? Were they aggressive? What was acceptable behavior by the panhandlers? Were where they located? What caused a student to increase her risk evaluation of the panhandler? Didn't they have the right to panhandle?
- § Repeated mention of thefts.
- § More concern about safety inside the buildings; presence of unauthorized persons; how could you tell if they belonged there? How to handle this?
- § Sometimes more of an "us versus them" theme emerged; talk of the projects being so close.
- § Not every woman in the group agreed with this assessment of the safety level. One student said, "I walk to school as well in the morning. I have never been approached by anybody. I live in... [off campus housing adjacent to HSC, deleted to protect student's privacy] and no one has ever approached me. For some reason, I guess I may be the only one here that feels safe."
- § Some allusions to Belknap campus and awareness of differences. If services were on Belknap, they wouldn't know about them. Even if they were aware of services on Belknap, they would not have time to go there.

African American students

- § African American women saw diversity and safety as parallel issues, “their taking an initiative to actually do something about implementing diversity. There should be an issue of also implementing safety.”
- § The group of African American students generally agreed that most information was received by word of mouth from trusted friends or others on campus.
- § Some in the group stated that verbal harassment was much more likely to occur on campus than any physical assault. Group participants weren’t sure how likely it would be that other students would report verbal harassment because some felt that a strong women might just shrug it off. The group went on to provide examples of this type of verbal harassment: “in the parking lots, there might be a group of guys. They might say things and sometimes they grab at you when you’re walking by”. And another participant stated, “But you don’t want to respond because it will make it worse and you keep walking, you don’t look at them, you ignore them. A lot of times, you might not even know them.”
- § Students were of the opinion that upperclass male students “went after” the freshman women and that freshman women were often not prepared for campus life. The group agreed that many women students, especially freshmen, were very impressed by athletes and this might put them at additional risk. “A lot of girls fall into that, ’oh, I got a football player.”
- § This group of students seemed to have more concerns about the geography on Belknap campus and questioned whether orientation could spend more time making sure they knew their way around. It seems that this group did not have as well formed mental map of the campus and as if they experienced the campus as larger than other groups. One safety strategy the group identified as important was to “know where you are going,” and it may be that this group needs more information as part of this strategy. For example, a comment was made that “off campus you know what you are getting into; know where you are going; but on campus you don’t always know.”

International students

- § This group of students spent more time explicitly discussing “within group” cultural issues than the other groups. For example, concern was expressed by these women that there was reluctance to make a report of relationship violence if the perpetrator was also a member of the same ethnic or cultural group. This type of reporting would be seen as “betraying your own group.” There was discussion about the lack of agreement as to how to handle such situations and keep one’s own reputation intact.
- § Opinions varied on whether they were safer in the U.S. than in their countries of origin. “Violence is everywhere regardless where you are, but here it is different because everyone judges you because you are not like them.” And from another student, “I somewhat feel safer here than in my country. I don’t like these ethnic issues, but the violence in is very high..” (country of origin deleted to protect participant’s identity). And from another student, “I have noticed a big difference between my country and here on the issue of safety. Here there are a lot of resources. I can remember when I was in the Humanities building the first time, I went to the restroom and I saw a sign that said, ‘If you have been raped, then push the button.’ I will never forget that. I would never dream of something like that in my own country.”
- § Cultural issues relating to reporting of violence were discussed. One student talked about a friend who could not “comfortably go to someone because they would not understand the extremity of the crime, what it meant to her.” From another student, “There is fear of making a complaint against someone that might have a connection.” And from another student, “A rape is a rape no matter where you are, but a rape in terms of how it is viewed in different cultures can mean the end of the life of a woman.”
- § Several students expressed concern that International students who were new to the campus were often targeted for sexual violence. “International women are seen as weak. Men take advantage of that. Some women are raped. Sometimes fraternity boys have told them that is the custom in the U.S.”

GBLT students

- § Students wondered if sensitivity training had or could be offered to the professors. More than one student provided examples of negative interactions with or intimidation from professors (male and female). For example from one student, “If I hear anti-gay comments coming from a professor, I am not going up to them for class related issues. I am not going to ask them anything if I can avoid it. This has affected my grades before.” Another student stated, “There was a professor who refused to help me catch up because I was a lesbian. He told me that I might as well drop the class because he was not going to help me and I was ill for about three weeks. As a freshman, I was not about to confront that.” And from a third group member, “I was intimidated by a professor by his manner of speaking, by the words he used, he was violent in his office while he was standing there and it scared me. I did not do well in that class. This professor threw a chair and used curse words. It was not directed at me but it was in my presence.”
- § Most of the group agreed there was a problem with under reporting of incidents on campus. “There is a fear of retaliation should you report it. I got a note under my door (in on campus dorm). It said, ‘We don’t want you here dike.’ But I never reported it because it did not seem like it would do any good. If I knew who did it, then they would do something about it.” And from another student, I know that undergrads in particular are terrified of the ramifications of reporting on their grades like with that professor. I could probably go with my unit to report it but that would be as far as I would go.”
- § Students reported experiencing and witnessing incidents on campus. “I was walking on the new walking track when a car pulled up on the sidewalk and sexually harassed me verbally. I got the license plate number, ran across the street to DPS and reported it. This was during a walking class ... It was seven in the morning and I gave them a description of the car, the color, and the license plate number and three weeks later he [DPS officer] said he had talked to the boy.” Another student stated, “Last Saturday I was walking with a friend and I heard a girl screaming in front of the parking garage. It was a man who had a hold on the girl. We called the police and the Louisville police responded before University police got there. It scares me.” Another viewpoint from a different student: “I would trust them [DPS] long before I would trust LPD, probably because of working with commonGround. I have hung out and talked with them at events. They have always been very helpful.”
- § GBLT students agreed with other groups in saying that “generally people stay away from it [counseling at Student Health Services]. They don’t go because there is a stigma attached to it, it is so public. It is in a high traffic area, right outside the parking garage. You know who is going in and who is going out.”

Physical Plant staff

- § This group of female staff seemed overall to have fewer safety concerns. Most safety concerns were directly related to working conditions. For example, one member talked about concerns about staff working at night in isolated locations with few people around. There was concern expressed about cleaning staff having to go into buildings starting at 4 a.m. and the buildings not always being locked by security.
- § Most members expressed satisfaction with the way DPS responded if called. More than one woman thought that DPS was more responsive and helpful than LMPD, mostly due to the larger volume of calls that LMPD must respond to.
- § Like the student groups, staff also talked about some areas on Belknap campus not being as safe as other areas. There was a complaint about the lack of security cameras near the south end of campus.
- § Group members reported not hearing of crime occurring on campus, but expressed confidence that if a crime were reported that it would be addressed appropriately.

Thematic Analyses

Common themes across all student groups:

- § Need for more lighting on campus. Every group mentioned this issue.
- § Would like for Department of Public Safety (DPS) to be more visible on campus, including on foot or bike.
- § Concern expressed about walking alone after dark; often had developed some strategies to deal with this (rarely used campus security escort, sometimes informally met other students on same schedule).
- § On both campuses, some areas were singled out as being more threatening than other locales at night. Physical plant group identified the Houchens Building and the Human Resources Building and surrounding areas; GBLT group identified walking from Davidson Hall to Ekstrom Library and also the 4th Street area; likewise African American students were concerned about walking from the dorms to Ekstrom Library at night and about the 4th Street area. International students also were concerned about the 3rd and 4th Street areas and working in the library late on Friday and Saturday nights.
- § Many women stated they had a female friend or knew of a woman who had been either been assaulted on campus or “had fought someone off” (in one instance when walking from Davidson Hall to parking lot near Speed School after night class)

- § On the other hand, many women stated that they felt safe on campus.
- § Most frequent on campus resources identified were DPS, faculty, and a specific administrative or faculty person that the student knows and trusts. Some students mentioned residence hall staff as very helpful.
- § Most frequent off campus resources identified were Center for Women and Families (CWF) and Louisville Metro Police Department (LMPD)

Some reoccurring themes:

Awareness of and accurate information about available resources is uneven.

- § Students are not aware of many of the resources available on campus. For example, many students were only vaguely aware of student counseling at Student Health Services. Several HSC students knew the name of counselor available on that campus and would consider talking to him. However, they weren't sure that they could talk to him about topics other than academic stresses. In addition, some attitudes that were expressed maybe acting as barriers to access for some of the services of which students were aware. For example, many participants said they would never use or recommend counseling services at Student Health Services to another student because access to the building was too public.
- § The security escort service continues to be a topic for discussion. Many students were not aware it existed; some thought you could only use the blue security phones to request; both good experiences (timely responses) and bad experiences were reported (didn't show up in a timely matter; didn't know campus or how to get them to their car in a university parking lot; put out of car in an inappropriate place). Some of the questions students had: What is available, when, who are the persons providing the service? Do they have to wait outside or can they stand at a window inside? Students do not have adequate information on this resource.

Privacy concerns were shaped by group membership.

- § Many students expressed privacy concerns and concerns about gossip. These concerns were shaped by the group membership. For example, if a medical student talked to another medical student about a personal issue, such as, a sexual assault, it was believed that soon all medical students would know about it. They spend their time in the same classes so it becomes a small community. With the International students, gossip was a major concern. They felt that people would talk about you in a very negative way, and this could be very damaging to your reputation. Although arising for different reasons, privacy and personal space were difficult for both these groups to establish.

Some expectations of differential treatment emerged.

- § African American, International, and GLBT groups expressed expectations of differential treatment on campus. This expectation was not expressed by the HSC group. In fact, HSC students seemed to be the group most convinced that if they needed help, they would receive it. Their expectation was that this assistance was available mostly within the confines of their particular school.
- § International students had experienced numerous instances of post-9/11 harassment. They were verbally threatened and called names; women were chased in the parking lots. When one student reported an incident, she was told that if you don't have a name to report, we (University) can't do anything about it. A student reported being in the library and being told to get out of the room. She felt there was nothing she could do about this kind of thing, "They come up to you like you are nothing. You can't do nothing because nobody is going to do nothing if you need help. You have to take care yourself." This level of threat was the worst immediately following 9/11 but concerns and fears continue.

Faculty were often cited as resources, and possible barriers were also discussed.

- § Faculty were mostly talked about in positive terms as resources that could be trusted. Students made comments about the first person they would contact if they had a problem was a faculty member known to them. They believed that faculty member would help see that they got whatever services needed. On the other hand, some students reported very serious concerns about some professors. The GLBT group was the most consistent in expressing this concern. They talked about professors creating an unsafe environment where students could not learn by making openly homophobic remarks in class and to individual students at times. The International group also cited numerous examples of how the faculty or staff needed more openness to and knowledge about different cultures. Students also cited the need for better ways to deal with the language barriers.
- § A number of students from both campuses cited rudeness of staff as a barrier. Several students expressed doubt that they would receive needed services for violence-related issues, if staff could not receive students in a professional manner in a routine office or clinic situation. HSC students talked specifically about rudeness of University Hospital personnel. International, GLBT, and African American students wondered if staff and faculty had or could receive training regarding diversity issues.

Student perceptions of Department of Public Safety varied.

- § Both African American and GBLT groups expressed that knowing the DPS officers either helps (GBLT) or might help (African American). The GBLT group seemed to have a better opinion and working relationship with DPS during on campus events. African American students didn't report inappropriate behavior by DPS during on campus events, but felt that DPS was not comfortable and that there was added tension. They saw a difference when predominately white groups had events. DPS more relaxed, chatted with students more, and let event come to a more gradual end than with African American student events. With African American events, students state it was more like "OK, the event is over, let's clear this area now." This statement from an African American student, "If we're having a function, I wouldn't want to call them to help us out. But if I was having a personal problem, I would feel more comfortable with calling."

Although outside threats to safety on campus were discussed by most groups, the HSC group spent the most time discussing this issue.

- § The permeability of the campus to the community was noted by all but the International group. This issue was highlighted most by the HSC group, who discussed panhandlers; unauthorized persons in the buildings; rapes in the nearby community (Dosker Manor); and intense verbal harassment on TARC buses to the point that the student would get off at wrong stops to get away from the harassment. In general, more concern about violence from strangers was expressed by the HSC group as compared to the other groups.

There was a lack of agreement among students about whether or not under reporting of crimes on campus was a major problem.

- § Opinions on possible under reporting of crime on campus varied a great deal among the participants in all groups. Many students stated that if a crime happened on campus, they would hear about it. Others agreed, but were convinced under reporting occurred because they knew of more rapes than the official numbers reflected. Students varied on the causes for this under reporting - some thought victims reported or tried to report and that the University suppressed these reports due to concerns about public image. Others thought that victims were reluctant to report due to the nature of the crime. For example, "I think a lot of women are hesitant to report date rape because it makes them feel, you know... 'how could I have been so ignorant?'"

Summary of suggestions made by groups to improve campus safety

HSC students

- \$ Have more access card readers to buildings to prevent strangers from coming in
- \$ Provide more funding to make campus safe
- \$ Increase lighting in the parking areas
- \$ Feel safer when security is around and visible
- \$ Remove all junk (old furniture, etc.) from bathrooms because it creates possible hiding places for intruders

African American students

- \$ Need more advertisement on escort services; many are not aware of it as a service
- \$ Use flyers and signs to advertise services available
- \$ Make more announcements in class about available resources
- \$ Resources could be listed on the back of student ID cards for easy reference
- \$ Travel in groups for safety
- \$ Would feel more secure with more lighting; more public safety presence and patrolling
- \$ Increase information during campus orientation about geography of campus
- \$ Include more information about on how it will be to live in a dorm, co-ed style
- \$ In orientation, emphasize how to deal with issues regarding drugs and alcohol; dealing and relating with upperclassmen; athletes; being away from home for the first time. Provide this information multiple times in other settings on campus..

International students

- \$ Need to fix broken lights
- \$ Need more lighting in the parking lots
- \$ Presence of DPS increases sense of safety
- \$ Increased sensitivity to cultural differences relating to reporting violence crime
- \$ Hire more international professionals to help address the language barriers and to increase culture competence
- \$ Provide more diversity training and exposure to other cultures to staff at Counseling Center

GLBT students

- \$ Need good lighting on campus to increase safety
- \$ Increased security presence and patrolling increases feelings of safety
- \$ Address certain unsafe areas, such as, walking from Davidson Hall to the library and 4th Street
- \$ Some professors need sensitivity training on GLBT issues

Physical Plant staff

- § Make sure all buildings are locked on schedule at night
- § Leave more lights on inside buildings at night for staff coming to work on night shifts
- § Regarding sexual harassment, more enforcement is needed by the University beyond requiring training for “repeat offenders”

Summary and Discussion

We found that common themes, especially those more specific to the physical plant of the campus, echo the findings of our previous campus survey. For example, every group discussed the need for more lighting on campus and would like for Department of Public Safety to be more visible on campus. All groups expressed concern about walking alone after dark.

Similar to the survey findings, the most frequent **on campus** resources identified were the Department of Public Safety, faculty, and a specific administrative or faculty person that the student knows and trusts. Some students mentioned residence hall staff as very helpful. The most frequently cited **off campus** resources identified were the Center for Women and Families and the Louisville Metro Police Department.

New information and a number of findings not learned from the previous survey emerged. For example, many students expressed privacy concerns in very specific contexts. The content of these privacy concerns differed by group, and privacy was a more central concern to some groups than others. International students expressed sometimes intense distress over in-group gossip. This group of students discussed the ever-present nature of gossip and its potential to cause serious damage to their reputation. These concerns were noted to have a major impact on how they might view reporting a violent crime and also what type of support they might expect from their peer group and families. On the other hand, professional students on the Health Sciences campus experienced lack of privacy due the small community that develops based on their structured class schedules. Most students attend classes with the same students within their discipline. Although this cohesiveness was seen as a possible source of support in many ways, students discussed the concern that if they shared a very private matter with one of their trusted classmates soon the entire cohort would be aware of it. Thus, this “small community” atmosphere could also limit the ability or willingness to turn to peers for support in reporting incidents of sexual violence or relationship violence and receiving needed assistance.

African American, International, and GLBT students expressed expectations of differential treatment on campus related to specific issues. Students on the Health Science Campus seemed to be the group most convinced that if they needed help, they would receive it. Their expectation was that this assistance was available mostly within the confines of their particular school. Both African American and GLBT groups expressed that knowing the DPS officers either helps (GLBT) or might help (African American). The GLBT group seemed to have a better opinion and working relationship with DPS during on campus events. African American students didn't report inappropriate behavior by DPS during on campus events, but felt that DPS was not comfortable and that there was added tension. International students talked about their

concerns that if they experienced verbal harassment or threats, there was nothing they could do about it and that no one would help because they are seen as different.

Although permeability of campus to community was noted by all but the International group, this issue as a possible threat to campus safety was most highlighted by the HSC students. The Health Science Campus students seemed to be more concerned about violence from strangers and discussed the presence of panhandlers, unauthorized persons in buildings, rapes in the nearby community, and intense verbal harassment on TARC buses. These concerns can be understood in terms of the location of the Health Science Campus and the hours that many of these students work. However, it also raises the concern that they might not be as aware of the very real dangers of sexual violence from persons known to them and the full range of relationship violence which based on national statistics is the more likely source of this type of danger.

Unlike the survey, the focus group setting allowed participants from diverse backgrounds to share their particular perspective on the issues in much greater depth and detail. When statements were made, researchers could ask for clarification or more detail if needed. Even though many common themes emerged, it is important to keep in mind that for the most part there was no one opinion - positive or negative - held by a group on any facet of the issues under discussion. Some students believed that under reporting of violence against women on campus is a very serious problem; other students in the same group disagreed. Although students did not agree about the performance level of the Department of Public Safety, many participants across groups indicated they would likely contact DPS if the need arose. And on the overall estimate of safety on campus, many divergent viewpoints were expressed. Having an opportunity to hear a full range of expression of participants' views and concerns has provided very construction input for the continuing efforts and future planning by the PEACC Program. The many quotes included in this report provide a rich portrayal of how safety issues are experienced through the eyes of the individual student or staff person. This information is invaluable as we continue our work to increase understanding of the very difficult subject of violence against women within the context of a campus community.

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Appendix A: Focus Group Questions

1. What factors do you think might influence how safe students feel on campus? Do you think these opinions would generally be shared by others across campus?
2. Do you think there is under reporting of violent crimes against women on UofL's campus? Please share any ideas you have why this is or is not a problem.
3. If you knew someone else who had been the victim of relationship violence, sexual assault or rape, can you think of any resources you might suggest to them?
4. [If no campus resources suggested] Any resources on campus that you would suggest?
5. What are the reasons for you suggesting any of these resources? Any barriers to you suggesting any of these resources?
6. What do you think would happen if someone reported a problem on campus? Do you think these opinions would generally be shared by others across campus?
7. What do you think increases risk to women for relationship violence, sexual assault or rape on campus? What about off campus?
8. What do you think decreases risk to women for relationship violence, sexual assault or rape on campus? What about off campus? Do you think these opinions would generally be shared by others across campus?
9. What questions do you think we should ask the next group that we haven't asked here?
10. Is there anything else we haven't talked about that anyone would like to comment on?

Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer

Participants Needed for Focus Groups

We are currently recruiting [specify group here, i.e., African American women] for a focus group to discuss “Understanding Violence Against Women Issues on Campus”. This project is being conducted in conjunction with the PEACC Project.

You will be invited to participate in one focus group lasting approximately 1 ½ hours. The focus group will take place on campus. You will be offered \$25.00 as an honorarium to acknowledge the contribution of your time to this project.

You must be a student [or staff person] at the University of Louisville and be 18 years old or older to participate.

Please contact Alethea Goodridge at 852-2919 or email amgood04@gwise.louisville.edu for more information.

Appendix C: Receipt Form

This is to acknowledge receipt of \$25.00 honorarium for myself for my participation in the project "Understanding Violence Against Women Issues on Campus". I understand that this is the total monetary amount that I will receive.

Signature

Date Signed

Printed Name

Appendix D: Resource and Contact List

First of all, we would like to thank you for your time and effort in participating in the focus group. We believe that this effort will make an important contribution to understanding our campus culture and to improving it if needed.

We realize that even though we have not asked for any personal information from you, just participating in a focus group that discusses violence against women might cause you to think about personally upsetting experiences. We would like you to have the following list of resources and contact persons in case you would like to talk about the focus group, personal issues that might have been brought up by your participation in the focus group, or if you are experiencing any problems that might benefit from these types of services.

Prevention, Education, Advocacy on Campus & in the Community (P.E.A.C.C.)

Contact: Sharon LaRue 852-7014
Cheryl Neal 852-7014

Women's Center (Belknap Campus) 852-8976

Contact: Mary Karen Powers, Director
Lisa Huber, Assistant Director

Student Counseling Services (Belknap) 852-6585

Services are available at no cost to currently enrolled undergraduate and graduate students on both Belknap and Health Science Campuses.

Student Counseling Services (Health Science Campus) 852-0996

Contact: Bill Foreman, M. Ed., Coordinator, Student Counseling Services

Center for Women and Families 581-7222

Faculty or Staff ONLY:

Faculty-Staff Assistance Program Stuecker & Associates 452-9227

Study Sponsors

Linda K. Bledsoe, Ph. D. 852-0421
Bibhuti K. Sar, Ph. D. 852-3932

Appendix E: Informed Consent

[Letterhead]

Violence Against Women on Campus: Under Utilization of Resources Subject Informed Consent

Introduction and Background Information

You are invited to participate in a research study. The study is being conducted by Dr. Linda K. Bledsoe and Dr. Bibhuti K. Sar. The study is sponsored by the U. S. Department of Justice, Violence Against Women on Campuses Program and the University of Louisville, Kent School of Social Work. The study will take place on Belknap and Health Science Campuses. Approximately 10 subjects will be invited to participate in each focus group for a total of approximately 100 subjects in the entire study. Your participation in this study will be for one focus group meeting lasting approximately 90 minutes.

Purpose

The purpose of this research study is to gather information on opinions and perceptions about campus safety and available resources on campus. You are being invited to participate in one focus group on campus that will last for approximately 90 minutes. The entire study will continue for approximately one year.

Procedures

In this study, you will be asked to participate in one focus group with up to ten other students that will take place on Belknap or Health Science campus. It will last for approximately 90 minutes. During this focus group, you will be asked to participate in a discussion and share your ideas and opinions. The topic of the discussion is violence against women on campuses and what resources are currently available on University of Louisville's campus. You will NOT be asked to disclose any personal information. We are interested in your ideas and opinions only. You will be encouraged not to use any names or other identifying information during the focus group. You are free to decline to respond to any particular questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

The session will be audio taped for later transcription. All audio-tapes will be destroyed when transcription is completed. Any names or other identifying information will be deleted from transcripts. Transcripts will be stored in a locked file cabinet.

Potential Risks

There are risks associated with focus group discussions. You may experience psychological discomfort from group participation. Other group members will be able to hear your comments and in that way your comments will not be confidential. You will NOT be asked to disclose any personal information.

Benefits

The possible benefits of this study include improved content and delivery of information about violence against women issues to the campus community. People on campus may become more aware of resources available to them by use of improved public awareness efforts based on the information we learn in this study. The information collected may not benefit you directly. The information learned in this study may be helpful to others.

Violence Against Women on Campus: Under Utilization of Resources
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Compensation

You will receive one payment of \$25.00 for consideration of your time spent on this project. You will receive payment at the end of the focus group session you attend. You will be asked to sign a receipt for accounting purposes only and this will not be in any way associated with your comments during the focus group.

Confidentiality

Although absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, confidentiality will be protected to the extent permitted by law. The study sponsor, the Human Studies Committees, or other appropriate agencies may inspect your research records. Should the data collected in this research study is published, your identity will not be revealed. Financial personnel may need to be notified of your participation to process payment.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time without penalty or losing benefit to which you are otherwise entitled. You may discontinue participation at any time without incurring any penalty or losing any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Research Subject's Rights and Contact Persons

You acknowledge that all your present questions have been answered in language you can understand and all future questions will be treated in the same manner. If you have any questions about the study, please contact Dr. Linda K. Bledsoe at 502-852-0421 or Dr. Bibhuti K. Sar at 502-852-3932.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Human Studies Committees office (502) 852-5188. You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject, in confidence, with a member of the committees. These are independent committees composed of members of the University community, staff of the institutions, as well as lay members of the community not connected with these institutions. The Committee has reviewed this study.

Consent

You have discussed the above information and hereby consent to voluntarily participate in this study. You have been given a copy of the consent.

Signature of Subject

Date Signed

Signature of Investigator

Date Signed

Appendix E: Confidentiality Agreement

I, the undersigned, _____ understand that during the course of my work on the Violence Against Women on Campus Focus Group Project I may be given access to confidential information.

Definition of Confidential Information. Confidential information shall include any information shared by participants in focus groups as well as tapes and transcripts of these focus groups.

Use of Confidential Information

With respect to the Confidential Information the undersigned agrees to:

- A. Maintain Confidential Information in full confidence and not reveal it to any other clients, firms, professional or other organizational groups with whom I am associated or to which I belong.
- B. I will not make any disparaging remarks related to the Confidential Information.
- C. I understand that I am not authorized to make public statements or press releases about this Program.
- D. Utilize the information disclosed to me solely for the purpose of carrying out the responsibilities of my position.
- E. I will restrict disclosure solely to those employees who need to know and advise them of their concomitant duty not to disclose Confidential Information to third parties.

I have read and understand this Confidentiality Agreement and Statement. By signing in the space below, I agree to its terms and conditions.

Print your name here: _____

Signature: _____

Date Signed: _____