

AN INVESTIGATION OF STUDENTS' WILLINGNESS TO REPORT THREATS OF
VIOLENCE IN CAMPUS COMMUNITIES

By

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By

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The safety of colleges and universities has been questioned in the wake of several high-profile shootings (i.e., Virginia Polytechnic Institute and Northern Illinois University). Internationally, since 1966, at least 114 persons have been killed on college campuses. Furthermore, between 2001 and 2009, 71 deaths have occurred on college campuses in the United States during violent attacks. In response to these attacks, many universities have adopted threat assessment plans to mitigate threats of violence. However, this approach does not address students' problematic tendency to underreport threatening individuals, thus limiting the dissemination of important information that may help to prevent an attack. Therefore, this study examined relationships among several variables that were expected to facilitate or inhibit college students' willingness to report threats of violence. Eight-hundred and twenty students participated and structural equation modeling was used to test associations between latent variables. As expected, trust in the college support system (i.e., trust in police, administrators, etc.) was found to be positively related to students' willingness to report threats. On the other hand, students who reported a history of delinquency displayed a low willingness to report. Feeling connected to the campus environment was positively related to students' willingness to

report threats directly and indirectly through trust in the college support system. Lastly, self-efficacy toward service (i.e., the belief that one can have a prosocial impact) only was related to willingness to report in the presence of trust in the college support system and campus connectedness. Thus, the belief that one can have a positive impact in the campus community does not increase threat reporting by itself. Instead, to facilitate threat reporting, it is important for students to feel connected to the campus community and to trust in members of the college support system. Lastly, contrary to expectations, students' fear of negative evaluation was not associated with their willingness to report threats of violence.

CHAPTER 1 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The shootings that occurred at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and Northern Illinois University left 37 persons dead and an additional 39 persons severely injured (Fox & Savage, 2009). Despite being two of the most lethal attacks committed on college campuses, these shootings are not isolated events. For more than 50 years, violent attacks have occurred at various colleges with diverse student body sizes and in different geographical locations. Based on data gathered from records provided by the U.S. Department of Education as well as media reports that were gathered from searching electronic newspaper databases, at least 114 shooting-related deaths occurred on college campuses around the world between 1966 and 2008. Moreover, the potential for violent attacks on college campuses still exists as 76 deaths occurred during violent attacks on U.S. college campuses over the previous eight years (U.S. Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education, 2009).

Weapon Carrying Students on Campus

Many college students report carrying weapons on campus, resulting in the possibility for violent attacks to occur unexpectedly. In a sample of more than 10,000 students attending 119 U.S. colleges, 4.3% reported having a working firearm at college and 1.6% reported having been threatened with a gun while on a college campus (Miller, Hemenway, & Wechsler, 2002). A survey of 5,652 students in 29 colleges in California found that 6% reported having carried a weapon (e.g., gun, knife) on campus within the previous thirty days (Patrick, Covin, Fulop, Calfas, & Lovato, 1997). Finally, a survey of 26,225 students from 61 U.S. colleges found a similar percentage of weapons carrying students (7%) on school grounds (Presley, Meilman, & Cashin, 1997). Higher rates of weapon carrying behaviors have been identified in males and students attending colleges located in the Southern United States in a reanalysis of the data from

the latter study (Meilman, Leichter, & Presley, 1998). Specifically, 15% of the male students in the South reportedly carried a weapon on campus within the previous 30 days.

Furthermore, the presence of weapons on college campuses may be problematic for individual weapon carriers in addition to being a concern for members of the campus community (e.g., administrators, law enforcement officers). Weapon carrying students are at risk for being threatened with a weapon by another individual (Miller et al., 2002), being involved in physical fights or altercations (Barrios, Everett, Simon, & Brener, 2000), and to engage in criminal activities (e.g., vandalism, assault) (Presley et al., 1997). Weapon carrying students also have been found to be at risk to abuse alcohol and illicit substances (e.g., cannabis sativa, cocaine), engage in high-risk behaviors (i.e., having unprotected sexual intercourse, driving while intoxicated) (Miller et al., 2002), and have suicidal ideations (Barrios et al., 2000). Thus, although a direct relationship has not been established between carrying weapons and socially undesirable behavior, individuals who carry weapons on college campuses are more likely to experience psychosocial difficulties and engage in risky or impulsive behaviors than are their non-weapons carrying counterparts.

Vulnerability of College Campuses to Attack

College campuses have been described as “soft targets” for terrorist attacks by the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Boynton, 2003) since they are densely populated and allow access to high numbers of potential victims. Furthermore, both within and across institutions, the availability of campus security resources (e.g., police officers, metal detectors), safety procedures, and administrative roles often are limited. Together, these conditions may decrease the effectiveness of crisis response efforts (Greenberg, 2007). Violent campus attacks often are highly chaotic and end tragically before law enforcement officials have the opportunity to marshal resources and dissipate an attack (Greenberg, 2007; O’Toole, 2000). In fact, many

violent attacks last only a few seconds, thus providing bystanders little time to coordinate a response to an attack. Once underway, despite the best efforts of university personnel, survival instincts are likely to determine how individuals respond to an attack (Greenberg, 2007).

Effects of Violent Attacks on College Campuses

The effects of violent attacks on college campuses often are diffuse and may affect the entire ecology of an institution (Fox & Savage, 2009; Utterback & Caldwell, 1989). Similar to other traumatic events (e.g., natural disasters, terrorist attacks), college students, faculty, staff, administrators, and extended members of the college community (e.g., students' parents/caregivers, college alumni) often experience psychosocial distress after a violent campus attack (Zdziarski, Dunkel, & Rollo, 2007). Survivors of campus shootings frequently experience symptoms of acute stress or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) if their stress symptoms persist for more than a month (Norris, 2007). These symptoms include the persistent reexperiencing of the traumatic event, lasting avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma, emotional numbing, and persistent symptoms of increased arousal that cause significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). Prevalence rates for post-shooting PTSD among individuals who directly witness a shooting tend to range from 10% to 36% (North, Smith, & Spitznagel, 1994; Schwarz & Kowalski, 1991; Trappler & Friedman, 1996). However, even if not exposed directly to a violent attack, individuals with personal connections to victims or communities in which they occur also may experience negative outcomes associated with an attack. For example, students in the process of grieving a personal loss (e.g., the death of a peer, colleague) may cope with grief through using or abusing drugs or alcohol, isolating themselves from others and social situations (Balk, 1997; Balk, 2001), decreasing their involvement in college activities (Tinto,

1993), or even challenging the authority of community or college authority figures (e.g., police officers, college administrators) (Ephraim, 1997).

Violent attacks also inspire fear in individuals who have no direct relationship to the victims. For example, in August 1990, the gruesome killings of five college students in Gainesville, Florida by Daniel Harold Rawlings caused many individuals to arm themselves and evacuate the community adjacent to the University of Florida where the attacks occurred. Although the killings did not occur on campus, many students stopped attending classes and other college functions due to fear and safety concerns. At the time, some media personnel even speculated that the University of Florida would have to close for the semester due to low student attendance (Mercer, 1996).

Almost universally, violent attacks in campus communities inspire a sense of vulnerability in students that may be alien to them when faced with other risks. In general, students display an optimistic bias about not contracting a sexually-transmitted disease (Ellen, Boyer, Tschann, & Shafer, 1996), developing a substance-abuse disorder (Hansen, Raynor, & Wolkenstein 1991), becoming pregnant (Smith, Gerrard, & Gibbons, 1997), or being affected by a natural disaster (Helweg-Larsen, 1999). However, less than a third of college students (32%) believe they are less likely than their peers are to be the victim of a violent attack at school. Instead, the majority of students (68%) exhibit either a pessimistic bias (e.g., believing they are more likely than others to be victimized) or no bias, thus indicating that they perceive no difference between themselves and others in their likelihood to be a victim of a violent attack at school (Chaplin, 2001).

Contemporary Responses to Violent Attacks on School Campuses

The Campus Security Act

Various attempts have been made to protect campus communities from violent attacks. The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (Public Law 105–244) (also known as the “Campus Security Act”) was enacted with the passage of the 1998 Higher Education Amendments Act to increase knowledge of crimes perpetrated on college campuses (Janosik & Gregory, 2002). Named after Jeanne Clery, a 19-year-old Lehigh University student who was raped and murdered on campus, the Campus Security Act requires all colleges and universities that receive federal funds to collect and disclose information about campus crime (Lipka, 2009). Despite being monitored by the United States Department of Education, which can impose civil penalties against institutions for each infraction (up to \$27,500 per violation) and can suspend the receipt of federal student financial aid, institutional compliance with this Act has been poor (Harshmen, Puro, & Wolff, 2001). A study of the willingness of 4-year higher educational institutions to provide campus crime data to prospective students found that only 25% of institutions complied with regulations imposed by the Act (Gehring & Callaway, 1997). A similar study that explored the provision of campus security information in 2-year colleges found an even lower percentage of institutions (22%) to provide information that is required for compliance with the Act (Callaway, Gehring, & Douthett, 2000). However, whether compliance with the Act actually would improve safety of college campuses is not clear (Lipka, 2009). Most college students are unaware of this Act (71%) and among those who are, few (7%) reported that campus crime statistics influenced their decision to matriculate at the institution of their choice (Janosik, 2001).

Zero Tolerance Policies Toward Violence

In addition to increasing awareness of threats, many educational institutions have adopted zero tolerance policies toward bringing weapons on campuses. The goal of these policies is to improve school safety by prohibiting weapons on campuses and increasing the severity of consequences for policy violations (e.g., an automatic yearlong expulsion for a first offense). Zero tolerance policies became more prevalent in secondary educational institutions following the passage of the 1994 Gun-Free Schools Act. As of 1999, 94% of U.S. elementary and secondary schools reported having zero tolerance policies toward the possession of firearms on school campuses and 91% reported having similar policies for the possession of weapons other than firearms (i.e., knives) (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). However, despite the widespread implementation of these policies, a national review by the American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force (Skiba et al., 2006) found no evidence that zero tolerance policies are effective at preventing adolescents from bringing weapons to school. Moreover, these policies have been criticized for being implemented either too rigidly or flexibly (Skiba & Knesting, 2001); being overly punitive towards minority students, males, and students receiving special education services (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2003); and failing to be applied to adolescents who may pose a significant threat to the school environment (Tobin, Sugai, & Colvin, 1996). For example, case reports indicate that many school shooters are actively suicidal during the time of the attack and unconcerned with the consequences for their actions.

Even if implemented fairly and with fidelity, it is not clear whether students who pose significant threats to campus safety can be identified accurately and punished effectively by zero tolerance policies. An investigation by the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education (Vossekuil, Reddy, Fein, Borum, & Modzeleski, 2000) found that nearly two-thirds (63%) of school shooters never had been in trouble or rarely were in trouble at school. On the other hand,

zero tolerance policies tend to identify and punish students who engage in chronic but less extreme forms of delinquent behavior (e.g., stealing, fighting) (Tobin et al., 1996). Thus, important differences seem to exist between students who commit violent crimes (e.g., homicide, school shootings) and those who engage in nonviolent delinquent behaviors (Cornell, 1990; Cornell, Benedek, & Benedek, 1987). For example, compared to students who engage in non-violent forms of delinquent behavior, students who had committed homicide tend to be less likely to have had a history of mental illness, to have prior arrests, and to be placed in a juvenile detention facility (Cornell et al., 1987). Therefore, zero tolerance policies are unlikely to prevent violent attacks and instead they may discriminate against students who engage in nonviolent delinquent behaviors.

Security Technology

Along with zero tolerance policies, many schools have attempted to increase campus security in an attempt to deal with school violence. During the past 20 years, countless school districts have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on increasing security measures. Some of these measures include hiring security guards and installing video surveillance cameras, emergency phones, metal detectors, X-ray baggage scanners, and duress alarms. However, little is known about the effectiveness of these measures (Garcia, 2003). Given an absence of data supporting their efficacy, the implementation of security technologies may be too costly for educational institutions to install and maintain (Reddy et al., 2001). Furthermore, recent increases in campus security and security technology pose new challenges for college administrators who must balance the need to maintain campus safety with a desire to uphold a college environment that fosters the open sharing of ideas and information (Schuh, 1999; Sewell & Mendelsohn, 2000).

Concealed Weapons Permits

Lawmakers in several states are debating whether citizens with concealed weapons permits should be allowed to carry weapons on campuses. As of January 2010, only the state of Utah allows such practices. Whether additional states will pass legislation that allows weapons on campuses in 2010 is unclear. Proponents of easing weapons restrictions on campuses claim that current weapons regulations limit bystanders' options to protect themselves during violent campus attacks (Harnisch, 2008). However, the belief that increasing the number of weapons on campuses will increase campus safety or decrease the probability of a campus attack is not supported by data. Additionally, most students, law enforcement personnel, and college administrators strongly oppose provisions to allow concealed weapons on campus. The presence of lethal weapons on campuses could escalate the lethality of conflicts among students, enable suicidal students increased access to lethal means to commit suicide, increase the chance for police to mistake an armed student for an attacker, and increase collateral shootings among attackers and bystanders during attacks (Harnisch, 2008). Additionally, whether bystanders would be able to intervene effectively during attacks without extensive training, how this training would be provided, and if educational institutions would be responsible for providing it are unknown.

Profiling of School Attackers

Various profiles have been developed that attempt to identify potential school shooters before attacks occur. An offender profile developed by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) (Band & Harpold, 1999) and the "Classroom Avenger" profile by McGee and DeBernardo (1999) exemplify this effort. However, the use of profiling techniques to identify future school shooters have been criticized as concerns have been raised about the selectivity and specificity of shooter profiles (Reddy et al., 2001). Most individuals who fit a specified profile will not commit

acts of violence and many school shooters do not embody characteristics described in the extant shooter profiles (e.g., having fascination with violence, being socially isolated) (Fein et al., 2002; Sewell & Mendelsohn, 2000).

For example, Steven Kazmierczak displayed few indicators that he was a threat to campus safety before he killed 5 individuals and injured 18 others in a mass shooting at Northern Illinois University (NIU). Kazmierczak was a high achieving and highly regarded student (Heinzmann & St. Clair, 2008) who recently had co-authored an academic paper entitled, “Self-injury in Correctional Settings: ‘Pathology’ of Prisons or of Prisoners?” that was published in *Criminology & Public Policy* prior to this shooting. Kazmierczak also was the Vice-President of the NIU chapter of the American Correctional Association, had expressed an interest in becoming a social worker, and had worked at a correctional facility for women. After the attack, Kazmierczak was described by the NIU police as having been normal and unstressed (Friedman, 2008). Northern Illinois University President John G. Peters was recorded to have said that Kazmierczak had “a very good academic record” and “no record of trouble” (Bohn, 2008).

The questionable accuracy of shooter profiles constitutes a major concern about using profiling techniques to identify school shooters (Fein et al., 2002; Reddy et al., 2001). The offender profile developed by the FBI is based on six school shootings (Band & Harpold, 1999) and these six shootings are not representative of the more than 30 school shootings that occurred in the U.S. over the past 20 years (Reddy et al., 2001). Additionally, the Classroom Avenger profile (McGee & DeBernardo, 1999) has been criticized for assuming that all school shooters are Caucasian when students from diverse backgrounds also have perpetrated violent attacks in schools (Reddy et al., 2001).

School shootings are infrequent and considerable variability exists in the nature of attacks (e.g., targeted students vs. random victims) and in shooter characteristics (e.g., single shooter vs. multiple shooters, dominant vs. minority group status, presence/absence of psychopathology) (Langman, 2009). Thus, it currently is impossible to predict potential school shooters or ways in which they may act (Greenberg, 2007). In this vein, a key finding from the Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative is that no accurate or useful profile exists to identify school shooters or students who may engage in violent attacks (Vossekuil et al., 2000). The authors of the report further caution that two substantial risks emerge from overly relying on profiles to predict future school attacks. First, the majority of students who fit any given “school shooter” profile never will perpetrate an act of severe violence. Second, the use of profiles will inevitably fail to identify some students who do in fact pose a risk of violence but do not share some characteristics with prior school shooters (Vossekuil et al., 2001). Moreover, the use of profiling techniques to identify school shooters may have negative consequences for students and other members of the school community (Morse, 2000). In addition to being unpopular, profiling techniques may stigmatize and label certain students as threats unfairly. For example, contrary to popular perceptions, few school shooters have histories of abuse (Langman, 2009), psychotic symptoms (O’Toole, 2000), or are abnormally preoccupied with violent media forms such as video games (Ferguson, 2008).

Threat Assessment Approach to Preventing Violent Attacks

The School Shooter: A Threat Assessment Perspective (O’Toole, 2000) report was created following a conference on preventing school shootings held by the FBI’s National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime. The purpose of this report was to provide schools with a blueprint for conducting threat assessments to diffuse threats. It encourages schools to use a multidisciplinary team of professionals to evaluate school threats using a four-pronged

assessment model, including 1) the personality and behavior of the student who made a threat, 2) the student's family dynamics, 3) the culture and climate of the school, and 4) the social dynamics of the larger community. However, despite these recommendations, this FBI report does not describe how the aforementioned evaluations should be conducted.

In this vein, Cornell and colleagues (2004a) refined and field-tested the procedures outlined in *The School Shooter*, drawing on information from 188 student threats in 35 primary (grades K-5) and secondary (grades 6-12) schools over the course of one school year. The study began with the organization of multidisciplinary threat response teams that consisted of school administrators (e.g., superintendent, principals), school psychologists, and school resource/law enforcement officers. Preliminary meetings with school administrators revealed concerns about a lack of clear guidelines for evaluating threats. Additionally, school psychologists expressed concerns about their limited training in conducting psychological evaluations on students who had made threats of violence. A decision tree model was adopted to guide school officials through the threat assessment process to address these concerns. School officials then were trained in conducting threat assessment procedures.

The first step of the threat assessment process was for a school administrator to gather information about a threat for triage purposes and to determine if additional information was needed. Thus, a school administrator was responsible for determining if he or she would be able to resolve the threat or whether additional members of the multidisciplinary team needed to be consulted. While interviewing a student to assess the severity of a threat, school administrators were advised to assess what had happened to instigate the threat, what the student meant by the threat, how the student perceived others would feel about the threat, the student's reasons for making the threat, and whether the student intended to carry out the threat. After compiling

student's answers to these issues, school administrators assessed whether threats were *transient* (i.e., could be resolved quickly and easily with an apology or explanation) or *substantive* (i.e., lasting and enduring threats of causing serious harm to others). Transient threat statements often are expressed when a student is angry and are no longer substantive when a student's feelings dissipate. Substantive threats represent a sustained intent to harm someone beyond the immediate situation in which a threat was made (Cornell et al., 2004b). Therefore, although transient threats warrant a prompt disciplinary response (Cornell et al., 2004a), school administrators are strongly advised to consult with the multidisciplinary team on substantive threats in order to take protective action to prevent emerging threats of violence and to develop an intervention plan to address any issues that appear to have precipitated the threat (e.g., bullying).

The use of the FBI's threat assessment guidelines allowed school administrators to resolve the majority (70%) of threats quickly and efficiently (Cornell et al., 2004a). The remaining 30% of threats required a more extensive evaluation and intervention plan, including conducting a comprehensive psychological evaluation, designing interventions that involve caregivers or law enforcement officers, and notifying potential victims of targeted violence. During this study, only 3 students were expelled, and no acts of violence were carried out. Cornell and colleagues (2004a) concluded that student threat assessment is a feasible and practical approach for schools that deserves further research.

Although the results of this study support the use of threat assessment procedures delineated by the FBI, they do not inform how threats are reported to school officials or potential barriers to threat reporting (Stueve et al., 2006). Consequently, Cornell and colleagues (2004a; p. 543) conclude, "It seems important to learn how students respond to threats, how they determine that a threat is serious, and what factors influence their decision to seek help." Thus, similar to

how many students do not report being victimized until it becomes unbearable (Unnever & Cornell, 2004), some students may fail to report threats or threatening statements when they are initially made and when a quick response could obviate an act of violence.

Student Threat Reporting

Threatening messages and statements made by students should be considered carefully. Results from the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative suggest that at least one individual has prior knowledge of an attack before it occurs in the majority (81%) of school shootings (Vossekuil et al., 2000). Furthermore, another study found that all school shooters that were studied in nine shootings had communicated their violent intentions to others before the attack, often including the time and place of the future attack (Verlinden, Hersen, & Thomas, 2000). Lastly, a *New York Times* study on rampage killings (i.e., violent attacks in public places that involve multiple victims) found that 63 of the 100 attackers had made threatening statements publicly before initiating an attack. Collectively, these data suggest that, in most cases, some individuals are aware that an attack is imminent or being planned before it is carried out. In fact, several individuals may have knowledge of an attack before it occurs. For example, more than half (59%) of school shooters tell more than one individual of their violent intentions before carrying them out (Vossekuil et al., 2000).

A follow-up study to the Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative explored relationships between bystanders (i.e., individual with prior knowledge of attacks) and attackers as well as how bystanders obtain information about potential attacks (Pollack, Modzeleski, & Rooney, 2008). Results of this study indicate that 34% of the bystanders are friends of attackers, 29% are peers (i.e., acquaintances, co-workers, classmates), 6% are family members, and 31% are other acquaintances or do not have close relationships with the attackers. Additionally, 82%

of bystanders appear to receive information about an attack directly from an assailant, and only 13% receive this information secondhand, suggesting that most individuals with prior knowledge of school shootings often have close relations with attackers. Unfortunately, however, these findings may fail to capture students' general willingness to report threats of violence. In other words, it is not clear whether the cases investigated in the Final Report and Findings of the Safe School Initiative are indicative of low student willingness to report threats in general or represent extreme cases in which tragedy resulted from a breakdown in students' general tendency to report threats of violence.

Although no studies have directly explored college students willingness to report threats of violence, four studies on this topic have been conducted with adolescent students. One study investigated adolescents' self-reported willingness to tell an adult if they heard another student state that he/she was going to shoot someone. Upon questioning, slightly more than half (54%) of the students reported that they would be willing to tell an adult if they had prior knowledge of a shooting (Gaughan, Cerio, & Myers, 2001). In another study, about three-fourth (74%) of students reported that they would tell an adult if they heard a student threaten to hurt someone else with a weapon. Similarly, in response to information that a peer was planning to "do something dangerous," a recent study assessed students' willingness to engage in four different actions: intervene directly, tell a teacher or principal, discuss the situation with a friend but not an adult, and do nothing (Syvertsen, Flanagan, & Stout, 2009). Results of this study indicate that students favored taking action on their own over the other options, which may suggest low willingness to report threats. Lastly, a fourth study found that majority of adolescents (70%) were willing to report if they knew that another student had a weapon at school (Brank et al., 2007). However, few students reported they definitely would report (5%) a student with a deadly

weapon. Also in this study, a higher percentage of adolescents responded that they would report peers if they could do so anonymously (83%), and fewer students (58%) responded that they would report their friends.

Threat Reporting in College Students

Compared to adolescent students, limited research exists on threat reporting behaviors among college students. One study investigated reporting behaviors in victims of violent crimes in an effort to assess the reliability and validity of campus crime statistics generated by the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act (Sloan III, Fisher, & Cullen, 1997). Results from this study suggest that a minority (25%) of campus crime victims report their victimization to campus authorities. Furthermore, an unpublished study on students' perceptions about campus police found that 10% of college students report being victims of campus crime; and among these students, 43% actually report their victimization to an authority figure (Revels, 1999). Students who do not report being victims of crime most commonly respond that their victimizations are "too minor" or "too private" to report (Sloan III et al., 1997). In the same vein, feeling that a threat was too minor or private also decreases students' willingness to report threats, thus illustrating that students' willingness to report is influenced by their perceptions of the seriousness of threats and how reporting threats may affect them socially.

Why do an alarming percentage of students display a low willingness to report threats? To answer this question, research will be reviewed as it relates to a variety of reporting behaviors (e.g., tattling, whistleblowing) that have been investigated with different populations (e.g., adolescent students, non-college populations of adults). Although the research base on these topics is evolving, it is sufficiently developed to suggest that some specific qualities influence students' willingness to report threats of violence to campus communities.

Trust in the College Support System

Trust involves an expectancy held by an individual that the words, promises, and intentions of others can be relied on (Rotter, 1971). Trust is important for interpersonal and interorganizational functioning in industrial/organizational settings and it provides a basis for clear and effective communications between group members (Zaheer, McEvily, & Perrone, 1998). Interorganizational trust improves intuitional performance, negotiation, and conflict resolution. However, interpersonal trust does not exert a direct influence on the former three variables, suggesting that efforts to improve organizational harmony require individuals in organizations to trust the organizations more than to trust the individuals in the organizations (Zaheer et al., 1998). Thus, in a similar vein, college students' trust in their college as a whole as compared to trust in specific individuals within the college (e.g., the college president, security officers, professors), may be critical to establishing harmony in the institution.

Although the effects of college students' trust in school support systems have not been measured directly, students' trust in authority figures appears to impact their willingness to report threats to campus safety (Brank et al., 2007; Gaughan et al., 2001; Greenberg, 2007; Pollack et al., 2008; Stueve et al., 2006). Adolescents who report threatening peers generally have positive relationships with adults, believe that their reports will be taken seriously, and think that threats would be addressed appropriately by figures of authority. Moreover, adolescents who feel they will be believed, have strong relationships with adults, and think that the information they provide will be protected are more likely to report threats (Brank et al., 2007). In contrast, adolescents who do not report threatening peers tend to anticipate negative responses from authority figures resulting from their sharing information about potential threats (Pollack et al., 2008).

A study that explored crime reporting behaviors in college students found about a quarter (24%) of students to not report being victimized due to a lack of trust that campus police would respond effectively (Sloan III et al., 1997). In this study, about 17% of students' did not report victimizations because they believed the police would not recover the lost property or find an offender. Furthermore, 7% did not report because they thought the police could not solve the crime and a small percentage (1%) of students did not report due to feeling harassed or threatened by campus police. Thus, even if the majority of college students trust campus police to respond effectively to crime reports, the lack of trust exhibited in a somewhat large minority of students (24%) still may impede the reporting of some threats of violence.

Campus Connectedness

Campus connectedness, an aspect of social connectedness, relates to feelings of closeness to others in a campus community (Lee, Sexton, & Keough, 2002). Research on social connectedness among college students indicates that students who feel strongly connected to their campus climate tend to become more involved in social activities and demonstrate higher levels of academic achievement (Lee et al., 2002). Conversely, students who lack a sense of connectedness tend to feel socially isolated and are prone to feelings of loneliness, low self-esteem, and higher rates of anxiety and depression (Hagerty & Williams, 1999; Lee & Robins, 1995). Additionally, being perceived as socially disconnected on campus may be socially stigmatizing (Lau & Gruen, 1992).

The stigma associated with low social connectedness may explain why socially disconnected individuals often appraise social environments negatively (Pinel, 1999) and have negative perceptions about their friends, roommates, and people in general (Jones, Sansone, & Helm, 1983; Rotenberg, 1994). Furthermore, socially disconnected individuals may eventually develop beliefs that the college campus is uninviting and these beliefs may prevent them from

engaging in social behaviors, thus perpetuating their social isolation as they avoid social interactions (Lee et al., 2002). Some socially disconnected students even may blame their lack of connectedness on others whom are seen as unfriendly instead of (or in addition to) internalizing their feelings of isolation (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). In a similar vein, some students who feel disconnected and alienated from the campus climate may be less inclined to report threatening students because they either may be unaware of where to make reports, distrust authority figures, feel awkward around peers, or be unconcerned with maintaining the safety of the campus climate (Brinkley & Saarnio, 2006; Pollack et al., 2008; Syvertsen et al., 2009).

Self-Efficacy Toward Service

Self-efficacy toward service (i.e., the belief that one can have a prosocial impact on his or her community) predicts students' willingness to function as a responsible agent in society (Weber, Weber, Sleeper, & Schneider, 2004). Thus, individuals with strong self-efficacy toward service may be likely to report threatening students, given their expected commitment to maintaining a safe campus environment. One study found general self-efficacy to influence students' propensity for whistleblowing after controlling for age, gender, and work experience (MacNab & Worthley, 2008). Specifically, individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy were more likely to report unethical activities than were individuals with low self-efficacy.

Trust in the college support system may influence relationships between students' self-efficacy toward service and their willingness to report threatening students. Although no research that directly explored these relationships could be located, research on virtual communities suggests that trust must be established between individuals before self-efficacious individuals (i.e., individuals who are competent in their abilities to share information) willingly share information with others electronically (Hsu, Ju, Yen, & Chang, 2007). Perceived risks associated with sharing knowledge electronically, including social threats (e.g., being perceived negatively

by others in the virtual community) (Wasko & Faraj, 2005), the potential for lost opportunities (e.g., having someone plagiarize one's work), or being vulnerable to the influence of others in the virtual community decrease willingness of individuals to share information. Thus, a similar relationship may exist between trust, self-efficacy toward service, and threat reporting. For example, a student who feels confident in his or her judgment and ability to inform an authority figure about a threat to campus safety but does not trust this individual to act reasonably when informed of a threat may not report the threat.

Fear of Negative Evaluation

Fear of negative evaluation, a central component of social anxiety, involves fear of being judged negatively by others (Watson & Friend, 1969). This fear often is maintained by unrealistically high standards for social performance ("I cannot let anyone see me make a mistake"), a tendency to presume that others perceive oneself as inadequate (e.g., unattractive, socially awkward, unintelligent), and a tendency to accept that others' beliefs about oneself are true without question (Clark & Wells, 1995; Rapee & Heimberg, 1997).

Students tend to become increasingly concerned with peer evaluations when parental influence decreases in adolescence and peer relations increase in importance (Beck & Treiman, 1996; Brown, Dolcini, & Leventhal, 1997; Perkins, 2002). In response to negative peer norms, some students engage in high-risk behaviors (e.g., binge drinking, sexual promiscuity) to avoid negative peer evaluations (Borsari & Carey, 2001; Scholly, Katz, Gascoigne, & Holck, 2005). Similarly, individuals who fear negative social evaluations may withhold information about campus threats in order to conform to a norm suggesting that to "tattle" or report other students warrants censure.

Social costs and negative perceptions associated with tattling or other forms of peer reporting also may exist among adults. For example, attorneys tend to eschew turning in a fellow

attorney for misbehavior due to possible negative social consequences (Toomey, 2004). Furthermore, peer reporting in military and law enforcement settings also is influenced by similar social factors. Despite having organizational policies that require U.S. Naval Academy cadets to report other cadets who engage in inappropriate behaviors, few midshipmen report their peers due to informal norms about peer loyalty, norms that override the organizational policies that cadets expected to follow. In fact, loyalty to a friend is the most influential factor determining whether cadets will report inappropriate behaviors of other cadets (Pershing, 2002). Similarly, police officers who report other officers for misconduct are seen as violating an informal “code of silence” and often regarded as disloyal to their peers (Westmarland, 2005). Similar to these settings, fear of negative evaluation also may curtail the reporting of behaviors in college students. An investigation of reporting practices in college students found the most common response students gave for not reporting a serious threat was that the threat was a “private matter” (Sloan III et al., 1997), indicating that students may eschew reporting out of a fear of negative social consequences.

Delinquency

Delinquent behavior is considered unlawful and against prevailing social norms and conventions. Adolescent students who report a history of delinquency appear to display a low willingness to report acts of violence (Brank et al., 2007; Brinkley & Saarnio, 2006). This phenomenon appears to be even more exaggerated in adolescents who carry weapons. For example, among students who reported having carried a weapon to school, 74% responded that they would not report another weapon-carrying student even if the student threatened to harm other students (Brinkley & Saarnio, 2006).

Although relations between delinquency and college students’ threat reporting behaviors have not been explored directly, research on other adult populations suggests that delinquency

may inhibit their willingness to report threats. For example, a study of active street offenders revealed strong negative perceptions associated with “snitching” (peer reporting) (Rosenfeld, Jacobs, & Wright, 2003). All interviewed street offenders denied reporting criminal activity to police or other authority figures and displayed contempt for those who had snitched on others. Furthermore, this study also explored how reporting behaviors may be influenced by street offenders’ beliefs about police officers. Most street offenders reported they did not trust police officers despite acknowledging their contributions to maintaining public order.

Individuals who have had negative experiences with authority figures are less likely to trust and rely on these individuals for protection (Hurst & Frank, 2000). Mutual distrust characterizes relationships between police officers and delinquent police informants, with the latter perhaps somewhat motivated to report criminal activity to receive a financial reward or a more lenient criminal charge (Dodge, 2006; Rosenfeld et al., 2003). Police officers often question the veracity of information reported by informants (Pogrebin & Poole, 1993) and informants report being exploited or mistreated by police officers (Marx, 1998). Furthermore, individuals in delinquent social groups may be disinclined to report threatening behaviors because of social pressures not to cooperate with authority figures. Delinquent students tend to belong to social networks that condone delinquency and share similar values, norms, and beliefs. Thus, the fear of social exclusion may prevent some individuals from reporting if they think that in their social network other individuals will perceive such acts negatively (Haynie, 2001). Additionally, in delinquent groups, beliefs about informing authority figures about delinquent behaviors appear to be well established. Cooperation with authority figures may cause delinquent individuals to be considered weak, ineffective, or untrustworthy by their delinquent peers (Rosenfeld et al., 2003). Lastly, cooperating with authority figures may place individuals at risk

for being victimized if they are members of delinquent social groups or live in communities with high crime rates (Rosenfeld et al., 2003). This risk may further dissuade these individuals from reporting individuals who may engage in violent crimes and could potentially retaliate.

Research Questions for Investigation

This literature review suggests that several variables could be reasonably expected to affect college students' willingness to report threats of violence to the campus community. They include students' trust in the college support system, fear of negative evaluation, history of delinquency, feelings of campus connectedness, and self-efficacy toward service. A primary goal of this study is to test a comprehensive model that includes these variables. Additionally, specific relationships between variables will be tested to determine paths of influence between variables.

The primary hypotheses are as follows:

1. Trust in the college support system will be positively related to students' willingness to report threats to campus safety.
2. Campus connectedness will be positively related to students' willingness to report threats to campus safety.
3. Self-efficacy toward service will be positively related to students' willingness to report threats to campus safety.
4. Fear of negative evaluation will be negatively related to students' willingness to report to threats to campus safety
5. Delinquency will be negatively related to students' willingness to report to threats to campus safety.

Trust may be an important mediator of relationships between several of the aforementioned variables. Delinquent adolescents and adults often distrust authority figures (Dodge, 2006; Hurst & Frank, 2000; Rosenfeld et al., 2003; Stoutland, 2001) and are less likely than non-delinquent students are to report threats (Brank et al., 2007). Additionally, students' self-efficacy toward service beliefs may be influenced by their trust in campus authorities. Thus, trust in the college

support system was expected to partially mediate relationships between delinquency and students' willingness to report threats as well as self-efficacy toward service and willingness to report. Secondary hypotheses are as follows:

6. Trust in the college support system will partially mediate relationships between delinquency and students' willingness to report threats.
7. Trust in the college support system will partially mediate relationships between self-efficacy toward service and students' willingness to report threats.

Lastly, there may be relationships between other study variables (i.e., campus connectedness, fear of negative evaluation) and trust in the college support system even though research could not be located that establishes these relationships. Therefore, in addition to testing the aforementioned hypotheses, alternative models will test these putative relationships.

CHAPTER 2 METHODS

Participants

Data collection was conducted in two prongs at the University of Florida. During the spring and fall of 2009, 160 participants were solicited through an undergraduate research pool (prong 1). Two participants were excluded from analyses due to scoring high on a measure of social desirability. During the fall of 2009, the second prong of data collection was conducted. Four-thousand undergraduate students were solicited to participate in this study via email. Among these students, 678 participated (17% response rate). An additional 15 participants were excluded due to scoring in the extreme range on a measure of social desirability. Thus, valid data were obtained from 663 participants. Data collected at prongs 1 and 2 were combined since no significant differences were found between participants on willingness to report threats of violence, $t(818) = 1.67, p = .11$, and trust in the college support system, $t(818) = 1.43, p = .15$. Therefore, the total sample included 820 participants. Table 2-1 presented means and standard deviations for study variables for both participant groups (i.e., participants from prongs 1 and 2 of data collection).

Approximately 70% of the total participants were female (30% male). Sixty-five percent identified as White/Caucasian, 9% as Black/African American, 14% as Hispanic/Latino, 7% as Asian, and 5% as Mixed Race. Twenty-six percent of participants listed their class standing as sophomore, 33% as junior, and 41% as senior. Eighty-two percent of participants lived off campus and 18% lived on campus. Approximately, 57% of participants participated in at least one extra-curricular activity, 4% were student athletes, 16% were members of a fraternity or sorority, 24% were members of an honor society, and 30% were not affiliated with any of the

aforementioned groups. Overall, undergraduate students from 86 different academic majors were sampled. The most common major was psychology with 44 students.

Procedure

Data first were collected from an undergraduate research pool (prong 1). These students were enrolled in classes offered by the Department of Educational Psychology (e.g., Human Growth and Development, The Adolescent, Teaching Diverse Populations) and were required to participate in a research study to meet a class requirement. Students in the research pool generally have diverse majors, as 42 different academic majors were represented in this first sample. Students who provided data in prong 1 accessed the study questions using an electronic portal provided by the Department of Educational Psychology. Data were collected using SurveyMonkey, a widely used survey generator. All participants answered all survey items. Thus, there were no missing data.

The second prong of data collection involved a large sample of undergraduate students who provided data on their own volition. These students ($N = 4,000$) were selected randomly by the Office of the Institutional Research at the University of Florida. All students were enrolled as sophomores, juniors, and seniors. The Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs first contacted students to encourage their participation in the study. Each student then received one to four emails that included a link to the study. Students were contacted weekly (on Monday or Tuesday) for a period of four consecutive weeks. Participants acknowledged their agreement to the terms of the study by signing an electronic consent form and providing data (Appendix A). Participants were excluded from receiving follow-up contacts and having access the survey a second time after they completed all survey questions. Thus, responses were independent and participants provided data only on one occasion. Data only were collected from participants who completed all survey items to ensure equal cases for each variable. Students were excluded if

they scored high (i.e., total score above 17) on a measure of social desirability. Student Voice, an online survey generator and manager, was used to collect data and email students.

Representatives at Student Voice copied the SurveyMonkey protocol that was previously used in the educational psychology research pool to ensure that the data collection processes were identical for both participant groups. Student Voice and SurveyMonkey do not allow third parties to access or view collected data. They also hold provided materials (e.g., images, email addresses) securely, in confidence, and prevent the collection of personally identifiable information that could be used to identify participant's responses. These provisions help ensure compliance with guidelines specified by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2002) for data collection and research participation, the Health Insurance Portability Accountability Act, and the Common Rule (45 CFR 46) regarding human subject research.

At the completion of the study, students were provided with a secure email address to which they could send a message if they wanted to be eligible for incentives. Thus, participants' responses remained anonymous and independent from their survey responses. Incentives included one free Apple ipod Nano 8GB ® digital music player valued at \$200 and gift cards for Outback Steakhouse ® valued at \$50.00 (quantity = 1), Sports Authority ® valued at \$40 (quantity = 1), Barnes & Noble valued at \$25 (quantity = 1), Chili's Grill or Romano's Macaroni Grill valued at \$25 (quantity = 1), TGI Fridays Restaurant ® valued at \$25 (quantity = 2), the Regal Entertainment Group valued at \$10 (quantity = 5), and Starbucks ® valued at \$5.00 (quantity = 12).

Measures

Campus Connectedness Scale

The Campus Connectedness Scale (Summers, Beretvas, Svinicki, & Gorin, 2005) is a self-report 14-item adaptation of the 20-item Social Connectedness Scale (Lee & Robins, 1995).

The measure assesses college students' personal sense of belonging on campus and connectedness to the campus community. Campus connectedness items are rated on a 6-point scale, ranging from 1, "I strongly disagree" to 6, "I strongly agree." The Campus Connectedness Scale demonstrates good internal consistency ($\alpha = .90$ to $.92$) (Summers et al., 2005), convergent validity (e.g., with a measure of classroom community [$r = .55$]), and discriminant validity (e.g., with a measure of group processing [$r = .17$]; Summers et al., 2005).

Self-Efficacy Toward Service Scale

The Self-Efficacy Toward Service Scale (Weber et al., 2004) is a five-item self-report measure that measures the strength of beliefs that one can have an impact on their college community. Items on the Self-Efficacy Toward Service Scale are rated on a five-point scale, ranging from 0, "I strongly disagree" to 4, "I strongly agree." The Self-Efficacy Toward Service Scale demonstrates good internal consistency ($\alpha = .80$). Positive associations have been found between the scale and measures of civic participation ($r = .59$) and attitudes toward helping others ($r = .72$). The Self-Efficacy Toward Service Scale is uncorrelated with a theoretically unrelated measure of fashion trends ($r = .05$; Weber et al., 2004).

Self-Report Delinquency Scale

The Self-Report Delinquency Scale (Piquero, MacIntosh, & Hickman, 2002) is a 9-item self-report measure that examines the frequency of minor and seriously delinquent behaviors committed over the last 12 months. Nine categories are used to assess the frequency of behaviors, ranging from 1, "never," to 9, "two-three times a day," thus allowing for the assessment of the frequency of delinquent behaviors. The Self-Reported Delinquency Scale has acceptable reliability for research purposes ($\alpha = .76$) (Piquero et al., 2002). The correlation between self-reports of delinquency and official criminal records generally are positive and statistically significant (e.g., Elliott, Ageton, & Huizinga, 1985; Farrington, Loeber, Stouthamer-

Loeber, Van Kammen, & Schmidt, 1996). Five items were excluded from analyses and 4 were retained due to limited variability in responses across items and categories. Retained items then were dichotomized into being either positive or negative for delinquency.

Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale-Revised

The Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale-Revised (Carleton, McCreary, Norton, & Admundson, 2006) is a 12-item measure of fear of negative social evaluation. Items on the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale-Revised are rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from 0, “not at all characteristic of me” to 4, “extremely characteristic of me.” The Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale-Revised has excellent internal consistency ($\alpha s = .95$ to $.97$) (Carleton, Collimore, & Asmundson, 2007; Carleton et al., 2006). The scale also displays convergent validity with measures of social anxiety ($r = .60$) and fear of socially observable anxiety reactions ($r = .55$), as well as divergent validity with measures of fear of illness ($r = .38$) and fear of injury ($r = .28$) (Carleton et al., 2007; Carleton et al., 2006).

Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale-Short Form X2

The Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale-Short Form X2 (Strahan & Gerbasi, 1972) is a 10-item adaptation of the commonly used 33-item Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). These measures purport to measure the tendency to reply in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others. Items on the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale-Short Form X2 are scored either positively “1” or negatively “0” and total scores range from 0 to 10. Factorial validity has been found for a single-factor model of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale-Short Form X2 (Leite & Beretvas, 2005). Mixed internal consistency estimates have been reported for the measure, ranging from the low to acceptable range (Beretvas, Meyers, & Leite, 2002). In the current study, the Marlowe-Crowne

Social Desirability Scale-Short Form X2 demonstrated low reliability ($\alpha = .35$). The measure was used only to exclude participants who scored in the upper extremes for social desirability.

Pilot Study

Instrument Development

A pilot study was conducted to assess the psychometric characteristics of previously unstudied measures. Participants included 93 undergraduate students enrolled at the University of Florida. Participants were solicited using an undergraduate subject pool, and data were collected in the spring of 2008. Participants completed a questionnaire containing the following measures: The Campus Connectedness Scale, the Self-Report Delinquency Scale, the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale-Revised, the General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer, 1993), and a newly developed Trust In College Support System Scale. The first three threat reporting passages (passages 1, 2, and 3) also were included (Appendix B).

Trust In College Support System Scale

The Trust in the College Support System Scale (Sulkowski, unpublished) is a self-report measure designed to assess a student's trust in various campus resources to preserve campus safety and integrity, establish channels of communication between students and college staff, and handle crisis situations. Measures that assess college students' trust in higher educational institutions were not located. However, measures have been developed to assess trust in other organizations, including school systems and business organizations (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). A review of research conducted in organizational systems identified the variables of openness, competence, beneficence, reliability, honesty, and willingness to be vulnerable as the key facets of trust (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Additionally, while acknowledging the data on assessing trust in schools are limited, these authors suggest that openness, competence, reliability, and beneficence may be relevant to trust in educational settings. Therefore, particular

attention was paid to developing items that purport to measure these qualities when designing the Trust in the College Support System Scale.

The Trust in the College Support System Scale initially included 17 items designed to assess openness (N = 5), competence (N = 5), beneficence (N = 3), and reliability (N = 4). However, 11 items were excluded to improve ease of scale interpretability and model fit to the data. The 6-item Trust in the College Support System Scale displayed excellent fit to the data as evidenced by a non-significant chi-square test value, [χ^2 (9, N = 93) = 15.56, $p = .08$] and values on fit indices: CFI = .99, NNFI = .99, SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .06. Therefore, the hypothesis that the tested model did not fit the data could not be rejected. Factor loadings for the 6 items were consistently high ($\lambda = .70$ to $.81$) and no negative or non-significant residual variances were identified ($\theta = .35$ to $.70$). The retained items appeared to assess beneficence (N = 2), reliability (N = 1), and competence (N = 3) as determined by their content validity and factor loadings.

The Trust in the College Support System Scale employs a self-report format, and items are rated on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1, “strongly disagree” to 4, “strongly agree.” The final 6-item scale used in this study demonstrated good internal consistency in the pilot study ($\alpha = .85$). The Trust in the College Support System Scale also displayed low to modest convergent validity with the Campus Connectedness Scale ($r = .32$) and General Self-Efficacy ($r = .21$). Support for the measure’s discriminant validity has been found with the Self-Reported Delinquency Scale ($r = -.43$) and the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale-Revised ($r = -.21$).

Threat Reporting Decision Passages

Studies that employ simulated reading passages to assess students’ willingness to report threatening students could not be located. The use of such passages allow a researcher to present a hypothetical situation to participants to which they can respond in order to assess what they may do in a specific situation. Pilot study participants read and responded to three passages that

used this format. The passages described common characteristics of school shooters identified in a report from U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education (Vossekuil et al., 2000). Participants were asked to read background information about a student, to assume they had overheard them make a specific threat statement, and then to rate their willingness to report this person (Appendix B).

A FBI report (O'Toole, 2000) describes four types of threats: direct threats (e.g., “on the 14th, I’m going to hide in the stairwell and shoot him when he comes back from class”), indirect threats (e.g., if she is really cheating on me, she is going to die”), veiled threats (e.g., this place would be much better with a few of these stuck-up snobs dead”), and conditional threats (e.g., “if he doesn’t pay me back what he owes, I’m going to kill him”). The report provides examples of each type of threat and suggests that direct threats are most likely to pose imminent and serious danger to the safety of others. However, given an absence of data that suggest that the type of a threat (i.e., direct vs. indirect) influences students threat reporting decisions, each passage was followed up with a direct, indirect, veiled, and conditional threat to control for the influence that threat type may have had on students’ willingness to report.

Efforts were made to create passages that accurately portray students who may pose a significant risk to campus safety. Thus, common characteristics of school attackers identified in the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education report (Vossekuil et al., 2000) were ordered by the degree to which they were shared by attackers. For example, all characteristics that were common to at least 80% of attackers were categorized in category 1, all characteristics shared by 60% to 79% of attackers were categorized in category 2, all characteristics shared by 40% to 59% of attackers were categorized in category 3, and all characteristics shared by less than 40% of attackers were categorized in category 4. Percentages of characteristics shared by

attackers in the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education report (Vossekuil et al., 2000) by each respective category are listed in Table 2-3.

Passage 1 included the following characteristics from category 1. Chris, the student in question, recently had experienced a major loss with which he was having difficulty coping. Passage 2 was designed to contain fewer severe characteristics. In fact, it contained only one category 1 characteristic (e.g., Thomas felt persecuted). Passage 3 described characteristics found in the first two categories. Drawing from category 1, Ray was described as experiencing difficulty coping with a major perceived loss; drawing from category 2, he also was described as experiencing periods of major depression and had experienced a major loss to his social status. After reading the passages, participants rated their willingness to report on a 4-point scale ranging from 1, “definitely wouldn’t report” to 4, “definitely would report.” Cronbach’s alpha analyses yielded good internal consistency on the 12 threat statements ($\alpha = .89$).

Instrument Modifications

Linear regression was used to assess whether participants scores on the campus connectedness, delinquency, fear of negative evaluation, general self-efficacy, and trust in the college support system predicted their responses to threat statements. No significant association was identified between the aforementioned independent variables and participants responses to threat statements, $R^2 = .03$, $F(1, 84) = 1.05$, $p = .40$. The lack of association between variables may have been due to the relatively small sample size ($N = 93$), a somewhat high percentage of missing data (10%), and limited variability in participants’ responses to the threat statements. Regarding the latter, many participants may have responded in a socially desirable manner, as a high percentage of respondents (90 to 100%) stated that they would either “probably report” or would “definitely report” in response to 3 of the 12 (25%) threat statements. Additionally, there may have been restricted variability in students’ responses since only a 4-point scale was used.

Additional Provisions to Address Pilot Study Limitations

In the current study, the following measures were taken to address limitations found in the pilot study. First, electronic data collection prevented selective answering and missing data. Second, additional threat reporting passages were designed to increase the number of threats to which participants would responded. A female gender passage also was included to reflect the possibility that school attackers could be male or female. In fact, the first campus shooting perpetrated by a female occurred at Louisiana Technical College on February 8, 2008 (Supino, 2008), a few months after the design of the original three passages. Third, two additional response categories were added to increase the variability of answers (Appendix B). Forth, a commonly used measure of social desirability was included (i.e., Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale-Short Form X2), which allowed for the exclusion of participants who respond in an unrealistically favorable manner. Lastly, two senior police offers (i.e., Chief of Police, a Police Major) and two other police officers from a critical incident response team reviewed the threat passages and statements. Independently, the police officers all reported that the proposed threats were germane, realistic, and would warrant immediate response from the department. No substantive changes to the threat passages or items were suggested during this review.

Statistical Analyses

Preliminary analyses were conducted with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 16.0. Dummy coding was applied to categorical variables with more than two levels (e.g., race/ethnicity). Linear regression was used to test the associations among demographic characteristics and variables related directly to research questions (e.g., trust in the college support system, willingness to report). Variables representing demographic characteristics were entered into the model simultaneously to control for the influence of these variables on each other.

This study used a two-step analysis approach to structural equation modeling (SEM). Step 1 involved specifying a measurement model using first-order CFA with categorical factor indicators. Step 2 involved specifying a series of structural regression models that tested the associations among latent variables. Mplus version 5.21 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998) with weighted least squares estimation was used to specify and test all models. Weighted least squares estimation is a theoretically appropriate method for fitting CFA models to polychoric correlations (i.e., a correlation that estimates the linear relationship between two unobserved continuous variables in the presence of observed ordinal data; Muthén, du Toit, & Spisic, in press). The chi-square statistic and standard errors are adjusted using a full-weight matrix with weighted least squares. A diagonal weight matrix is used for parameter estimation. Further, the goodness of fit test associated with this estimation method involves multiplying the usual chi-square test statistic used with maximum likelihood estimation by a robust adjusted chi-square statistic, resulting in estimated model degrees of freedom (Flora & Curran, 2004). Thus, degrees of freedom are estimated rather than being determined directly from the specification of the model (Muthén et al., in press; Muthén & Muthén, 1998). Data simulation studies indicate asymptotically unbiased, consistent, and efficient parameter estimates are provided with weighted least squares. This estimation method also corrects chi-square test of fit with dichotomous or ordinal observed variables (Muthén & Satorra, 1995). Further, weighted least squares estimation is appropriate for use with non normal data (Quiroga, 1992) and provides stable estimates for large sample sizes ($N > 500$; Flora & Curran, 2004).

Measurement Model

All items were expected to load highly on their related factor and not on other factors. Residuals for observed variables were expected to be weakly associated with latent factors. Furthermore, latent factors were expected to account for the associations among the observed

variables that load on each respective factor. Model fit for the measurement model was assessed using the chi-square test of independence, goodness of fit indices, standardized factor loadings, and factor variances. The following goodness of fit indices were assessed: the comparative fit index (CFI), the non-normed fit index (NNFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). A non-significant ($p > .05$) chi-square test value indicates that a model fits the data exactly (i.e., no significant discrepancy exists between the model-implied and unrestricted correlation matrix) and cannot be rejected by the data. The CFI index indicates the proportion of possible improvement from a null model (i.e., a model that assumes the indicator variables in the model are uncorrelated) to a saturated model (i.e., a model in which all parameters are estimated) that is achievable by using a targeted model. The non-normed fit index also reflects the proportion by which the target model improves fit compared to the null model yet the measure does not require making chi-square assumptions associated with the CFI. Lastly, the RMSEA estimates the discrepancy per degree of freedom between an unrestricted correlation matrix and the model-implied matrix. Suggested model criteria include a non-significant model chi-square statistic, $CFI \geq .95$, $NNFI \geq .95$, and $RMSEA \leq .06$ (Hu & Bentler, 1999). However, results from data simulation studies with weighted least squares suggest that the traditional cutoff value for RMSEA (i.e., $\leq .06$) is overly strict and may lead to the improper rejection of properly specified models, especially if data are non-normal (Yu, 2000). Therefore, the historically preferred RMSEA value (i.e., $\leq .09$; Schumacker & Lomax, 1996) was used to interpret model fit.

Structural Regression Models

Structural regression models were compared using robust chi-square difference tests with mean and variance adjusted statistics, an approach suitable for chi-square difference testing with weighted least squares (Muthén & Asparouhov, 2002). Significant chi-square difference test

values indicate a significant change in model fit from the less restrictive comparison model resulting from the estimation of the test model. Exogenous (independent) variables in the model included trust in the college support system, campus connectedness, delinquency, fear or negative evaluation, and self-efficacy toward service. The endogenous (dependent) latent variables in the model included willingness to report as well as trust in college support system. In total, three structural regression models were tested. Model 1 tested all expected associations among study variables. Model 2 included direct effects from campus connectedness and fear of negative evaluation to trust in the campus support system. Lastly, model 3 allowed for a direct effect from self-efficacy toward service to campus connectedness. Model respecifications were made in light of appropriate empirical (e.g., modification index values, expected parameter change statistics) and theoretical criteria (Kline, 2005).

Table 2-1. Results of independent samples *t*-tests for study variables

Variable	Sample 1 (N = 158)		Sample 2 (N = 662)		<i>t</i> (818)
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
1. Willingness to report	81.96	24.89	85.56	25.01	1.67
2. Trust in the college support system	17.17	2.33	17.46	2.25	1.43
3. Campus connectedness	57.73	10.60	64.28	13.26	5.79**
4. Fear of negative evaluation	26.07	7.70	25.40	7.97	.94
5. Delinquency	5.50	2.52	4.56	.90	7.58**
6. Self-efficacy toward service	21.06	3.27	20.94	3.48	.42

Note: Sample 1 = data collected during prong 1; Sample 2 = data collected during prong 2;
p* < .05, *p* < .01

Table 2-3. Percentages of school shooters displaying specific characteristics prior to carrying out attacks.

Category level	Characteristics of school shooters	Percentage of shooters with characteristic
1	Male	100
1	Recently experienced or perceived a major loss	98
1	Planned an attack in advance of carrying it out	93
1	Had difficulty coping with a recent loss/perceived loss	83
2	Exhibited a history of suicidal thoughts/attempts	78
2	Had a grievance against at least one victim	73
2	Felt persecuted, bullied, or vulnerable	71
2	Recently experienced a loss of social status or major failure	66
2	Had a history of feeling extremely depressed	61
3	Demonstrated excessive interest in violence	59
3	Experienced loss of a romantic relationship	51
3	Demonstrated excessive interest with weapons	44
3	Experienced a change in academic performance	44
3	Experienced a change in friendship patterns	41
4	Were frequently disciplined in school	37
4	Had previously received a mental health evaluation	34
4	Demonstrated excessive interest with explosives	32
4	Motive for attack included an attempt to gain notoriety	24
4	Had a diagnosis of a psychiatric disorder	17

Note: Data are reported by the U.S. Secret Service and U.S. Department of Education (Vossekuil et al., 2000)

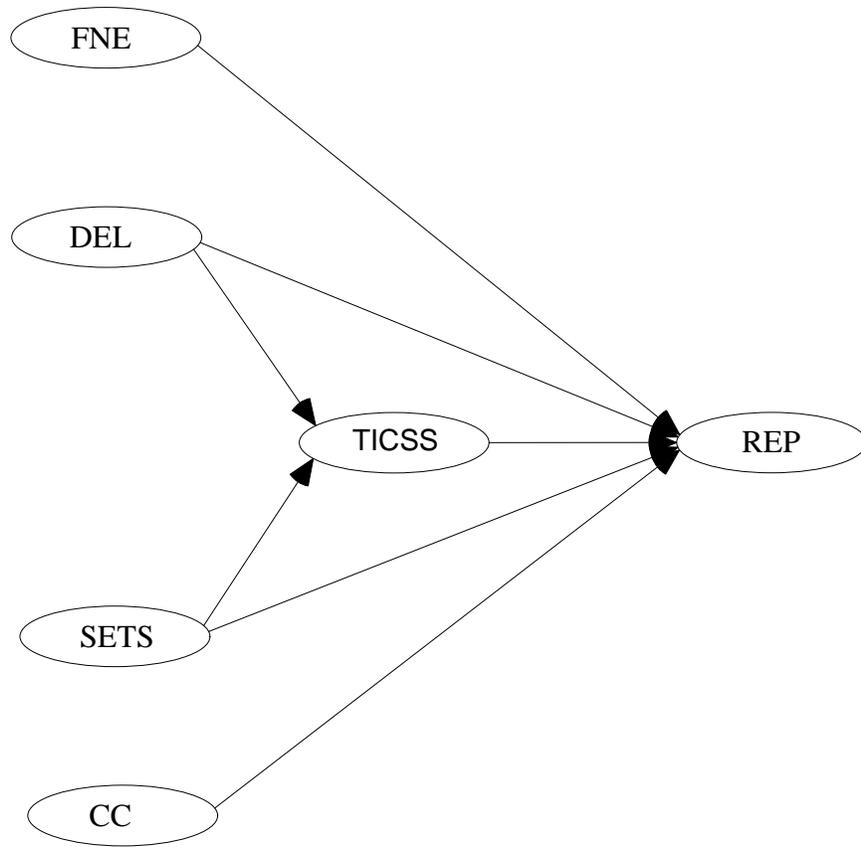


Figure 2-1. Model 1: Hypothesized structural relations among variables. Note: FNE = fear of negative evaluation; DEL = delinquency; SETS = self-efficacy toward service; CC = campus connectedness; TICSS = trust in the college support system; REP = willingness to report

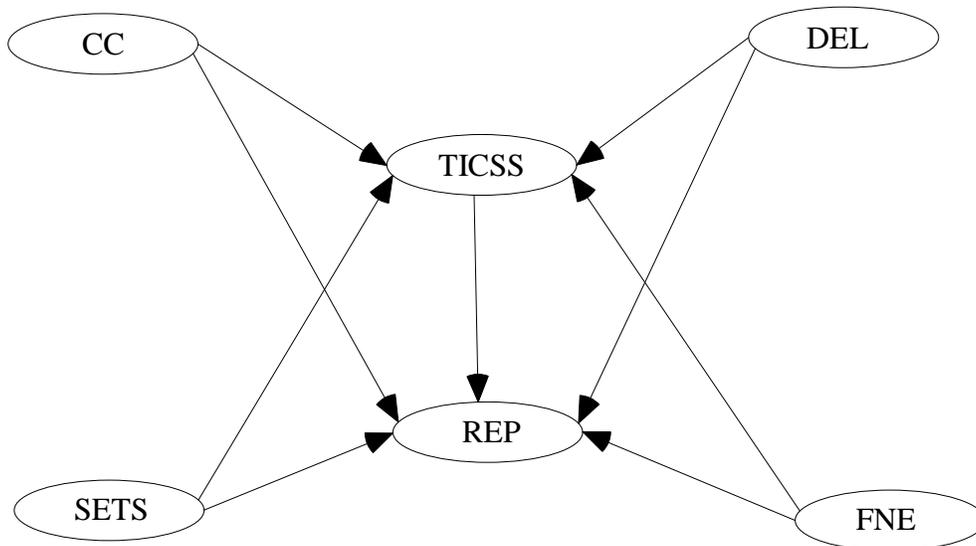


Figure 2-2. Model 2: Allowing direct effects of campus connectedness and fear of negative evaluation on trust in the college support system. *Note:* FNE = fear of negative evaluation; DEL = delinquency; SETS = self-efficacy toward service; CC = campus connectedness; TICSS = trust in the college support system; REP = willingness to report

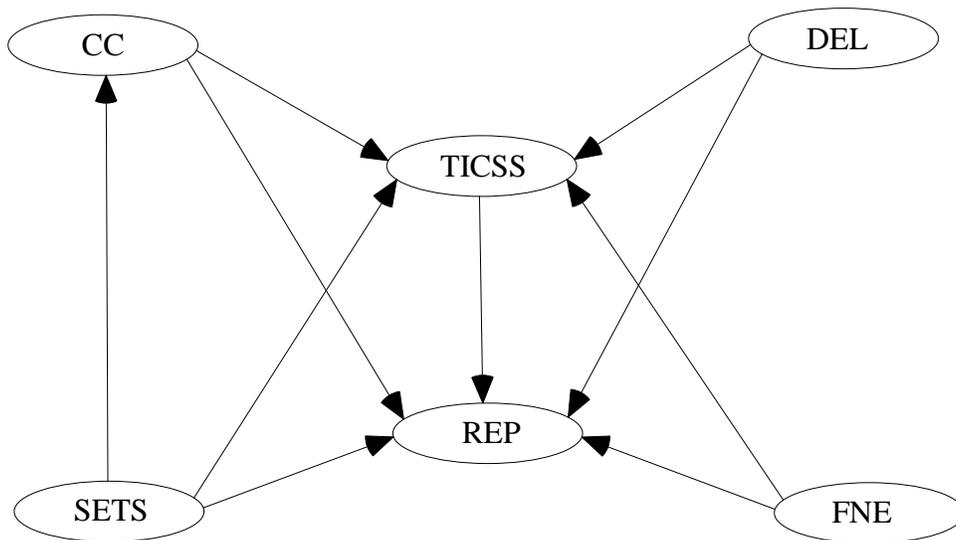


Figure 2-3. Model 3: Allowing a direct effect from self-efficacy toward service to campus connectedness. *Note:* FNE = fear of negative evaluation; DEL = delinquency; SETS = self-efficacy toward service; CC = campus connectedness; TICSS = trust in the college support system; REP = willingness to report

CHAPTER 3 RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha values, and interfactor correlations between latent variables are presented in Table 3-1. Linear regression analyses were conducted to test for associations between demographic characteristics and variables pertinent to research questions. Specifically, associations among gender, race/ethnicity, grade, place of residence, willingness to report, and trust in the college support system were explored. No significant association was identified between willingness to report and students' gender, $b = .01$, $t(819) = .16$, $p = .88$, place of residence (i.e., on/off campus), $b = .03$, $t(819) = .90$, $p = .37$, and race/ethnicity. Black/African American, $b = -.08$, $t(819) = -2.03$, $p = .12$, Hispanic/Latino, $b = -.05$, $t(819) = -1.36$, $p = .17$, Asian, $b = .03$, $t(819) = .90$, $p = .37$, racially/ethnically mixed students, $b = -.00$, $t(819) = -.08$, $p = .90$, did not differ from White/Caucasian students in willingness to report. College juniors, $b = .06$, $t(819) = 1.10$, $p = .14$, and seniors, $b = .07$, $t(819) = 1.39$, $p = .09$, did not differ from freshmen in willingness to report. As a result, grade level was not associated with willingness to report.

No significant association was identified between students' trust in the college support system and place of residence, $b = -.02$, $t(819) = -.44$, $p = .66$, or race/ethnicity. Black/African American, $b = -.02$, $t(819) = -.50$, $p = .62$, Hispanic/Latino, $b = -.08$, $t(819) = -2.02$, $p = .10$, Asian, $b = -.01$, $t(819) = -.26$, $p = .79$, racially/ethnically mixed students, $b = .02$, $t(819) = .53$, $p = .60$, did not differ from White/Caucasian students in trust in the college support system. College juniors, $b = .02$, $t(819) = .56$, $p = .58$, and seniors, $b = .07$, $t(819) = 1.60$, $p = .12$, did not differ from freshmen in trust in the college support system. However, a small yet significant association was identified between gender and trust in the college support system, $b = .07$, $t(819)$

= 2.23, $p = .03$, $d = .17$, as females ($M = 12.70$, $SD = 2.72$) displayed greater trust than did their male counterparts ($M = 12.28$, $SD = 2.06$).

Measurement Model

The measurement model's fit to the data (i.e., fit to unrestricted polychoric correlations) was assessed using multiple criteria. The finding of a significant chi-square statistic value, [χ^2 (176, $N = 820$) = 1782.88, $p < .01$], indicated that the measurement model did not fit the data exactly. However, goodness of fit index values were examined since any non-saturated model will only fit data approximately. Additionally, non-saturated models generally are rejected by the goodness of fit test (i.e., evidence a non-significant minimum fit chi-square statistic; Kline, 2005).

Table 3-2 presents goodness of fit test and index values for each model. According to fit indices, the measurement model demonstrated adequate data fit: comparative fit index (CFI) = .95, non-normed fit index (NNFI) = .97, and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .10. Obtained CFI and NNFI values were above acceptable limits, and the RMSEA value approximated its historically preferred level. No negative or non-significant variances were identified ($\theta = .36$ to $.81$). Negative or non-significant variances may suggest poor model specification or insufficient data. All indicators displayed significant loadings on their latent constructs. High standardized factor loadings were found for items that were specified to load on self-efficacy toward service ($\lambda = .78$ to $.90$) and fear of negative evaluation ($\lambda = .72$ to $.88$). Standardized factor loadings for items specified to load on campus connectedness ($\lambda = .63$ to $.88$), delinquency ($\lambda = .59$ to $.92$), trust in the college support system ($\lambda = .50$ to $.70$), and willingness to report ($\lambda = .66$ to $.98$) were slightly more variable. Factor loadings and factor variances are presented in Table 3-3. No respecifications were attempted to the measurement model due to limited statistical and theoretical criteria to inform such respecifications.

Structural Equation Models

Model 1

Table 3-4 presents total, direct, and indirect effects for study variables across tested models. A structural equation model (model 1) was specified to investigate the effects of latent variables. Figure 3-1 presents the model with standardized parameter estimates. This model was fully recursive and demonstrated marginal data fit: $\chi^2(176, N = 820) = 1815.38, p < .01, CFI = .93, NNFI = .97, \text{ and } RMSEA = .11$. Furthermore, estimating model 1 resulted in a significant decrease in data fit as compared to the measurement model: $\chi^2(2, N = 820)_{\text{diff}} = 41.06, p < .01$. Overall, structural paths in Model 1 accounted for a greater percent of the variance in students' willingness to report threats ($R^2 = .40$) than they did for trust in the college support system ($R^2 = .13$).

All exogenous variables in model 1 were expected to be intercorrelated and have direct effects on willingness to report. Direct effects of trust in the college support system, campus connectedness, and delinquency on willingness to report were significant. However, direct effects of self-efficacy toward service and fear of negative evaluation on willingness to report were not significant. As specified in model 1, delinquency and self-efficacy toward service were expected to have direct effects on trust in the college support system in addition to willingness to report. The direct effects of delinquency on trust in the college support system and self-efficacy toward service on trust in the college support system were significant.

Trust in the college support system was expected to partially mediate the relationship between self-efficacy toward service and willingness to report. Trust in the college support system also was expected to partially mediate the relationship between delinquency and willingness to report. Two conditions described by Kenny, Kashy, and Bolger (1998) were used to evaluate mediation. First, an association must be established with an initial and proposed

mediating variable. Second, an association must be established between the mediating variable and the outcome variable. Partial mediation is determined by meeting these conditions and by establishing an indirect effect between an initial and outcome variable through a mediating variable. Further, full mediation exists if the relationship between the initial variable and the outcome variable does not differ significantly from zero with the mediating variable in the model (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In other words, full mediation implies that the indirect path through the mediating variable determines the relationship between the initial and outcome variables completely.

Considering the aforementioned criteria, the significant indirect effect from delinquency to willingness to report through trust in the college support system indicates that trust in the college support system partially mediates the relationship between delinquency and willingness to report. Similarly, a significant indirect effect was found from self-efficacy toward service to willingness to report through trust in the college support system. In this case, trust in the college support system almost completely mediates the relationship between self-efficacy toward service and willingness to report since total and indirect effects of self-efficacy toward service on willingness to report are significant while the direct effect is close to zero.

Model 2

A second structural equation model (model 2) was tested to explore the aforementioned relationships as well as the effects of campus connectedness and fear of negative evaluation on trust in the college support system. Figure 3-2 presents the model with standardized parameter estimates. A conceptual link between campus connectedness and fear of negative evaluation to trust in the campus support system may exist even though research was not located that directly establishes this association. Further, the presence of a large modification index and expected parameter change statistic values in the previous model (model 1) supports an association

between these variables. Model 2 was fully recursive and displayed better data fit than model 1 did: $\chi^2(2, N = 820)_{diff} = 41.60, p < .01, CFI = .93, NNFI = .97,$ and $RMSEA = .10$. Structural paths in Model 2 accounted for a greater percent of the variance in students' willingness to report threats ($R^2 = .43$) than they did for trust in the college support system ($R^2 = .20$).

All exogenous variables were expected to be intercorrelated and were specified to have direct effects on trust in the college support system and willingness to report in model 2. Similar to first model, direct effects of trust in the college support system, campus connectedness, and delinquency on willingness to report were significant. Direct effects of delinquency, self-efficacy toward service, campus connectedness, and fear of negative evaluation on trust in the college support system also were significant. Thus, all exogenous variables were related directly to trust in the college support system.

The indirect effect of self-efficacy toward service on willingness to report was significant while the direct effect was not. Thus, the relationship between self-efficacy toward service and willingness to report is completely mediated by students' trust in the college support system. However, trust in the college support system did not mediate the relationship between delinquency and willingness to report in model 2. Therefore, the relationship of delinquency to willingness to report appears to depend on the influence of other variables (e.g., campus connectedness). Furthermore, the magnitude of the direct effect of delinquency on willingness to report also decreased with the inclusion of the two additional paths in model 2. The inclusion of the two additional paths in model 2 allowed for the testing of indirect effects between campus connectedness and fear of negative evaluation on willingness to report. With the inclusion of these paths, trust in the college support system partially mediated the relationship between

campus connectedness and willingness to report. However, similar to model 1, no significant associations were identified between negative evaluation and willingness to report.

Model 3

Model 3 includes a direct path from self-efficacy toward service to campus connectedness in addition to the paths that were estimated in the previous two models. Figure 3-3 presents the model with standardized parameter estimates. This respecification was made due to a relatively large modification index value and theoretical criteria (i.e., individuals who believe they can be successful in public service endeavors are likely to be connected to and involved with members of the campus community). This modification resulted in a significant improvement in model fit, $\chi^2(2, N = 820)_{\text{diff}} = 46.02, p < .01$, and slight improvements in fit index values, CFI = .95, NNFI = .98, and RMSEA = .09. Structural paths in Model 3 accounted for the greatest percentage of the variance in students' willingness to report threats ($R^2 = .41$) followed by trust in the college support system ($R^2 = .18$) and campus connectedness ($R^2 = .14$).

Similar to the previous two models, the direct effects of trust in the college support system, campus connectedness, and delinquency on willingness to report were significant. Further, the direct effects of campus connectedness, delinquency, fear of negative evaluation, and self-efficacy toward service on trust in the college support system were significant. Thus, all exogenous variables remained casually related to trust in the college support system. Additionally, the direct effect of self-efficacy toward service on campus connectedness was significant. Similar to the previous two models, the effect of self-efficacy toward service on willingness to report remained entirely indirect through trust in the college support system in model 3. However, two new indirect paths were found from self-efficacy toward service to willingness to report. One path was through campus connectedness and trust in the college support system and the other was through campus connectedness alone. The effect of campus

connectedness on willingness to report remained mostly direct while the effect of delinquency on willingness to report entirely was direct. As in the previous two models, no association was identified between fear of negative evaluation and willingness to report.

Table 3-1. Descriptive statistics, internal consistency estimates, and interfactor correlations between study variables

	Items	Min	Max	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Willingness to report	20	20	120	83.12	24.97	.97	1.00					
2. Trust in the college support system	6	6	23	17.38	2.28	.81	.18**	1.00				
3. Campus connectedness	14	14	84	60.02	13.02	.92	.28**	.24**	1.00			
4. Fear of negative evaluation	11	11	44	25.53	7.92	.94	-.04	-.13**	-.29**	1.00		
5. Delinquency	4	4	8	4.62	.92	.80	-.23**	-.22**	-.09*	-.08	1.00	
6. Self-efficacy toward service	5	5	25	20.96	3.44	.90	.05	.23**	.35**	-.25**	-.10*	1.00
7. Social desirability	10	10	20	13.81	1.51	.35						

Note. $p < .05^*$, $p < .01^{**}$

Table 3-2. Goodness of fit test and index values for tested models

	χ^2	<i>df</i>	CFI	NNFI	RMSEA
Acceptable fit values			$\geq .95$	$\geq .95$	$\leq .09$
M Model	1742.88*	176	.95	.97	.10
Model 1	1815.38*	176	.93	.97	.11
Model 2	1782.88*	176	.95	.97	.10
Model 3	1679.59*	159	.95	.98	.09

Note. M Model = measurement model; CFI = comparative fit index; NNFI = non-normed fit index; RMSEA = root mean square error approximation; $p < .01^*$

Table 3-3. Factor loadings and factor variances by construct for the measurement model

Item	Willingness to report		Campus connectedness		Fear of negative evaluation		Trust in the college support system		Self-efficacy toward service		Delinquency	
	<i>S</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>U</i>
1	.90	1.00	.71	1.00	.83	1.00	.60	1.00	.80	1.00	.81	1.00
2	.81	.90	.72	1.02	.74	.89	.65	1.09	.78	.97	.92	1.14
3	.85	.95	.71	1.01	.78	.95	.70	1.22	.89	1.12	.65	.80
4	.82	.90	.63	.91	.81	.98	.60	1.01	.90	1.14	.59	.72
5	.90	.99	.86	1.23	.87	1.06	.68	1.14	.85	1.05		
6	.93	1.03	.88	1.25	.88	1.07	.50	.83				
7	.85	.95	.71	1.00	.84	1.01						
8	.97	1.09	.78	1.10	.84	1.01						
9	.79	.88	.72	1.01	.72	.88						
10	.94	1.05	.78	1.09	.84	1.01						
11	.71	.78	.82	1.16	.79	.96						
12	.88	.98	.71	1.00								
13	.84	.93	.81	1.14								
14	.90	1.00	.77	1.09								
15	.77	.85										
16	.98	1.10										
17	.70	.78										
18	.92	1.03										
19	.87	.97										
20	.66	.73										
Factor variance	.81		.50		.68		.36		.64		.65	

Note. *U* = unstandardized factor loading; *S* = standardized factor loading; All factor loadings and factor variances are significant, $p < .01$.

Table 3-4. Effects decomposition for study variables

Exogenous variables	Endogenous variables						
	Willingness to report			Trust in the college support system		Campus connectedness	
	Total effect <i>r</i>	Direct effect <i>r</i>	Indirect effect <i>r</i>	Total effect <i>r</i>	Direct effect <i>r</i>	Total effect <i>r</i>	Direct Effect <i>r</i>
Model 1							
Delinquency	-.27*	-.23*	-.04*	-.24*	-.24*	--	--
Self-efficacy toward service	.06*	.02	.04*	.23*	.23*	--	--
Campus connectedness	.28*	.28*	--	--	--	--	--
Fear of negative evaluation	-.02	-.02	--	--	--	--	--
Trust in the college support system	.18*	.18*	--	--	--	--	--
Model 2							
Delinquency	-.25*	-.23*	-.02	-.19*	-.19*	--	--
Self-efficacy toward service	.05*	.02	.03*	.22*	.22*	--	--
Campus connectedness	.29*	.27*	.03*	.21*	.21*	--	--
Fear of negative evaluation	-.02	-.01	-.02	-.12*	-.12*	--	--
Trust in the college support system	.14*	.14*	--	--	--	--	--
Model 3							
Delinquency	-.25*	-.23*	-.02	-.19*	-.19*	--	--
Self-efficacy toward service	.14*	.01	.13*	.21*	.21*	.38*	.38*
Campus connectedness	.32*	.29*	.03*	.22*	.22*	--	--
Fear of negative evaluation	-.03	-.01	-.02	-.12*	-.12*	--	--
Trust in the college support system	.14*	.14*	--	--	--	--	--

Note. The symbol -- means the effect is not in the model; * $p < .05$.

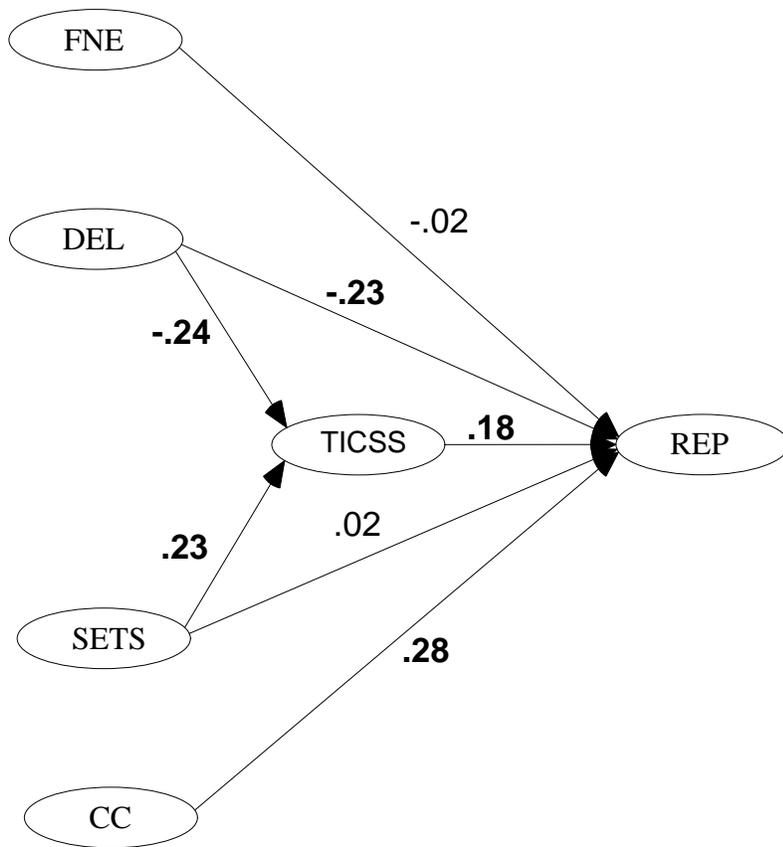


Figure 3-1. Model 1: The hypothesized structural equation model. Note: FNE = fear of negative evaluation; DEL = delinquency; SETS = self-efficacy toward service; CC = campus connectedness; TICSS = trust in the college support system; REP = willingness to report; significant effects in bold ($p < .05$).

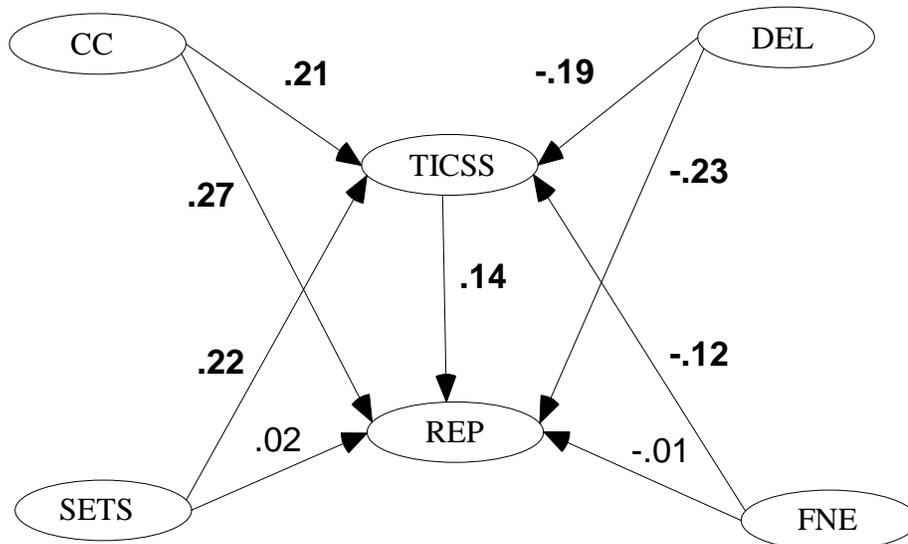


Figure 3-2. Model 2: Allowing direct effects of campus connectedness and fear of negative evaluation on trust in the college support system. Note: FNE = fear of negative evaluation; DEL = delinquency; SETS = self-efficacy toward service; CC = campus connectedness; TICSS = trust in the college support system; REP = willingness to report; significant effects in bold ($p < .05$).

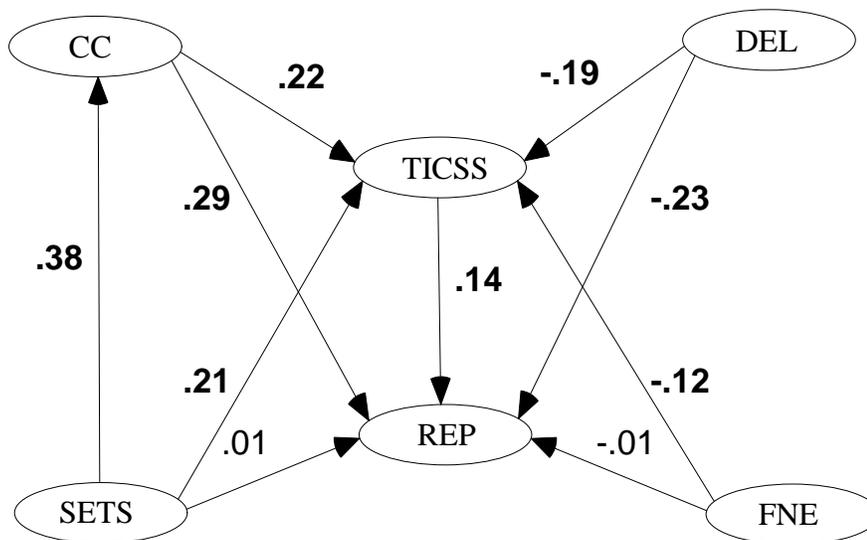


Figure 3-3. Model 3: Allowing a direct effect from self-efficacy toward service to campus connectedness. Note: FNE = fear of negative evaluation; DEL = delinquency; SETS = self-efficacy toward service; CC = campus connectedness; TICSS = trust in the college support system; REP = willingness to report; significant effects in bold ($p < .05$).

CHAPTER 4 DISCUSSION

This is the first known empirical investigation of college students' willingness to report threats of violence in campus communities. The primary aim of this study was to test relationships among several variables that were expected to predict students' willingness to report threats of violence. Specifically, the effects of trust in the college support system, campus connectedness, and self-efficacy toward service were expected to be positively related to willingness to report threats. On the other hand, delinquency and fear of negative evaluation were expected to be negatively related to willingness to report. Additionally, trust in the college support system was expected to mediate relationships between delinquency and self-efficacy toward service and students' willingness to report threats of violence to the campus community.

Structural equation modeling with weighted least squares was used to test the aforementioned relationships. Three simultaneous equation models were estimated in addition to a comprehensive measurement model for all latent factors. Following the establishment of an adequate measurement model, a structural equation model (model 1) was specified to test associations among latent variables. All exogenous variables were expected to have direct effects on students' willingness to report. The effects of self-efficacy toward service and delinquency were expected to be partially mediated by the influence of trust in the college support system. However, model 1 demonstrated marginal fit to the data. Thus, a second simultaneous equation model (model 2) was specified, which allowed for the testing of putative relationships among study variables. As compared to model 1, model 2 evidenced better fit and it allowed campus connectedness and fear of negative evaluation to have direct effects on trust in the college support system. This model then was respecified to test the effect of self-efficacy toward service

on campus connectedness (model 3). Overall, model 3 demonstrated the best fit and it provided the most comprehensive view of the relationships among study variables.

Trust in the College Support System

As expected, trust in the college support system was positively related to students' willingness to report threats. Therefore, students who trust in college administrators, faculty members, and police officers are more likely to report threats of violence than students are who do not trust these figures. In general, students who trust in members of the college support system feel comfortable sharing safety concerns with school officials, feel supported in general by the support system, and believe that campus officials would respond quickly and efficiently to crises.

Similarly, trust has been found to influence adolescents' threat reporting behaviors. Findings obtained from studying peers of prominent and prospective school shooters indicate that adolescents who report threatening peers generally have positive relations with adults, believe their reports will be taken seriously, and think that authority figures will address threats appropriately (Gaughan et al., 2001; Greenberg, 2007; Pollack et al., 2008; Stueve et al., 2006). Moreover, adolescents who are socially bonded with adults display an increased willingness to report threats if they think that their reports will be believed and that the information they provide will be protected (Brank et al., 2007). On the other hand, adolescents who do not report threatening peers tend to believe that they may experience negative consequences from authority figures for sharing information about potential threats. In the extreme, some of these adolescents may fear being interrogated, harshly questioned, or even suspended from school for reporting a threatening friend or peer (Pollack et al., 2008).

In addition to attenuating college students' willingness to report threats of violence, limited trust in the college support system also may influence their crime reporting behaviors in general.

For example, one study found that 24% of students did not report being a victim of a campus crime (e.g., theft, assault) due to a lack of trust in campus police to respond effectively (Sloan III et al., 1997). Documented reasons for not reporting in the aforementioned study include believing that police would not be able to recover lost property, find the offender, and solve the crime. Furthermore, a small number of students (1%) did not report their victimizations out of a fear of being harassed or threatened by police officers.

Self-Efficacy Toward Service

Quite unexpectedly, no direct association was found between self-efficacy toward service and students' willingness to report threats of violence. Instead, this relationship was completely mediated by other variables. For example, students who trust in the campus support system, feel connected to the campus community, and believe they can have an impact on campus display a greater willingness to report threats. However, students who feel efficacious in their ability to report threats yet do not trust members of the college support system or feel weakly bonded to the campus community still may not report threats. Thus, the belief that one can have a positive impact in the campus community does not facilitate threat reporting by itself. In its place, it is important for students to feel connected to the campus community and to trust in members of the college support system to facilitate threat reporting.

This finding is supported by results from a study that found college students unwilling to trust authority figures if they were unable to express their opinions or concerns with them openly (Lind, Kanfer, & Earley, 1990). Furthermore, students who believe they are discriminated against tend to have low levels of connectedness to the campus community even if they have a strong sense of ethnic pride and self-esteem (Lee, 2005). Therefore, students who feel disenfranchised, disconnected, or discriminated against in the campus community may be less

willing to trust members of the campus support system and be less willing to report threats even if they are confident in their ability to communicate them.

Campus Connectedness

Campus connectedness was positively related to students' willingness to report threats directly and indirectly. Thus, the association between campus connectedness and willingness to report is consistent with results suggesting that school climate and student-teacher relationships influence adolescents' willingness to report the presence of weapons and students who may intentionally harm others (Brinkley & Saarnio, 2006; Syvertsen et al., 2009). Results from the current study and the latter two suggest that students who feel bonded with others, develop strong interpersonal relationships with peers and educators, and feel comfortable on campus, may take protective actions to preserve the safety of the campus such as reporting the presence of threats of violence.

In general, students who feel strongly connected to their campus community are likely to have many interpersonal relationships, value the welfare of these individuals, and even develop a sense of pride related to belonging to a specific college or university (Summers, Svinicki, Gorin, & Sullivan, 2002). However, on the other hand, students who are poorly bonded with members of the campus community tend to have fewer interpersonal relationships, are less aware of social issues at their school, and may even have negative perceptions of specific individuals on campus or their college as a whole (Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996; Summers et al., 2002). Further, adolescents who do not share prior knowledge of school attacks generally report feeling loosely connected to the school community and uncomfortable communicating with others at school, especially authority figures (Pollack et al., 2008).

Results of this study indicate that students who feel connected to the campus community and trust in the college support system display a greater willingness to report threats of violence.

On the other hand, students who feel disconnected from the campus and display low trust in members of the college support system are less likely to report threats of violence. Similarly, research on college students' familiarity with campus police officers supports this association. One study found that the majority (85%) of students do not know personally or have any contact with campus police officers and almost no students (less than 1%) know a campus police officer very well (e.g., on a first name basis) (Revels, 1999). Furthermore, when questioned about the accessibility of campus law enforcement officers, almost half of students (49%) reported that the officers seemed either "very remote" or "remote" to the regular functioning of the campus (Revels, 1999). Thus, weak student-police relationships may be a barrier to threat reporting and negative perceptions of campus police may attenuate students' willingness to report threats to the campus community.

Delinquency

Delinquency was negatively related to students' willingness to report threats directly. In general, students who report a history of delinquent behavior display a low willingness to report threats of violence. Similarly, delinquent adolescents appear to be less likely to report weapon carrying students (Brank et al., 2007) and threats of violence than non-delinquent adolescents are (Brinkley & Saarnio, 2006). One study even found 74% of adolescents who endorsed having carried a weapon to school to state that they would not report another weapon-carrying student, even if the student threatened to harm other students (Brinkley & Saarnio, 2006).

Although delinquent students may be in a favorable position to report potential threats of violence due to their increased likelihood of associating with delinquent peers (Thornberry et al., 1994) and the association between weapon-carrying behaviors and other delinquent behaviors (Miller et al., 2002; Presley et al., 1997), some barriers appear to prevent them from doing so. Delinquent students may belong to social networks that condone delinquency and reinforce

antisocial behavior. For example, snitching (i.e., informing police or other authorities of illegal activity) can lead to social ostracism and place informants at risk for retaliation from peers in delinquent social groups (Rosenfeld et al., 2003). Fears of social exclusion or concerns for one's safety may prevent some individuals from reporting if they think that they may be identified as an informant or be perceived negatively by peers (Haynie, 2001). Additionally, cooperating with authority figures may cause some delinquent individuals to feel ineffective and inferior for having to appeal to an external agency to address a problem that they were unable to do so personally (Rosenfeld et al., 2003).

Fear of Negative Evaluation

Although college students generally are concerned with peer approval (Brown et al., 1997; Perkins, 2002) and often engage in maladaptive behaviors (e.g., binge drinking) to conform to social norms (Borsari & Carey, 2001; Scholly, Katz, Gascoigne, Holck, & Scholly, 2005), no association was found between fear of negative evaluation and students' willingness to report threats of violence. Perhaps tragic attacks at Virginia Tech, Northern Illinois University, and other educational institutions may have caused students to take threats of violence seriously and overcome fears that may be associated with incurring negative peer evaluations. Alternatively, reporting threats of violence may be socially acceptable or even condoned in non-delinquent student groups. In this vein, students may receive peer, family, institutional, or community support for attempting to mitigate threats of violence to the campus community. Further, external variables also may influence the relationship between fear of negative evaluation and students' willingness to report. For example, empathy has been shown to attenuate college students' motivation to avoid negative social evaluations when they are presented with an opportunity to help a depressed student (Fultz, Batson, Fortenbach, McCarthy, & Varney, 1986).

Other Findings

Associations between demographic characteristics and variables pertinent to research questions also were explored in this study. Specifically, associations between students' gender, race/ethnicity, grade (i.e., sophomore, junior, senior), place of residence (i.e., on/off campus) and willingness to report threats were explored. None of these associations were significant.

These results differ from those obtained with adolescents. One study found a negative relationship between grade level and students' willingness to report, as eleventh graders were less willing to report threats than were eighth graders (Brinkley & Saarnio, 2006). Grade level may be less influential in college samples due to college student's decreased susceptibility to peer pressure. For example, the influence of peer perceptions on student behavior tends to decline in college, especially for risk-taking behavior (Gardner & Steinberg, 2005). Additionally, college students' greater maturity at all grade levels may cause them to take threats more seriously than younger students would.

Compared to their male counterparts, female adolescents exhibit a greater willingness to report threats (Brinkley & Saarnio, 2006) and the presence of weapons at school (Brank et al., 2007). Their tendency to engage in lower rates of maladaptive behaviors, delinquency, and use more mental health services due to their greater openness toward others (Davies et al., 2000) could imply that females would be more willing to report threats. In this study, males may have been more likely to report threats of violence than males in the general population. This finding may be due to this study's sample. Most students voluntarily participated in this study and the students who participated to meet a class requirement were enrolled in educational psychology classes. Male psychology students have been found to display more advanced critical thinking skills and higher maturity levels than male nursing and business students do (Walsh & Hardy, 1999). Therefore, the male students in this study also may have been elevated in these qualities,

thus leading them express a greater willingness to report threats than would be expected from males in different programs of study.

Racial/ethnic differences were not found in college students' willingness to report threats or trust in the college support system. One study found Hispanic adolescents to be slightly less likely to report weapons carriers as compared to their non-Hispanic peers (Brank et al., 2007). However, in the same study, White/Caucasian, African American, and students who identified with an "Other" race category did not differ in reporting. Additional research is needed to understand the influence of race/ethnicity on the aforementioned variables (i.e., willingness to report, trust in the college support system) as well as to determine if findings from this study generalize to educational institutions that have a different demographic makeup.

Compared to males, females in this study displayed greater trust in the college support system. This result is consistent with findings suggesting that females tend to be more trusting in situations in which they feel obligated to perform pro-social actions (e.g., donating money) and avoid personal risks (Chaudhuri & Gangadharan, 2003). Additionally, compared to males, females tend to be more trusting of high-trust targets (e.g., physicians, police officers) (Rotter, 1980). Thus, they also may be more likely to trust figures of authority in campus communities.

Limitations

Several limitations of this study deserve mention. First, a low response rate (17%) was obtained from the general student population. Whether participants differ in meaningful ways from students who were solicited and did not provide data is not known. Efforts were made to control for a potential sampling bias through the inclusion of a sample of students who participated to meet a class requirement. However, the use of a multi-method sampling approach (i.e., contacting participants through different mediums [e.g., email, mail, phone contact]) may have increased the overall response rate for this study (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2008), as

well as protected against a potential sampling bias. Second, all participants were enrolled in classes at one large university located in the Southern U.S. Weapons carrying rates on college campuses vary by geographic location (Meilman et al., 1998) and so may estimates of students' willingness to report threats of violence. Thus, the results from this study may not generalize to students attending markedly different educational institutions. Third, approximately 70% of participants in this study were female. Females were over sampled as they comprise 54% of the general student body of the institution in which data were collected (Peterson Education, 2010). Forth, all participants either chose to participate voluntarily or were enrolled in an educational psychology class in which participation was required. Therefore, these students, especially male students, may differ from the general student body in important qualities (e.g., critical thinking) (Walsh & Hardy, 1999) and this may have influenced their responses to study questions. As a result, the generalizability of these findings for males may be limited. Fifth, not all possible causes of endogenous variables (e.g., willingness to report, trust in the campus support system) were included in this study. Additional causes of these variables warrant future research. Sixth, several different structural equation models were estimated to protect against the possibility of an alternative model demonstrating superior fit. However, not all possible models were tested. Alternative models may exist that demonstrate equivalent fit yet describe different relations among study variables. Seventh, this study relied only on self-report measures. Future studies may benefit from using different methods (e.g., observations, interviews, records) to assess variables of interest. Additionally, this study used a cross-sectional design. Efforts are needed to examine these and other variables over time to determine the reliability of these results. Lastly, this study assessed college students' perceptions rather than their actual behaviors. Therefore, the

data may be misleading and thus lead to inaccurate conclusions despite efforts that were made to control for social desirability.

Conclusions

Despite these limitations, results from this investigation support the expectation that trust in the college support system, campus connectedness, self-efficacy toward service, and delinquency all impact college students' willingness to report threats of violence in campus communities. Thus, efforts to improve students' trust in college support staff as well as students' connectedness to the campus community may improve their willingness to report threats of violence to authorities who may be able to mitigate them. On the other hand, students with a history of delinquent behavior appear to be less willing to report threats of violence in general. Therefore, additional research is needed to explore qualities that may increase delinquent students' willingness to report threats. Perhaps anonymous reporting options such as those that have been recently implemented at several large universities may encourage delinquent students to report threats without incurring possible negative consequences for doing so.

In conclusion, the task of stopping a violent attack on a college campus is analogous to capturing a bolt of lightning on film: the task is impossible without being in the right place at the right time. Although the results of this study are unlikely to inform the efforts of those who are in the right place at the right time to mitigate threats of violence, they may encourage the formation of policies and practices designed to prevent future acts of violence. Instead of being unduly influenced by rare—albeit tragic—acts of violence in campus communities, it is important to recognize that college campuses generally are safe (Bromley, 1995) and that students who feel bonded with members of the campus community are likely to take protective actions to preserve campus safety. Thus, in lieu of controversial increases in security technology, concealed weapons, harsh disciplinary policies, and criminal profiling techniques that may produce an

illusion of safety, better solutions to reducing threats of violence may result from facilitating greater trust in members of the college support system, as well as from engendering a greater sense of “community” among all members of the campus community.

APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

CONSENT TO ACT AS A RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Protocol Title: *Contributing factors to college students threat reporting*

Note: Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this study is to assess factors that may contribute to or affect students' willingness to report individuals who may pose a significant threat to campus or public safety.

What you will be asked to do in the study: Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to answer various questions that assess your subjective levels of self efficacy toward service (e.g., your beliefs about how responsible you are for causing positive social outcomes), campus connectedness (e.g., how much you feel a part of the campus milieu), delinquency (unlawful or deviant acts you may have committed), fear of negative evaluation (e.g., how much you dread others' negative perceptions), and your trust in the college support system.

Time required: 30-45 minutes

Potential Risks: You may experience some distress from filling out some personal questions. If you experience significant discomfort, you are encouraged to contact the University of Florida Counseling Center (P301 Peabody Hall, 352-392-1575).

Confidentiality: Your identity will remain anonymous, as you are not to provide any personally identifiable information (e.g., name, student ID #) anywhere on the questionnaire. All of your responses will be kept confidential. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, your answers will be destroyed. Your individual answers will not be used in any report, scientific meetings, institutional policies, or published materials that may result from this research.

Voluntary participation: You can only participate if you are 18 years of age or older. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating and you have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study: Michael Sulkowski, M.Ed., School Psychology Program, sulkowsm@ufl.edu, phone (352) 392-0724. Thomas Oakland, Ph.D., Professor, School Psychology Program, oakland@coe.ufl.edu, phone (352) 273 4283.

Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study: IRB02 Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250; phone 392-0433.

Agreement: I have read the information provided for the study as described herein. I will express this agreement by completing the following questions.

Note: Students were presented with the following information after consenting to participate in the study.

Participants of this study may win any one of the following: A free Apple ipod Nano 8GB ® digital music player valued at \$200, a gift card for the Outback Steakhouse ® valued at \$50.00 (quantity = 1), a gift card for Sports Authority ® valued at \$40 (quantity = 1), a gift card for Barnes & Noble ® valued at \$25 (quantity = 1), a gift card redeemable at Chili's Grill ® or Romano's Macaroni Grill ® valued at \$25 (quantity = 1), gift cards for TGI Fridays Restaurant ® valued at \$25 (quantity = 2), a gift card for the Regal Entertainment Group ® valued at \$10 (quantity = 5), and gift cards for Starbucks ® valued at \$5.00 (quantity = 12).

Incentives will be provided to participants who respond in the following order:

- The 1st and 2nd respondents will each receive one gift card for TGI Fridays Restaurant ® valued at \$25.
- The 100th – 112th responders will each receive one gift card for Starbucks ® valued at \$5.00.
- The 200th – 205th respondents will each receive one gift card for the Regal Entertainment Group ® valued at \$10.
- The 500th respondent will receive one gift card for Barnes & Noble ® valued at \$25.
- The 600th respondent will receive one gift card for Sports Authority ® valued at \$40.
- The 700th respondent will receive one gift card for the Outback Steakhouse ® valued at \$50.00.
- The 800th respondent will receive one gift card for Chili's Grill ® or Romano's Macaroni Grill valued ® at \$25.
- The 1000th respondent will receive one free Apple ipod Nano 8GB ® digital music player valued at \$200.

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT MEASURES

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please select the options that best correspond to you.

1. Please select your gender Male Female

2. Which racial or ethnic group best describes you?
 Caucasian/Non-Hispanic White Hispanic/ Latino
 Black/African American Asian
 Mixed race

3. I am presently a: sophomore junior senior

4. What is your academic major? _____

5. Do you . . . (Check one)
 Live on campus Live off campus

6. I am . . . (Check all that apply)
 A student athlete
 A member of a social fraternity/sorority
 A member of an extra curricular school club
 A member of an honor society

CAMPUS CONNECTEDNESS SCALE

(Lee & Robbins, 1995)

Rate the degree to which you **AGREE** or **DISAGREE** with each statement using the following scale:

(1 = Strongly Disagree and 6 = Strongly Agree). There is no right or wrong answer. Do not spend too much time with any one statement and do not leave any unanswered.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Mildly Disagree	Mildly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. There are people on campus with whom I feel a close bond	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. I really don't feel that I belong around the people that I know on campus	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I feel that I can share personal concerns with other students	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I am able to make connections with a diverse group of people	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I feel distant from the other students	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I have no sense of togetherness with my peers	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. I can relate to my fellow classmates	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I catch myself losing all sense of connectedness with college life	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I feel that I fit right in on campus	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. There is no sense of brother/sisterhood with my college friends	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. I don't feel related to anyone on campus	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Other students make me feel at home on campus	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. I feel disconnected from campus life	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. I feel I don't participate with anyone or any group	1	2	3	4	5	6

SELF-EFFICACY TOWARDS SERVICE SCALE

(Weber, Weber, Sleeper, & Schneider, 2004)

Please use the following scale to respond to each item. Select the number theta corresponds to the answer that best describes the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

0	1	2	3	4
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree/Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. I can have a positive impact on social problems.	0	1	2	3	4
2. I can help people with disabilities.	0	1	2	3	4
3. I have confidence in my ability to help others.	0	1	2	3	4
4. I can make a difference in my community.	0	1	2	3	4
5. Each of us can make a difference in the lives of the less fortunate.	0	1	2	3	4

BRIEF FEAR OF NEGATIVE EVALUATION SCALE-REVISED

(Carleton, McCreary, Norton, & Asmundson, 2006)

Please carefully read and answer each question below. Indicate **HOW TRUE** each statement is for you by selecting the number next to each question.

0 Not at all characteristic of me	1 Slightly characteristic of me	2 Moderately characteristic of me	3 Extremely characteristic of me
---	---	---	--

1. I worry about what other people will think of me—even when I know it doesn't make any difference.	0	1	2	3
2. It bothers me when people form an unfavorable impression of me.	0	1	2	3
3. I am frequently afraid of other people noticing my shortcomings.	0	1	2	3
4. I worry about what kind of impression I make on people.	0	1	2	3
5. I am afraid that others will not approve of me.	0	1	2	3
6. I am concerned about other people's opinions of me.	0	1	2	3
7. When I am talking to someone, I worry about what they may be thinking about me.	0	1	2	3
8. I am usually worried about what kind of impression I make.	0	1	2	3
9. If I know someone is judging me, it tends to bother me.	0	1	2	3
10. Sometimes I think I am too concerned with what other people think of me.	0	1	2	3
11. I often worry that I will say or do wrong things.	0	1	2	3

SELF-REPORT DELINQUENCY SCALE

(Piquero, MacIntosh, & Hickman, 2002)

Please carefully read and answer each question below. Indicate number of times that you engaged in each of the following behaviors. Answer each question by selecting the number next to each question.

OVER THE PAST YEAR, have you?		
	No	Yes
1. Sold illegal drugs.	0	1
2. Used force to get money or things from others.	0	1
3. Stolen (or tried to steal) things worth between \$5 and \$50.	0	1
4. Been involved in a physical fight.	0	1

MARLOWE-CROWNE SOCIAL DESIRABILITY SCALE-SHORT FORM X2

(Strahan & Gerbasi, 1972)

Listed below are a number of statements concerning personal attitudes and traits. Read each item and decide whether the statement is *true* (circle the **T**) or *false* (circle the **F**) as it pertains to you.

1. I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble.	T	F
2. I have never intensely disliked anyone.	T	F
3. I sometime feel resentful when I don't get my way.	T	F
4. There have been times when I felt like rebelling against people in authority even though I knew they were right.	T	F
5. I remember "playing sick" to get out of something.	T	F
6. When I don't know something I don't mind admitting it.	T	F
7. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable.	T	F
8. I would never think of letting someone else be punished for my wrongdoings.	T	F
9. There have been times when I was quite jealous of the good fortune of others.	T	F
10. I am sometimes irritated by people who ask favors of me.	T	F

TRUST IN COLLEGE SUPPORT SYSTEM

(Sulkowski, unpublished)

Please carefully read and answer each question below. Indicate how much you either **AREE** or **DISAGREE** with each statement is for by circling the number next to each question.

1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Agree	4 Strongly agree
--------------------------------------	-----------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------------------

1. If a crisis happened on campus, my college would handle it well.	1 2 3 4
2. College officials don't really care about students.	1 2 3 4
3. The college responds too slowly in difficult situations.	1 2 3 4
4. It is difficult to share safety concerns with school officials.	1 2 3 4
5. My school is poorly prepared to handle crisis situations.	1 2 3 4
6. There is a good support system on campus for students going through difficult times.	1 2 3 4

THREAT REPORTING PASSAGES

(Sulkowski, unpublished)

Please read the passages below and answer the questions that follow

Passage 1.

Following the sudden loss of his older brother last month, Chris has gone from being normally quiet and reserved around other people to being blunt and confrontational. He blames his brother's death on three students who were in a car that struck and instantly killed his brother. The other students attributed the accident on the bad weather and slick streets, but Chris is convinced that they were intoxicated and that a cover up took place. He believes that the campus police gave them special treatment since the students were well connected. Currently, Chris is extremely upset and frustrated. While he is in the process of grieving, his mood swings back and forth from sadness to rage when he thinks about the tragic loss of his brother. Chris believes that the "system" has failed him and his family and does not know what to do, but he feels like he must do something.

Pretend that you overheard Chris say the following:

"If the cops don't start listening to me I'll take a hostage. Then they will have to listen to every word I say."

1. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Chris?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Pretend that you overheard Chris say the following:

"I could easily get back at guys who killed my brother. All it would take is a couple of good shots and justice would be served. If the "cops" won't do their job, I could take matters in my own hands. I bet there are a lot of people out there who would sympathize with my cause. If we don't avenge our loved one's deaths, who else will?"

2. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Chris?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Pretend that you overheard Chris say the following:

“I say eye for an eye is only fair. If you kill someone’s brother, you better watch out for what may be coming your way.”

3. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Chris?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Pretend that you overheard Chris say the following:

“I’ll kill them on the two month anniversary of my brother’s death. I will show up at the dorm on a Sunday night when I know they’ll be home. I’ll hide a pistol in my backpack, walk up to their door, knock, and—when the door opens—I’ll start shooting point blank.”

4. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Chris?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Passage 2.

Thomas always tries to be the center of attention. Whether in class or out in public, he always wants to get a rise out of others. Sometimes his peers find his antics amusing, but other times, he goes too far and gets himself into trouble. Last Friday, he was arrested for being drunk and disorderly at a campus sponsored event and now he is facing legal charges and in jeopardy of losing his scholarship. Thomas does not know what to do and for the first time he feels like he cannot talk his way out of the situation. He recently started an online group where students can get together and protest the oppressive campus atmosphere. He has appointed himself the leader and spokesperson of the group.

Pretend that you overheard Thomas say the following:

“On the 14th, I’m going to climb into the bell tower and start picking people off at random. I’ll go up the night before so nobody will see me. Then, when the sun rises, I will start sniping people with my rifle.

5. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Thomas?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Pretend that you overheard Thomas say the following:

“I’ll call in a bomb threat if they don’t drop the charges against me. They won’t know if it was me or someone else from the online group.”

6. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Thomas?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Pretend that you overheard Thomas say the following:

“Retribution would be so sweet. I would love the opportunity to shake this campus up with a bang—to really freak everyone out.”

7. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Thomas?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Pretend that you overheard Thomas say the following:

“Tomorrow, they will be talking about this college on the news and I guarantee that the administration won't be happy about it.”

8. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Thomas?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Passage 3.

Jessica is enraged about being rejected by a social sorority. She feels like an outcast, and since she is a new student on campus, she does not know many people. Throughout her adolescence, Jessica experienced significant periods of depression and she continues to feel hopeless about the future and is desperate for things to change. Jessica has recently been stalking a male student named Jeff. She will often call him to hear his voice and hang up without speaking, drive by his apartment, and send him cryptic messages from an anonymous email address. Last Friday, Jessica saw Jeff and another female student walking together while holding hands. Afterward, she ran back to her dorm room and started furiously drawing pictures of Jeff and the other girl being killed.

Pretend that you overheard Jessica say the following:

“If I wanted to do so, I could shoot her—it would be really easy for me to do.”

9. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Jessica?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Pretend that you overheard Jessica say the following:

“On the last Saturday of the month, I'm going to hide in the woods and shoot Jeff and that girl when he stops by to pick her up for the game at 7:00pm.”

10. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Jessica?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Pretend that you overheard Jessica say the following:

“If she doesn't start paying attention to me, I'm going to do something that they won't be able to ignore.”

11. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Jessica?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Pretend that you overheard Jessica say the following:

“This world would be a much better place if I got rid of a few stuck-up “preppy” kids.”

12. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Jessica?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Passage 4.

Ever since childhood, Ray had wanted to be a doctor. After completing his undergraduate education, he had planned to attend medical school. However, despite applying to many different programs, Ray was not accepted into a single medical school. Ray now feels like “throwing it all away,” and he thinks that he is “too stupid” to get into graduate school. Moreover, he blames the “corrupt selection committee” for being rejected. Ray has recently burned his class notes and gave away many of his personal possessions to other students.

Pretend that you overheard Ray say the following:

“With that Dean out of the way, I bet I could get in.”

13. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Ray?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Pretend that you overheard Ray say the following:

“Everyone would rethink how these unjust admissions standards ruin peoples’ lives if I ended it all and took others with me.”

14. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Ray?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Pretend that you overheard Ray say the following:

“I’m going to do something that is going to make everyone feel as bad as I feel. They will seriously regret not admitting me into the program.”

15. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Ray?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Pretend that you overheard Ray say the following:

“At the commencement ceremony, right after everyone takes their seats, I’m going to start shooting into the crowd. If my dream has to die, they will go with it.”

16. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Ray?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Passage 5.

Alex’s girlfriend of two years has just left him for a more socially active classmate. Even though Alex and his ex-girlfriend had often disagreed with each other, Alex was shocked by the breakup. He was even more shocked when he found out that his ex-girlfriend had been intermittently cheating on him over the past twelve months. While breaking up with him, Alex’s ex-girlfriend told him that he was stifling her and that they had nothing in common. Upon hearing this, Alex reacted violently. He screamed at his girlfriend to get out of his apartment, smashed a picture frame on the ground, and then punched the wall with his fist. Since Alex had

previously spent most of his free time with his ex-girlfriend, he now feels isolated, alone, and betrayed by her actions.

Pretend that you overheard Alex say the following:

“If that new guy touches her, I’ll kill him.”

17. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Alex?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Pretend that you overheard Alex say the following:

“On Saturday at 9:00 PM he is going to take her out. I’m going to wait for the both of them in my car and then start shooting when they leave her apartment. I’ll be able to snake out the back exit of the complex and I’ll be gone before anyone knows what happened.”

18. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Alex?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Pretend that you overheard Alex say the following:

“I could make him and her pay for all of this. She wasted two years of my life and I could waste the rest of both his and hers.”

19. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Alex?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

Pretend that you overheard Alex say the following:

“Anyone who cheats deserves to be punished. I’m going to torture her big time.”

20. Based on the former information and his statement, how willing would you be to report Alex?

Definitely would report	Probably would report	Somewhat willing to report	Not really willing to report	Probably wouldn't report	Definitely wouldn't report
6	5	4	3	2	1

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Michael Lee Sulkowski was born in Getzville, New York in 1984. He spent his formative years in Amherst, NY and graduated from Williamsville North High School in 2002. Michael then matriculated at Canisius College and earned Bachelors of Arts degrees in history and psychology in 2006. He entered the School Psychology Program at the University of Florida in 2006 and earned a Master of Education degree in 2007. Michael plans to earn his Doctor of Philosophy in school psychology in 2011 from the University of Florida after the completion of his professional internship in psychology. He will then be a postdoctoral fellow at the Rothman Center for Pediatric Neuropsychiatry in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of South Florida.

During his graduate career, he has received the following awards and honors: The University of Florida College of Education Outstanding Graduate Research Award (2011), the Everett L. Holden & Marian G. Holden Memorial Scholarship (2010), the Melissa Institute Belfer-Aptman Dissertation Research Award (2009), the American Psychological Association Division 55 Patrick H. DeLeon Award (2009), the American Academy of School Psychology Irwin Hyman/Nadine Lambert Memorial Scholarship (2009), the Florida Association of School Psychology Doctoral Graduate Studies Award (2009), Numerous Research Travel Awards (2008 - 2010), the Joseph-Lillian Damon Scholarship (2007), and the Norman F. Nelson Fellowship (2007). Michael also has published the following articles and book chapters:

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