

Capstone Project
Minnesota State University Crime and Victimization Survey

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Alan Hughes (2005) argued that research poster projects are very valuable in the college classroom. In his study, findings revealed that students conducting research poster projects strengthened communication skills, improved critical thinking, fostered independent learning, and improved understanding in research methodology.

The *Minnesota State University Crime and Victimization Survey* is a poster research project assignment that integrates research and criminal justice issues. This project was implemented through group activity, encouraging students to work together as they apply criminal justice course material to identify problems through literature review, form research questions and hypotheses, and answer questions that may lead to future policies.

Previous criminal justice students at Minnesota State University responded towards the research poster project by asserting that the experience was very positive; it allowed them the opportunity to individualize the area of interest; it provided them the opportunity to work in groups; it motivated them to learn more about criminal justice issues; and it helped set a pace that worked best for them to learn. Additionally, the research poster project also worked well for the professor because it assisted in designing a classroom curriculum that reinforced course material.

Professionally, the most significant attribute of the research poster project is that it provided a final source of information that may lead to exposure and participation at professional conferences and undergraduate symposiums. The following proposal submitted to the Institutional Review Board by two general education courses at MSU (i.e. Introduction to Criminal Justice and Juvenile Delinquency).

General Information

Principal investigator - Assistant Professor

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Secondary Investigators - Students (See Appendix A - Class Roster for 2005 Spring)

Course ID: 007573	Corr 106-01	Introduction to Criminal Justice
Course ID: 007575	Corr 255-01	Juvenile Delinquency
Course ID: 008927	Corr 255-02	Juvenile Delinquency
Course ID: 008062	Soc 255-01	Juvenile Delinquency
Course ID: 008926	Soc 255-02	Juvenile Delinquency
Course ID: 008922	Corr 441-01	Social Deviance
Course ID: 008924	Soc 441-01	Social Deviance

Statement of the Problem

Crime rates among college students have sparked major debate among public safety officials. According to the Public Law 101-542 Title IV, Minnesota State University at Mankato is required to provide crime statistics to University Students residing on campus. According to the Minnesota State University enrollment statistics for year 2004, there are approximately 12,257 undergraduate students (MSU, 2004). During this year, approximately 684 crimes were committed on the MSU campus, which is an increase compared to 595 crimes committed on the campus in 2000 (MSU, 2000). Specifically, MSU crime statistics indicate that rape incidents doubled between year 2000 and 2002. Alcohol incidents referred to adjudication increased from 440 to approximately 533. Although drug incidents referred to adjudication was significantly lower than alcohol incidents, year 2002 crime statistics indicated that was an increase from 50 incidents in 2002. Since year 2002, MSU has not provided MSU students with current crime data. This study will strengthen timely statistics provided to MSU students. Additionally, the study will provide the University with a better understanding of issues relating to student offenses, victimization, and prior history. A better understanding should result in possible panel discussions and safety policies that will protect MSU students.

General Purpose of Research Project

This research project has several purposes. The first purpose is to provide students enrolled in the Introduction to Criminal Justice (Corr 106-01) and Juvenile Delinquency (Corr 255-01 and Corr 255-02) the opportunity to engage actively in the learning process by conducting criminological research. The second purpose is to develop an understanding of the crime statistics as it relates to offenses and victimizations on Minnesota State University - Mankato. According to the Public Law 101-542 Title IV, Minnesota State University must provide crime statistics to University Students residing on campus. Unfortunately, these statistics do not inform residents of students that have been previously victimized. The third purpose is to develop an understanding of student behavior prior to enrolling in Minnesota State University. The rationale is that students that have a history of prior delinquent behavior may be more likely to continue such deviant acts in their college years. Drawing on these objectives, the Introduction to Criminal Justice (Corr 106-01) and Juvenile Delinquency (Corr 255-01 and Corr 255-02) students have developed several research questions that are presented below.

Offenses

- What percentage of MSU students used drugs?
- What drugs are prevalent among MSU students?
- What percentage of MSU students engaged in fist fights while under the influence of drugs and alcohol?
- What percentage of MSU students has driven under the influence of alcohol?

Victimization

- How prevalent is theft among MSU students?
- Where is money stolen at Minnesota State University?
- What percentage of MSU students has been sexually assaulted?
- How many MSU students been abused as a child?
- How do MSU students define and categorize child abuse?
- What percentage of MSU students has been physically, emotionally, and sexually abused?
- What percentage of MSU students has been victimized by vehicle break-ins?
- Is there a difference between male and female break-in percentages?
- What percentage of MSU students have been victims of vandalizing?
- What percentage of MSU students have been victims of sexual harassment?
- What percentage of MSU students have been victims of assault?
- Are victimization rate of sexual assault higher among females than males?

Juvenile delinquency prior to enrolling at MSU

- What percentage of MSU students engaged in sexual behavior prior to enrolling at MSU?
- What factors were significant contributions to past sexual behavior among MSU students?
- Do drinking habits among MSU students begin prior to attending MSU?
- What percentage of MSU students participated in underage drinking have also committed delinquent acts prior to attending MSU?
- What percentage of MSU students used drugs prior to enrolling at MSU?
- What is the gender difference in the percentage of MSU students that used drugs prior to enrolling at MSU?
- What percentage of MSU students engaged in theft prior to enrolling at MSU?
- What percentage of MSU students committed traffic violation prior to the age of 18?
- What traffic violations are typical among MSU students prior to the age of 18?
- What percentage of MSU students engaged in status offenses prior to enrolling at MSU?
- What percentage of students that engaged in delinquent behavior prior to enrolling at MSU had a religious affiliation?

Investigators in the Study

The investigators in this study are identified as students enrolled in the Introduction to Criminal Justice course (Corr 106-01) and the Juvenile Delinquency course (Corr 255-01 and Corr 255-02).

Survey Samples

A survey of students enrolled at Minnesota State University at Mankato will be conducted on MSU-Mankato's campus. This University on campus student population is

estimated at 12, 257. In this study, the survey sample is identified from the courses offered in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. This college has an enrollment of approximately 1,915 students across the following departments:

- Anthropology
- The Center for Applied Social Science
- Economics
- Ethnic Studies
- Geography
- Gerontology
- History
- Political Science and Law Enforcement
- Social Work
- Sociology and Corrections
- Urban and Regional Studies
- Women's Studies

The investigators in this study will conduct the study in groups. The investigators will conveniently sample approximately 333 students enrolled in the courses offered under the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Procedures for selecting volunteer participation from students will be made from the MSU course list. Additionally, participants surveyed will be age 18 and over.

Questionnaire

A letter will accompany the survey describing the research project, benefits, risks, and rights of the participant. This letter will also provide contact information for the counseling center if any discomfort is experienced during the course of the survey (See Appendix B – Research letter). Before respondents participate in the study, they will be required to sign a consent form (See Appendix C – Consent Form). Students that do not participate will be required to sign a refusal form. Since the investigators will obtain their participants from classrooms, a refusal form will protect the professor and student that do not participate by informing them of their right not to participate and that it will not be a reflection of their grade (See Appendix D – Refusal Form).

This survey consists of several itemized questions, asking respondents about their experiences with prior offenses prior to attending MSU, asking respondents about their prior offenses while attending MSU, and asking students about whether they have been victimized by illegal activity (See Appendix E – Questionnaire). The questions selected were extracted from the National Youth Survey (Delbert, 1987) and the National Crime Victimization Survey (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000). Each group had the responsibility of submitting questions pertinent to their research question.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics will be generated for each of the research questions.

Protection of Participant Rights

Students voluntarily participating as respondents to this survey will be informed of the purpose of the study and informed of their rights as subjects in this study. The investigators in this study will provide the participants with a research letter describing the research and participation requirements and guarantees. A copy of the research letter, along with a copy of the consent form will be given to voluntary participants (See Appendices B, C, and D).

Work Cited

Hughes, Alan (2005). *A Poster Project for an Undergraduate Sensation and Perception Course*. *Teaching of Psychology* 32(1), 58-9.