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**ROWAN UNIVERSITY UNDERGRADUATE RESIDENTIAL STUDENT
PERCEPTIONS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY**

by

Alexis M. Gross

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Department of Educational Services and Leadership
College of Education
In partial fulfillment of the requirement
For the degree of
Master of Arts in Higher Education
at
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Dedications

To my family for all their support.

Acknowledgments

I would like to dedicate my work to my family, friends, and cohort. These individuals have supported me through many ups and downs, and I am so grateful. Thank you to my professor for always helping with the thesis and graduate school process. Thank you to the people from the department I work in for making each day fun and positive. Thank you to my family for always being there through the ups and downs, especially my mom and dad. I am forever grateful for the support I received from them over these last two years. Thank you to my friends for always supporting me, especially my best friend for celebrating every step of the way with me. I am so grateful for the people I have had in my life and the opportunity to conduct this research.

Abstract

Alexis Gross
UNDERGRADUATE RESIDENTIAL STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AT ROWAN UNIVERSITY
2021-2022

Stephanie Lezotte, Ph.D.
Master of Arts in Higher Education

This paper looks into the undergraduate residential student perceptions of the on-campus public safety department at Rowan University. The goal of this study is to analyze the following research questions: a) what the perceptions of the residential undergraduate students towards on-campus police departments at Rowan University are, b) how students' perceptions at Rowan University affect their desire to file reports when necessary, and c) what the recommendations for the on-campus police department are to improve their relationship with the campus community. The study utilized a survey sent through Qualtrics to 5180 undergraduate residential students in February 2022. There was a total of 132 responses. Of this only 81 individuals completed the survey to completion. The conclusion of this was that students rated the services above average in most categories given, including overall perceptions in relation to efficiency, helpfulness, and level of care/support. Overall though it was indicated that students would like more opportunities to learn about the services provided and have more officers in visible locations.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Recently, there is a higher frequency in the media coverage of police violence and the police departments are frequently being heavily discussed (Jacobsen, 2015).

Universities typically have their own campus police or public safety department which work to protect the student body as well as the general campus community of the institution they serve. These departments serve to maintain the safety of the student body. In order to ensure this is actually happening it is important to reach out to the students to assess whether these safety goals are being met. Not all students feel safe around police officers. At universities, the public safety departments occasionally end up being viewed as too eager to distribute parking tickets and so it is viewed that they only wish to make the student's lives more difficult (Jacobsen, 2015; Wada et al., 2010). Not much research has been conducted on this topic. It is important to stay in touch with the student body, and this research can aid in ensuring the departmental goals are being met and the students feel supported. This then allows for them to further enjoy their higher education experience since they will not be preoccupied by fear (Wada et al., 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Higher education aims to support a diverse student body and allow for students to express themselves and feel safe on the campus at all times. With the current increase in media coverage in regard to police brutality all over the United States, many individuals are becoming less trusting of their local law enforcement. Research from 2020 predicts there will be an increase in organizational accountability over the next year which should serve to hold law enforcement accountable and allow the public to feel safer (Merchant,

2020). Police departments are also striving to increase their use of technology to work on a more preventative instead of reactionary position (Merchant, 2020). With all of the social movements addressing minority injustices ongoing throughout the United States, universities strive to ensure their population still feels protected and their staff is well trained.

Students need to be able to feel safe in order to develop to their fullest potential within their time spent at the university. If an individual is preoccupied by fear and chaos, they may lack structure and withdraw from the campus or refuse to engage with their peers (Txssc, 2016). If basic needs are not being met, it will be a distraction for the student that can impair their development and hinder them from maximizing their time within the higher education institution.

Institutions need more information about the perceptions different student populations have in regard to their safety and desire to conform to campus policies. This can work to increase student productivity and their ability to further engage with their campus. There is still not much known on what the most influential factors of campus public safety perceptions are, but there are numerous studies on law enforcement in general. Utilizing the studies on law enforcement in general as a guideline, one can begin to plan what elements to study. This can then allow for future action to be recommended that could positively impact the perceptions students may have and universities can work to better the overall campus experience. A feeling of support from public safety may also lead to an increase in student's ability to follow policies being outlined by the institution.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the residential undergraduate student perceptions of the Department of Public Safety at Rowan University. It looks to examine how these perceptions may influence one's desire to conform to Rowan University policies and make recommendations to positively influence the perceptions in future years. It is important the university monitors their students' perceptions to ensure the safety of the campus community the department serves and if perceptions are negative, they should act to better this relationship.

Research Questions

This study explores the research questions listed below:

1. What are the perceptions of the residential undergraduate students towards on-campus police departments at Rowan University?
2. How do students' perceptions at Rowan University affect their desire to file reports when necessary?
3. What are the recommendations for the on-campus police department to improve their relationship with the campus community?

Assumptions and Limitations

This study was limited to undergraduate residential students, currently living on campus during the 2021-2022 academic year at Rowan University. This is not a huge population within the university, but it is one of the groups who would interact with public safety the most due to parking constantly on campus, fire drills, and any

emergency they face whereas commuter students only need to interact with campus public safety when they are visiting campus. The study was sent out over email to the residential students living within each different housing location. Mass emailing is assumed to hinder the number of people willing to participate, as many see it as spam or do not check their email. The survey was sent to 5,180 students and only 132 responded. Of this, only 81 students completed the survey completely. This means the target sample size was not achieved and this data may not be completely representative of the population. It is assumed each student is answering honestly from their experiences, and they do not have any biases from their experiences with law enforcement outside of Rowan University's Department of Public Safety.

Operational Definitions

1. Undergraduate Residential Student: A student currently enrolled in the associate's or bachelor's degree program at a higher education institution that lives within the housing provided by the institution on their campus. This study focuses on the experience of the general population of undergraduate residential students attending Rowan University for the 2021-2022 academic year.
2. Student Perceptions: The thoughts, feelings, or beliefs the students have in regard to a given topic or stimuli. In this case, undergraduate residential student views on the Rowan University Department of Public Safety will be assessed.
3. Department of Public Safety: A department within the higher education institution that aims to protect the lives and property of the institution's residents, employees, students, and visitors. Within this study, I will focus on Rowan University's Department of Public Safety, which provides services such as: Police, Security,

Parking, Dispatch Center, Crime Prevention, and the Office of Emergency Management and is accredited through the Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA).

Overview of the Study

Chapter 2 provides insight to the current scholarly articles published in relation to this topic. This chapter provides information on how perception can be measured and what the greatest factors influencing student perceptions may be. Chapter 3 provides insight on how the study was conducted and provides further details about the population and program being studied at Rowan University during the 2021-2022 academic year. Chapter 4 will assess the responses gathered from the Qualtrics survey sent out from February 4th to February 20th, 2022, to all undergraduate residential students. Chapter 5 draws conclusions from the data described in chapter 4 and looks to make recommendations.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Creating a safe environment for students will maximize their ability to perform at the highest level within their time at a higher education institution (Wada et al., 2010). Campus police departments have been rapidly expanding over the last 20 years. Between the lack of research having been conducted and recent political movements there is a greater focus on the implicit biases police forces may possess and/or demonstrate (Jacobsen, 2015). The idea of a university having its own police department, or some form of campus safety officers is relatively new. Many universities are just beginning to build their police departments (Jacobsen, 2015). There has been an overall increase in the scrutiny of law enforcement throughout the United States in relation to police brutality. This is causing a need for universities to have their own police force within a public safety department that they can trust (Jacobsen, 2015). Some institutions cannot afford to implement their own public safety department though, so they form connections in order to utilize their surrounding township's police forces. This can lead to a strong disconnect between the individuals attending the university and the police forces. Other institutions are still in a relatively new phase of building a police department (Jacobsen, 2015).

The following literature review will assess campus safety in general and its importance on admissions. It will also review the reporting of crime statistics within higher education institutions, which is mandatory now due to the Clery Act (Dameron et al., 2009). This will also provide insight as to why public safety is such an important

aspect of the campus at Rowan University. Finally, the perceptions of public safety from varying roles within the institutional setting will be elaborated upon.

Public Safety within Higher Education Institutions

Department of Public Safety

There has been a lot in the media recently about law enforcement agents and their public image is becoming more negative. There are many situations in which public safety officers must interact with students. Very commonly alcohol plays a role in the need for public safety intervention as it seems to be a popular pastime for students, even when they are underaged (Chekwa, et al., 2013). There have been numerous studies done on the increase of sexual assaults performed by college men heavily under the influence. Cybercrime is also becoming a larger issue on campuses, and some are utilizing such social media to befriend their target online and then be able to find them outside of the workplace to cause them harm (Chekwa, et al., 2013). Due to this increase seen in crime on campuses, it became obvious that institutions needed to take further action in order to help and protect their students.

There are four ways universities typically operate their public safety departments: a campus police department, security department or operation, contract security, or local/state police (Monahan, 2003). Some university's only use one of these while others may use some sort of combination. A campus police department is a full-service law enforcement department functioning right out of the university. A security department works to ensure the safety of the campus but does not have full police training, so they utilize local law enforcement for assistance in true criminal cases. Contract security would be a private firm securing the campus but always utilizing local law enforcement

for support or anything criminal in nature. The local or state police use is typically done with small campuses that sit within a town since this is not terribly difficult for the department to additionally maintain. The university will have a set contract with the police department in that case (Monahan, 2003). This being said, there are a variety of ways universities can choose in order to ensure they are protecting their students.

Rowan University's Development of Public Safety

Rowan University has had a fairly concerning past when it comes to crime on campus. In 1996, the University had its first on-campus murder; a woman was fatally shot by Bozorth Hall by a man who then shot himself (Newman, 1996). The second instance was eleven years later when a student was robbed and beaten to death by one of the dormitories. The University worked with state police and local media to get word out and was able to arrest and convict the assailants (*The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 2007). This second murder led to the development of Rowan University's Department of Public Safety. A 14-point plan was implemented in order to begin developing their campus security initiative and soon, fully trained police officers were part of the staff. Following a student patrol program was implemented, with that expanding to be a Safe Walk and Ride program. The campus then also began improving lighting and installing cameras as well as Blue Light Alert towers which allows students to contact Rowan University's Police Department right away, as well as automatically sends an officer out to said location (Rowan Today, 2010).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Higher Education Institutions

A university should strive to provide the best campus possible to allow for the success of the students they cater to. In not providing a safe environment, the universities are doing themselves more harm than good when it comes to their students. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs one must fulfill each level prior to fulfilling needs higher up. The pyramid defined in Maslow's theory includes (*Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, 2007*):

1. Physiological needs: food water, warmth, rest
2. Safety need: security, safety
3. Belongingness and love need: intimate relationships, friends
4. Esteem needs: prestige and feeling of accomplishment
5. Self-actualization: achieving one's full potential, including creative activities

As you can see from above, safety needs come right above basic needs such as food and shelter being met. Campuses typically strive to provide resources to meet these needs. Once such needs have been met the focus becomes whether they feel safe in their surroundings. If an individual feels they have to constantly stress over their environment, those worries will consume a significant amount of their time and energy that could be spent better elsewhere, such as on schoolwork or extracurricular activities. It could also hinder one's desire to get involved in the campus.

In order to best provide for its students, a campus should provide an effective and present public safety department. Maslow once wrote that if students are provided an environment that meets their basic needs, then they will develop to be more independent and willing to take charge of their own life. He also mentions that if people develop to be

stronger and healthier then they will have greater respect for the environment they are in and they will change said environment for the better (*Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*, 2007).

Crime Reporting in Higher Education Institutions

Desire to Report Crimes

Whether or not a crime is reported may be dependent on a number of factors. A study conducted by Aiello (2019), looked to explore whether the perceived legitimacy of police force, severity of the crime, prior experiences with the police, sex, and race effect their desire to report a crime. It was found that the trust and respect individuals had for the campus police greatly affected an individual's desire to call the police or report a crime to the police (Aiello, 2019). Sex and race had a small impact on whether an individual called (Aiello, 2019). Even though one's own sex was seen to have little impact on one's desire to act, if the victim was identified to be female, then the likelihood of an individual stepping in and assisting or contacting the on-campus police systems was increased (Aiello, 2019).

It was also found that one's previous encounters with police and the severity of the crime had little to do with whether one would be willing to contact the police to report a crime, or step in and help the victim (Aiello, 2019). In contradiction though, a study by Rizzo et al. (2020), demonstrated that past experiences with the police would have a greater impact than previously thought. If an individual had more positive experiences and ideas about the legitimacy of police, then they were also going to be more likely to report a crime on their campus. Other studies also support this idea, stating

that involuntary interactions with campus police typically result in a more negative perception since these occurrences are typically disciplinary, such as receiving a parking ticket (Jacobsen, 2015; Wada et al., 2010). The severity of the crime is also a factor that was studied by Amar et al. and addressed that in the moment one may not understand the severity of the crime taking place so they may not feel as compelled to report the crime. This supports what was said in a previous study, stating that better education so individuals can identify a crime taking place is needed to help improve the likelihood of one calling a police officer (Amar et al., 2014).

Crime Report Accessibility

Universities now have to report their crime statistics due to the Clery Act of 1990 makes this a requirement for institutions. A study by Samuel Dameron et al. (2009), was conducted to evaluate students' access to crime statistics and resources to report a crime. When scanning a university's homepage, it was discovered it is very difficult to access both the crime statistics and resources in order to report a crime (Dameron et al., 2009). This study found that only 85% of institutions post their crime statistics, even though this is required information (Dameron et al., 2009). It was also found that 72.6% of institutions provide easily accessible information on how to report a crime (Dameron et al., 2009). The location of these links on the website was only on the first page in 22.2% of universities (Dameron et al., 2009). Another study scraped 100 websites and utilized a program to assess the reading level of the text provided in regard to sexual assault cases found based on the syntax and semantic elements. It was discovered the average reading level required to fully comprehend the information provided was that of a third-year college student. In contrast, the average reading level of an American citizen is at an

eighth-grade level (Taylor, 2018). This means there are both general website accessibility barriers as well as comprehension barriers for individuals trying to report a crime.

Perceptions of On-Campus Public Safety Department Legitimacy

This section will detail how police legitimacy is established and then how different groupings within the university perceive on campus police, according to previous literature. First it will look to examine the administration, as they may be a victim of a crime but are also in a position to connect students to the public safety units on campus. Second, public safety themselves will be studied as their perceptions could affect how they react in situations. Third, and most importantly, is the student's perceptions of the departments according to current literature and these impressions can be compared within this study.

Establishment of Police Legitimacy

The procedural justice theory is spoken of in most conversations about police legitimacy. The four main pillars of the theory include: being fair in process, being transparent in actions, providing opportunity for voice, and being impartial in decision making (Aiello, 2019). A study by Rizzo et al. (2020), found that students valued transparency to be the most important factor towards whether they will report a crime. If they did not feel there was an easily understood procedure in place and the consequences were not outlined, then individuals will not call (Rizzo et al. 2020). An example of this would be the medical amnesty programs, which prevent students from getting in trouble if they call for a substance abuse related emergency, provided by universities (Rizzo et al. 2020).

In another study they looked at the procedural justice theory in relation to the student's trust of their police force. Trust within this study is the dependent variable and was studied in relation to four independent variables: perception of procedural fairness, perception of police effectiveness, fear of crime, and police assistance. Procedural fairness and students' trust are positively correlated, as well as police providing an opportunity for individuals to speak was positively correlated to students' trust (Lee et al., 2015). When a university is seen to be trying to do all they can for their students, there could be increased trust in the police forces as well. This can then contribute to a lower crime rate as students will feel their campus adheres to the four principles of the procedural justice theory (Rizzo et al. 2020).

Administrator's Perceptions of Police and Policies

A study by Amar et al. (2014), looked to see administrator opinions on the police forces within their universities. It focused on "campus assault adjudication, protocols and responses to assault, and student prevention education all in relation to sexual assault" (Amar et al., 2014). It was found that administrators did not seem to feel their campus provided enough information or a stable enough procedure for justice to effectively be conducted. The process of convicting a sexual assault perpetrator is seen to retraumatize the individual (Amar et al., 2014). This may cause more harm than good, especially because in many cases there is not a conviction against the perpetrator. It was also seen that the information provided to administrators about crime reporting and sexual assault procedures is within their handbooks, but not something they must read so many have not. While the information does exist, it is not widely known about or frequently discussed. This study also found that administrators feel there should be more prevention

training provided to students, especially within their orientation process (Amar et al., 2014).

On-Campus Police Perceptions of Themselves

While the student's views of the police play a large role in the campus climate surrounding the authorities, the police force's self-perception should also be taken into consideration. Many of these individuals working at institutions were originally trained to handle intense situations and diffuse them before things escalated too quickly (Wada et al., 2010) This means that many of the young officers found themselves acting too aggressively towards situations because they are following the municipal training provided.

As a university police officer or public safety officer, one's main responsibilities would be for them to protect and prevent crime. This leads to a decrease in the severity of the situations being handled. This can create cognitive dissonance between the individual's understanding of their role as a police officer in the community versus what their purpose is working for a university. Overall, it is seen that the police forces have a very low perception of themselves and their effectiveness or importance to the student body they serve (Wada et al., 2010). Officers may also be overly aggressive because they want to create further separation between themselves and the students. College students may be close to their age so in order to establish authority the individual may rely on scare tactics. This typically creating a further dissociation and dislike for campus authorities though (Jacobsen, 2015)

Student Perceptions of Police Legitimacy

Police legitimacy was studied in many different ways and can be based on a variety of factors. In one study, students see the municipal police as more legitimate than those working directly for the university police departments. Factors that could affect this mentioned within this study consist of the university's size, general environment, and geographical region (Wada et al., 2010) One campus police are not seen as elements of academics or administration so there is a disconnect between the police and the university (Wada et al., 2010). Another study found that students commonly think negatively about the police because they see them as overly zealous to give out tickets (Jacobsen, 2015). This causes individuals to not feel as though the police are doing their job in regard to protecting them, and instead serve to make their life more difficult (Jacobsen, 2015).

Another study found that these negative views on the legitimacy of the police on campus can affect the student's desire to follow what the police are trying to enforce (Lee et al., 2015). Police legitimacy is said to be able to be gained though if the police were to be neutral, provide a voice, treat individuals professionally and fairly, as well as establish some form of trust with the students they serve (Lee et al., 2015). A police officer's attitude towards the students can also cause them to see the police as more or less legitimate. If they feel the officers are trying to put on a show then they will feel less supported and find the police to be less legitimate, especially when there is already a large perception that campus police serve to distribute parking tickets and that is all (Jacobsen, 2015; Rizzo et al., 2020). The legitimacy of the police has a large impact on whether or not crimes will be reported as well so it is important this information is

assessed by universities so they can best serve the students they are trying to protect (Aiello, 2019).

Chapter 3

Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of Rowan University's main campus residential undergraduate students towards the department of public safety at Rowan University and provide recommendations to improve relations between students and officers. A quantitative approach was used to assess, through students' perceptions, the on-campus police department at Rowan University and determine steps they can take in order to improve the relationship with the campus community. The population surveyed was undergraduate residential students attending Rowan University's main campus in Glassboro, NJ during the Spring 2022 semester.

Research Questions

This study explored the research questions listed below:

1. What are the perceptions of the residential undergraduate students towards on-campus police departments at Rowan University?
2. How do students' perceptions at Rowan University affect their desire to file reports when necessary?
3. What are the recommendations for the on-campus police department to improve their relationship with the campus community?

Context of Study

This study was conducted at Rowan University's Glassboro campus in New Jersey. Rowan University is a Carnegie- classified national doctoral research institution that was founded in 1923 (Rowan University, 2021). They have been able to transform from a teacher preparation school to a research university. There are dorms and apartments offered to students that choose to live on campus. The following are options for students to live on campus: Mimosa Hall, Evergreen Hall, Mullica Hall, Chestnut Hall, Magnolia Hall, Willow Hall, and Holly Pointe Commons. The apartment locations include Edgewood Park Apartments, Rowan Boulevard Apartments, the Townhouse Complex, Triad, the Whitney Center, and the International House. (Rowan University, 2021). Throughout the campus it can be seen that there are also blue light alert towers stationed all over the campus. These are frequently placed near dorms and have an emergency button that when pressed will alert an officer to come as quickly as possible.

The Department of Public Safety at Rowan University in Glassboro, New Jersey offers a variety of services such as On-Campus Police, On Campus Security, Parking services, a Dispatch center, Crime Prevention programs, and the Office of Emergency Management. They work to prevent crime and offer a wide variety of services to assist in keeping their campus community safe. They have been accredited through the Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) and the international Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators (IACLEA). Rowan University is one of 50 institutions in the nation to have a CALEA certification (Rowan University, 2021).

Under the Clergy Act institutions have to post their crime statistics to be viewed publicly. Rowan University monthly posts an excel sheet for each crime that month that includes the case number, date and time reported, date and time the incident occurred, the nature of the crime, the campus the crime took place on, which part of that campus this occurred, and the disposition (Rowan University, 2021). It appears rape, fondling, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson were some of the main issues the university saw between 2016 and 2018 (*How Does Rowan University rank Among America's Best Colleges*, n.d.) According to the current monthly data gathered from Rowan University's website in 2021, it appears this past year that assault and theft were the most common issues Rowan University's department of public safety faced.

Research Design

This study utilized the non-experimental descriptive quantitative research design. Quantitative research is utilized to be more generalizable and aims to break down complex phenomena into visual or mathematical representations (O'Dwyer & Bernauer, 2013). Quantitative is used to be objective, precise, imperialism, local, and replicable when assessing empirical results (O'Dwyer & Bernauer, 2013). Empirical results are generally unbiased observations or experiments either collected firsthand by the researcher or exist as a compilation of secondary sources (Empirical Evidence, 2020). Quantitative data is studied using the scientific method which is a process consisting of the "formulation, testing, and refinement of hypotheses; the systematic collection of empirical evidence through measurement; and in specific situations, conducting

experiments” (O’Dwyer & Bernauer, 2013). This is the process of conducting experiments in order to get quantitative data to analyze.

There are two types of quantitative research designs: non-experimental and experimental. For this study we will be conducting a non-experimental research design. Non-experimental research can be broken down into six categories: descriptive study, predictive study, explanatory study, cross-sectional study, longitudinal study, or retroactive study. This study in particular will be a descriptive study since it looks to describe a phenomena, characteristics, and perceptions of the sample (O’Dwyer & Bernauer, 2013). Quantitative data is commonly associated with the use of statistical numeric analysis. It should be evaluated this way, but it should also be looked at through an exploratory data analysis. This means information should be collected on how this information was gathered as well as how the data seems to be distributed. It puts a focus on understanding the data and then producing statistical values to back this up (Connolly, 2019).

The majority of the information will be gathered by a Likert scale throughout the survey. A Likert scale allows ordinal intervals to be perceived to have equal spacing between each step and allows for data to be quantified (Bernstein, 2005). A Likert scale of agreement specifically has the individual evaluate whether they “strongly agree”, “agree”, “somewhat agree”, “disagree somewhat”, “disagree”, “strongly disagree” (Bernstein, 2005).

Population and Sampling

Rowan University of Glassboro has a total enrollment of 19,678 students, 15,963 undergraduate students, 2,466 graduate students, and 1,249 medical/professional

students. Of these students 10,232 identify as men and 9,233 identify as women. The demographics of the enrolled students at Rowan University are 64.8% White, 11% Hispanic or Latino, 9.9% Black Or African American, 7.39% Asian, 3.32% Two Or More Races, 0.112% Native Hawaiian or Other. (Rowan University, n.d.). Nearly 96% of Rowan University students are New Jersey residents, but overall, they have students from 42 states and 40 countries. Rowan University’s main campus in Glassboro, New Jersey has a dormitory capacity of 6,672 students and approximately 34.27% of students live in these housing facilities (Rowan campus life, n.d.).

The population being specifically looked at in this study is the residential undergraduate students at Rowan University’s main campus in Glassboro, New Jersey. Since 34.27% of students attending are residential the population is small, only being 5180 students as of November 2021. Table 1, below, displays the breakdown of students residing in on campus residential housing locations as of Fall 2021:

Table 1

Residential Student Demographics

Variable	<i>n (%)</i>
Housing Location	5180 (100%)
Residence Halls	1760 (33.98%)
Apartments	1896 (36.60%)
Affiliate Housing	1524 (29.42%)

Due to this, the survey will be distributed to all undergraduate residential students to try to meet the target sample size of 358 participants, based on a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level. There are demographic questions within the survey being administered in order to get a better idea of the population sampled and how it reflects the overall demographics at Rowan University. In order to communicate this survey with these groups, residence life was contacted and provided the information needed to send information out to each student living on campus.

Data Collection

This study utilized a cross-sectional online survey to examine the demographics of students participating in the survey, the perceptions and knowledge these students had of the campus police, and potential suggestions that could be beneficial to improve their relationship with campus police departments.

The quantitative data was collected through a web-based cross-sectional survey, consisting of three sections. The first section, Residential Student Demographics, collected information on residential undergraduate students' characteristics such as race/culture, gender, age, year in school, time living on campus, and current residential housing location. The second section focused on Police Perceptions with a Likert scale where participants rate their feelings in regard to police transparency, fairness, fear of crime, allowance for individual to speak, and impartial decision making, and the students then desired to report crimes. The students were to select from indicators between 1 and 5 for each statement along with responding to questions in regard to whether they have firsthand needed to utilize public safety services. The third section was focused on Potential Beneficial Programs based on another Likert scale and contains an open-ended

question regarding potential solutions for improved connection between Rowan University of Glassboro's residential undergraduate students and the Department of Public Safety.

Five students at the university working for the Department of Campus Recreation were asked to pre-test the online survey and provide their feedback. These individuals were selected based on a convenience factor, since I work for Rowan University's Department of Campus Recreation. The pre-test allowed an opportunity for biases or miscommunications to be evaluated. The survey was then altered upon those recommendations. The test is believed to be reliable and valid upon distribution. After finalizing the survey to be distributed, the electronic Institutional Review Board process was completed. Once the board approved, an email distributed the survey to the total population. The survey was sent on a Monday and remained open for four weeks, with a reminder email sent each Monday thereafter at noon to increase student participation. The survey closed at 5pm the fourth Friday.

Data Analysis

The survey was created on the Qualtrics survey platform that allowed for survey data to easily be compiled and analyzed. After downloading the data into a spreadsheet, the data were analyzed using descriptive data analysis. Descriptive data analysis works to illustrate observations from a given study and format it so it can be visually understood. It does so by assessing the measure of central tendency and dispersion of the data (Marshall, 2010). The frequency distributions, means, and percentages were generated. Tables and graphs were utilized to assess this information and properly visualize it.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis

Context of Study

This study was conducted at Rowan University between the dates of February 4th and February 20th, 2022. The survey was sent to 5180 undergraduate students residing on campus during the Spring 2022 academic semester. Graduate students living on campus were not invited to participate in the study as they were not given the same orientation experience or housing experience that undergraduates received. The students were invited to participate in a study that consisted of 17 questions across five categories: demographics, public safety services evaluation, overall public safety perceptions, desire to report crime, and recommendations for building a community. The recruitment emails and survey questions were approved by Rowan University's IRB prior to being sent to the given population of the study. The overall goal was to assess three main questions:

1. What are the perceptions of the residential undergraduate students towards on-campus police departments at Rowan University?
2. How do students' perceptions at Rowan University affect their desire to file reports when necessary?
3. What are the recommendations for the on-campus police department to improve their relationship with the campus community?

Findings

The survey began with gathering basic demographic information. Table 2 is a demographic breakdown of the student responses received. This displays a breakdown by housing location. This is broken into three categories: residence halls, apartments, and

affiliate housing locations. Residence halls include Mimosa, Evergreen, Mullica, Chestnut, Magnolia, Willow, and Holly Pointe Commons. Apartment complexes include Edgewood, Rowan Blvd, Townhouse Complex, Triad, and Whitney Center. The Affiliate housing locations are owned by Nexus Properties and include 220 Rowan Blvd, 223 West High Street, 230 Victoria Street, 57 North Main Street, and 114 Victoria Street.

Table 2

Demographics

Variable	<i>n (%)</i>
Housing Location	131 (100.0%)
Residence Halls	49 (37.0%)
Apartments	29 (22.0%)
Affiliate Housing	53 (40.0%)
Gender Identity	132 (100%)
Man	50 (37.9%)
Woman	69 (52.3%)
Nonbinary	10 (7.6%)
Prefer Not to Say	3 (2.3%)
Academic Status	132 (100%)
Freshman (1st Academic Year)	42 (31.8%)
Sophomore (2nd Academic Year)	33 (25.0%)
Junior (3rd Academic Year)	41 (31.1%)
Senior (4th Academic Year)	15 (11.4%)
Second Year Senior	1 (0.8%)

As previously indicated, Table 1 demonstrates that there was a variety of responses from different housing locations. The highest number of respondents, 40.0%, live in affiliate housing and the lowest number of responses, 22.0%, came from those residing in apartment complexes on campus. Table 1 also demonstrates that women had the highest response rate, accounting for 52.3% of the initial individuals who participated in the survey. These factors are important when analyzing the data to know what the sample size consisted of when reviewing the responses.

Table 3

Service Knowledge and Promotion (n = 167)

Variable	Adequately Knowledgeable		Not Knowledgeable	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Rape and Aggression Defense System Courses (currently on hold due to COVID-19)	16	10%	72	43%
Student Patrol Services	42	25%	41	25%
University Public Safety (including police, security, and dispatch personnel)	67	40%	15	9%
University Emergency Medical Services	50	30%	25	15%
Department of Public Safety Victim Witness Services	10	6%	69	41%
Counseling and Psychological Services	45	27%	36	22%
Empowering Rights of Victims Program (SERV)	2	1%	75	45%
New Jersey Victims of Crime Compensation Board (VCCB)	4	2%	78	47%

Variable	Adequately Knowledgeable		Not Knowledgeable	
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Citizen Commend/Complaint Information	4	2%	74	44%
Rowan Alert (RAVE)	34	20%	45	27%
Crime Prevention Tip Line	8	5%	71	43%

Variable	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Overall Rating of Public Safety Promotion	2.27	1.17	94

Table 3 assessed which programs available on Rowan University's public safety department website were most known about by students, and which were not. The survey asked individuals to select which of the programs they felt knowledgeable on, and then it asked for which of the same program's individuals felt least knowledgeable on. The most known services students felt confident in knowing were University Public Safety (40%), University Emergency Medical Services (30%), and Counseling and Psychological Services (27%).

Table 4

Public Safety Access

Variable	Yes		No		<i>n</i>
	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>	
Have you tried to access the public safety webpage to utilize services provided?	27	27.27%	72	72.73%	99
Have you tried to access the public safety webpage to report a crime?	12	12.37%	85	87.63%	97

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Ability to find information on services	2.90	0.33	27
Ability to find reporting information	2.94	0.93	12

Table 4 was developed from the questions in the survey that focused on students' experiences in trying to find information on public safety resources on Rowan University's public safety website. Of the 27 students that had accessed the webpage to utilize the services provided, they on average rated their ability to find the information necessary a 2.9 on a scale of 1-5. Of the 12 students who tried to access the webpage in order to report a crime, the information again was rated on average a 2.94 on a scale of 1-5.

Table 5

Public Safety Experience

Variable	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Efficient (how quickly they responded)	2.83	1.46	26
Helpful (explaining process)	2.64	1.51	25
Level of care (support, care)	2.90	1.55	23

One of the survey questions asked if students ever had to contact public safety in the case of an emergency. Of the 167 students that took the survey, and 81 who completed the entire survey, only 26 indicated they had contacted public safety. Table 5

seeks to analyze how to students rated their public safety experience if they had to call in the case of an emergency. Between 23-26 students responded to each category. There were three categories to rate these services on: efficiency, helpful, and level of care. Efficient, defined as how quickly public safety arrived on the scene, was rated by 26 students, and had a mean of 2.83 with a standard of deviation of 1.46. The next category was “helpful”, meaning did the officers explain the process of what would happen within the situation and after, which was had a total of 25 responses and had a mean of 2.64. The third category, level of care, which was defined as the support and care given to the victims or individuals who called had a mean of 2.90. Overall, level of care was the top-rated aspect of the experience with public safety was level of care and overall ability to be helpful was the lowest rated.

Table 6

Reporting Crime

Variable	Most Likely (<i>n</i> =92)		Least Likely (<i>n</i> =88)	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Assault	71	77%	10	11%
Robbery	60	65%	8	9%
Sexual Assault	73	79%	6	7%
Motor Vehicle Threat	50	54%	27	31%
Burglary	59	64%	11	13%
Murder	76	83%	10	11%
Arson	62	67%	5	6%

Variable	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
In the Moment Reporting	3.44	1.49	88
Retroactive Reporting	3.09	1.41	89

After assessing the ability to report crimes in Table 4, it was important to ask which categories individuals would want to report. The categories given were assault, robbery, sexual assault, motor vehicle theft, burglary, murder, and arson. It was asked which of these students would report and which they would not. Murder, sexual assault, assault, and arson were the highest rated crimes that students would report. Motor vehicle theft, burglary, and assault/murder were rated as the crimes students would be least likely to report. After this it was asked whether students would report crimes in the moment and retroactively. As indicated in table 6, it appeared students were more likely to report crimes in the moment, with a mean of 3.44 on a 1-5 scale, as opposed to retroactively reporting crimes, with a mean of 3.09 on a 1-5 scale.

Table 7

Overall Perceptions of Public Safety

Variable	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Supportive	2.85	1.46	87
Transparent	2.57	1.41	82
Efficient	2.51	1.37	83
Allows room for voice to be heard	2.48	1.48	82
Accessible	3.05	1.36	83

Variable	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Knowledgeable	3.00	1.31	81
Impartial	2.73	1.39	78

Based on the procedural justice theory, the categories shown in Table 7 were selected and students were asked to rate their overall perceptions of public safety on a 1-5 scale. Based on the means of this information, public safety was rated highest on its accessibility and knowledge, with means of 3.05 and 3.00, and least likely on its ability to be transparent and efficient, with means of 2.57 and 2.51 respectively.

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

The study focused on student perceptions of the on campus public safety departments at Rowan University. A survey was sent out to all residential undergraduate students on February 4th, 2022, and could be filled out until February 20th 2022. The questions explored students' desire to report crimes, perceptions of public safety, and the promotion of the public safety offerings. The survey was sent to 5180 students who were registered as residential undergraduate students. Of the 5180 students, 167 students responded, and only 81 students completed the survey 100%. The data was collected through Qualtrics from Rowan University. Quantitative data was collected and analyzed from the survey. It was assessed through frequency distributions and a study of means. The results looked to answer three core research questions.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceptions of the residential undergraduate students towards on-campus police departments at Rowan University?
2. How do students' perceptions at Rowan University affect their desire to file reports when necessary?
3. What are the recommendations for the on-campus police department to improve their relationship with the campus community?

Discussion of the Findings

The first research question is looked at through a series of questions. The survey asked students to rate their perceptions based on the primary factors taken from the

procedural justice theory mentioned in chapter 2. This was done by having students rate on a scale of 1-5, 1 being the lowest rating, in the following categories: support, transparency, efficiency, allowing room for voices to be heard, accessibility, knowledge, and ability to stay impartial. It was indicated that in all categories public safety was rated above the median or middle rating of 2.50, with the exception of allowing for the student's voice to be heard which was rated at a mean of 2.48. The department was rated highly on their ability to be accessible and knowledgeable but not as high on their ability to be efficient and allowing for the student voices to be heard. This indicates students feel as though they have the information necessary to access the public safety departments, but they did not feel as though they were responding quick enough to emergencies and did not provide a safe space for students to vocalize what actually happened in the situation. This question was also assessed by the results of Table 3 which asked student which aspects of public safety they felt they were knowledgeable on and which they did not. The highest rated category was the basic university public safety services. Many of the victim support systems were found to not be heard of by almost half of the participants. Overall students rated that they found the promotion of these public safety programs to be a 2.27 on a 1-5 scale, which is below the median of 2.5 and indicates more promotion of these services could be done so students feel safer.

In regard to the second question, students were asked which crimes they would report and if they find it easy to access the web pages in order to find information needed. Table 6 looked to assess this by asking student which crimes they would report and which they would not. Many students indicated that assault/ sexual assault were the top situations they would report as well as murder. Students indicated these were the most

prominent instances that would cause them to need to involve public safety, but with this only 79% of people stated they would report sexual assault and 77% indicated they would report assault. The opposite of this is the crimes students would be least likely to report. Of the 88 students that made it to this portion of the survey, 31% indicated they would not report motor vehicle theft, and the second highest crime least likely to be reported was burglary. This could indicate that students are more likely to report crimes that may directly affect them or cause greater harm to an individual's well-being and safety.

The results of these studies from Table 5 indicated that students did find the website to be easily accessible, rating it an average of 2.90 and 2.94 on a five-point scale. While the findings indicate the mean was above the center point, 2.50, it is still not very much above. There is significant room for improvement so that students can better access the information they are seeking. The standard of deviation on the ability to find information so students can report a crime was 0.93 meaning that there was a large gap between the lower and higher ratings of individuals who did not rate around the mean.

The final research question asks for recommendation from students on what could be done to improve the safety and security of students on campus. Many indicated they would feel safer if there was an increase in public safety's presence especially on Rowan Boulevard and at the Townhouses apartment complex. There was a survey question asking if students would participate in networking events on campus, which many did not say they would go out of their way to attend. In replace of this students suggested that the public safety officers should attend the floor meetings that residential assistants have at

the beginning of the semester so students can hear firsthand what the department offers and how to best get in contact with them in the case of an emergency.

Conclusions

The study suggests that students at Rowan University do not feel completely safe and do not feel some of the resources provided are easy to access. There should be an increase in the promotion of public safety services and further explanation of what this means to students. Students feel moderately safe but not completely. The results indicate that students on average feel they can contact public safety in the result of an emergency, but not all students would immediately seek out this support system. A greater presence of the campus public safety units would help for students to feel safer and greater knowledge provided specifically for students living on campus would help them to feel safer in their place of residence.

Recommendations for Practice

The final question of the survey asked students for their recommendations for the future. The responses indicated that students would like public safety staff to be present in residential housing meetings that take place in the beginning of the semester. They felt if the officers had an opportunity to speak to them, they would feel more connected and have a greater desire to call. Students also indicated they would like a greater police presence on campus especially at night as one of the biggest fears of students is walking across campus at night.

Recommendations for Future Studies

Future studies should seek to have this survey promoted better. There was also not a full list of residential housing locations provided so some students were unable to take

the survey. There are also recommendations to restructure the survey so the overall public safety perceptions are assessed prior to the students' knowledge of the public safety departments and the desire to report crimes questions so that if students only complete 30-68% of the survey they would still answer the main questions offered. This survey was sent when many others were being sent as well so survey fatigue also could have affected the number of response given.

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Appendix

Verification of Study Approval



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DHHS Federal Wide Assurance Identifier: FWA00007111
IRB Chair Person: Dr. Ane Johnson
IRB Director: Eric Gregory
Effective Date: January 26, 2022

Notice of Approval - Initial

Study ID: PRO-2021-597
Title: Undergraduate Residential Students Perceptions of the On Campus Public Safety Departments at Rowan University
Principal Investigator: Stephanie Lezotte
Study Coordinator: Alexis Gross
Co-Investigator(s): Alexis Gross
Sponsor: Department Funded

Submission Type: Initial
Submission Status: Exempt
Approval Date: January 26, 2022
Review Type: Exempt
Exempt Category: Category 2,(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording). The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Pregnant Women, Human Fetus, and Neonates Code: N/A
Pediatric/Children Code: N/A

ALL APPROVED INVESTIGATOR(S) MUST COMPLY WITH THE FOLLOWING:

1. Conduct the research in accordance with the protocol, applicable laws and regulations, and the principles of research ethics as set forth in the Belmont Report.
- 2a. Continuing Review: Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses in approval, submit a continuation application at least eight weeks before the study expiration date.
- 2b. Progress Report: Approval is valid until the protocol expiration date shown above. To avoid lapses, an annual progress report is required at least 21 days prior to the expiration date.