



FROM THE EDITOR

EDITOR

Allan L. Patenaude, Ph.D.

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Cyndi Banks, Ph.D.

Northern Arizona University

Robert Burns, Ph.D.

Texas Christian University

Joan E. Crowley, Ph.D.

New Mexico State University

James W. Golden, Ph.D.

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

W. Wesley Johnson, Ph.D.

Sam Houston State University

Marilyn McShane, Ph.D.

University of Houston-Downtown

Mary L. Parker, Ph.D.

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

William E. Stone, Ph.D.

Southwest Texas State University

Prabha Unnithan, Ph.D.

Colorado State University

Janet A. Wilson, Ph.D.

University of Central Arkansas

Jeffrey T. Walker, Ph.D.

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the *Southwest Journal of Criminal Justice (SWJCJ)*, the official publication of the Southwestern Association of Criminal Justice (SWACJ). It marks an important step in the evolution of our region and how both we and other persons regard our association.

As you can see, the *SWJCJ* is an electronic journal. There are three reasons for this choice of a format. First, it is far less expensive than the traditional, printed journals such *Justice Quarterly* and the *Journal of Criminal Justice Education* that we receive as part of our membership with our parent organization, the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences. No one will be asked to increase his or her dues or pay a subscription fee to receive the *SWJCJ*. Second, an electronic format does not restrict authors to a specific number of pages (although the editor might do so) or to the use of grayscale images and maps. So, while you can include those color maps and graphs, please be realistic and keep the size reasonable. Third, both the Southwestern Association of Criminal Justice and the individual author will have worldwide circulation once the journal is assembled and posted on the World Wide web. For this reason, I haven't password-protected the *SWJCJ*, but I am willing to listen to your suggestions concerning this option.

The *SWJCJ* is a refereed journal and owes its success to the team of associate editors listed to the left side of this page. As a refereed journal, it will provide each of you with an opportunity to disseminate quality information about our field (while providing another venue for earning tenure and promotion).

In closing, I would be remiss if I didn't offer our thanks to Emily Johns and Sabra Horne at Wadsworth Publishing for agreeing to provide the journal with texts for our book review section. Their desire to see us succeed is greatly appreciated.

Take Care and Good Reading,

Al Patenaude



**The Invisible Among Us:
Exploring Criminal Victimization Experiences and Perceptions of College
Students With Physical Disabilities**

Charisse T. M. Coston, Ph.D.¹
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Robert L. Bing III, Ph.D.
University of Texas at Arlington

Abstract

Seventy-six physically-challenged college students responded to a survey through the Office of Disability Services at a medium-sized university in the south. In this exploratory study, they were asked to indicate their general worries while attending classes. The goal of this project was to identify if, and to what extent, they worry about becoming the victim of a crime, and where worries about crime ranks among their other worries. Results provide counter intuitive findings with respect to perceptions of risk and vulnerability to crime based upon physical disability and articulate the need for better coordination of overall services for this group.

Introduction

New laws have resulted in improved educational opportunities, and many colleges and universities have removed architectural barriers to students with physical disabilities (see Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act* of 1973, and the *Americans With Disabilities Act* of 1990). Student affairs and student service professionals' challenge of meeting the needs and concerns of students who are physically differentially-abled, including the deaf, blind, and/or in wheelchairs have increased the numbers of individuals with disabilities who are able to attend colleges and universities. Given these physical enhancements, academic successes continue to be thwarted by their worries or concerns while studying in college (Elliot and Witty, 1992).

The primary focus of this paper is to assess their general worries and, in particular, to detect the extent to which, they worry about becoming the victim of a personal and/or property

¹ The authors would like to acknowledge the assistance of Ms. Jeanne Webb, a counselor in Disability Services at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte for her consultation about this special population and assistance with data collection.

crime. Other foci concern the nature and range of past victimization experiences, strategies used to insulate themselves from criminal victimization, and suggestions for continued attention and improved quality of life while studying in college.

Background

All students, able-bodied or not, have worries while studying in college. For the disabled, these worries are intensified and, at times, different. The literature suggests that these worries range from getting to class on time, embarrassment from an inability to complete simple tasks, such as reaching for a library book to an inability to hear a fire alarm (Goodrick *et al.*, 1990; Fairbanks, 1992; Williams, 1995). Other concerns from the physically-disabled while studying in school are worrying about time limitations placed on taking tests, whether they will be allowed to tape class sessions, feelings that the professor will expect less from them due to their physical limitations, worries about socially interacting with able-bodied students because of negative perceptions of them, not graduating and/or worrying about their future employability (Reeser, 1992; Kelly *et al.*, 1994; Hart and Williams, 1995; Powers and Sowers, 1995; Huepner and Thomas, 1996). Many students deal with these concerns by “passing” (e.g., Cox and Klas, 1996), that is, they may pretend that they are ‘abled’ and thus reject or fail to solicit opportunities for assistance. Similarly, others cope by using humor to put them and/or others down (Bailey, 1990). In contrast, the more positive ways utilized to cope with worries include use of study and/or support groups.

Based upon an extensive review of the literature, worry about victimization ranks high among the physically disabled (Coston, 1998). Several other studies suggest that researchers who are studying fear, worries, and/or concerns should focus on examining the salience of this emotion in relation to other worries, fears, and/or concerns of other people (Coston and Finckenhauer, 1993; Coston, 1994; Coston, 1995; Coston, 1998). These suggestions drive the foci of this research.

Sample and Procedure

This medium-sized university in the South with an enrollment of 18,000 students is located in a Metropolitan area of more than 1.5 million people. The university offers baccalaureate and masters degree programs and provides on-campus housing for approximately 4,000 students.

Of the 350 differentially-abled students who utilized the services of the Office of Disability Services during the fall semester of 1997, 135 were either blind, hard of hearing, deaf, or wheelchair bound. Of the 135, 76 agreed to answer a twenty minute, 41-item questionnaire. The survey instrument was read to them in person by trained interviewers. Questions solicited personal information such as age, race, sex, marital status, type of disability, major, employment history and place of residence. Students were also asked if they had ever been the victim of a property or personal crime. If so, they were asked about the nature and frequency of these events. They were also asked about their self-perceptions of vulnerability to victimization risk and whether they use any self-protections strategies, including the type. These students were asked to identify their top five worries or concerns.

After these worries were listed, they were asked to prioritize their worries with one as the greatest and five as the least worry. Students were asked to rank-order their responses to questions about their experiences with disability services and their academic experience. Last, they were asked if they had any suggestions for the academic community that could improve upon the quality of their lives while attending college.

Results

Characteristics of the Sample

Thirty percent of the 76 respondents were wheelchair bound. Twenty percent of the sample reported having a visual impairment, and 50% reported problems resulting in deafness or difficulty in hearing. Fifty percent of the sample reported having been diagnosed while growing up; others reported being diagnosed at birth (29%), and the others reported a diagnosis of disability within the past 10 years (21%).

The median age of students in this sample was 22 years. The ages ranged from 18 to 48 years. Eighty percent of the respondents in the sample were single. Fourteen percent indicated that they were married and 6 percent were legally separated or divorced. Most of the respondents (43%) reported owning a home, 35% reported living in university housing, 16% reported living at home with their parents, and 6% reported living in an apartment. Over half of the respondents reported working (55%). Forty-five percent reported not working. Ninety-two percent of the students who responded were undergraduates and 8% were graduate students. Seventy-four percent of the respondents were majoring in the arts and sciences, and nearly 27% were majoring in the natural sciences' areas. Over half (51%) of the students who responded reported that for some jobs they sometimes think that their disability will affect their career goals; however 35% of the sample indicated that they felt that their disabilities would not interfere with their career goals. Additionally, only 15% reported that their disability would negatively impact career objectives.

Treatment by Disability Services, Faculty, Staff, and Students Without Disabilities

Most students rated the quality of physical accessibility on the university campus as good to excellent, 41% and 43%, respectively. However, those students who were wheelchair bound were more inclined to rate the quality of physical accessibility as fair to poor, 15% and 5%, respectively.

Most of the students in this sample rated the Office of Disability Services as excellent (65%). Twenty-five percent of the respondents reported that the Office of Disability Services was good, while four percent rated the Office of Disability Services as fair. Six percent had no comment.

Over three-quarters (78%) of the students (or respondents) reported that the faculty do not mistreat them while they are enrolled in their classes. A few students reported that mistreatment by faculty while enrolled in their classes occurs often (10%), sometimes (8%), and rarely (4%). Eighty-five percent of the students reported that the support staff did not mistreat them. However, the remaining 14% reported that mistreatment does occur sometimes.

Crime-related Data

Differentially-abled students were asked about feelings of safety while on campus, their biggest worries while studying on campus, the nature and frequency of past victimization experiences and how much they worry about becoming the victim of a crime. Over half of the students reported always feeling safe while on campus (51%). Thirty-two percent reported that they feel safe often and 16% reported only feeling safe sometimes. Seventy percent of the students reported that they had never been the victims of a crime, while 39% reported a past victimization experience. The numbers of past victimization experiences ranged from one to four. The types of crimes reported were assaults (37%), larceny (25%), grand theft auto (21%), robbery (15%), and attempted murder (2%). Ten percent of those students who reported having been the victim of a crime reported more than one type of crime in a single incident (two incidents of rape and robbery and three incidents of a larceny and grand theft auto). Seventy-five percent of the sample reported that they did not believe that they were at a greater risk of being victimized than people without a disability. Twenty-five percent believed that they had a greater risk of being victimized than those without a disability.

Interestingly, the official police data indicate that in 1998, only 6% of the 18,000 student population reported having been the victim of a crime. At the time of writing, neither the university, nor the local police department compartmentalized data based upon disability. Thus, these self-report data reveal more about this population's experiences with crime.

Self-Reported Worries

Students were asked to identify their five biggest worries while studying on campus. Table 1 illustrates that the rank-ordering of concerns and includes inter-category rankings. The primary worries relate to graduating, keeping up with course material, being homesick, the lack of money generally, and finding employment after graduation. Within the primary category, these students reported also worrying about obtaining and maintaining a good GPA. A few students reported that they worried about physical accessibility in getting to and from their classes and to other parts of the university, for example getting around at the library. Surprisingly, concerns about criminal victimization appeared as their least worry. Other worries reported by students in the sample include: the lack of funding to continue school, mistreatment by non-disabled students, being lonely, finding a job after school, and finding friends and/or a romantic partner. Finally, students were asked to show on a five-point scale the degree to which they worry about becoming a victim of crime. Consistent with the results in Table 1, only eight percent reported extreme concern about becoming the victim of a crime. Most of the respondents reported that they do not worry (51%), or that they were somewhat unworried (41%). In short, the expectation of criminal victimization as a major concern or reality is not indicated in this research.

Table 1
List of Student Worries While Studying on Campus

(1 = most important worry; 5 = least important worry)				
1	2	3	4	5
Graduating 55%	Keeping up with school work 70%	Being homesick 65%	Money 75%	Finding a job after school 67%
Keeping up with school work 25%	Mistreatment from non- disabled students 24%	Lack of courtesy by non-disabled students 20%	Finding a romantic partner 15%	Not being treated as a misfit 15%
Good GPA 10%	Lack of funding to continue school 5%	Keeping up with school work 10%	Keeping up with school work 5%	Finding a romantic partner 10%

Suggestions for Improvement

Students in this sample were asked for their suggestions for improving the quality of their academic experience while studying. Forty percent of the students stated that the academic community (particularly the offices of Student Government, the Dean of Students and Disability Services) need to develop outreach programs (including workshops) to help them to integrate with their non-disabled peers. Further, it was reported by these students that they want to spend study as well as leisure time with abled students in order to better acclimate to the university environment. Other comments included their desires to: (1) join fraternities/sororities, (2) be asked to join the abled for meals and/or other social events, and (3) have better interpersonal relationships with non-disabled peers in order to develop friendships some of which might result in romantic relationships. Twenty-five percent of the students reported that they would like to have more public transportation available to them. This transportation, according to answers to this open-ended question, included transportation to and from locations off campus, and more transportation within the perimeters of the campus, i.e., a shuttle bus service. Eighteen percent of the students commented that they would like for the library to be more accessible in terms of devising methods for physically retrieving books and journals off of the shelves. Seven percent of the students suggested that there be better lighting in the parking lot and along the walkways during nighttime hours.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

This was an exploratory study on the physically-disabled college student, a potentially high risk group. Additional studies may be needed to further assess perceptions of victimization. In addition, since this research focused only on physical disabilities, future research directives might include samples involving college students with learning disabilities.

The results of this study provide new information on the criminal victimization experiences and worries about future victimization among college students with physical disabilities. These findings present a challenge to college student personnel whose responsibility it is to insure that within this population that every attempt to fully integrate the disabled student is undertaken. Supervisors should be trained and followed by the provision and updating of in-service programs on an ongoing basis in order for the campus community to be sensitive and responsive to this special population's needs (e.g., among food service, physical plant, library, clerical, counseling, law enforcement and academic personnel). These steps, along with critical input from the students with physical disabilities on how services can be tailored to their needs, may result in a more effective approach to addressing the unique service needs of students with physical disabilities.

These suggestions are seen as fundamental to the quality of academic life which is an integral component of the overall quality of life. One last interpretation of the data suggests that the concerns of the students with physical disabilities seem to reflect the concerns of the student without physical disabilities, driving home the importance of an integrated network of support for counseling and career services for all students.

Bibliography

- Alston, R. and C. McCowan, (1995). "Perception of Family Competence and Adaptation to Illness Among African Americans With Disabilities." in *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 61 (1). pp. 27-32.
- Babbitt, C. and H. Barbach. (1990). "Note on the Perceived Occupational Future of Physically Disabled College Students." in *Journal of Employment Counseling*, 27 (3). pp. 98-103.
- Bailey, J. (1990). "Do Students With Disabilities Value College Education?" in *Journal of College Student Development*, 35(2). pp. 494-495.
- Barbach, H. and C. Babbitt. (1993). "An Exploration of the Social Functions of Humor Among College Students in Wheelchairs." in *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 25(2). pp. 6-9.
- Barga, N. (1996). "Students With Learning Disabilities in Education: Managing a Disability." in *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 29(1). pp. 413-21.
- Coston, C. and J. Finckenauer (1993). "Fear of Crime Among Vulnerable Population: Homeless Women." *Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness*, 2(1). pp1-18.
- Coston, C. (1994). "Worries About Crime: Rank Ordering Survival Concerns Among Urban Transient Females." *Deviant Behavior*, 14(2). pp. 366-376.
- Coston, C. (1995). "Self-Other Judgements and Perceptions of Vulnerability." in *International Review of Victimology*, 4(2). pp. 33-46.

- Coston, C. (1998). "Methodological Shortcomings Associated With Measuring Fear in Criminal Justice Research." in *The Victimologist*, 2(2). pp. 1-15.
- Cox, D. and L. Klas. (1996). "Students With Learning Disabilities in Canadian Colleges and Universities: A Primer for Service Provision." in *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 29(4). pp. 93-97.
- Day, S. and B. Edwards. (1996). "Assistive Technology for Postsecondary Students with Learning Disabilities." in *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 29(6). pp. 486-492, 503.
- Elliot, T., S. Herrick, and T. Witty. (1992). "Problem-solving Appraisal and the Effects of Social Support Among College Students and Persons with Physical Disabilities." in *Journal of Counseling and Psychology*, 39(1). pp. 219-226.
- Fairbanks, C. (1992). "Labels, Literacy, and Enabling Learning: Glenn's Story." in *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(2). pp. 474-593.
- Fichten, C., C. Bourdon, and R. Ansel. (1987). "Validation of the College Interaction Self-Efficacy Questionnaire: Students With and Without Disabilities." in *Journal of College Student Personnel*, 28(2). pp. 449-458.
- Fichten, C., G. Goodrick, V. Tagalakakis, R. Amsel, and E. Libman. (1990). "Getting Along in College: Recommendations for College Students with Disabilities and Their Professors." in *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 34, 103-125.
- Friehe, M., B. Aune, and J. Leuenberger, (1996). "Career Service Needs of College Students with Disabilities." in *Career Development Quarterly*, 44(2). pp. 289-300.
- Gregg, N. C. Hoy, M. King, C. Moreland, and M. Jagota. (1992). "The MMPI-2 profile of Adults with Learning Disabilities in University and Rehabilitation Settings." in *Journal of Learning Disabilities*. 25(10). pp. 386-395.
- Greenbaum, B., S. Graham, and W. Scales. (1995). "Adults with Learning Disabilities: Educational and Social Experiences During College." in *Exceptional Children*, 61(2). pp. 460-471.
- Hart, R. and D. Williams. (1995). "Able-Bodied Instructors and Students with Physical Disabilities: A Relationship Handicapped by Communication." in *Communication Education*, 44(2). pp. 140-154.
- Huepner, R. and K. Thomas. (1996). "A Comparison of the Interpersonal Characteristics of Rehabilitation Counseling Students and College Students With and Without Disabilities." in *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 40(1). pp. 45-61.
- Jarvis, P. and E. Justice. (1992). "Social Sensitivity in Adolescents and Adults with Learning Disabilities." in *Adolescence*, 27(108). pp. 977-988.

- Kelly, A., W. Sedlack, and W. Scales. (1994). "How College Students With and Without Disabilities Perceive Themselves and Each Other." in *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 35(2). pp. 178-182.
- Powers, L. and J. Sowers. (1995). "An Exploratory, Randomized Study of the Impact of Mentoring on the Self-Efficacy and Community-Based Knowledge of Adolescents with Severe Physical Challenges." in *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 40(2). pp. 33-40.
- Reeser, L. (1992). "Students With Disabilities in Practicum: What is Reasonable Accommodation?" in *Journal of Social Work Education*, 28(2). pp. 98-109.
- Roffman, A., J. Herzog, and P. Wershba-Gershon. (1994). "Helping Young Adults Understand Their Learning Disabilities" in *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 27(2). pp. 413-419.
- Saddler, D. and R. Buckland. (1995). "The Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale: Correlations with Depression in College Students with Learning Disabilities." in *Psychological Reports*, 77(2). pp. 483-490.
- Stage, I. and N. Milne. (1996). "Invisible" Scholars: Students with Learning Disabilities." In *Journal of Higher Education*, 67(4). pp. 426-445.
- Thompson, A. and K. Pickey. (1994). "Self-Perceived Job Search Skills of College Students with Disabilities." in *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 37(2). pp. 358-370.
- West, M., J. Keregel, E. Getzel, M. Zhu, M., I. Ipsen, and D. Martin. (1993). "Beyond Section 504: Satisfaction and Empowerment of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education." in *Exceptional Children*, 59(1). pp. 456-467.



Alcohol, Sexual Innuendos, and Bad Behavior: An Analysis Of A Small Town Bar.

Tammy S. Garland
University of Arkansas at Monticello

Marc F. Hughes
James W. Marquart
Sam Houston State University

Abstract

This paper builds on the work of Roebuck (1976), Cavan (1966), and Goffman (1963) to further the literature on deviant behaviors occurring within the confines of the bar setting. The previous research conducted on bar behavior has focused on bars located within major cities. Although these studies have allowed for and contributed to the research, they have failed to address the small town bar. Using observational data taken from a small town bar, this study looks at the types of deviant behaviors occurring within this setting. Moreover, we attempt to establish a typology of bar patrons based upon our observations. The results of our study were consistent with those found in the previous literature. Both aggressive and sexually explicit behaviors were considered acceptable with the bar setting; however, there was a limit to these behaviors. The results of our typology found the roles of those within the bar coincided with their assigned roles in mainstream society, albeit in a deviant, yet acceptable, form.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, humans have consumed alcohol. Thus, alcohol's acceptance into society led to the creation of designated places in which an individual could imbibe the substance without fear of punishment from law enforcement officials, the bar. On any given night throughout the United States, an individual can go to a local bar to obtain a drink and socialize with his or her friends. Bars have in essence become a ritualistic pattern for those who wish to engage in the consumption of alcohol. Ironically, the fascinating issue that makes bar attendance interesting is not the drinking of alcohol but the behaviors that ensue once a person crosses the threshold into this exciting yet familiar world.

As one enters the doorway of the bar, the smell of cigarette smoke and stale liquor automatically cue the individual that they have walked into a different realm. The structure of the bar allows behaviors deemed inappropriate in society to occur with little fear of repercussion to the patron. Individuals will often indulge in certain animalistic urges (aggression, lack of

sexual inhibition, and criminality) while in the bar in which they would never act upon in their normal social setting. Thus, these behaviors are what attracted us to this study.

The majority of the research conducted on bar behavior has focused on bars located within major cities. Although these studies have allowed for and contributed to the research, they have failed to address the local small town bar. In order to fill the gap in the literature, we have chosen to conduct our research on a small town bar. Although we realize that our study has limitations, as did past studies, we have attempted to add to the literature by documenting the behaviors in our observations.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As early as 1700 B.C.E, legal codes limited the consumption of alcohol (Lyman & Potter, 1998). Even though alcohol has historically been sanctioned by most nations, this controversial substance differs from the majority of other drugs due to its 'acceptance' into society. Even though alcohol has been linked to aggressive behaviors (see Giancola and Chermack, 1997), alcohol is legal for consumption throughout the world. The Eighteenth Amendment prohibited the sale of alcohol during the 1920s and early 1930s in the United States; however, the popularity of the beverage caused so much political turmoil throughout the nation that the law was repealed. Today, approximately two-thirds of the adult population in the United States consumes alcoholic beverages (Greenfield and Room, 1997). Even though alcohol consumption is such a common occurrence in the United States, Room (1975) noted that drinking remains a "highly enclaved activity in American society" (in Greenfield and Room, 1997:33). In essence, public drinking of alcohol is limited to designated locations.

Conventional settings are made up of standard patterns of behavior "routinely expected within the setting, treated as fitting and proper for time and place, and persistently independent of the changing populace" (Barker and Wright, in Cavan, 1966:3). As noted by Shibutani (1968), society is made up of 'social worlds,' in which behaviors not tolerable in mainstream society are permitted (Clark, 1988). Patrons of a bar are able to participate in acts not deemed appropriate in the traditional mediums of society. Thus, the bar allows individuals to share a common set of norms, which places them in a setting apart from the conventional social order (Room, 1975). Although drinking is condoned within society, this 'accepted deviance' must be contained in specified locations for it to remain acceptable. Drinking is, therefore, contingent upon the social role of the individual, time, place, definition of the situation, and actions associated with expected patterns of behavior (Greenfield and Room, 1997; Cavan, 1966). Hence, the bar is the appropriate place in which an individual can participate in this deviant act without being labeled as deviant by society.

Due to the "numerous laws and regulations governing what, how, and where Americans drink," (Roneck and Bell, 1981:35) public drinking mainly occurs in bars, taverns, and/or restaurants. Single and Wortley (1993) reported that one-fourth of all drinking occurs in licensed establishments. Since the consumption of alcohol is prohibited in non-designated public places by many state and federal laws, adult drinkers consume alcoholic beverages in the local bar, tavern, club, or restaurant. Federal and state laws prohibit juveniles from purchasing alcohol;

therefore, legalized drinking in designated places does not apply to juveniles. For the purposes of this study, we have assumed that those drinking in bars are of a legal age.

Who Drinks?

Historically, men have been associated with alcohol consumption in bars (Lesch and Hazeltine, 1995). However, a study conducted by Clark (1981) reported young, single men, closely followed by young, single women, had the highest patronage among bar attendees ranging in age from 21 to 40. The change in drinking patterns can be linked to many factors, but the most compelling reason is the prevalence of women gaining equality and entering into colleges and universities. Since many young drinkers are often enrolled in college, bars are often filled with college students. According to Wechsler and McFadden (1979), 95% of the students surveyed in their study reported that they were drinkers, thus lending support to Clark's estimation that young males and females make up the highest percentage of bar goers. In addition, approximately 90% of college-age women drink alcohol (Parks, Miller, Collins, and Zetes-Zanatta, 1998; Taylor and St. Pierre, 1986).

Even though both young males and females have a high attendance at bars, research has determined that male patrons drink more than their female counterparts. Clark (1988) reported that the mean number of drinks per month for male drinkers was 44.5 drinks per month compared to women drinking a mean number of 19.4 drinks per month indicating that men consume over two times the number of alcoholic beverages than women. This difference in mean numbers of drinks consumed can be attributed to prevailing attitudes stemming from centuries of beliefs deeming that alcohol eroded the moral fiber of society. Historically, bars have been associated with behavior not tolerable to the standards of proper society (Cavan, 1966). Moreover, bars have been associated with social outcasts and regarded as centers of prostitution and gambling (Lesch and Hazeltine, 1995); therefore, a bar has traditionally been considered no place for a 'lady.' Cavan (1966) noted that "attitudes toward public drinking places are intimately bound up with attitudes toward alcoholic beverages and drinking (1966:41). Even today, those attitudes remain prevalent in our society. Among both men and women, fewer see it appropriate for a woman to drink with friends at a bar than for a man (Greenfield and Room, 2001:38). In essence, even though more than 60% of adult women consume alcohol with over half being under the age of 50 (Parks, *et al.*, 1998), women drinking in bars remains viewed as a deviant act by society.

Why Drink in a Public Setting?

According to a study conducted by Cosper, Neuman, and Okraku (1982), Canadians were more likely to drink in taverns as a social function than those drinking in American taverns. It cannot be disputed that bars/taverns in the United States serve as a place of drinking; however, individuals frequent bars in order to socialize with others. Literature has shown that socializing and meeting friends is the major reasons for attending a bar (Harford, Wechsler, and Rohman, 1983; Strouse, 1987; Parks, *et al.*, 1986). Bars are considered "open regions" allowing those previously unacquainted to become involved in communication; therefore, "sociability is the most general rule of the bar" (Cavan, 1966:50).

Time and Place

Typically, bar patrons are constrained by the social order (i.e., the so-called ‘blue laws’) to participate in bar behavior during specific times. Mainstream American society considers drinking before designated hours as taboo and often unacceptable. For instance, an individual participating in ‘heavy drinking’ during lunchtime who returns to work would be deemed as inappropriate, which could inevitably lead to termination of employment. Thus, bar attendance is highest during evenings, nights, and weekends (Greenfield and Room, 1997; Arfkin, 1988).

As previously noted, approximately one quarter of American drinking occurs in licensed establishments. The reason that these designated places remain so popular is because bars allow individuals, independent of social class, race, and gender, to communicate with less restraint. This freedom from the manacles of society not only permits individuals to participate in activities that defy the norms of the social order but to engage those persons otherwise deemed unapproachable.

The ability for individuals to socialize in a bar is contingent upon the set-up, which impacts the dynamics of the bar. Although Cavan (1966) addresses the set-up of public drinking places, the majority of the literature has failed to address this phenomenon. Cavan (1966:50) stated “the physical bar structure forms the center of social gravity.” As noted, bars are designed to promote socialization. Thus, dependent on where an individual sits determines what type of interaction that person will have. Persons looking to socialize can be found sitting at tables and/or booths, which allow for groups to congregate. However, those who wish to remain solitary from the group typically seat themselves at the bar and sit there in a manner that deters interaction. For instance, an individual who confines himself to his space by creating a fortress-like barrier simply with the use of his arms obviously wishes to be alone. Even though the bar serves as a place in which individuals can remain alone, the bar is also a place in which lone patrons can socialize with others without being viewed as abnormal. The literature has failed to address this contradiction and many other issues relating to areas of the bar; therefore, this paper will further address the set-up of the bar in the findings section.

Deviance

In mainstream society, uninhibited behavior is not tolerated; however, in the bar, acts deemed inappropriate in society are not only tolerated but accepted if they remain in the socially and situationally-defined boundaries of the bar (MacAndrew and Edgerton, 1969; Greenfield and Room, 1997). Cavan noted “the public drinking place is often treated as a setting where a variety of self-indulgent and otherwise improper acts can be engaged in” (Cavan, 1966:67). In essence, deviance as defined by the conventional world is both accepted and expected in this subcultural setting. Since the bar setting has been labeled deviant due to the attitudes of traditional society regarding alcohol, the literature must also look at the types of deviance that occur due to drinking.

Much of the literature, regarding alcohol-related deviancy, focuses on the relationship between alcohol and behavior. Research on alcohol’s behavioral effect on individuals has noted a pharmacological and biological impact (Chermack and Giancola, 1997; Chermack and Taylor,

1995; Hull and Bond, 1986) leading to loss of control, verbal and physical aggression, and lack of sexual inhibition. Alcohol is responsible for loss of control. In situations in which an individual drinks heavily, intoxicated patrons often experience physical impairment. Excessive amounts of alcohol lead not only a loss of control of the body, but impairment of the mind. Evidence of loss of control is found in staggering, a lack of awareness, and even behavior not normal for the individual. In the latter instance, this often results in aggressive or sexually provocative behaviors.

Consistently, studies have determined that alcohol consumption facilitates aggressive behavior (Giancola and Zeichner, 1994). The majority of research conducted on aggression and alcohol use has found that individuals who drink alcoholic beverages are more prone to aggression than those who partake in non-alcoholic beverages (see Chermack and Giancola, 1997, Giancola and Zeichner, 1994). Moreover, Bond and Lader (1986) found that alcohol increased aggression in both males and females although females have been found to engage in less alcohol-related aggression than males (White, Brick, and Hansell, 1993; Eagly and Steffen, 1986; Hyde, 1984). Not only are those who drink alcohol more likely to become aggressive, they are also prone to become sexually uninhibited. Feelings of sexuality are exacerbated among both men and women when drinking especially in a public setting such as a bar. Men are more likely to verbally harass female patrons of a bar by such measures as telling dirty jokes, making lewd comments, or sexually propositioning the women (Parks, *et al.*, 1998). This can be attributed to the stereotypical labels assigned to women who attend bars; whores, sluts, easy, loose, etc. This idea of the female bar attendee is inaccurate. However, the stereotype is reinforced when female patrons behave in ways that are considered unacceptable by society. Some intoxicated females become less inhibited when approached by men (rubbing against men, sexually aggressive body language, allowing men to touch them, and being flirtatious) resulting in the perception of sexually provocative behaviors in bars (Parks, *et al.*, 1998).

In addition to the physiological effects of alcohol on the human body, social scientists have also noted the social factors involved in behavior resulting from alcohol consumption. The learned expectancy of illicit behaviors about alcohol and the situational factors involved in these behaviors have been attributed to acts that would not normally be tolerated in society. Expectancy models have determined that aggressive behavior due to alcohol consumption is due to learned beliefs about the effects of alcohol (George, Dermen, and Nochajski, 1989). Although the physiological affects of alcohol on the body cannot be disputed, individuals realize while in the confines of the bar they may act out in a deviant manner while intoxicated without becoming labeled as a deviant. Thus, alcohol “provides a proper excuse to engage in what would otherwise be considered inappropriate acts” (Hull and Bond, 1986:348).

Most researchers often take an either/or stance in which behavior is due to either physiological or social factors. However, most likely deviant behaviors resulting from the consumption of alcohol are due to an amalgamation of both physiological and social factors. Alcohol in itself causes individuals to act in ways not normally accepted by the dominant culture; therefore, by drinking in a public place that allows indulgent acts not tolerated by society to occur without fear of punishment, individuals in a bar expect that certain behaviors will be tolerated in this setting. For instance, Boyatzis (1975:358-359) suggested that “the amount of interpersonal aggression expressed in bars is probably a function of the level of aversive stimuli

present, cues allowing or provoking aggressive behavior, nature of the clientele, and the reason why the particular bar is patronized.” Simply put, individuals intentionally go to a place in which certain behaviors are tolerated, therefore, aggression and sexual freedom are acceptable forms of deviance but only within the boundaries of the bar.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Like all social organizations, bars have socially defined boundaries, however, the subculture of the bar is endemic to the structure. The bar is a place in which the regular social norms of society are relaxed enabling individuals to step outside of themselves and participate in ‘deviant behaviors.’ Roebuck and Frese (1976) maintain that behavior and the setting are interconnected. Thus, behaviors deemed unacceptable in conventional society are considered normal within the borders of the bar. Since improper behavior often carries a penalty when carried out in our culture, individuals will often go to great lengths to “evade rules and safely accomplish forbidden ends” (Goffman, 1963:139). Cavan (1966) found:

Settings vary not only in the kinds of improprieties that can be covertly engaged in by those present but also in the kinds of improprieties which, if observed, may be tolerated at least on an occasional basis, the kinds of sanctions that may be meted out for various offenses, and the extent to which the sanctioning of offenders is a laissez-faire endeavor or one that is both formal and formidable. The ways any given setting may be exploited, and whether this exploiting can be done with relative impunity or at least with little cost, may be a matter of casual or occasional interest to some, although to others it may comprise one of the most important features of the social organization (Cavan, 1966:7).

In essence, the bar allows for certain behaviors to occur and be tolerated that would be inappropriate in other settings (Roebuck and Spray, 1967). For instance, middle-class society does not allow individuals to exhibit aggressive or sexually promiscuous behaviors in non-designated public places. Hence, a man slapping a woman on her buttocks in church would be considered outlandish (even ungodly) behavior leading to an aversive reaction, but a man conducting himself in the same manner in a typical bar¹ would be considered standard in many instances. Although the social order views bar behavior as ‘acceptable’ if contained in the bar, these behaviors are still considered deviant. In essence, the bar is a place of license, which allows individuals to participate in ‘acceptable deviance.’ Not only can these individuals step out of their everyday roles, bar patrons can engage in behaviors they can disassociate themselves from once they leave the setting (Goffman, 1963).

Since the bar is a location in which deviance is embraced, it is often difficult to be punished for acting out in certain ways; however, as noted, bars have established rules that govern behaviors in the confines of that setting. Thus, even though aggressive and sexually explicit behaviors are tolerated, there is a boundary that is not supposed to be crossed. If these rules are broken, verbal and/or physical altercations are likely to occur with the staff or the

¹ Since all bars are not homogeneous, this type of behavior would not be considered appropriate in all bars. For instance, this type of behavior would not occur in a ‘high end’ bar.

patrons of the bar. Antagonists who continuously violate the rules of the bar can be permanently removed from the social setting. In essence, they are ostracized from the bar and are forced to find a new subculture to belong.

Not only must the rules of the bar be adhered, but certain behaviors perpetrated by patrons are only acceptable when specific individuals participate in this manner and do not extend to the entire population. As we will discuss further, 'acceptable deviance' depends upon the interaction between the actor, the time, and the context of the situation. Patrons, who refuse to adhere to these unspoken rules, will meet the same fate as those who have violated the set rules of the bar.

METHODOLOGY

Social scientists have historically embraced quantitative methodologies when conducting research, however, "when examining various social settings and the individuals that inhabit these settings" qualitative research is often a more appropriate technique (Berg, 2001:6). Admittedly, while quantitative research is needed within the field, human interactions and behaviors cannot always be measured in numerical terms. The attempt of researchers to do just this often results in a mechanistic approach that often fails to answer questions of immense importance. As noted by Berg (2001:7), "qualitative procedures provide a means of accessing unquantifiable facts about the actual people researchers observe and talk to."

The qualitative methodology used in this study was based upon participant observation. We chose to study the subjects in a natural setting in an attempt to make sense of the phenomena without disrupting the process in which these behaviors occur (Berg, 2001). Hence, using the *verstehen* approach enabled us to gain critical insight in what was occurring within the setting without influencing the unknowing participants (Hagan, 2000:212). Ironically, we successfully observed our subjects without notice; however, during the research, it was we, the researchers, who were affected. The process of testing our hypotheses was replaced by the generation of hypotheses. In this, we mean that unexpected observations and typologies emerged from our research. This occurrence forced us to rethink the way the data collection process was written. Rather than coding and measuring the behaviors, we were able to explain what was occurring and avoid the quantification of qualitative research, thus enabling us to better understand the phenomenon occurring within the setting.

The Research Site

A popular college bar in a small, southern university town was selected as the research site because: (1) the bar was considered a popular hangout by both locals and college students, (2) the bar offered nightly drink specials to attract business, (3) the bar was close to campus in proximity, and (4) the bar was set up in a way that behavior could be monitored from both inside and outside of the bar. Since this was only one bar in a small university town, the findings are

limited and not generalizeable to the entire bar population.² However, since the bar is a “typical college bar,” we attempted to make inferences about this universal population based on our observations.

The research on *Bar M* was conducted between early February and late April of 2002. The two-person research team collected observations together on each Thursday night beginning at 9:00 p.m. and ending at closing time, 12:00 a.m. In addition, the researchers collected data separately at various times throughout the week in order to obtain a divergent sample of the population. This approach was undertaken to determine if at varying times, different types of individuals attended the bar and different patterns of behavior occurred. Not only did the researchers attend the bar at different times, we also monitored behavior from different sections of the bar to determine if the location of the individual patron had anything to do with behavior.

The structure of the observations was separated into two parts: (1) to identify behavior patterns of the bar patrons and (2) to identify the types of patrons which participated in “deviant” behaviors. In order to collect this information, we established ourselves as “participant”³ observers. Thus, when we monitored the behaviors of those in the bar, we, ourselves, became part of the study. During nighttime monitoring, it was essential that we, the researchers, engaged in behavior fitting for the location of our study; therefore, upon arrival, we would order a pitcher of beer and proceed to drink approximately a total of 3 beers while we observed our intended targets. We would also sit together on Thursday nights in order to not “stand out” in the bar. Since location is dependent on the type of interaction, the only place a person can sit alone without being viewed as unordinary is the bar; therefore, we would sit together inside or outside at one of the tables. On nights when data was collected separately, often times each of us would bring a non-researcher to accompany us during periods of data collection. However, sitting alone was not a problem during daytime hours. This time period allowed for us to sit and “study” while observing the patrons of the bar. After periods of data collection, we would discuss what we saw during the ride home. Then, salient observations and thoughts would be written down at the first opportunity. Field notes contained observations on behavior, who was drinking, what type of drink was ordered, the number of drinks consumed, the time spent drinking, estimated weight of the individual, and if participant drove home.

The researchers attempted to keep the project unnoticed, however, after spending numerous hours in the bar, participants typed as regulars began to befriend us. One patron realized that we were doing something other than socializing; this knowledge did not affect the project. Other than that sole incident, no one realized the true nature of our attendance. Since this was an observational analysis only, no interviews were conducted after the final observation period.

² The rules learned and the acceptable behaviors in Bar M are not generalizeable to every bar type. Different types of bars have different rule, therefore, we will attempt to make inferences about bars of this nature.

³ Even though we participated in the bar, we did not conduct a true participant observation study since research did not involve any interviewing in the data collection. (see Lofland and Lofland, 1995).

Sample

Since it was impossible to monitor every person within the bar, our data is based on a convenience sample taken from the bar population. Taking into consideration that the sample could lead to a misrepresentation of our population, we attempted to minimize the risk by comparing our sample to the basic features of the bar population. We determined that our observations were indeed representative of our population.

FINDINGS

Behaviors

Layout of the Bar

Bar M was converted from an old drive-though restaurant into a bar. Even though it is not a big place, Bar M is laid out in such a manner where individuals can have diverse experiences while remaining in the same structure. The bar is divided into three major sections: (1) the bar, (2) inside tables, and (3) the patio. Even though these areas exist within the confines of the bar, they all differ in types of people attracted to these areas and types of behaviors occurring there.

The inside of the bar is divided into two sections: the bar and the inside table area, both of which are somewhat of a typical set-up when compared to other small establishments. The first odors that assail the senses as one walks into the bar are lit cigarettes, stale beer, and liquor. In addition, the auditory system is barraged by the loud sounds of the jukebox pouring over the speakers. A lone pool table sitting in the back corner is less than standard size, but fits just right in the small area. In the middle of the room, a golf arcade game stands off center to the right of the tables. Two televisions, which are opposite of each other in the room, sit in the front corners of the establishment; the big screen sits near the tables while a smaller television hangs in the corner nearest to the bartender. Sports are played on these televisions, which are always on mute. Beer advertisements hang from every corner. A large chalk menu of the beer specials for the day is located above big screen television. Both sections of the bar allow individuals to eat and drink, however, the seating in these sections is what separates the two areas and establishes the behavioral boundaries.

As noted by Cavan (1966), the bar area is typically a place for individuals who are alone to sit. These individuals have come to the bar to have an after hours drink. Even though they may not desire to be alone, it is not normal for a single person to enter the bar and sit in areas designated for socialization. Thus, the lone patron sits at the bar in an attempt to socialize with the bartender and those who have come by themselves as well. In the few instances in which we witnessed solitary customers sitting in sections other than the bar, patrons would often ask the lone person if they wanted to sit with them. Even we were asked to join groups when sitting alone on the patio. By bringing individuals who are alone into a group, this maintains the social structure of the bar and preserves the acceptable conduct designated in these areas.

Also located in the bar is the inside table section. Unlike the bar area, the inside table area was the place in which the majority of socialization took place. From lunchtime until

approximately 8:00 p.m., this section was populated by patrons who were there to drink a few alcoholic beverages during lunch or after work, however, beginning around 8:00 p.m. more college students began entering the bar to drink and socialize amongst their peers. By 10:00 p.m., the tables were all taken allowing for standing room only. The amount of people increased on most nights so that it enveloped many of the other areas of the bar. The areas inside the bar, from the place of order to the pool table, are crowded with individuals. This phenomenon continued until closing time. Since so many people are located inside this small structure, the inside table area was characterized by its' loud nature. If one wanted to have a conversation, voices had to be raised to overcome the cacophony created by the mass number of people joined by the jukebox.

In order to escape the loudness of the bar, one only had to go outside to the patio area. This area was noted for not being as loud (or smoky) as the inside of the bar. Posters and ads of local business advertisements and college sporting events were displayed on the windows separating the inside of the bar from the outside. The researchers concluded that this area was more serene because it was, in essence, the transition zone back into mainstream society. Even though it was an extension of the bar, it remained outside and was shielded under the protective veil of four invisible walls. Thus, patrons would engage in behaviors deemed more acceptable in society on the patio than they would in the actual bar. Occasionally, the patio would get loud but only for short instances. When this occurred, the bar was extremely crowded; therefore, we concluded that this was basically an overspill of behaviors occurring from inside the bar. Like the inside areas, prior to 8:00 p.m., the patio was usually empty. However, after 8:00 p.m., the patio began to fill up. There were different reasons for this: (1) the table areas inside of the bar were already taken; therefore, if a patron wanted to sit down, they had to go outside, and (2) the temperature dropped to create a pleasant atmosphere not typically found during the day.

Forms of Deviant Behaviors

The bar setting concedes patrons a sense of licensure to participate in behaviors deemed aberrant from mainstream society. Not only are individuals consuming alcohol in a public setting, they are given leeway to act out in seemingly deviant behaviors without being labeled as such. During our observations at Bar M, we noted two major behaviors that are viewed as unacceptable in the social world: aggression and the "sexualization" of women. As documented in the literature, alcohol has been linked to aggressive behavior (see Giancola and Chermack, 1997), therefore, those engaging in activities at a bar would be considered to be more likely to participate in aggressive behaviors than in other public places. This anomaly would not typically be tolerated in society; however, this behavior is expected in the bar. Our observations revealed that within limits aggressive behavior was tolerated at Bar M. Males repeatedly partook in playfully aggressive behaviors such as screaming at one another or shoving a "fraternity brother." These behaviors were aggressive; however, they did not go beyond a playful nature.

Our observations found that the bar allowed for more intense sexualizing behaviors that it did for aggressive behaviors. Although the male patrons became increasingly more aggressive as the female patrons entered the bar, aggression in a violent sense was not their intent but rather sexual aggression became the "truly deviant" behavior witnessed. Leering was the most benign of the behaviors in which the male patrons engaged. Even though this bothered some females,

the majority of those being objectified by the “male gaze” shrugged it off and seemingly enjoyed the attention. In addition to the ostensibly harmless behavior, more aggressively sexual behaviors such as smacking a female on the buttocks were not uncommon. However, males were not the only patrons participating in sexually aggressive acts. Upon their arrival, the majority of the females, who were scantily dressed, walked into the bar and immediately began hugging on their male “friends.” These signs of affection were not limited to simple hugging. During the embrace, there was often groping being conducted by both sexes. After this “meet and greet” session, the females would typically huddle into groups giggling loudly until males joined them. Once again, the touching would begin. One female went as far to lie on the pool table while a male patron straddled her. Moreover, female patrons, wearing mini-skirts, would sit with either their legs apart, or if their legs were crossed, their skirt would ride up to reveal the outline of their buttocks.

In addition to these accepted deviant behaviors, patrons also were observed crossing into the realm of criminality. One of the problems associated with drinking in a public place is the fact that individuals often drive while intoxicated beyond the legal limit. Although this incident was not observed on a frequent basis, it did occur. Many of the telltale signs of patrons being intoxicated were observed such as staggering, slurring of speech, and other behaviors often linked to intoxication. In addition to driving under the influence, patrons would often drink after the 12:00 p.m. deadline. In one instance, patrons continued to drink after the announcement was made to put drinks away (12:02 p.m.). This continued for approximately ten minutes, and one patron, who had almost a full pitcher of beer left to drink, simply carried it to the car and drove away. Another instance of criminal behavior occurring in Bar M was the possible selling of alcohol to minors. Since Bar M is located in a college town, a number of underage students enter the bar. Even though not all of these underage students attempt to purchase alcohol, it does occur, however, neither the bartender nor the waitresses asked for ids on a regular basis. During one observation period, the bartender asked a patron for his identification and, upon this request, the patron stated that it was in his car. The bartender quickly told him not to worry about it and handed him a pitcher of beer.

Typology

The research of Bar M also led to the establishment of two typologies of the bar population. Bar M attracted two distinct populations: (1) college students and (2) locals. Although these two categories may not be mutually exclusive, our observations indicated that participants were either students or locals not both. Therefore, we based our typology on this assumption.

College Students

Since the observed bar is located in a small college town, many of the students attending the college congregate at Bar M. As already noted, the majority of students enter the bar around 10:00 p.m. For this analysis, students can be broken down into categories based on gender (male or female). As noted, the literature has documented that males tend to frequent bars more than their female counterparts (Clark, 1981); a finding supported by our observations. Male patrons made up approximately 75% of bar patrons in our study. Of those college males that were

observed in this analysis, they could be separated into 3 main categories: (1) jocks, (2) frat boys, and (3) the wolf pack.

Jocks, those who are involved in organized sporting teams, were prevalent in the bar. We initially noticed this typology upon our first observation period. Seven males were sitting outside discussing their game over several pitchers of beer (8 total). Originally, we thought the jocks were soccer players, however, after overhearing a conversation between two of the participants, we determined that they were rugby players. For the most part, jocks were content on being left alone to their group and did not seek out stimulation beyond their chosen group. Throughout our observations, this was the standard behavior of those labeled 'jocks'. It must be noted that we could not determine if these individuals were mutually exclusive from the following groups, however, the behavior of those categorized as jocks differed substantially from the group 'frat boys.'

Frat boys, individuals belonging to a fraternal or Greek order made up the majority of the bar population during peak hours. During every observation period, this statement held true. The frat boys would begin to arrive in groups of 4 to 5 around 8:00 p.m. and continue to do so throughout the night. These individuals were characterized by their style of dress: t-shirts and baseball caps with fraternity logos. In addition, these patrons tended to be louder than average bar patron. Initially, this group was not extremely loud, however, as the night progressed and their alcohol consumption increased, they became more garrulous with this loquacious fervor heightening with the arrival of their female sorority counterparts. Although the frat boys' aggressive behaviors were almost always limited to verbalization, this group was the most likely to be calmed down by the bar staff.

The final typology of male college students was the wolf pack.⁴ The wolf pack can be distinguished by the group's aggressive nature and their attempt to target women. This group could be easily interchanged with the frat boys. However, taking into consideration that not all of those belonging in a fraternity acted out in this manner, we could not place the entire group into this category as we could also not completely eliminate jocks from this typology. Like the frat boys, the wolf pack was more aggressive in behavior participating in behaviors that would be viewed as unacceptable under the norms of society. However, since these individuals were located inside of the bar, they acted as if they had a license to behave in an aggressive manner; actually, they did since they were in the bar. Not only did these individuals come in 'packs,' but they also were loud. The key factor that distinguished the wolf pack from the frat boys was their behavior towards female bar patrons.

Behaviors were not limited to such acts as hugging in the bar. Those belonging to the wolf pack went as far to smack females on the buttocks while their group cheered them onwards. In one instance, a male being 'egged on' by his peers grabbed one female around the waist and then proceeded to slap another female on her buttocks. At no time during our observations did

⁴ The term, 'wolf pack,' was borrowed from Jon Beard's (1989) analysis on driving violations. We have modified the term and applied it to the predatory behavior of males toward females (sheep).

any of the females openly protest to this behavior, thus indicating that this type of behavior is characteristic to the bar and even though not appropriate remains tolerated.

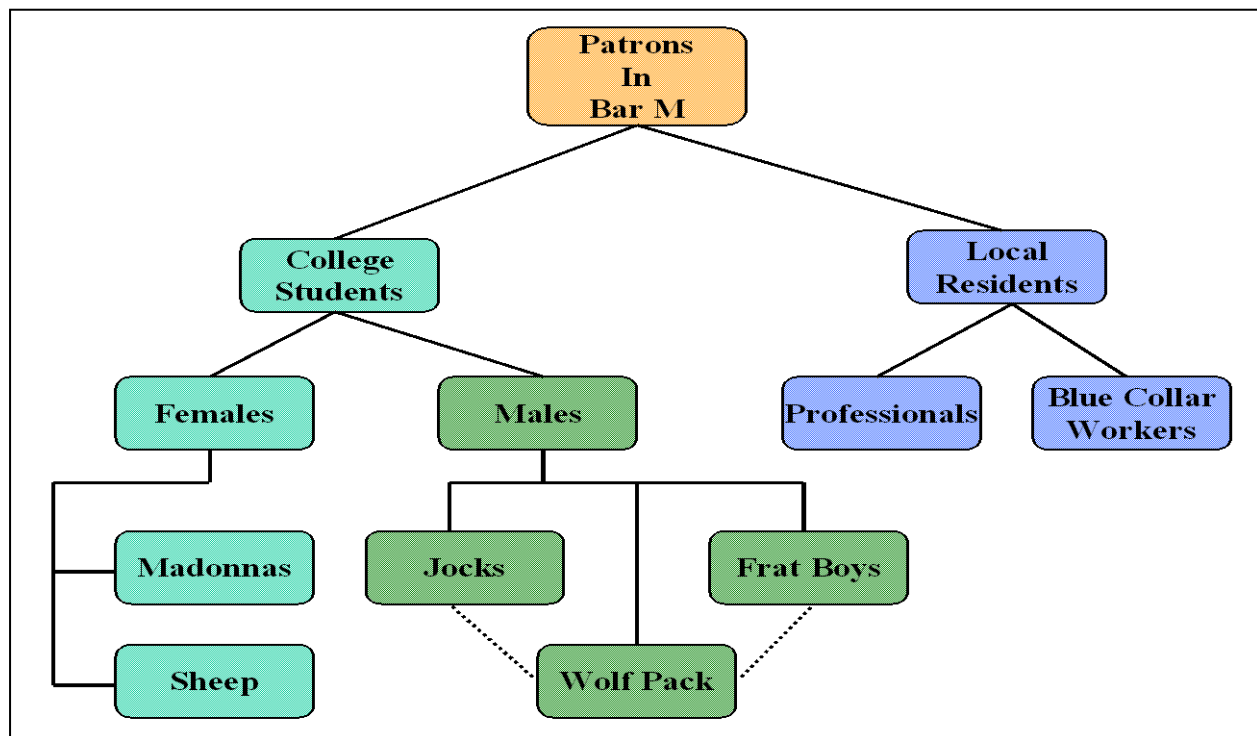


Figure 1: Typology of Bar M

Although females have historically not been prone to bar attendance, female bar patronage has increased dramatically over the last fifty years especially among female college students. Indeed, the recent literature has noted that approximately 90 percent of college-aged women drink alcohol (Parks, *et al.*, 1998; Taylor and St. Pierre, 1986), thus, one can also assume that many of these women are attending bars. Our observations found that the majority of patrons at Bar M were male; however, females were prevalent in the bar. College-age women could be divided into two typologies: (1) the madonna and (2) the sheep⁵.

The ‘madonna’ was labeled as such because these were the college females who attended the bar with one or more males. Observations of these women indicated that they were dating one of the males in the group. Rarely did these women order drinks for themselves. Even when they did drink, their consumption of alcohol was minimal. Moreover, they only engaged in conversation with their significant other or members of the group in which they came. In essence, madonnas brought a passive element to the bar scene. Observations indicated that these women were not there because they wanted to be but rather because their boyfriend wanted to be there.

⁵ Our reference to women as sheep stems from the term used by biker gangs to characterize women who do not belong to a member; therefore, they are passed around among the members and are not treated in a respectable manner.

In contrast to the madonnas, the sheep differed considerably. The sheep were distinguished by their exceptionally attractive good looks and provocative attire. Sheep rarely enter the bar before 10:00 p.m. Once they arrive, these women are scantily clad in mid-rift shirts, mini-skirts or short dresses, and 3-inch high heels/clogs. Their outfits are not what one would consider bar-wear rather clothes more fitting for a nightclub and in some instances a strip club. Upon their entry into the bar, the heads of the male patrons begin to turn and the sheep are almost immediately surrounded. Instantaneously, they are exposed to a barrage of attention paid to them by the male patrons. These women bask in the attention they receive from the male patrons and often participate in their own sexualization. For instance, during one observation period, a sheep laid on the pool table while a male patron straddled her body. Ironically, these females rarely imbibe large quantities of alcohol. In most instances, drinks are seldom finished. One reason for this lack of alcohol consumption is that this group tends to stay in the bar approximately 20 minutes. This trend occurred every Thursday during the observation period and also occurred on the weekends. We assumed that the sheep were simply making their rounds of the local bar scene.

Our typology of college females is ironic since women have historically been divided into those who conform and those who do not. Those who conform to their acceptable roles have been traditionally labeled the Madonna, hence, our “madonna” classification derives from this same theory. However, those who have refused to conform and have stepped out of their assigned roles were considered whores. There are those who maintain their madonna identity while there are those who are able to shed this persona and become sheep if only for a short while. Females who choose to engage in non-traditional behavior within the bar are able to take on such roles due to the nature of the bar. As noted, the bar is a place of license that enables patrons to break away from their roles held in conventional society. By walking into the bar, madonnas and sheep, alike, can take on a deviant role without actually being labeled as deviant by the mainstream. For the madonnas, their mere presence within the bar is deviant within itself while those who choose to participate in more non-traditional acts, sheep, can do so freely without any real fear of repercussion. Female bar patrons can are able to partake in “bad” behavior within the boundaries of the bar without being labeled as such by the mainstream. Nevertheless, if women decide to take on the non-conventional role as sheep, they have opened themselves up as sexual targets within the bar. Feinman (1994:4) maintains that the madonna/whore duality is implicit in “women’s subservience to men who assumed the role as protectors of the madonna and punishers of the whore.” Even though it is considered acceptable for women to enter the bar, women are still bound to these same stereotypes held by mainstream society. Hence, treating these women, who step out of their assigned roles, as if they were whores was acceptable among the male patrons.

Locals/Regulars

In contrast to the college student typologies listed above, the locals/regulars differed dramatically. These individuals began entering the bar around 4:00 p.m. and continued to do so until about 6:00 p.m. We did not break the locals down based on gender because both men and women who entered the bar belonging to this category possessed many of the same characteristics. However, we did decide to break the locals/regulars typology down into two categories based on social status: professionals and blue collar workers.

The distinguishing characteristic that designated the local bar patrons into separate categories was based on style of dress. Professionals were typically dressed in suits or other dressy attire. Upon listening to their conversations, we found that they were employed as professors, teachers, librarians, administrators, judges, and others who are considered to be professionals. On the other hand, blue-collar workers generally entered the bar wearing jeans, button-up or t-shirts, and work boots or non-professional dress shoes. In many instances, these individuals were dirty from a hard day of work. Those belonging to this group were determined to be prison employees, construction workers, electricians, and so forth. Even though these individuals came from different socio-economically based jobs, they had no problem intermingling amongst the two groups. Most everyone in the bar at this time knew one another, and if they did not, they eventually would become acquainted with the other regulars. Another oddity found during these times of observation was the fact that the locals would often bring their children with them. The first time that we observed this phenomenon we could not understand why a parent would bring their child into a bar; however, upon spending the next three months engaged in the research, she realized that during these hours, the bar was in a sense a family place. Thus, the locals/regulars were not at the bar to get drunk, but to have a few drinks and socialize with their friends and colleagues.

CONCLUSION

As noted in the literature, our analysis found that males not only drink more than their female counterparts, they are more likely to attend a bar. However, the major focus was not that of alcohol but a study based on behavior. The verbally and sexually aggressive behaviors that were recorded at Bar M would not be considered appropriate in society. Not only were these behaviors tolerated, but they were accepted. However, as previously mentioned, every place has rules in which individuals must adhere, and the bar is no exception. Even though the bar is a place of license, individuals participating in this acceptably deviant behavior must learn these rules and stay within their bounds. Thus, like all bars, the patrons of Bar M had to learn what behaviors are acceptable in that structure. Both verbal and sexually aggressive behaviors were acceptable within the boundary of the Bar M, however, physically aggressive and sexually exploitative behaviors that crossed into the realm of criminality were forbidden in Bar M. This may not be generalizeable to all bars (i.e. a biker bar), but since Bar M is typical model of most college bars, this adherence to these rule are applicable. Failure to adhere to the rules of the bar could lead to being ostracized from that setting or being labeled deviant in mainstream society if law enforcement officials were forced to intervene. Accordingly, most bar patrons will choose to follow the rules of the bar in order to remain a part of that subculture; therefore, they can enjoy the experience of the bar and be able to engage in behaviors regarded as deviant by society.

The bar experience is like no other. Like other observations, the experience can be tedious at times and very stimulating at others. There are many events and actions to document and process. General observations are not effortless. However, by immersing yourself into the study, a researcher can see and find things that would have never been observed by a normal person. It definitely takes much desire and will to go beyond the simple observation point of view.

Since our research was limited to observational analysis only, it would have been interesting to interview the participants. Further research on the different attributes of the bar should be conducted using informal interviews to ensure that our observation coincided with the participant's perception. For example, further research is needed to determine attitudes and personalities before patrons start drinking at a bar compared to when they leave. Research determining whether an individual's mood at the time of entry is exacerbated or decreased would be helpful in studying the bar setting. Another area in which further analysis is needed is to monitor the constant occurrence of females visiting the bar for short periods of time, since this occurrence was very rare for males. Thus, a plethora of further research needs to be conducted on the bar in order to obtain valuable information regarding human behavior.

REFERENCES

- Arfkin, C.L. (1988). "Temporal Pattern of Alcohol Consumption in the United States." in *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, Vol. 12. pp. 137-142.
- Babor, T.F., J.H. Mendelson, B. Uhly, and E. Souza, E. (1980). "Drinking Patterns in Experimental and Barroom Settings." in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 41(7). pp. 635-651.
- Berg, B.L. (2001). *Qualitative Research Methods For the Social Sciences*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bond, A., and M. Lader. (1986). "The Relationship Between Induced Behavioral Aggression and Mood After the Consumption of Two Doses of Alcohol." in *British-Journal-of-Addiction*, Vol. 81(1). pp. 65-75.
- Bowman, R.S., L.I. Stein, and J.R. Newton. (1975). "Measurement and Interpretation of Drinking Behavior." in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 36 (9). pp. 1154-1172.
- Boyatzis, R.E. (1975). The Predisposition Toward Alcohol-Related Interpersonal Aggression in Men." in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 36(9). pp. 1196-1207.
- Britt, D.W., and E.Q. Campbell. (1977). "Assessing the Linkage of Norms, Environments, and Deviance." in *Social Forces*, Vol. 56(2). pp. 532-550.
- Cavan, S. (1966). *Liquor License: An Ethnography of Bar Behavior*. Chicago, IL: Aldine Publishing Co.
- Chermack, S.T., and P.R. Giancola. (1997). "The Relation Between Alcohol And Aggression: An Integrated Biopsychosocial Conceptualization." in *Criminal Psychology Review*, Vol. 17(6). pp. 621-649.

- Chermack, S.T., and S.P. Taylor. (1995). "Alcohol and Human Physical Aggression: Pharmacological Versus Expectancy Effects." in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 56(4). pp. 449-456.
- Clark, W. (1988). "Places of Drinking: A Comparative Analysis." in *Contemporary Drug Problems*, nv. pp. 399-446.
- Clark, W. (1981). "Public Drinking Contexts: Bars and Taverns." in T.C. Harford and L.S. Gaines (eds), *Social Drinking Contexts, Proceedings of Workshop*, (NIAAA Research Monograph 7, DHHS Publication No. (ADM) 82-1097. Washington, DC: Department of health and Human Services. pp. 8-33
- Cosper, R.L., I.O. Okraku, and B. Neumann. (1987). "Tavern Going in Canada: A National Survey of Regulars at Public Drinking Establishments." in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 48(3). pp. 252-259.
- Curran, P.J., T.C. Harford, and B.O. Muthen. (1996). "The Relation Between Heavy Alcohol Use and Bar Patronage: A Latent Growth Model." in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 57(4). pp. 410-418.
- Eagly, A.H., and V.H. Steffen. (1986). "Gender and Aggressive Behavior: A Meta-Analytic Review of the Social Psychological Literature." in *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 100(3). pp. 309-330.
- Feinman, C. (1994). *Women in the Criminal Justice System*. Westport, CT: Prager.
- Fox, J.G., and J.J. Sobol. (2000). "Drinking Patterns, Social Interaction, and Barroom Behavior: A Routine Activities Approach." in *Deviant Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 21. pp. 429-450.
- Giancola, P.R., and A. Zeichner. (1995). "An Investigation of Gender Differences in Alcohol Related Aggression." in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, n.v. pp. 573-579.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Behavior in Public Places: Notes On The Social Organization Of Gatherings*. New York, NY: Free Press of Glencoe.
- Graham, K., L. La Rocque, R. Yetman, T.J. Ross, and E. Guistra. (1980). "Aggression and Barroom Environments." in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 41(3). pp. 277-292.
- Graves, T.D., N.B. Semu, and I.A. Sam. (1982). "Patterns of Public Drinking in a Multiethnic Society." in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 43(2). pp. 990-1009.
- Greenfield, T.K., and R. Room. (1997). "Situational Norms for Drinking and Drunkenness: Trends in the US Adult Population, 1979-1990." in *Addiction*, Vol. 92(1). pp. 34-47.

- Hagan, F.E. (2000). *Research Methods in Criminal Justice and Criminology*. Fifth Edition. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Harford, T.C., H. Weschler, and M. Rohman. (1983). "The Structural Context of College Drinking." in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 44(4). pp. 722-732.
- Hull, J. G., and C.F. Bond, Jr. (1986). "Social and Behavioral Consequences of Alcohol Consumption and Expectancy: A Meta-Analysis." in *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 99(3). pp. 347-360.
- Hyde, J.S. (1984). "How Large are Gender Differences in Aggression? A Developmental Meta-Analysis." in *Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 20(4). pp. 722-736.
- Kedrick, D.K. (1978). "Deviance and Sanctioning Within Small Groups." in *Social Psychology*, Vol. 41(2). pp. 94-105.
- Kelly, T.H., D.R. Cherek, and J.L. Steinberg. (1989). "Concurrent Reinforcement and Alcohol: Interactive Effects on Human Aggressive Behavior." in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 50(5). pp. 399-405.
- Lesch, W.C., and J.E. Hazeltine. (1995). "Males Use of Alcoholic Beverages: A Study of Contexts." in *Journal of Health and Social Policy*, Vol. 7(2). pp. 47-60.
- Lofland, J., and L.H. Lofland. (1995). *Analyzing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Lyman, M., and G. Potter. (2002). *Drugs in Society: Causes, Concepts, and Control*. Fourth Edition. Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing Co.
- MacAndrew, C., and R.B. Edgerton. (1969). *Drunken Comportment: A Social Explanation*. Oxford, UK: Aldine.
- Parks, K.A., and B.A. Miller. (1997). "Bar Victimization of Women." in *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Vol. 21(4). pp. 509-525.
- Parks, K.A., B.A. Miller, and L. Zetes-Zanatta. (1998). "Women's Descriptions of Drinking in Bars: Reasons and Risks." in *Sex Roles*, Vol. 38. pp. 701-717.
- Plant, M.A., N. Kreitman, and T. Miller. (1977). "Observing Public Drinking." in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 38(5). pp. 867-880.
- Room, R. (1975). "Normative Perspectives on Alcohol Use and Problems." in *Journal of Drug Issues*, Vol. 5. pp. 358-368.
- Roebuck, J.B., and W. Frese. (1976). *The Rendezvous: A Case Study of an After-hours Club*. Chicago, IL: The Free Press.

Roebuck, J., and S.L. Spray. (1967). "The Cocktail Lounge: A Study of Heterosexual Relations in a Public Organization." in *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 72(4). pp. 388-395.

Roneck, D.W., and R. Bell. (1981). "Bars, Blocks, and Crimes." in *Journal of Environmental Systems*, Vol. 11(1). pp. 35-47.

Roncek, D.W., and P.A. Maier. (1991). "Bars, Blocks, and Crimes Revisited: Linking the Theory of Routine Activities to the Empiricism of 'Hot Spots.'" in *Criminology*, Vol. 29(4). pp. 725-753.

Roncek, D.W., and M.A. Pravatiner. (1989). "Additional Evidence That Taverns Enhance Nearby Crime." in *Sociology and Social Research*, Vol. 73(4). pp. 185-188.

Rosenhow, D.J., and J. Bachorowski. (1984). "Effects of Alcohol and Expectancies on Verbal Aggression in Men and Women." in *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, Vol. 93(4). pp. 418-432.

Russ, J.W., M.K. Harwood, and E.S. Geller. (1986). "Estimating Alcohol Impairment in the Field: Implications For Drunken Driving." in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 47(3). pp. 237-240.

Smart, R.G., E.M. Adlaf, and G.W. Walsh. (1996). "Procurement of Alcohol and Underage Drinking Among Adolescents in Ontario." in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 57(4). pp. 419-424.

Strouse, J.S. (1987). "College Bars ss Social Settings for Heterosexual Contacts." in *Journal of Sex Research*, Vol. 23(3). pp. 374-382.

Sykes, R.E., R.D. Rowley, and J.M. Schaefer. (1993). "The Influence of Time, Gender, and Group Size on Heavy Drinking in Public Bars." in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 11. pp. 133-138.

Taylor, M.E., and S. St. Pierre. (1986). "Women and Alcohol Research: A Review of Current Research." in *Journal of Drug Issues*, Vol. 16(4). pp. 621-636.

Wechsler, H., and M. McFadden. (1976). "Sex Differences in Adolescent Alcohol and Drug Use: A Disappearing Phenomenon." in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 37(9). pp. 1291-1301.

White, H.R., J. Brick, and S. Hansell. (1993). "A Longitudinal Investigation of Alcohol Use and Aggression in Adolescence." in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, Vol. 11. pp. 62-77.



**Anatomy of a Murder:
Semiotics and Students' Perceptions of What Constitutes Murder.**

Willard M. Oliver, Ph.D.
Sam Houston State University

Abstract

The theory of semiotics is used to explain variation in student responses to what constitutes murder. A survey was administered to 278 introductory and senior level students in criminal justice courses to determine students' perceptions of what constitutes murder. Descriptions of various types of homicide (e.g., first and second degree murder), euthanasia, abortion, and juvenile homicides were used as the method of measurement. Using descriptive statistics, chi-square analysis and logistic regressions, the findings indicate that religion and ideology are key driving factors in students' perceptions of what constitutes murder. Students that leaned more conservative on the political spectrum and attended church regularly were more likely to see most of these acts as murder, while those that leaned more liberal and never or occasionally attended church, were more likely to limit their views of murder to a 'traditional' definition.

Homicide is the slaying of one human being by another. There are four kinds of homicide: Felonious, excusable, justifiable, and praise-worthy, but it makes no great difference to the person slain whether he fell by one kind or another – the classification is for the advantage of the lawyers.

*- Ambrose Bierce in *The Devil's Dictionary* (1911)*

INTRODUCTION

In 1997, a study was published in the *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, by Vandiver and Giacopassi titled "One Million and Counting: Students' Estimates of the Annual Number of Homicides in the U.S." The authors provided a simple statement that the United States population consisted of approximately 260 million people and then asked the respondents to estimate how many citizens die each year from cocaine, homicide, suicide, car accidents, and

tobacco-related illnesses. The authors found that nearly 15 percent of the introductory students and 7 percent of the seniors estimated that there were over one million murders annually in the U.S., hence the title of their article. However, in looking at the total number of students overestimating the actual number of homicides in a given year, 84 percent of the introductory students and 67 percent of the seniors overestimated the number of annual murders in the U.S. The authors concluded that both innumeracy (the inability to grasp numbers) and the “mean-world”¹ syndrome (an overemphasis by the media on negative news) may account for the poor grasp of the annual number of homicides.

The findings of Vandiver and Giacopassi fascinated this author who, along with an associate, decided to replicate the study (Oliver and Conrad, 1999). It was decided that rather than an exact replication, the authors would generate additional questions derived from two hypotheses. The first hypothesis was based on the geographical location of the students from the original survey, which was a major metropolitan area, and most of these students likely came from an urban setting. It was our contention that students from a more rural setting may not have the same conceptualization of crime and hence, may not grossly overestimate the number of homicides per year. The second hypothesis was focused on the influence of the media, arguing that a media-saturated student would exhibit more signs of the “mean-world” syndrome. Thus, the authors included questions related to the level of media attention by the students. The replication study found that the percentage of students who overestimated the five categories to be highly correlated with the original study. More specifically, the number of students that overestimated the number of homicides per year was 74 percent, with 76 percent of freshmen and 64 percent of seniors overestimating the annual number of murders. In addition, no support was found for either the geography or media variables.² Hence, additional support was found for the original study and, in the words of Maxfield and Babbie, the replication study helped to “extend the safeguards” of research (1995).

In light of this study, the authors have continually raised this issue in the classroom for a number of reasons. One reason is to highlight the conclusions of Vandiver and Giacopassi, that innumeracy is a problem among most people and should be a warning to criminal justice students that realistic estimates of crime are important. Another reason is to highlight that the “mean-world” syndrome is prevalent among not only criminal justice students, but society as a whole. A third reason is highlighted to make a point about the actual number of murders in the

¹ The “mean world syndrome” theory is derived from Gerbner’s study (Gerbner *et. al.*, 1977), which was based upon secondary analysis of General Social Survey data, which found those with high levels of television viewing had a greater sense of mistrust, suspicion, and personal danger than those that watched little to no television.

² It should be noted that the questions for the media hypothesis focused on the reading of newspapers and internet news, the watching of network and cable news, and the listening of radio news. The study found that college students do not read newspapers, watch the news, or listen to news on the radio, thus explaining why no relationship was found. Oliver and Conrad (1999) suggested that future studies should focus on the popular forms of media such as prime-time television viewing, movie viewing, etc.

U.S. and to convey information about the rate of murder. Students come to grasp the crime rate when they estimate over one million murders per year and then compare that to the 260 million population in the U.S. Finally, and admittedly, it has a humorous aspect to it that people can laugh at, even those that estimate over one million murders annually. In a sense, asking and having students answer the question is a “fun” method of learning.

However, a new theory arose in the Spring of 2000, when one of the current authors asked the question in one of his classes. The class was an introductory course, the subject was the Uniform Crime Reports (U.C.R.) and, of course, the topic for discussion was the number of annual murders in the United States. The author asked his students to write down on a piece of paper “How many murders there are each year in the United States?” Students wrote down their answers followed by a quick show of hands which provided the same general overestimation of murders. The students laughed at the absurdity of over one million murders occurring each year when the population figure for the U.S. was provided and the rate of murder was computed (1/260 citizens each year). One student, however, raised her hand and said that the number wasn’t funny and was actually very accurate. When asked how that could be, the student responded that there were approximately 1.5 million abortions each year in the United States and when added to the number of “traditional” murders, the number would, in fact, be over one million per year. Despite the author taking the standpoint that we were discussing the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (F.B.I.’s) statistics on murder and how murder was legally defined, the student consistently argued that while not integrated into the U.C.R., it did fit the F.B.I.’s definition of murder. The notion that “murder” may be perceived and defined differently for many people is based on the concept that the term “murder” serves as a symbol for people’s understanding of the world, rather than as a solid definition to a heinous act. Thus, the theory of semiotics may explain variations in students’ estimates of the number of annual homicides.

The purpose of this study is to take a three-step examination of students’ perceptions of what constitutes murder. It will first provide an overview of the contemporary literature regarding the theory of semiotics. Second, this study will review previous research and public opinion polls related to the topics of abortion, euthanasia, and juvenile homicide to assess national perception of what constitutes murder. Third, it will review methodology and detail the findings of the study through the use of descriptive statistics, chi-square, and logistic regression analysis. The implications of the study’s findings will also be explored.

THE THEORY OF SEMIOTICS

Perhaps the best way to understand the theory of semiotics is to reflect on what Humpty Dumpty said to Alice in the book, *Through the Looking Glass*, when he explained that words can mean whatever we take them to mean or whatever we decide them to mean. After Alice objects to this notion of misconstruing language, Humpty Dumpty tells her very directly that it is not a matter of language, rather the question is which definition “is to be master.” In other words, the language we use can have a variety of meanings, not just in the sense of meaning as derived from various dictionary entries, but rather meaning based upon individual perception of the meaning of the words (Eco, 1976; Morris, 1970; Noth, 1990; de Saussure, 1983). The meaning behind

words can often result in a power struggle among people who are trying to achieve widespread acceptance of their accepted definitions.

One of the early founders of the theory of semiotics, Ferdinand de Saussure, explained that words are in fact symbols, or signs, that influence our social life (Saussure, 1916/1983). The more modern understanding of semiotics comes from Umberto Eco, the Italian academic-turned-popular author of such fictional works as *The Name of the Rose*. He explained that “semiotics is concerned with everything that can be taken as a sign” (Eco, 1976:7). He argued further that it is not only the signs found in everyday language, but also when anything stands for something else. These signs are really symbols that provide meaning to the individual that happens to be interpreting the signs. This is why Morris (1970) broke down semiotics into three branches: (1) *semantics*, which looks at the relationship of signs and what they stand for, (2) *syntax*, which is the formal relations between signs, and (3) *pragmatics*, which is the relation of signs to interpreters. Morris (1970) recognized that signs can stand for many different things, especially in language, as its meaning and usage is constantly changing and evolving. He also recognized that often there were relationships among these signs, but that this may be contingent upon how people receive these signs. This is because the theory of semiotics argues that the meaning behind language is not directly transmitted to us, but rather is interpreted by each individual based upon various social influences.

The example used at the beginning of this article perhaps helps one understand the theory of semiotics best. The sign given to the students in this case was the word “murder” which has a definition as found in the dictionary, but that can also have many meanings that go far beyond this simple transmission (semantics). The reason the term may stand for many things largely depends upon who is receiving the information (pragmatics) since some may perceive a relationship between the symbols that others do not (syntax). In this case, the symbol “abortion” was linked to the symbol “murder.” If one recognizes the possibility of this relationship being made by some students, one must reflect on how many other such relationships may exist, thus, giving importance to understanding what does (or could) constitute “murder.”

What Constitutes Murder?

Trying to define exactly what constitutes a murder is in some ways akin to the poem about “the blind men and the elephant” because it depends upon individual perceptions. One dictionary of criminal justice defines murder as “intentionally causing the death of another without legal justification or excuse” (Rush, 2000:219). The F.B.I’s U.C.R. simply states that “murder and non-negligent manslaughter is the willful (non-negligent) killing of one human being by another” (F.B.I., 2002). Like the student who raised the objection, a number of various behaviors could potentially fall into the category of murder. Similar to the blind man who felt the elephant’s side and described him as a wall and another who felt his tusk and described him like a spear, different people will describe the concept of murder in different ways. However, the moral of the story aside, the conceptualization of what could potentially constitute murder may include not only premeditated murder, but such acts as abortion and euthanasia (including both assisted and doctor-assisted suicide). In addition, other behaviors such as an attack on a

pregnant woman, exemplified by the recent Laci Peterson case in California, or self-abuse by a pregnant woman resulting in the death of an unborn child/fetus, could also constitute murder. Finally, a murder committed by a juvenile may or may not be seen as being a bona fide murder. In order to understand public opinion of each of these issues, a brief review of these various behaviors follows.

In direct response to the students' assertions, there are, in fact, approximately 1.5 million abortions each year according to the Center for Disease Control (2002) (see also Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2002; Planned Parenthood, 2002). Since the decision in *Roe v. Wade* (410 U.S. 113) in 1973 to 1980, there was an increase in the number of abortions per year from approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ million to 1.5 million (Center for Disease Control, 2002). From 1980 through 1993, the number of abortions remained steady at approximately 1.5 million per year with only a slight increase to 1.6 million in 1990. Starting in 1994, the annual number of abortions has continually dropped, with the latest figures for 2000, show the rates to be approximately 857,475 (Center for Disease Control, 2002).

Turning to the public opinion of abortion, in general, a Gallup poll question has found that since *Roe v. Wade* (1973), approximately 27 percent of Americans have stated they believe abortion should always be legal, while an additional 53 percent said it should remain legal under certain circumstances (Maguire and Pastore, 2002:table 2.114). In addition, approximately 18 percent of those polled agreed with the statement that it should never be legal while another two percent offered no opinion (Maguire and Pastore, 2002:table 2.114). In a more recent poll, college freshmen voiced their opinion that abortion should be legal given that approximately 58 percent have favored abortion rights in a yearly poll taken since 1977 (Maguire and Pastore, 2002:table 2.105). Finally, research has consistently shown that those in the upper socioeconomic strata with more college education tend to be supportive of abortion, while those who are religious (specifically Catholic and Protestant) and attend church on a regular basis tend to be against abortions (Tatalovich, 1997:117-120).

Looking more specifically at public opinion as it relates to the morality of abortion and the possibility that some individuals may define it as murder, a Gallup Poll Special Report shed some light on this topic (Saad, 2002). Saad (2002) pointed out that a May 2001 survey reported that 45 percent of respondents answered that abortion is morally wrong while 42 percent believed it to be morally acceptable.

She went on to review various opinion polls that had asked respondents if they felt abortion was murder. A *Times/CNN* poll in August 1994, reported that 43 percent of respondents believed abortion was murder, while 47 percent did not believe it equated to murder (Saad, 2002). In 1996, a University of Virginia poll found that 38 percent of respondents considered abortion as "murder, as bad as killing a person already born" while an additional 10 percent thought it was "murder, not as bad as killing a person already born." In a *CNN/USA Today/Gallup* poll in January 1998, 48 percent of respondents reported they believed abortion was murder while 45 percent believed it was not (Saad, 2002). In a *CBS/New York Times* poll that was also conducted during January 1998, 50 percent of respondents equated abortion to

murder, while 38 percent disagreed (Saad, 2002). Finally, in a *Los Angeles Times* poll in June 2002, 57 percent agreed abortion was murder, while 36 percent disagreed (Saad, 2002). Taken together, a subtle trend appears in the public's perception of abortion whereby abortion constituting murder has gradually increased over the past decade.

Turning to the topic of euthanasia, public opinion polls have also tended to provide very similar patterns of responses across time. When asked in a Harris poll, "Do you think that the law should allow doctors to comply with the wishes of a dying patient in severe distress who asks to have his or her life ended, or not?" the average response between 1982 and 2001 has been 64 percent said "yes" while 30 percent said "no" (Maguire and Pastore, 2002:table 2.0006). In addition, another Harris poll asked if the U.S. Supreme Court acted appropriately in a 1997 case which stated there is no constitutional right to doctor assisted suicide, 64 percent of the respondents disagreed while 32 percent agreed (Maguire and Pastore, 2002:table 2.0007). Moreover, a more recent Gallup poll found that 44 percent of respondents believed that doctor-assisted suicide was morally wrong, while 50 percent stated that situational factors dictated the appropriate response (Saad, 2002). However, when respondents were asked whether or not suicide is morally wrong, the percentage jumped to 83 percent responding in the affirmative with only 12 percent stating that the situation dictates (Saad, 2002). What is not asked is whether euthanasia with or without a doctor's assistance constitutes murder (Sanders, 1969).

Other behaviors that have come to be classified as crimes, with some defining the acts as murder, include any type of self-abusive behavior on the part of a pregnant women that results in the death of her unborn child/fetus (Dinsmore, 1992; Feinman, 1991; Gustavsson and MacEachron, 1997; Lengyel, 1992; Peak and Del Papa, 1993). In addition, there are currently eleven states and the federal government that define an assault on a pregnant woman, resulting in the death of her child/fetus, as murder, regardless of the stage of development (CNN, 2002). Moreover, twelve more states define the act as murder, but specify a specific stage of prenatal development (CNN, 2002). Taken together there appears to be some debate over whether or not these behaviors constitute the crime of murder.

Finally, a question that is not necessarily new to our understanding of murder is at what age does the behavior of killing another constitute murder? The issue of violent crimes by juveniles has become a common point of discussion among both criminal justice professionals and the public with a large percentage of the latter believing that juveniles should be treated as adults (Reaves, 2001). In the past decade, a number of states have lowered the age at which a juvenile can be tried as an adult and that age is 14 in sixteen states, 13 in eight states, 12 in Colorado, Missouri, and Montana, and as low as 10 in Kansas and Vermont (Frontline, 1998). In a 2001 survey by Gallup, 65 percent of respondents believed that juveniles, between the ages of 14 and 17, should be treated as adults while 24 percent advocated for more lenient treatment (Maguire and Pastore, 2002:table 2.58). A certain tendency to attribute crime to dispositional factors has been found to be the link between conservative religious beliefs and punitiveness toward juvenile offenders (Grasmick and McGill, 1994) suggesting that those higher in religiosity and leaning conservative would be more willing to treat juvenile murders as bona fide murders.

According to the evidence, then, public opinion is mixed on what constitutes the crime of murder. Reportedly, abortion is viewed as murder by approximately half of Americans despite the fact of its legality resulting from the passage of *Roe v. Wade* (1973). Euthanasia has come to be seen as being morally acceptable by many, but primarily when a doctor is involved, despite being persistently illegal (except for the State of Oregon). Public opinion and state laws also seemed to be also mixed concerning self-abuse and assault on a pregnant women resulting in the death of the child/fetus. Finally, it has long been questioned at what age should a child be legally held liable for the crime of murder? Taken together, these various behaviors raise issues as to what constitutes the seemingly innocuous definition of the term “murder.” In the present research, the author investigates student perceptions of what constitutes the crime of murder.

METHODOLOGY

In the first several weeks of the Fall 2002 semester, surveys³ were distributed to 140 students in the freshmen-level *Introduction to Criminal Justice* and to 144 students in the senior-level criminal justice capstone courses. The target was both freshmen and seniors in criminal justice, however, it was recognized that both non-majors and sophomore/junior level students would also be captured in the sample. Six of the surveys from the freshmen students were eliminated by the researcher for failure to answer the demographic questions. Thus, the total number of usable surveys was 278, of which 134 were derived from the introductory courses and 144 from the senior level courses.

Students were provided with the Uniform Crime Reports definition of murder and non-negligent manslaughter, namely “the willful (non-negligent) killing of one human being by another” (F.B.I., 2002), at the beginning of the survey. This was done intentionally to provide them the official definition of the symbol “murder” since it was believed that if there were any influence toward including that statement, it would most likely cause students to limit their responses to only the traditional or official definitions. Additionally, it was reasoned that introductory and especially senior level criminal justice students would be more aware than the average citizen of what legally constitutes the crime of murder.

Students were then asked a series of 14 questions from five categorical areas: (1) murder/manslaughter, (2) euthanasia, (3) abortion, (4) death of unborn, and (5) juveniles. The students were then provided with a “yes/no” response option in order to determine whether or not they believed the activity was murder. The first four questions of the survey were based upon standard definitions of pre-meditated murder, murder without premeditation, and both negligent and non-negligent homicide.

The next two questions revolved around the issue of euthanasia. The first question asked if someone assisted another in committing suicide would it be murder while the second asked if a

³ The survey and supporting documentation were sent to the Radford University Institutional Review Board for the Review of Human Subjects Research in June of 2002, and the project was granted “exempted” status from full review and was authorized to be administered to the students in a letter dated July 11, 2002.

licensed physician provided the same assistance would it murder. This last question used both the language of “licensed physician putting to death” and “physician-assisted suicide.”

The next four questions were directly related to abortion. The first question asked if a licensed physician aborting an unborn baby/fetus in the first trimester was considered murder. Two subsequent questions were related to the same activity during the second and third trimesters, respectively. The final question asked about the same activity, but inserted the language of abortion through partial birth/late term abortion. It should be noted that the questions employed language that was familiar to both sides of the debate in order to avoid bias in either direction.

Two questions revolved around the issue of pregnancy without focusing on the topic of abortion. The first question asked if a woman consumes alcohol or imbibes narcotics during the pregnancy resulting in the death of her fetus/baby if that constituted murder? The second question asked if someone assaulted a pregnant woman and it resulted in the loss of her unborn child whether that constituted murder of the baby/fetus?

Finally, two general questions were asked about juveniles committing a homicide. The first question asked if a youth between 8 and 18 years killed another person would they define that behaviour as murder. The second question asked if a youth under the age of 8 years killed another person if they would define that action as murder.

The second half of the survey consisted of demographic questions (See Table 1). The respondents to the survey were nearly evenly split between males (48%) and females (52%) and the average age of the students was 20, with a range of 17 to 45 years of age. While the percentage of Freshmen students was very low (20%) and the number of Seniors fairly high (44%), the majority of the Sophomores (21%) and Juniors (15%) were enrolled in the Introduction to Criminal Justice courses. Although most of the students were criminal justice majors (62%), one-third of the students surveyed were from another major (33%) and most of these were also enrolled in the Introduction to Criminal Justice course.

Interestingly, most students classified themselves as “middle-of-the-road” (55%) while only one-quarter of respondents considered themselves to be either liberal (21%) or conservative (24%) on the political spectrum. In terms of their political affiliation only 20 percent labeled themselves as Democrats while 33 percent labeled themselves as Republicans. In addition, 13 percent self-identified as Independents, 19 percent claimed no party allegiance, while another fourteen percent simply said they didn’t know. When asked about their church attendance, the majority of students said they never attended church (23%) or attended only on occasion (53%). Eight percent of the students said they went to church once-a-month, 12 percent said once-a-week, 2 percent more than once-a-week, and only 1 percent stated that they attended church on a daily basis. Finally, when asked about their parent’s political affiliation, most students stated their parents were either Democrats (28%) or Republicans (40%) while 21 percent responded they did not know.

Table 1.
Demographic Variables for Student Sample

Variables	Number (<i>n</i> = 278)	Percentage*
Gender		
Male	133	48
Female	145	52
College Standing		
Freshman	56	20
Sophomore	58	21
Junior	43	15
Senior	121	44
Degree Program		
CRJU Major	172	62
CRJU Minor	13	5
Other	93	33
Political Spectrum		
Liberal	59	21
Middle	152	55
Conservative	67	24
Political Affiliation		
Democrat	57	20
Republican	91	33
Independent	37	13
None	53	19
Don't Know	38	14
Other	2	1
Church Attendance		
Never	64	23
Occasionally	148	53
Once a Month	23	8
Once a Week	34	12
Once a Week +	5	2
Daily	4	1
Parent's Political Affiliation		
Democrat	79	28
Republican	111	49
Independent	10	4
None	15	5
Don't Know	59	21
Other	4	1

* All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Based on an analysis of the frequency of murder versus non-murder responses to the description, there appears to be some support for the theory of semiotics (see Table 2). The definitions of premeditated murder and murder without premeditation show a consistent agreement as to what constitutes murder. However, this begins to decline for non-negligent and negligent homicide, where only 61% and 11%, respectively, classified these as murder. Interestingly, approximately one-quarter of the respondents classified euthanasia as murder, regardless of whether or not a licensed physician assisted. In the case of abortion, the number of respondents who classified it as murder tended to increase with the trimester involved (34% in the first trimester, 58% in the second trimester, and 75% in the third trimester) with partial/late-term abortion having the highest abortion response of 83%. When a woman self-abused resulting in the death of her fetus/child, 73% of students stated it was murder, while 88% regarded an assault of a pregnant woman causing the death of the fetus/child as murder. Finally, homicide committed by youths 8 to 18 was overwhelmingly seen as murder (96%), but under age 8 it dropped to only half of student respondents (53%).

Table 2.
Perceptions of Behavior as Murder or Non-Murder by Category and Frequency

Descriptive Category	<u>Murder</u>		<u>Non-Murder</u>	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Premeditated Murder	275	99	3	1
Murder w/o Premeditation	258	93	20	7
Non-Negligent Homicide	169	61	109	39
Negligent Homicide	28	11	250	89
Euthanasia – Not by Licensed Physician	68	25	210	75
Euthanasia – by Licensed Physician	62	23	216	77
Abortion – 1 st Trimester	93	34	185	66
Abortion – 2 nd Trimester	162	58	116	42
Abortion – 3 rd Trimester	207	75	70	25
Abortion – Partial/Late	231	83	47	17
Pregnant Woman – Self-Abuse	202	73	76	27
Pregnant Woman – Assault	243	88	35	12
Homicide by Youth 8-18 years	267	96	11	4
Homicide by Youth < 8 years	146	53	132	47
* All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.				

Despite having provided the F.B.I. definition of murder, categories such as euthanasia, abortion, and assault on a child/fetus while in the womb had enough respondents who classified these behaviors as murder or non-murder to lend support for the theory of semiotics. Murder appeared to be a symbol that is not exclusively associated with the traditional definition by most people, but rather may be dependent upon the relationship they perceived amongst other symbols. Having satisfied the inquiry into other symbols being associated with murder, the

analysis turned to understanding the factors that cause someone to perceive these relationships between symbols.

The second analysis of the data used the Chi-Square to test the independence of the relationship between categorical variables. In looking at the relationships between the demographic variables and the four categories of general murder, negligent and non-negligent homicide showed significance (see Table 3). When given the description of these two behaviors, women were less likely than men to see these crimes as murder ($p < .01$). And, interestingly enough, both Freshmen and Seniors were less likely than Sophomores and Juniors to classify these crimes as murder ($p < .05$).

Table 3. Bivariate Chi-Square Analysis of Respondent's Perception of General Murder Descriptions as Murder by Demographic Variables				
Demographic Variables	<u>Murder</u>		<u>Non-Murder</u>	
	Premeditated	Without Premeditation	Non-Negligent	Negligent
Gender	.255 (.613)	.040 (.841)	8.496 (.003) **	8.750 (.003) **
Age	3.514 (.990)	9.394 (.668)	11.676 (.472)	15.556 (.212)
College Standing	1.059 (.900)	2.012 (.733)	11.421 (.022) *	9.705 (.045) *
Degree Program	.153 (.926)	.115 (.943)	2.656 (.264)	.656 (.720)
Political Spectrum	1.105 (.981)	5.671 (.460)	6.507 (.368)	6.504 (.369)
Political Affiliation	2.852 (.722)	3.506 (.622)	7.334 (.196)	1.896 (.863)
Church Attendance	2.663 (.751)	8.172 (.146)	5.637 (.343)	3.242 (.662)
Parent's Political Affiliation	1.930 (.858)	4.336 (.502)	3.747 (.586)	1.889 (.864)
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$				

In the second category, euthanasia (see Table 4), the level of significance for gender and college standing fell off with only gender remaining significant for “euthanasia by a licensed physician.” Here, women were twice as likely as men to consider this behavior as murder ($p < .05$). In terms of church attendance as a level of religiosity, however, both euthanasia not by licensed physician ($X^2=16.73$) and by licensed physician ($X^2=14.39$) were significant ($p < .001$). Those students who reported only attending church either on occasion or never, overwhelmingly believed that neither of these behaviors should be classified as murder, while those that attended church more frequently believed it was murder.

Table 4.
Bivariate Chi-Square Analysis of Respondent's Perception of Euthanasia Descriptions as Murder

Demographic Variables	<u>Not By Licensed Physician</u>		<u>By Licensed Physician</u>	
	Murder	Non-Murder	Murder	Non-Murder
Gender	.73 (.569)	.23 (.907)	3.08 (.048) *	1.09 (.245)
Age	6.10 (.016)*	1.98 (.178)	8.83 (.003)**	2.55 (.176)
College Standing	2.93 (.063)	.95 (.435)	2.52 (.345)	.71 (.467)
Degree Program	1.98 (.159)	.64 (.398)	.58 (.691)	.16 (.698)
Political Spectrum	11.69 (.002) **	3.79 (.048)*	7.33 (.009)**	2.10 (.119)
Political Affiliation	5.48 (.021)*	1.77 (.323)	4.24 (.038)*	1.21 (.237)
Church Attendance	16.73 (.000)***	5.44 (.019)*	14.39 (.000)***	4.13 (.043)*
Parent's Political Affiliation	2.36 (.259)	.77 (.455)	2.78 (.121)	.80 (.867)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

In the third category, abortion (see Table 5), a number of variables were significant depending upon which trimester of pregnancy was considered and whether it was a partial birth/late term abortion. In regard to the first trimester, both the political spectrum of the student and church attendance were significant. Those students that identified themselves as being liberal to middle-of-the-road ($X^2 = 18.867$, $p < .01$) and those who occasionally or never attend church ($X^2 = 32.008$, $p < .001$) were significantly less likely to classify abortion as murder than those who stated that they conservative and attended church more regularly. In regard to the second trimester, the political spectrum dropped off somewhat in significance ($X^2 = 14.060$, $p < .05$) while gender, age, and college standing became significant. Freshman and Sophomore women between 18 and 21 were most likely to see second trimester abortions as murder. Church attendance was a highly significant factor in this decision ($X^2 = 27.232$, $p < .001$). In regard to the third trimester, gender, age, and political spectrum remained significant factors although church attendance still appeared to be key with an apparent shift in view. The shift in support moved from those that rarely or only occasionally attended church becoming less likely to say third trimester abortion is murder and those who occasionally attended church to more regular attendance becoming more likely to say it is murder ($X^2 = 19.389$, $p < .01$). Finally, the gender, age, and church attendance variables were significantly related to partial-birth/late-term abortions. Women, between the ages of 18 and 21, who attended church on a regular basis, were most likely to classify this behavior as murder.

Table 5.
Bivariate Chi-Square Analysis for Respondent's Perception of Abortion Descriptions
as Murder by Demographic Variables

Demographic Variables	1st Trimester	2nd Trimester	3rd Trimester	Partial/late
Gender	2.729 (.098)	10.810 (.001)**	10.387 (.001)**	5.794 (.016)*
Age	12.189 (.430)	25.870 (.011)*	21.111 (.048)*	30.311 (.002)*
College Standing	1.817 (.769)	13.027 (.011)*	5.148 (.272)	6.609 (.158)
Degree Program	4.188 (.123)	1.115 (.569)	.714 (.699)	.942 (.624)
Political Spectrum	18.867 (.004)*	14.060 (.028)*	15.870 (.014)*	10.459 (.106)
Political Affiliation	10.263 (.068)	6.604 (.251)	6.943 (.224)	9.603 (.087)
Church Attendance	32.008 (.000)**	27.232 (.000)**	19.389 (.001)**	14.693 (.011)*
Parent's Political Affiliation	2.276 (.809)	1.460 (.917)	3.585 (.610)	2.474 (.780)
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$				

In the fourth category of descriptions (See Table 6), the perceptions of self-abuse found some statistically significant relationships, but the assault on pregnant women variable did not. While both men and women were likely to see this as being murder, women were much more likely than men to respond this way ($X^2=5.417$, $p < .05$). In addition, those respondents that listed themselves as “middle-of-the-road” to conservative on the political spectrum were more likely to see self-abuse as murder ($X^2=18.883$, $p < .01$). In regard to assault, students appeared to be evenly divided on whether or not this constituted murder, hence no statistically significant relationships were observed in the analysis of that variable.

The fifth and final category, the respondent's perception of youth murder by demographic variables, revealed no statistically significant relationships (See Table 7).

Finally, the study employed logistic regression analyses as a means of further verifying the findings of the Chi-square analysis.⁴ These regressions were able to substantiate the results of the Chi-Square analysis in almost all categories (see Table 8). Both the variables of political spectrum and church attendance continued to be significant for student perceptions of euthanasia,

⁴ It should be noted that logistic regression was used for the variables of assault, youth murder 8 to 18, and youth murder under age 8. Like the chi-square analyses, there was nothing reported as being statistically significant, hence they were removed from Table 7.

Table 6.
Bivariate Chi-Square Analysis for Respondent's Perception of Self Abuse and Assault of Pregnant Women Resulting in Death Descriptions as Murder by Demographic Variables

Demographic Variables	Self-Abuse	Assault
Gender	5.417 (.019)*	.206 (.649)
Age	14.164 (.290)	12.983 (.370)
College Standing	3.461 (.483)	.777 (.941)
Degree Program	.125 (.939)	.941 (.624)
Political Spectrum	18.883 (.004)**	4.886 (.558)
Political Affiliation	5.721 (.334)	3.486 (.625)
Church Attendance	9.345 (.096)	4.996 (.416)
Parent's Political Affiliation	10.661 (.058)	2.467 (.781)
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$		

Table 7.
Bivariate Chi-Square Analysis of Respondent's Perception of Youth Murder Descriptions as Murder by Age and Demographic Variables

Demographic Variables	Youth 8-18 Years	Youth Under 8 Years
Gender	.604 (.436)	2.956 (.085)
Age	4.230 (.978)	17.575 (.129)
College Standing	2.931 (.569)	6.070 (.193)
Degree Program	2.070 (.355)	.608 (.737)
Political Spectrum	2.541 (.863)	8.110 (.230)
Political Affiliation	2.343 (.799)	2.404 (.790)
Church Attendance	.565 (.989)	9.794 (.081)
Parent's Political Affiliation	7.647 (.176)	5.082 (.405)
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$		

euthanasia with a licenced physician, abortion in the first, second, and third trimesters, as well as partial-birth/late-term abortions. Although political spectrum was found to be significant in relation to self-abuse, church attendance was not statistically significant. In sum, the more conservative a student labeled themselves and the more often they went to church, the more likely the student was to identify these behaviors as murder.

Table 8.
Logistic Regression Models

Independent Variable	Euth.¹	Euth./Dr.²	1st Trimester	2nd Trimester	3rd Trimester	Partial/ Self-Late	Abuse
Gender	-0.22	-0.68 *	-0.54	-0.90 **	-1.00 **	-0.86 *	-0.66 *
Age	-0.19	-4.22	-3.43	-2.02	-5.04	-1.03	-8.84
College Standing	.13	-5.96	.02	-0.25	-0.15	-0.26	.18
Degree Program	-6.73	-2.29	.13	-2.77	8.71	-6.94	-2.21
Political Spectrum	.40 *	.42 *	.60 **	.49 **	.62 **	.55 *	.36*
Political Affiliation	-6.01	.12	.16	.15	.15	.34	6.33
Church Attendance	.41 **	.38 **	.55 **	.53 **	.36 **	.24 **	.23
Parent's Pol. Affil.	-2.37	-1.51	-5.32	-3.03	-2.56	-0.12	.15
Constant	.89	-1.94	-2.76	-0.34	.49	1.00	.81
Model Chi-square	21.59 **	22.63 **	40.29 **	50.49 **	37.99 **	29.16 **	20.11 **
Cases Correctly Classified	74%	78%	72%	68%	75%	83%	73%
* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001 Euth. ¹ = Euthanasia Euth./Dr. ² = Doctor Assisted Euthanasia							

Gender also proved to be another variable that showed fairly consistent significance within euthanasia by a licensed physician in the second and third trimesters of abortion as well as in partial-birth/late-term abortion and for self-abuse. Women were more likely than men to identify these behaviors as murder.

CONCLUSION

While the theories of innumeracy and the “mean-world” syndrome may serve to explain the overestimations of the number of annual murders by criminal justice students, it would

appear that the theory of semiotics should also be given some consideration. While the data does not directly explain the overestimations, it does offer another theory for why students might give such gross estimations of annual murders and provides some explanatory variables. As illustrated in the descriptive statistics (see Table 2), many students perceived certain behaviors, such as abortion and euthanasia, to be classified as murder, despite being given the official F.B.I. description of murder. It would appear that many students are making links between the symbol "murder" and the other symbols such as "abortion" and "euthanasia." What explains the connection of symbols, or syntax, was analyzed by using both the chi-square and logistic regression analyses.

Three variables displayed significant relationships suggesting that the perception of what constitutes murder is heavily influenced by gender, political ideology, and religiosity. Women, those leaning toward conservatism, and those regularly attending church, were more likely to perceive euthanasia, abortion, and self-abuse resulting in death of the unborn, as murder. While men, those leaning toward liberalism, and those who never or occasionally attend church, were more likely to perceive these behaviors as being socially acceptable. This is largely consistent with the literature, which indicates that those leaning conservative and those that demonstrate higher levels of religiosity, as marked by church attendance, (Page and Shapiro, 1992; Mayer, 1993; Norrander and Wilcox, 2001; Studlar, 2001; Tatalovich, 1997), tend to see these behaviors as morality issues, based upon first principles, thus shaping their perceptions to define them as "murder" (Mooney, 2001). As a result, to fully understand the complexity of why students overestimate the number of annual murders, it is important to take a slightly deeper look at what students define as murder.

It is acknowledged that when asked the question, "How many murders are there annually in the United States?" the typical student probably does not begin processing the number of traditional murders along with all of the additional categories, such as abortion and euthanasia, that they would classify as murder. However, this may contribute to their sense of the "mean-world syndrome" as Vandiver and Giacomassi (1998) suggested in their original study. Hence, those behaviors that they, based upon a student's first principles, define as immoral and wrong, can easily be classified as murder. Their worldview of these behaviors, in a sense, contributes to the "mean-world syndrome." While Vandiver and Giacomassi (1998), drawing upon Gerbner's work (1977), focused heavily on the "mean-world" construction from the media, this study suggests support for the theory of semiotics, in that many students perceive a relationship between the symbols of "murder" and "abortion," "euthanasia," and the death of a pregnant woman's child/fetus through either self-abuse or assault. The reason for these connections, as illustrated in both chi-square and logistic regression, may actually be derived for many students from their first principles (Mooney, 2001) that may help drive their "mean-world syndrome" and subsequent overestimation of murder in the U.S. So, while this study does not purport to offer a definitive explanation for student overestimation of murder it does suggest an alternative approach as well as some support for the theory of semiotics.

It should be noted that some of the minor variation found in the various analyses and the lack of findings in the assault and juvenile murder categories, may be the result of question

wording. In dealing with such sensitive issues based upon people's first principles, it is difficult to construct questions that are not biased in any direction. By asking, for example, if someone "defined the act of aborting an unborn baby/fetus through partial-birth/late-term abortion by a licensed physician as murder?" the question is attempting to avoid bias by incorporating language from both sides of the debate. However, those on the pro-life side of the issue may find offense to seeing the terms "fetus" and "late-term abortion" present in the question, while those on the pro-choice side of the issue may find offense in the terms "unborn baby" and "partial-birth" abortion. It is difficult, therefore, to design a survey that does not appear biased from the wording of the questions. Thus, the wording of the questions in this type of survey should be always treated as suspect.

With regard to the three questions that elicited no statistically significant relationships, this again may have resulted from the wording or lack of a clear definition. An example is the question of a person's definition of "a youth between the ages of 8 and 18, killing another" being defined as murder. The age span may have been too great to encompass any meaning behind the students' responses. The question also does not articulate what type of murder and hence, premeditated murder may have elicited a "yes" response, while non-negligent homicide may have elicited a "no" response. It is also interesting to note that these three questions were on the back side of the survey, prior to the demographic questions, perhaps suggesting student fatigue from reading the very closely worded questions.

In terms of the demographic questions, some issues can be raised about their wording as well. In terms of "church" attendance, the question does not speak to all religions, especially for those who attend "synagogues" or "mosques." In addition, the question asking parent's political party affiliation did not allow for two parents that may have differing party affiliations, hence possibly generating some problems with the question. In addition, it could be simply stated that since a high number of students did not know their own party affiliation or claimed to have "none," it may be unrealistic to ask them their parent's party affiliation.⁵

Finally, it is suggested that future research in the area of students' perceptions of what constitutes the crime of "murder" delve deeper into what creates the "mean-world syndrome" and how this might be association with semiotics. This could prove beneficial in understanding students and their perceptions about not only the crime of murder, but of all crime. Thus, having a deeper understanding of how students' perceive both specific crime categories and crime in general may provide educators in criminal justice with a better understanding of where our students are "coming from." This would allow for us to create better educational strategies and more fully explore the moral side of the criminal law.

⁵ The authors would like to thank Dr. Todd Burke for identifying potential problems with both the church and parent's affiliation questions.

REFERENCES

- Alan Guttmacher Institute. (2002). *Alan Guttmacher Institute Homepage*. Online document. Available at: <<http://www.agi-usa.org/>>. Accessed: 02 Oct. 02.
- Bierce, A. (2002). "The Devil's Dictionary" in D.E. Schultz and S.T. Joshi (eds.), *The Unabridged Devil's Dictionary*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Center for Disease Control. (2004). "Abortion Surveillance-United States, 2000." Online document. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/drh/surv_abort.htm>. Accessed: 30 Aug 04.
- CNN. (2002). *States that Have Laws Regarding Fetuses as Victims*. Online document. Available at: <<http://www.cnn.com/interactive/allpolitics/0104/fetus.laws/frameset.exclude.html>>. Accessed: 01 Aug 02.
- Dinsmore, J. (1992). *Pregnant Drug Users: The Debate Over Prosecution*. Alexandria, VA: National Center for Prosecution of Child Abuse.
- Eco, U. (1976). *A Theory of Semiotics*. Bloomington, IN: University Press.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2002). *Uniform Crime Reports*. Online document. Available at: <<http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm>>. Accessed: 15 Jul 02.
- Feinman, C. (1991). "The Criminalization of a Woman's Body." in *Women and Criminal Justice*, Vol. 3(2). pp. 1-99.
- Frontline. (1998). "Frontline: Juvenile Justice." Online document. Available at: <<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/juvenile/stats/states.html>>. Accessed: 08 Nov 02.
- Gerbner, G., L. Gross, M.F. Eleey, M. Jackson-Beeck, S. Jeffries-Fox, and N. Signorielli. (1977). *Trends in Network Television Drama and Viewer Conceptions of Social Reality*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania.
- Gustavsson, N.S. and A.E. MacEachron. (1997). "Criminalizing Women's Behavior." in *Journal of Drug Issues*, Vol. 27(3). pp. 673-687.
- Lengyel, L. B. (1992). "A New Crime Has Been Created: Ingestion of Drugs During Pregnancy." in *Justice Professional*, Vol. 7(1). pp. 17-24.
- Maguire, K., and A.L. Pastore (eds.) (2002). *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 2000*. Available at: <<http://www.albany.edu/sourcebook/>>. Accessed: 24 Oct 02.

- Mayer, W.G. (1993). *The Changing American Mind: How and Why American Public Opinion Changed Between 1960 and 1988*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.
- Mooney, C.Z. (ed.) (2001). *The Public Clash of Private Values*. New York, NY: Chatham House Publishers.
- Morris, C.W. (1970). *Foundations of the Theory of Signs*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press. (original published 1938).
- Norrander, B., and C. Wilcox. (2001). "Public Opinion and Policymaking in the States: The Case of Post-Roe Abortion Policy." in C.Z. Mooney (ed.), *The Public Clash of Private Values*. New York, NY: Chatham House Publishers. pp. 143-159.
- Noth, W. (1990). *Handbook of Semiotics*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Oliver, W., and T. Conrad. (1999). "One Million and Still Counting: A Replication Study of Students' Estimation of Homicides in the U.S." in *The Dialogue*. September, 1999. Available at: <<http://www.appstate.edu/~robinsnmb/dialoguesep99woliver.htm>>.
- Page, B.I., and R.Y. Shapiro. (1992). *The Rational Public: Fifty Years of Trends in Americans' Policy Preferences*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Peak, K., and F.S. Del Papa. (1993). "Criminal Justice Enters the Womb: Enforcing the 'Right' to be Born Drug-Free." in *Journal of Criminal Justice*, Vol. 21(3). pp.245-263.
- Planned Parenthood. (2002). *Planned Parenthood Homepage*. Online document. Available at: <<http://www.plannedparenthood.org/>>.
- Reaves, J. (2001). "Should the Law Treat Kids and Adults Differently?" *Time*. May 17, 2001. p. 54.
- Rush, G.E. (2000). *The Dictionary of Criminal Justice*. Fifth Edition. New York, NY: Dushkin Publishing Company.
- Saad, L. (2002). *Special Reports: Public Opinion About Abortion – An In-Depth Review*. Online document. Available at: <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/specialReports/pollSummaries/sr020122.asp>>. Accessed: 05 Jul 02.
- Sanders, J. (1969). "Euthanasia: None Dare Call it Murder." in *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology and Police Science*, Vol. 60(3). pp. 351-359.
- de Saussure, F. (1983). *Course in General Linguistics*. London, U.K.: Duckworth Publishing. (original 1916; trans. Roy Harris).

Studlar, D.T. (2001). "What Constitutes Morality Policy? A Cross-National Analysis." in C.Z. Mooney (ed.), *The Public Clash of Private Values*. New York, N.Y.: Chatham House Publishers. pp. 37-52

Tatalovich, R. (1997). *The Politics of Abortion in the United States and Canada: A Comparative Study*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe.

Vandiver, M., and D. Giacomassi. (1997). "One Million and Counting: Students' Estimates of the Annual Number of Homicides in the U.S." in *Journal of Criminal Justice Education*, Vol. 8(2): 135-143.

Cases Cited

Roe v. Wade, 410 U.S. 113 (1973)