

## The Clery Act, Campus Safety and the Views of Assault Victim Advocates

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*One hundred forty-seven directors of women's centers and advocates for assault victims responded to a questionnaire about the effectiveness of the Clery Act and their views of campus safety. Responses were examined by institutional type, institutional size, and victim status. Institutional differences were found in several instances.*

Since its passage in 1990, the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (20 U.S.C. §1092 (f)) continues to be a frequent topic of conversation in Congress, the popular press, and on college campuses. During the past 14 years, the Act has been amended several times to expand the reporting requirements and clarify how college administrators report campus crime. The Act's primary purpose is to require college administrators to report, in a consistent manner, incidents of campus crime. The goals of the legislation are (a) to provide consistent crime information so that parents, potential students, and potential employees will be better able to evaluate an institution before they make a commitment to it; (b) to educate students and employees about campus crime so they might better protect themselves from the risks in their campus environment; and (c) to reduce crime (Gregory & Janosik, 2002). During this same time period, researchers have studied institutional response to the Act. Gehring and Callaway (1997) concluded that college administrators were still unsure of the Act's reporting requirements and that many were not including the right material in admission packets, despite considerable efforts to comply with the Act.

The response and reactions of college constituents most affected by the Act have also been studied. Janosik and Gregory (2003) assessed the views of campus law enforcement officers and changes in campus law enforcement practices. A majority of law enforcement officers credited the Act with improving crime reporting practices but this same group reported that the Clery Act did little to reduce campus crime and believe that few students made use of the mandated reports required by the Act. Judicial officers (Gregory & Janosik, 2003, p. 770) reported closer relationships with campus police but did not believe that students made use of crime statistics in their college choice or personal safety decisions.

Parents and students have also commented on their knowledge and use of Clery Act information (Janosik, 2001; Janosik & Gehring, 2003; Janosik, 2004). About 25% of parents and students know of the Act, and fewer report reading the mandated campus

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crime reports. Less than 10% of parents and students report using campus crime information to help them make decisions about which college to attend.

Absent from the literature are the views of those who serve as advocates for victims of assaults. These professionals collect crucial data for accurate Clery Act reporting and work closely with those who produce mandated reports required by the Act. Adding the experiences and impressions of this group to the existing studies done with other major constituents such as students, parents, campus police, and admissions and judicial officers will provide a more complete assessment of the Act's impact on campus safety issues.

The following questions guided this research: (a) How do advocates believe students use the campus crime information contained in mandated reports? (b) What reactions do advocates have to the strategies college administrators use to inform students about campus crime issues? (c) What perceptions do advocates have about college administrators and their Clery-related administrative practices?

The purpose of this study was to assess victim advocates' knowledge of the Act and their views of campus crime prevention strategies. Additionally, we wanted to add to what we know about the Act's effectiveness in meeting its stated goals.

## Methods

### *Participants*

To determine the answers to these questions, we focused this study on directors of women's centers and other staff who serve as advocates for students who have been assaulted. Since this group of professionals does not belong to a readily identifiable professional association, we used two large email lists of professionals working in this area to develop a sample for this study. The first list included directors of women's centers at college campuses in the United States from which we identified 233 email addresses. Next, we developed a second list of professionals who participated in a listserv for victim advocates in higher education. After duplicate listings were eliminated, this second list contained 198 names. In the end, we identified a total of 431 potential participants representing all states except Alaska and Hawaii.

We tested these email addresses by sending a message to each person on the list. Twenty-six email addresses from the advocate list bounced back and could not be used. Two other contacts declined to participate, having recently left their positions. Fifty-six messages could not be delivered to directors of women's centers. Three persons on this list declined to participate because they had just been hired in their positions and did not feel able to respond to the questionnaire. The final sample was 344.

### *Procedures*

Once the sample was identified, participants were sent an email inviting them to participate and directing them to a questionnaire posted on the World Wide Web. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaire with the understanding that their names and institutions would not be identified.

Reminder email messages were sent 5, 9, and 12 days after the initial contact. Non-respondents were encouraged to participate. Responders were thanked for their replies. No additional follow-up beyond these three reminders was conducted.

### *Instrument*

We designed a 29-item questionnaire specifically for this project. Twenty-five questions addressed this group's knowledge of the Act and assessed respondents' views of the influence of the Act on their operations and student behavior. These questions also elicited information about their perceptions on how college administrators share information, strategies to address campus safety, and relationships with other campus offices. Many of these items were adapted from questionnaires previously developed for other studies (Janosik, 2001; Janosik & Gehring, 2003; Janosik & Gregory, 2003). The reliability for those questionnaires was reported as .73.

We also included a demographic section consisting of four other questions to determine the respondent's type of institution, size of institution, victim status, and whether they were engaged in providing assistance to assault victims. The item referencing "victim status" was designed to identify respondents who had experienced an incident of violent crime in their immediate family. Neither location nor gender of the respondent was collected.

Several college administrators reviewed the final questionnaire to assess its clarity and content validity. This group was selected because of their knowledge of the Clery Act and its reporting requirements. They made no suggestions or recommendations for improvement.

### *Data Analysis*

We calculated frequencies on the demographic data to describe the respondent group. To determine significant differences between groups, we conducted chi-square tests of independence (institutional type, institutional size, and victim status). The level of significance for these tests was set at 0.05. To ensure correct interpretations of the data, pairwise chi-square tests were completed to examine specific between-group differences to items where an overall significant difference was found.

## **Results**

Of the 344 advocates who received the survey email, 147 (42.7%) responded. All respondents (100%) were involved in assisting assault victims on college campuses. One hundred seven respondents (72.8%) represented public institutions. One hundred forty-four advocates (98.0%) represented four-year institutions. Only three were employed (2.0%) at community colleges. One hundred advocates (68.0%) reported that they themselves or a member of their immediate families had been a victim of violent crime.

The Cronbach's alpha model was used to test the reliability of the 25 non-demographic items included in the questionnaire. The reliability coefficient was .72, confirming the internal consistency of the instrument.

In the first analysis, we examined victim status. No significant difference between respondents who had been a victim of violent crime or had immediate family members

who had been victimized and those who had no such experience was found on any of the items. Given this finding, we eliminated the results based on victim status from the tables that follow. Then we analyzed responses by institutional type (public vs. private) and institutional size (less than 4500 students vs. more than 4500 students).

### Use of Mandated Reports

Table 1 displays the responses concerning use of mandated reports. Overall, 40% of victim advocates ( $n = 58$ ) believed that their students receive their institution's crime summary in their admission packets. About 6% ( $n = 9$ ) thought that students use this summary when making their college choice decisions, while 81% ( $n = 120$ ) were unsure if students used this information or not. There were significant differences when institutional type and size were examined. Pairwise chi-square analyses confirmed this finding. Victim advocates at private institutions were significantly more likely to make affirmative rather than negative responses to this item than their public institution colleagues ( $N = 27$ ,  $\chi^2 = 8.82$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .003$ ). Victim advocates at public institutions also were much more likely to indicate they did not know rather than make an affirmative response ( $N = 129$ ,  $\chi^2 = 6.45$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .011$ ). Respondents at smaller institutions made affirmative rather than negative responses at significantly higher rates to this item than their larger institution colleagues ( $N = 27$ ,  $\chi^2 = 12.00$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .001$ ). Victim advocates at larger institutions were also much more likely to indicate they did not know rather than make an affirmative response ( $N = 129$ ,  $\chi^2 = 26.85$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

About 55% of victim advocates ( $n = 81$ ) believed their students receive the complete annual report. Respondents at private institutions ( $n = 28$ , 70%) were statistically more likely to think students received the annual reports than their colleagues ( $n = 53$ , 50%) at public institutions. Pairwise chi-square analyses confirmed this finding. Victim advocates at private institutions were significantly more likely to make affirmative rather than negative responses to this item than their public institution colleagues ( $N = 115$ ,  $\chi^2 = 7.31$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .007$ ).

Three percent of respondents ( $n = 5$ ) believed that students read the annual report. Although professionals at smaller institutions (13%) were significantly more likely to hold this view than their colleagues at institutions with enrollments greater

Table 1

#### Chi-Square Results on Advocate Perceptions of Student Use of Mandated Reports

Survey Item/Group	Yes		No		Don't Know		$\chi^2$	df	p
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)			
<i>Believe students receive mandated crime summary in their admissions packet</i>									
<i>Institutional Type</i>									
Public	40	(37)	22	(21)	45	(42)	1.15	2	0.56
Private	18	(45)	9	(23)	13	(33)			
Total	58	(40)	31	(21)	58	(40)			

Table continues

Table 1 (continued)

Survey Item/Group	Yes		No		Don't Know		$\chi^2$	df	p
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)			
<b>Institutional Size</b>									
Less than 4500	6	(26)	7	(30)	10	(44)	2.48	2	0.29
More than 4500	52	(42)	24	(19)	48	(39)			
Total	58	(40)	31	(21)	58	(39)			
<i>Believe that this summary influences students' college choice decisions</i>									
<b>Institutional Type</b>									
Public	3	(3)	16	(15)	88	(82)	9.45	2	0.01*
Private	6	(15)	2	(5)	32	(80)			
Total	9	(6)	18	(12)	120	(81)			
<b>Institutional Size</b>									
Less than 4500	7	(26)	2	(14)	14	(60)	28.04	2	0.00*
More than 4500	2	(2)	16	(13)	106	(85)			
Total	9	(7)	18	(12)	120	(81)			
<i>Believe students receive the institution's mandated annual crime report</i>									
<b>Institutional Type</b>									
Public	53	(50)	29	(27)	25	(23)	7.36	2	0.03*
Private	28	(70)	3	(8)	9	(22)			
Total	81	(55)	32	(22)	34	(23)			
<b>Institutional Size</b>									
Less than 4500	10	(43)	9	(40)	4	(17)	4.83	2	0.89
More than 4500	71	(57)	23	(18)	30	(25)			
Total	81	(55)	32	(22)	34	(23)			
<i>Believe that students read the institution's annual report</i>									
<b>Institutional Type</b>									
Public	2	(2)	16	(15)	89	(83)	3.25	2	0.19
Private	3	(8)	7	(18)	30	(75)			
Total	5	(3)	23	(16)	119	(81)			
<b>Institutional Size</b>									
Less than 4500	3	(13)	5	(22)	15	(65)	9.19	2	0.01*
More than 4500	2	(2)	18	(15)	104	(84)			
Total	5	(3)	22	(16)	119	(82)			
<i>Think that annual report helps change the way students protect property</i>									
<b>Institutional Type</b>									
Public	15	(14)	33	(32)	58	(54)	10.11	2	0.01*
Private	5	(13)	24	(60)	11	(27)			
Total	20	(14)	57	(39)	69	(47)			
<b>Institutional Size</b>									
Less than 4500	8	(35)	8	(35)	7	(30)	10.80	2	0.01*
More than 4500	12	(10)	50	(40)	62	(50)			
Total	20	(14)	58	(40)	69	(47)			

Table continues

Table 1 (continued)

Survey Item/Group	Yes		No		Don't Know		$\chi^2$	df	p
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)					
<i>Think that annual report helps change the way students protect themselves</i>									
Institutional Type									
Public	13 (12)	35 (33)	59 (55)		11.88	2	0.01*		
Private	4 (10)	25 (63)	11 (27)						
Total	17 (12)	60 (41)	70 (48)						
Institutional Size									
Less than 4500	7 (30)	8 (35)	8 (35)		9.62	2	0.01*		
More than 4500	10 (8)	52 (41)	62 (51)						
Total	17 (12)	60 (41)	70 (48)						
<i>Think that the annual report helps students make decisions about how they move around their campuses</i>									
Institutional Type									
Public	13 (11)	37 (33)	57 (56)		7.08	2	0.03*		
Private	4 (10)	23 (57)	13 (33)						
Total	17 (12)	60 (40)	70 (48)						
Institutional Size									
Less than 4500	7 (30)	8 (35)	8 (35)		9.62	2	0.01*		
More than 4500	10 (8)	52 (42)	62 (51)						
Total	17 (12)	60 (41)	77 (48)						

\* significant finding at the  $p < .05$  level of significance.

than 4500 students (2%), small frequency counts in too many cells caused this analysis to be suspect.

Small percentages of respondents (about 13%) thought that information contained in the annual reports influenced student crime prevention behavior. Perceptions were mixed when institutional type and size were examined. Victim advocates at private institutions were less likely to think these reports positively influenced how students protected their property. Pairwise analysis showed that victim advocates at public institutions were much more likely to indicate they did not know rather than make a negative response to this item ( $N = 127$ ,  $\chi^2 = 10.21$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

Table 2

*Chi-Square Results on Advocate Perceptions of Campus Safety Strategies*

Survey Item/Group	Yes			No			Don't Know			$\chi^2$	df	p
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)				
<i>Think students would read flyers, posters, news articles, or email about campus safety</i>												
Institutional Type												
Public	77	(72)	4	(4)	26	(24)			2.53	2	0.28	
Private	33	(83)	0	(0)	7	(18)						
Total	110	(75)	4	(3)	33	(22)						
Institutional Size												
Less than 4500	15	(65)	0	(0)	8	(35)			2.93	2	0.23	
More than 4500	95	(77)	4	(3)	25	(20)						
Total	110	(75)	4	(3)	33	(22)						
<i>Think their student would attend a campus crime prevention/awareness program</i>												
Institutional Type												
Public	84	(79)	13	(12)	10	(9)			0.29	2	0.87	
Private	33	(83)	4	(10)	3	(7)						
Total	117	(80)	17	(11)	13	(9)						
Institutional Size												
Less than 4500	17	(74)	4	(17)	2	(9)			0.91	2	0.63	
More than 4500	100	(81)	13	(11)	11	(9)						
Total	117	(80)	17	(12)	13	(9)						
<i>Think these materials and programs would change the way students protect property</i>												
Institutional Type												
Public	49	(46)	19	(18)	39	(36)			7.21	2	0.03*	
Private	19	(48)	14	(35)	7	(17)						
Total	68	(46)	33	(22)	46	(31)						
Institutional Size												
Less than 4500	12	(52)	6	(26)	5	(21)			1.16	2	0.56	
More than 4500	56	(45)	27	(22)	41	(33)						
Total	68	(46)	33	(22)	46	(31)						
<i>Think these materials and programs would change the way the student protects self</i>												
Institutional Type												
Public	62	(58)	10	(9)	35	(33)			7.27	2	0.03*	
Private	25	(63)	9	(22)	6	(15)						
Total	87	(59)	19	(13)	41	(28)						
Institutional Size												
Less than 4500	12	(52)	6	(26)	5	(22)			4.25	2	0.12	
More than 4500	75	(61)	13	(11)	36	(29)						
Total	87	(59)	19	(13)	41	(28)						

*Table continues*

Table 2 (continued)

Survey Item/Group	Yes		No		Don't Know		$\chi^2$	df	p
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)			
<i>Think these materials and programs would change the way the student moves around the campus</i>									
Institutional Type									
Public	52	(49)	16	(15)	39	(36)	11.96	2	0.01*
Private	17	(43)	16	(40)	7	(17)			
Total	69	(47)	32	(22)	46	(31)			
Institutional Size									
Less than 4500	12	(52)	7	(30)	4	(18)	2.78	2	0.25
More than 4500	57	(46)	25	(20)	42	(34)			
Total	69	(47)	32	(22)	46	(31)			

\* significant finding at the  $p < .05$  level of significance

Respondents at smaller institutions made affirmative rather than negative responses at significantly higher rates than their larger institution colleagues ( $N = 78$ ,  $\chi^2 = 6.26$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .012$ ). Victim advocates at smaller institutions were also much more likely to make a positive response rather than indicate they did not know ( $N = 89$ ,  $\chi^2 = 9.86$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .002$ ).

Responses regarding the influence of the information contained in the annual report on how students protected themselves from harm differed significantly when institutional type and institutional size were examined. Victim advocates at private institutions were significantly more likely to respond negatively to this item, while their colleagues at public institutions were more likely to indicate that they did not know ( $N = 130$ ,  $\chi^2 = 10.87$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .001$ ). Respondents at smaller institutions were significantly more likely to make affirmative rather than negative responses than their colleagues from larger institutions ( $N = 77$ ,  $\chi^2 = 6.55$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .011$ ).

Responses regarding the influence of the information contained in the annual report on how students moved around the campus also differed significantly when institutional type and institutional size were examined. Victim advocates at private institutions were more likely to make a negative response to this item, while their public institutions colleagues were more likely to indicate they did not know ( $N = 130$ ,  $\chi^2 = 6.30$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .012$ ). Respondents at smaller institutions, on the other hand, were much more likely to make affirmative rather than negative response ( $N = 77$ ,  $\chi^2 = 6.55$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .011$ ). These data can be found in Table 1.

### **Perceptions of Campus Safety Strategies**

Survey results related to perceptions of campus safety strategies appear in Table 2. Seventy-five percent of respondents ( $n = 110$ ) thought that students read

Table 3

*Chi-Square Results on Advocate Perceptions of Administrators and Their Administrative Practice*

Survey Item/Group	Yes		No		Don't Know		$\chi^2$	df	p
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)					
<i>Believe administrators are candid about campus crime issues</i>									
Institutional Type									
Public	68 (64)	27 (25)	12 (11)		1.15	2	0.56		
Private	29 (72)	7 (18)	4 (10)						
Total	97 (66)	34 (23)	16 (11)						
Institutional Size									
Less than 4500	11 (48)	8 (35)	4 (17)		4.04	2	0.13		
More than 4500	86 (70)	26 (21)	12 (10)						
Total	97 (66)	34 (23)	16 (11)						
<i>Believe that administrators at their institution have attempted to hide crime</i>									
Institutional Type									
Public	17 (16)	49 (46)	41 (38)		0.15	2	0.93		
Private	7 (18)	19 (48)	14 (35)						
Total	24 (16)	68 (46)	55 (37)						
Institutional Size									
Less than 4500	4 (17)	10 (44)	9 (39)		0.09	2	0.96		
More than 4500	20 (16)	58 (47)	46 (37)						
Total	24 (16)	68 (46)	55 (38)						
<i>Believe that the information shared increases confidence in campus police</i>									
Institutional Type									
Public	30 (28)	18 (17)	59 (55)		1.92	2	0.38		
Private	7 (17)	9 (23)	24 (60)						
Total	37 (25)	27 (18)	83 (57)						
Institutional Size									
Less than 4500	4 (18)	7 (30)	12 (52)		2.91	2	0.23		
More than 4500	33 (27)	20 (16)	71 (57)						
Total	37 (25)	27 (18)	83 (57)						
<i>Believe that the Clery Act has reduced crime on their campuses</i>									
Institutional Type									
Public	4 (4)	32 (30)	71 (66)		0.14	2	0.93		
Private	1 (3)	12 (30)	27 (67)						
Total	5 (3)	44 (30)	98 (67)						
Institutional Size									
Less than 4500	1 (4)	4 (17)	18 (78)		2.05	2	0.36		
More than 4500	4 (3)	40 (33)	80 (65)						
Total	5 (3)	44 (30)	98 (67)						
<i>Believe that the Clery Act has improved campus crime reporting</i>									
Institutional Type									
Public	42 (39)	32 (30)	33 (31)		4.22	2	0.12		
Private	23 (58)	7 (18)	10 (25)						
Total	65 (44)	39 (27)	43 (29)						
Institutional Size									
Less than 4500	11 (48)	1 (4)	11 (48)		8.35	2	0.02*		
More than 4500	54 (44)	38 (31)	32 (25)						
Total	65 (44)	39 (27)	43 (29)						

*Table continues*

Table 3 continued

Survey Item/Group	Yes		No		Don't Know		$\chi^2$	df	p
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)			
<i>Believe that the Clery Act has improved the quality of crime awareness programming</i>									
Institutional Type									
Public	40	(37)	34	(32)	33	(31)	4.72	2	0.95
Private	8	(20)	19	(48)	13	(33)			
Total	48	(33)	53	(36)	46	(31)			
Institutional Size									
Less than 4500	6	(26)	6	(26)	11	(48)	3.49	2	0.17
More than 4500	42	(34)	47	(38)	35	(28)			
Total	48	(33)	53	(36)	46	(31)			
<i>Believe that the Clery Act has fostered better relationships with judicial affairs</i>									
Institutional Type									
Public	34	(32)	57	(53)	16	(15)	0.66	2	0.72
Private	10	(25)	23	(58)	7	(18)			
Total	44	(30)	80	(54)	23	(16)			
Institutional Size									
Less than 4500	3	(13)	13	(57)	7	(30)	6.43	2	0.04*
More than 4500	41	(33)	67	(54)	16	(13)			
Total	44	(30)	80	(54)	23	(16)			
<i>Believe that the Clery Act has fostered better relationships with campus police</i>									
Institutional Type									
Public	44	(41)	41	(38)	22	(21)	2.47	2	0.29
Private	12	(30)	21	(53)	7	(18)			
Total	56	(38)	62	(42)	29	(20)			
Institutional Size									
Less than 4500	5	(22)	11	(48)	7	(30)	3.71	2	0.16
More than 4500	51	(41)	51	(41)	22	(18)			
Total	56	(38)	62	(42)	29	(20)			
<i>Believe that the Clery Act has fostered better relationships with counseling services</i>									
Institutional Type									
Public	28	(26)	56	(52)	23	(22)	2.50	2	0.29
Private	6	(15)	22	(55)	12	(30)			
Total	34	(23)	78	(53)	35	(24)			
Institutional Size									
Less than 4500	5	(22)	9	(39)	9	(39)	3.08	2	0.16
More than 4500	29	(23)	69	(56)	26	(21)			
Total	34	(23)	78	(53)	35	(24)			
<i>Believe that the Clery Act has encouraged greater crime reporting by students</i>									
Institutional Type									
Public	14	(13)	47	(44)	46	(43)	5.22	2	0.16
Private	2	(5)	13	(33)	25	(63)			
Total	16	(11)	60	(41)	71	(49)			
Institutional Size									
Less than 4500	3	(13)	8	(35)	12	(52)	0.58	2	0.90
More than 4500	13	(11)	52	(42)	59	(48)			
Total	16	(11)	60	(41)	71	(48)			

flyers, posters, news articles or email messages about campus safety, and 80% ( $n = 117$ ) believed that students would attend campus safety or crime prevention programs. Roughly 46% ( $n = 68$ ) thought that this type of educational campaign would change both the way students protect their property and the way they move around their campuses. Fifty-nine percent of respondents ( $n = 87$ ) thought that this type of information would change the way students protect themselves from harm. These results are shown in Table 2.

On those items dealing with safety-related behavior, significant differences were found when institutional type was examined. With respect to educational materials and programs changing how students protected their property, pairwise chi-square analyses revealed that victim advocates at private institutions were much more likely to answer “no” while their public institution colleagues were much more likely to indicate they “did not know” ( $N = 79$ ,  $\chi^2 = 7.29$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .007$ ). The same response pattern held true when respondents were asked if such strategies would change how students protect themselves ( $N = 60$ ,  $\chi^2 = 7.42$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .006$ ). Finally, respondents at public institutions were significantly more likely to give an affirmative rather than negative response when asked if educational materials would change the way students move around the campus ( $N = 101$ ,  $\chi^2 = 6.39$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .011$ ).

### *Perceptions of College Administrators and Administrative Practice*

Two-thirds of victim advocates ( $n = 97$ , 66%) believed that college administrators were being candid about campus crime. In a related question, 16% ( $n = 24$ ) of respondents thought that administrators had attempted to hide crime on their campuses.

Twenty-five percent of respondents ( $n = 37$ ) credited Clery-related activities with an increased confidence in the campus police but only 3% ( $n = 5$ ) thought that the Clery Act was in any way related to reducing crime on their campuses. However, 44% of respondents ( $n = 65$ ) believed that the Clery Act had improved crime reporting by the campus police. Although the overall chi-square analysis revealed a significant difference when institutional size was examined, no significant differences were found in the pairwise chi-squares. Thirty-three percent ( $n = 48$ ) believed that the Act had improved the quality of crime awareness programming on college campuses.

About one-third of respondents thought that the process of complying with the Clery Act fostered better relationships with the office of judicial affairs ( $n = 44$ , 30%) and the campus police ( $n = 58$ , 38%). Fewer respondents reported that the Act fostered better relationships with counseling centers ( $n = 34$ , 23%) and a lower percentage ( $n = 16$ , 11%) thought that students would be more likely to report crime as a result.

Respondents at larger institutions were more likely to perceive an improvement in their relationships with offices of judicial offices than their small institutions colleagues. Pairwise chi-square analyses confirmed this finding. Victim advocates at smaller institutions were much more likely to indicate they did not know rather than make an affirmative response ( $N = 67$ ,  $\chi^2 = 6.64$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .01$ ). These results can be found in Table 3.

## Discussion

There are several important findings in this study. First, 7% of victim advocate respondents were unaware of the Clery Act. When compared to other groups, such as law enforcement and judicial officials, this is a relatively high percentage. In addition, 82% were unsure if students read the mandated reports or used the mandated summary to make decisions about college choice. Almost 50% of victim advocates were unsure if students used any of the information contained in the annual reports to change their personal safety-related behavior. These professionals may focus more of their attention on violent crime, supporting crime victims, and educating students about the rights of crime victims and thus, devote less time to the admissions and orientation processes where the Clery Act and crime data are typically shared with parents and students. It could also mean that victim advocates and women's center personnel are not integrated into their respective campus administrations. If so, these issues should be addressed.

Seventy-five percent of respondents thought that students would read educational materials prepared by their institutions and 80% thought that students would attend crime prevention and campus safety programs. Further, 59% of this group believed these types of materials would change how students protect themselves, 47% thought they would change how students move around their campuses, and 46% thought they would change how students protect their property. Passive ad campaign materials and educational programming are usually designed to be much more attention getting, timely, and incident-specific than the formal reports that must contain three years of raw data on the number of crime incidents at a specific campus.

The views of these victim advocates about the effectiveness of these types of crime prevention programs are slightly more optimistic than their colleagues in judicial affairs (Gregory & Janosik, 2003) and law enforcement (Janosik & Gregory, 2003) and also more optimistic than the students' reports about their own use of crime data (Janosik & Gehring, 2003). It may be that their work as advocates or their personal experience with crime (68%) predisposes them to be more hopeful that such interventions will reduce the likelihood that others will become victimized. This finding also could be gender-related. Although data on this demographic variable were not collected, one might presume that the vast majority of victim advocates are women. The majority of law enforcement and judicial officers is more likely to be men. In the end, the effectiveness of the Clery Act is largely determined by what students' think and do. Still, the perceptions of student affairs professionals and others affect how policy and administrative decisions are made, how resources are allocated, and how students are helped.

One of the challenges faced by campus advocates engaged in educational efforts is assessing the effectiveness of passive educational campaigns. A paradox that advocates often experience is an increase in the number of reports of crime due to increased educational efforts, not because the rate of crime increases. Assessing the effectiveness of educational efforts remains a challenge. Although this group seemed optimistic about educational interventions, it was equally pessimistic about students'

willingness to read (3%) and act (12%) upon the information contained in the Clery Act's mandated reports. This finding, too, mirrors the results of the studies done by Janosik and Gregory (2003).

In this study, victim advocates at smaller institutions were more confident that students received the institution's annual crime report and were more likely to believe that the crime summary provided in admissions material influenced students' college choice decisions. Similar findings were reported in a recent student study (Janosik & Gehring, 2003) and a parent study (Janosik, 2004). Respondents at larger institutions, in several instances, were more likely to indicate they did not know how to answer particular items. In smaller communities and at smaller institutions, it may be that the methods used to communicate are simply more effective. It could be too that more complex organizations employ a greater number of specialists. Respondents from larger institutions may be more isolated than those in other settings and this isolation may result in less direct knowledge about the topic.

Despite this group's personal experience with crime and advocacy, the percent of respondents who believed college personnel hide crime (16%) or are less than candid (34%) with others about campus crime and campus safety issues was relatively low. For those respondents who do believe that administrators hide crime or are less than candid about it, their perceptions might be influenced by the fact that victim advocates often work with victims who chose not to report to law enforcement and other university officials. In addition, victim advocates often provide services to victims whose experience falls outside the required reporting parameters of the Clery Act. These advocates may be more aware than students, parents, and other college officials of the discussions about confidential issues that take place behind the scenes. By the very nature of their work, victim advocates may be more likely to know about cases where the truth was hidden or shaded. Finally, a minority of respondents attributed better working relationships with counseling centers (23%), offices of judicial affairs (30%), and campus police offices (38%) to the Clery Act. For some, the process of communicating with one another and sharing crime information has improved working relationships. This finding ought not be overlooked.

### Conclusion

All research suffers from certain limitations and this study is no exception. This group of professionals is not represented by a national organization and identifying appropriate respondents was not easy. The two lists of professionals used as the sample in this study may not be representative of the population. Because we cannot be sure, the results must be interpreted with caution.

Conducting survey research online presents its own set of difficulties. Although we were certain that the invitation was sent to an appropriate participant, we could not ensure that the person filling out the questionnaire was the same person. In a similar vein, self-report data is not as reliable as observed behavior. The same is true of a pencil and paper survey, of course, but the ease of bouncing an email message to a

different address makes it a particular concern with online surveys. Despite these shortcomings, we have no reason to suspect the trustworthiness of the data and believe that it points to several important conclusions.

All of the groups studied (in this and previous studies) report that mandated summaries and annual reports are not likely to be read and are not likely to affect student behavior. In the opinion of victim advocates; law enforcement, housing and residence life, and judicial officers; and students and their parents, this required reporting does little if anything to reduce campus crime. It does, however, seem to improve the quality of crime reporting and the consistency of those reports.

According to the perceptions of respondents in this study, passive ad campaigns and campus programming that focus on the timely reporting of crime activity are more likely to influence student safety-related behaviors. Students, in two separate studies, share this view (Janosik, 2001; Janosik & Gehring, 2003).

For some advocates, the Clery Act has provided opportunities to increase communication with law enforcement, judicial affairs, and other campus administrators resulting in closer working relationships and enhancing services for victims and their families. While campus advocates are often contrasted with their campus law enforcement and judicial affairs colleagues, this study indicates that all three groups share similar perceptions about the impact and value of the Clery Act on student behavior and campus practices.

### Policy Implications

Given these results, one should conclude that continuing to focus on increasing the categories of crimes reported, as is currently being considered by Congress, would not benefit prospective students or community members. Indeed, the findings of this body of research suggest that the energy and emphasis devoted to the crime reporting requirements of the Act are ineffective and may be misplaced. If the Clery Act's purpose is to educate, change behavior, and protect college students, policy makers and college administrators would be better served by focusing their attention on the development of services and programs that seem to make some difference. In addition, it would be helpful to create better support structures for institutions that may still be struggling to comply with the frequently changing requirements of the Act.

Furthermore, given what students report, we have reason to believe the passive ad campaigns do a better job of changing student behavior. More should be done, however, to identify best practices based on appropriate outcome measures. In all of the studies mentioned in this article, a small but important number of respondents believe that college administrators are not candid and intentionally hide information from the public. We need to examine administrative practice more closely to learn whether this minority opinion is accurate. Too often, policy and administrative procedures are driven by emotional responses to a tragedy, a desire to appear responsive, or a hasty search for a quick fix. By attending to the findings of this study,

college administrators will be able to develop more effective crime reduction strategies that will result in safer college campuses.

### References

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