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CRIMINAL JUSTICE



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A Note from the Editor-in-Chief

Austin G. Payne
Utah Valley University

This has truly been an interesting semester to handle the role and responsibilities of Editor-In-Chief. With the ongoing pandemic of COVID-19, there was question as to whether we would be able to successfully gather pieces and compile them into a new publication. Though the odds were very much stacked against us, we are extremely proud to bring you the newest issue of the UVU *Journal of Criminal Justice*.

From the start, we desired that this publication not simply match the quality of the first, but that it represented a progression in the journal. Working directly with the authors has proven more challenging than ever, given the multitudes of electronic communications that were required to fulfill all of the editing processes. Nonetheless, all of the authors and editors involved in this publication worked diligently, and successfully in the effort to produce this newest issue.

I would like to take this time to personally thank my Executive Editor, Rylie Bullock, and my two Managing Editors, Liahona Bons, and Kiersten Swanson, for all of their continued dedication and hard work to bring this journal to life. Without them, the production of the journal would not be anywhere near the caliber that it is. Having called upon the them one year ago to help me build this journal from the ground up, I can truly say that I am forever in their debt.

I would also like to thank our faculty mentor, Melissa Noyes, for her continued support of our work, and for sponsoring us on behalf of the Department of Criminal Justice. I am grateful for her input and trust in me to see this journal through each semester. I would also like to thank Deb Thornton and her students for their amazing technical editing work, for without them, the journal would lack validity. Deb

Thornton has proven to be the most valuable asset to this journal, and without Deb's excitement and enthusiasm towards this work, we would not be where we are at today.

I am thrilled to have the contributions of Professor Enoch Irvine, who is currently a Utah County Sheriff Deputy as well as an Adjunct Professor here at UVU. We are also pleased to have the outside submission of Kevin S. Bullock, as well as the student contributions of Elena Dennis, Joshua Coombs, and Amanda Bunker. I am grateful for their desire and willingness to publish in this journal. In concluding my thoughts, these are rather uncertain times. With the lack of knowledge as to when the pandemic may be over, we will continue to work as hard and as efficiently as we can to bring about publication after publication of this journal. And it is my hope that with this current issue, we all may gain new insight into the current world of criminal justice.

Austin Payne

Editor-In-Chief

Journal of Criminal Justice

Foreword: Law Enforcement Challenges and the Path Forward

Darren J. Falslev

Chief of Police, American Fork Police Department

I have had the privilege of being associated with the Criminal Justice Program at Utah Valley University for over twenty-four years. I began my association as a student where I received an education that has helped provide a solid foundation for a rewarding thirty-year career in law enforcement, helped me serve my community, and to pursue two advanced degrees. The University has allowed me the opportunity to teach at UVU as an adjunct professor and police academy instructor, where I have had the privilege to interact with great people from many walks of life and help the University prepare the leaders of tomorrow. While doing so, I have witnessed firsthand the quality of the Utah Valley Criminal Justice Program.

The need for the research and direction provided by this journal has never been greater. Law enforcement professionals at both a national and local level are facing many challenges, and we now find ourselves at a critical crossroads. We are witnessing events in the world and our communities at home that a few years ago we never would have contemplated. We have faced and will continue to confront a global pandemic, terrorism, violent riots, policing with limited resources, and changing societal views of the policing mission. Our citizens are experiencing high levels of fear and concern for their future. The law enforcement profession has been in the national and international spotlight, and the calls for change are unprecedented. We have witnessed officers who are leaving their careers behind at extraordinary levels and agencies have struggled to find quality recruits to help fill the void that has been left by their departure. The profession and society must face these issues head-on and resolve the division we are experiencing in order for this country to heal and move forward.

We live in an era in which threats to public safety and the quality of life found in our communities are increasing and unparalleled. The low levels of crime we have achieved and the lives we all enjoy each day must be fought for to be maintained. Once lost, they will be difficult to re-establish. We must create, maintain, and foster relationships with the businesses, government entities, and citizens within our communities who can help us be more effective and efficient as we strive to protect and serve. We need to safeguard the trust that has been placed on the criminal justice profession and find ways to build quality relationships with those among us who may feel alienated and disenfranchised.

The future will require the criminal justice profession to develop better philosophies and approaches to help those suffering from mental illness and drug addiction. To find a lasting solution we must see the humanity of their daily struggles. We must continue to improve our response to the damaging impact of domestic and relationship violence that is tearing our families apart and facilitating a culture of inter-generational abuse and destruction. To succeed and thrive in the future will require sound knowledge, fortitude, and resolve. The efforts of law enforcement leadership and Utah Valley's Criminal Justice Department will help us navigate the challenges and turmoil that lie before us. If we all work together the future will be bright and we will find some of our best days are ahead of us.

As these events unfold and new challenges present themselves that threaten our safety, freedoms, and the very fabric of our society, the work of the Criminal Justice Department at Utah Valley University is exactly the type of important resource needed to guide the law enforcement professionals of today and shape the leadership of tomorrow.

I have always been impressed with the high caliber of the faculty and students at Utah Valley University who have the work ethic and academic passion to achieve excellence and to make a difference in the world. I am honored to be a part of the work of Utah Valley University and the Criminal Justice Department and their efforts to present this material to governmental leaders, the educational community, and those involved in public safety. The information presented in this journal is a tribute to the great work of Utah Valley University, its faculty, and students. Thank you for a job well done.

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and the Threat They Pose

Enoch Irvine

Utah Valley University

In today's world, the number of emerging technologies or refinements of previous advances is only limited by an individual or group's imagination. But, for every legitimate use these new systems and methods offer, there is an equal number of illegitimate and criminal uses for the very same technology or methodology. One emerging area that has the potential for amazing positive uses is Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs). The commercial, and private applications where UAVs could be used involve everything from delivering mail and monitoring farmers' crops, to urban planning and family photography. Some of these applications are already becoming standard uses for civilian UAVs. Despite all the positive uses for UAVs, however, there is the potential for individuals or organizations to use the same technologies to further their own criminal agendas. This is especially worrisome when it comes to terrorist groups or radicalized individuals who are looking to perpetrate an attack inside the United States. The proliferation of UAVs in the civilian marketplace is an almost indefensible threat to human life, critical infrastructure, and undermines the ability of law enforcement agencies to counter the intelligence gathering operations of a hostile person or nation state. Unless proper steps are taken, UAVs could become one of the greatest threats to homeland security that law enforcement faces.

With the evolution of UAVs (or drone technology), the trend is like what has been seen with cell phones or computers. What once was a large, slow, and expensive machine has now evolved into an exponentially faster, smaller, and more powerful machine that is also comparatively inexpensive. Many people now question what can be done to keep them safe from UAVs as they have evolved to be more than just a

hobby item or military tool. As the technology has evolved, lawmakers have been attempting to enact legislation to mitigate the threat that UAVs can pose when used by someone with ill intent. For example, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has now defined Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) as “an unmanned aircraft and the equipment necessary for the safe and efficient operation of that aircraft” (2017, para. 1). With this definition, lawmakers have begun the framework for regulating the use of UAVs by the civilian population for both commercial and individual users. However, this framework has many loopholes and potential problems as the laws vary from state to state and there is only minimal federal regulation in place, especially for individual users.

Currently, there are no standard regulatory practices regarding UAVs across the entire United States. However, as explained by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), almost every state now has legislation regarding the regulation of UAVs (NCSL, 2020). Most of the existing regulations concern where UAVs may be flown, how high and how fast they may be flown, and what, if any, certification requirements need to be obtained before flying a UAV. For example, the NCSL explains in the 2017 legislative update, that in the state of Utah it is illegal to weaponize a UAV, mandates that UAVs are flown under 400 feet, and prohibits the use of a UAV to harass livestock (NCSL, 2020). Despite the commonalities, state regulations and laws vary. These conflicting laws and regulations are part of the reason why the FAA, at the direction of the federal government of the United States, released operational rules regarding the use of UAVs.

The FAA's operational rules for UAVs help close some of the loopholes regarding civilian use of UAV technology. The FAA has adopted some of the more common rules that some states have enacted on their own. For example, altitude and speed limitations, the prohibition against weaponizing a UAV, and mandating that hobbyists fly their UAVs only during daytime hours, among many other operational and safety regulations, were included by the FAA in their operational rules (FAA, 2016). The FAA has also taken a step to try and mitigate the danger UAVs can pose in the hands of a person or organization with criminal intentions. They did this by requiring all UAVs to be registered, just like other manned aircraft such as planes and helicopters (FAA, 2020). These laws and regulations are well-intentioned steps, but, as with all regulations, they work only if the person using the UAV respects the

laws that have been put into place. Most people can agree that criminals, radicalized individuals, and terrorist groups do not care about, let alone respect, the laws of the United States. As a result, no amount of regulations, laws, or orders will prevent these individuals or groups from using a UAV to further their own agendas if they choose to. The key is then determining what can be done to prevent or stop a group or individual from using a UAV in their planned criminal actions.

One possible example is the establishment of ‘hard’ mandatory geofences surrounding secure areas like federal buildings, court houses, correctional facilities, and large public venues. Drew Dixon explains that “geofencing is basically a virtual perimeter programmed with GPS data that keeps drones from veering into restricted air space” (2017, para. 3). This type of software would notify a user that they have crossed into secure airspace or are about to and give them a chance to leave the restricted area. One company that is a leader in UAV technology, Da- Jiang Innovations (DJI), has voluntarily installed geofencing software into their drones (BI, 2015). This voluntary update came after a few well-publicized incidents where DJI brand UAVs were crashed onto the White House lawn, and another in Japan, where a UAV carrying a radioactive element in a container was used to land on the roof of the Japanese Prime Minister’s home (Wang, 2015). These incidents are examples where geofencing software could have prevented potentially devastating security breaches. The only way that geofencing will work, however, is if there is not an option to voluntarily violate a geofence and if every manufacturer agrees or is mandated to have the software installed in their UAVs. Currently, the software DJI uses allows an operator to voluntarily override a geofence warning and many other manufacturers do not include geofencing software at all.

Many people believe that the only kind of UAV that poses an actual threat to the public are the military drones frequently seen on the news. This is untrue. UAVs come in all sizes and are usually made of plastic, metal, and carbon fiber. For example, DJI sells many different models of UAV both online and in retail locations (DJI, 2020). One UAV that DJI sells underscores the threat that these types of drones represent, and that is the Matrice 600 Pro (DJI, 2020). This UAV looks and functions much like those the public is accustomed to seeing. The Matrice 600 Pro has multiple propellers, takes off and lands vertically, and can be folded when not in use for easy storage and transportation (DJI,

2020). This UAV has the capability to carry a gimbal-mounted, high definition camera or other payloads of up to 13 pounds, has a range of just over 2 miles, and when fully loaded, has a flight time of 15 minutes (DJI, 2020). This means that the Matrice 600 Pro can be adapted for criminal use as an impact weapon, a payload delivery system, or a mobile surveillance platform. These capabilities are common among many of the hobby type UAVs available in the civilian marketplace. The variety of ways in which these capabilities can be used by someone with criminal intent is only limited by the operator's imagination.

There are many scenarios where an over-the-counter UAV, like the Matrice 600 Pro, can be used to cause damage, panic, or even loss of life. This is especially true if critical infrastructure is targeted. This potential to effectively use a UAV against critical infrastructure has been seen in reported accidents that have occurred in some parts of the country. In October of 2015, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office reported that a drone had run into power lines in Hollywood and knocked out power for a few hours (Serna, 2015). The operator of the drone that caused this outage wasn't found. A loss of power by itself can result in a loss of life for individuals who are dependent on machines to keep them alive. An actual attack on the power grid could also enable other criminal activities to take place once power is out. The FAA has cited airline pilots as having reported contact with UAVs (FAA, 2020). At best, these reports show that there are UAV operators who do not care about state or federally mandated altitude restrictions. This is especially troubling because a hostile individual or group no longer needs an anti-aircraft missile, bomb, or successful hijacking to take down a passenger plane. Instead, they can purchase an over the counter UAV or DIY drone kit and fly it up into a plane to cause the plane to crash.

There are many other ways that this type of UAV can be used as a weapon other than by ramming itself into a vehicle or person. The Matrice 600 Pro, for example, can carry up to 13 pounds, according to the manufacturer (DJI, 2020). If a radicalized individual or group was to manufacture Triacetone Triperoxide (TATP) explosives and use a UAV to deliver them, they could achieve catastrophic results. By comparison, "The July 7th, 2005 London bombings, for instance, were carried out by four radical Islamic terrorists using 4.5 kg (10 lb.) of home-made TATP explosives, killing 52, injuring around 700, and terrorizing

a nation” (TFOT, 2017, para. 5). If a UAV’s max payload is similar or just slightly more than the amount used in the London bombings, then that drone, and others like it, represent a viable weapons platform for an individual criminal, terrorist group, or nation state. If the drone operators cannot be apprehended, then this type of attack also represents a repeatable pattern that does not require new attackers, as they would be able to escape and attack again.

As evidenced by the drone that landed on the Japanese Prime Minister’s home carrying a container with a radioactive element, individuals and groups that want to further their own criminal agendas are already thinking of innovative ways to use UAVs to accomplish their goals. This innovative thinking is also being seen on the battlefield in Iraq and Syria by United States and Iraqi soldiers. Video has been released by ISIS of several successful bombing missions carried out by over the counter UAVs that have resulted in civilian and military casualties in Iraq and Syria (Rogoway, 2017). The technology seen in these videos does not require specialized training or technological prowess and yet can produce catastrophic results. Many hobby UAVs can broadcast in-flight camera footage in high definition to a tablet or smartphone, making the mobile device a veritable bombsite the attacker can use to know when to drop their payload.

One of the most overlooked threats that UAVs represent is also one of the common uses for a UAV; that is taking pictures and video of people, animals, or scenery. Some UAVs come with a high definition camera built in, but many more, like the Matrice 600 Pro and other multi-propeller designs, can have an actual Digital Single-Lens Reflex (DSLR) camera mounted underneath in a gimbal mount so that pictures and video will keep their high definition quality despite any turbulence or maneuvering of the UAV (DJI, 2020). This inherent quality of UAVs is already being utilized for criminal purposes. As David Cardinal points out, in August 2014, ISIS released footage from a DJI drone they used to scout a Syrian army base before launching an attack (2014). This ability to perform surveillance and obtain high definition video is just as dangerous as the UAV itself being used as a weapon, or the UAV carrying a payload. This innate capability that many UAVs have allows an individual or a terrorist group to successfully gather pre-operational intelligence on a target and then confirmation, or real-time video, of a target being successfully hit.

Many people believe they have privacy in secluded areas outdoors and especially inside their homes or on their own property. However, by using a UAV, an operator can negate man-made and natural barriers alike by flying over walls, landscaping, surveillance cameras, and other security measures, usually without the individual who is being surveilled ever knowing. A common UAV, that is used by many different users from construction companies to law enforcement agencies, is the MMC A6 Plus (Mortimer, 2017). This UAV is designed to be adaptable for many different tasks, from mapping and imagery projects, to search and rescue, and even construction projects like hanging power lines. However, this UAV, and others with similar specifications, are available for anyone to purchase. As explained on the Aero Expo website, this UAV can fly as high as fourteen thousand feet, stay in the air for up to an hour depending on payload, and carry a maximum of twenty-two pounds (Aero Expo, 2020). This UAV is available online with all its pertinent information listed and can be compared with other UAVs so that buyers can pick the one that best suits their needs. There is currently no way that an individual person, business, or local law enforcement agency can track a UAV moving that fast, at that height, for that long, even if the attack plan has been discovered.

Despite the challenges involved in tracking and then neutralizing a threatening UAV, some have crashed or been shot down and recovered. They are the same type of hobby UAV designs commonly seen in retail stores in the United States. Because of successful attacks in combat zones, the military is now researching various “squad level solutions for the hobby drone threat” (Rogoway, 2017, para. 5). As with many types of technology, it is first developed and tested on the battlefield, and then moves into the civilian market for similar applications. The solutions that the military discovers to defend soldiers on the ground from this threat should be paid special attention by homeland security and law enforcement policy makers, as they may prove viable options here in the United States as well.

Some of the options that are currently being researched by the United States military and their allies to neutralize these smaller UAVs will not be acceptable outside of combat conditions. However, there are several technologies that could be adapted for homeland defense and law enforcement use inside the United States. The FAA has said that it “recognizes LEAs (law enforcement agencies) are often in the

best position to deter, detect, immediately investigate, and, as appropriate, pursue enforcement actions in response to unauthorized or unsafe UAS operations” (2018, p. 1). This sounds great in theory, but the reality is that local law enforcement currently has nothing in their arsenal capable of locating, tracking, or apprehending a UAV. Instead, law enforcement will have to rely on apprehending the operator in almost all cases. This is further complicated by a current trend among hobby UAV users, who have begun to build “mobile drone command centers” (Koebler, 2014, para. 1) that look like the military-style command centers seen in movies and media. This means that operators are inside trailers and are not within line of sight of their UAV. While this is a complication, having a basic understanding of UAVs and how they work will help local law enforcement to better know where they need to be looking for the operator of a potentially hostile UAV.

As the threat to the military from hobby style UAVs continues, so will the research into countering that threat. As that research bears viable options, these options should then be adapted for homeland defense and law enforcement use. A few options that are showing promise are rifle-like jamming systems, and larger more broadband jamming systems (Rogoway, 2017). The idea of having a system to jam an individual drone is one that has been proven effective in testing. The Battelle Drone Defender system is a rifle attachment that jams the control signals of a hobby style UAV so that it loses contact with the operator and is forced to land (Atherton, 2015). This system has been proven to work, but can only work on one UAV at a time, which may become a problem in the future as UAVs are becoming smaller and, rather than requiring one operator per UAV, are moving towards “autonomous flight coordination, also known as swarm technology” (Rogoway, 2017, para. 8). This idea of drone swarms is why larger jamming systems are being tested so that selected areas can be free of UAVs by jamming the frequencies commonly used by hobby style UAVs or swarms of UAVs. However, this option has a downside because ‘area jamming’ means that law enforcement cannot deploy their own UAV in that area. Because of this, the decision to use a broadband jamming system will have to be made knowing that UAV technology won’t be available to emergency responders in that area either.

Currently, UAVs are prohibited from being used for commercial applications inside the United States. However, this is quickly changing.

The FAA is beginning to give commercial certifications and exceptions to some larger UAVs that are designed to fertilize crops, transport goods, help with construction projects, and fight wildfires among other applications. Currently, there is only one type of UAV that has been certified by the FAA, and as Hodgkins points out, it is the Griff 300 (Hodgkins, 2017).

Now that one UAV has been certified, it is only a matter of time before other manufacturers also receive certifications, and the possibilities of commercial UAVs are amazing. They feature almost identical controls to hobby-style UAVs, but their capabilities are multiplied many times over in some cases. They also can be used to conduct surveillance, even though they are much larger than the smaller hobby style UAVs, and their ability to carry a payload is exponentially greater. For example, “the Griff 300 can haul up to 660 pounds” and can stay “flying up to 45 minutes with that heavy payload” (Hodgkins, 2017, para. 23).

The similarity of operator controls, between this goliath and the smaller hobby style drones, means that someone experienced with hobby style UAVs could steal, or otherwise obtain, and deploy much larger UAVs in their attack plans. If ten pounds of TATP can kill over 50 and wound several hundred when effectively placed, imagine the chaos, damage, and death toll an individual operator could cause with 600 pounds of TATP attached to a commercial UAV, that is then deployed effectively. As Aldag said, “While commercial drone operators are probably going to do exactly what they’re supposed to do, the rogue operator, we can never do anything about. They’re going to do what they’re going to do” (cited by Moore, 2016, para. 12). This reality that a UAV operator could potentially commandeer one of these larger commercial UAVs for criminal actions in the United States underscores the importance of developing and deploying effective counter-UAV technologies as soon as possible.

Laws, regulations, and registration only work if the operators are willing to follow them. By themselves, legal restrictions and mandates are ineffective at mitigating the threat that UAVs pose in the hands of an individual or group determined to carry out illegal activities inside the United States. As technology continues to evolve, law enforcement must also evolve if they are going to be able to prevent the citizens they are sworn to protect from becoming victims to the individuals and groups that would use UAVs as weapons. Homeland defense and local

law enforcement administrations need to maintain or develop relationships with the various military branches and learn all they can regarding counter-drone technologies and effective methods of detecting hobby style UAVs. These administrators must openly communicate with the citizens they serve so that the public understands the need for civilian law enforcement and homeland defense personnel to adapt military technology and methodologies to effectively keep them safe. Without this open communication, law enforcement personnel will not receive the acceptance or cooperation of the public they serve. Without this cooperation, law enforcement will not receive the funding necessary for the training and equipment required to learn how to, and then effectively, counter the UAV threat. Because of the 'new' nature of UAVs, there currently is a massive gap between the capability to gather intelligence or conduct attack operations inside the United States, and the ability of homeland defense and law enforcement to counter the threat that a hostile UAV represents. Law enforcement and homeland defense personnel must close this gap as quickly as possible, before a criminal organization or individual operator successfully exploits this weakness.

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Criminal Justice from the Inside

Kevin S. Bullock

Abstract

I am writing this paper to share some personal experiences I had with several inmates while serving a prison sentence. I am an educated man, yet my education did little to keep me from committing my crime. There are lessons to be learned before one can fully and responsibly participate in a society. As it turned out, those lessons for me and for many others like me were not to be learned while living a free life. For example, my current ideas and attitudes about criminal justice were not completely formed until after I went through the justice system myself. It was only when circulating among other convicted felons, listening to their views, and witnessing their adjustments to incarceration, while struggling to find my own way through the physical consequences of my criminal behavior that my own views were finally cemented.

In preparation for this paper I looked at some published materials on Criminal Justice. While reading through this material I was disappointed to find little on inmate viewpoints regarding the subject. Inmates are told that they have been legally disenfranchised from civil society. They are wards of the state. They cannot vote. They have no say. My perusal through related published works seems to have confirmed such a harsh view.

Having spent years as one of the muted, and noting since my release the general lack of accurate insight into the mind of inmate attitudes regarding our civil and criminal systems of justice, I thought it would be useful to bring out into the open some of their perspectives regarding a topic which directly affects their lives, and may consequently affect the lives of every other civic minded individual. What follows is a brief look into the lives of seven people with whom I spent enough

time to learn how they too thought and felt about our current justice system. I then add my own awakening to my current points of view of the subject and a little on how I arrived at it.

Criminal Justice from the Inside

It will not come as a surprise that those convicted and sentenced to lengthy prison terms see the criminal justice system in profoundly different ways than do those who have never been convicted of a crime. Eight percent of the US population has a felony conviction on their record (Zoukis, 2018) which translates to over 26 million United States citizens, or the population of the state of Texas. In contrast, 20 years ago, only three percent of the US population were felons.

There is an increasing likelihood that the average American will know and have an opportunity to converse with a prison-experienced man or woman. And what would the takeaway be from such a contact? How does a convicted felon, someone who has been to prison, view their conviction and time away from free society? What do they think of someone never having done time?

This paper represents an attempt to shed light on how an American convicted inmate looks at the criminal justice system. The author spent twenty years behind prison walls himself and had the opportunity to informally interview many hundreds of inmates with every sort of criminal history, every sort of sentence, and every sort of personal definition for the criminal justice system. [The names of the following inmates are sufficiently altered to conceal their identity.]

Five Men and Two Women

- 1. Jim.** Jim was in the medical profession. He was arrested and convicted for having sex with a minor and was sentenced to over fifty years in prison. I met Jim after he first arrived in prison and was privileged to “cell up” with him for nearly a year. In that time, during his first couple of years of incarceration, Jim was extremely bitter about “what had happened to him.” He complained about the length of his sentence, about the way in which the D.A. had “tricked” him into incriminating himself, and even believed that there was little wrong with what he had done with the young girl since “she had been the initiator” of the encounters. Jim took every opportunity to

minimize his role in the crime, as well as criticize the “injustice” of his conviction. He believed that justice cannot be just without an honest appraisal of the viewpoints of all concerned parties, including the accused. Further, Jim could not wrap his mind around the apparent irony of allowing lying on the part of police and the D.A. to obtain evidence which was then used in arriving at a “just verdict.” I asked him once whether his current attitude towards law enforcement’s use of deception to obtain evidence in a felony case is consistent with how he would have thought about the same issue prior to his arrest. If he had thought about it before getting into his current trouble, what would have been his views on the matter? Jim thought it over and confessed that his personal experience with official deception definitely had had an impact on his opinion, though he would have, on principle, disliked the practice before as well, had he given it any thought. That was one of the many things I liked about Jim, he was always honest, if even painfully so.

Twenty years later Jim is still in prison, but his views have evolved considerably. Jim no longer sees himself as a victim of an unjust system. Jim now believes that, though his sentence was severe, what time he had measured out to him by the criminal justice system was proportionate to the callousness with which he approached the young girl at the time of the crime and to his whole attitude during the trial and sentencing. Though he will not likely parole before he is a very old man, he now believes that the person he has become, as a direct result of the time he has spent in prison, has made him into a man that he can respect. And Jim believes that that is truly just.

- 2. Jerry.** Jerry was a general contractor. He was arrested and convicted for first degree murder and attempted murder. Jerry received a sentence of Life Without the Possibility of Parole (LWOP). I met Jerry on the “yard” at a time that I was looking to cell up with someone, anyone who could offer me a break from my then nutty and dangerous cellie. Jerry seemed perfect. He was well spoken, relatively educated, a former professional, and seemed to have a good reputation on the yard. I moved in

with him and soon learned that I had made a mistake. LWOPs are among those class of inmates who see the prison where they reside as their home, and everyone else as visitors. Even though I had a lengthy sentence myself, compared to Jerry's sentence, I was just passing through. Jerry was ruthless in his condemnation of the system which, he believed, had taken away his life. Though he freely admitted that he had murdered his victim and had tried to murder the witness to his crime, all that mattered to Jerry was how his life had forever changed at the hands of the arresting police, the D.A., and the Judge. Not at any time did I ever hear Jerry refer to himself as a contributor to his plight. Jerry was the victim of an unjust criminal justice system and any attempt at a reasonable discussion about alternative viewpoints would be met with physical violence. My time with Jerry was thankfully short, and I vowed to never again voluntarily cell up with an LWOP.

It has been over 25 years since I last saw Jerry, so I cannot speak to his current attitude or situation. I do know that he is still in prison. One thing I have learned from my years away is that everyone can change, though it is difficult to believe that everyone will change. Good luck to you, Jerry!

3. Wheelchair Gordon. Gordon was a union plumber and was also that "nutty and dangerous cellie" from whom I was so anxious to move away that I moved in with Jerry. I met Gordon soon after I arrived at my second prison. As a new arrival, one rarely selects where or with whom you are going to live. [I would later learn that you are very often moved into a cell and with a cellie which few if any wish to live.] Within a day after my move in with Gordon I began a search for a new place to live. Gordon had a reputation for being the single worst cellie anyone could have. He stole from other inmates, he was a heroin addict, his wheelchair "dependency" was an act to play the system, he was an LWOP, he blamed everyone but himself for his current state, and he would fight anyone who differed from him on any issue. Since the adult male prison system in my state was at 225% capacity, the only way to arrange a cell move was to have someone agree to swap beds with me. And since

that meant someone had to willingly want to move in with Gordon, I ended up stuck with him for nearly six months.

In this time, I learned to be a patient listener. Gordon had a lot to say to anyone who would care to listen. He was bitter for having had been convicted of a murder he says that he did not commit. He admitted to me that he had killed people, two by his count, but that he had not killed the man he was convicted of killing, and this error by the system made him seriously mad. He could not stop talking about it. Every time he spoke of it, he became enraged. He was once so angry that he broke his television set while striking out with his fists at the closest target he could find. Gordon had a deeply rooted need to make people pay for his pain. Stealing, cheating, fighting, and generally breaking any rule he could were all meant to bring his miserable life into some sort of balance. It was this personal calculation for finding a balance that was his definition of true justice. In his view, nothing society had done to him had anything remotely to do with justice. Gordon was, and as far as I know, continues to be completely closed to the idea that society has any right to define and exact criminal justice upon those who chose to break its rules. For Gordon, justice can only be immediately rendered by the wronged party. Gordon hates anything delayed, as he believes any delay in his form of justice “just muddies the waters.”

4. Keith. Keith was an electrician and a former associate of the biker “club” known as the Hell’s Angels. As an associate Keith was often sent on “missions” to find drugs, weapons, meeting places, new club petitioners, and to generally do anything and everything the chapter’s shot callers might ask him to do. I was Keith’s last cellie. He was finishing a thirty-year sentence for the torture and murder of a gay man. Keith did this act on the orders of his club’s chapter leadership. After more than two decades within the penal system Keith told me that he was a changed man. Instead of wanting to belong to this former criminal organization, he thought more of wanting to see his children and teach his grandson how to fish. He had taught himself how to paint, and even painted me surfing on the perfect wave. Keith spent his time reading, listening to classical

music, writing letters of apology to the family of his victim, and generally attempting to prepare himself for the day that he would return to a society in which he likely never fit. I lived with Keith for three years and I found nothing in his behavior which might indicate that he wanted or would attempt to return to a life of crime. On the contrary, he was looking forward to voting, building a home on the land he inherited from his father, vacationing with his family, and finding his way, like the rest of us, as part of a society of rules and regulations. Keith was a refreshing departure from many of my more emotionally troubled first cellies.

I received a letter from Keith a year after my own parole. The letter was posted from a county jail near his home. Keith had been arrested for selling large quantities of heroin. According to Keith, he does not believe he will get any sort of a deal which will allow him the freedom with his grandchildren he had been hoping for when I live with him. I did not see this one coming. I really believed that Keith was going to make it. Can we ever be certain of anyone's future choices?

- 5. George.** George never had an honest, paying job in his life, but was a lifetime criminal. When I met him, he was spending five years locked up for assault. This was his seventh felony conviction. George would be my last cellie as I was finishing my own sentence. George would prove to be another challenge for my patience. George began his trouble with the law when he was only eleven years old, having nearly killed his sister in a fist fight. He was sentenced to the youth authority and stayed there for five years. George only has violent convictions. He believes that his family, city, county, state, nation, and world are against him. The views one might form and hold against someone who disciplines a child is like how George approaches anyone attempting to correct his violent nature. Criminal justice, for George, has always represented an unfair force bent towards raining misery upon his life.

He paroled three months after I did and was arrested two weeks later after committing a strong-armed robbery of a liquor store. He was found guilty and is now

confined for fifteen years. He wrote me a note from county jail immediately after his sentencing and blamed this latest trouble on a cop who “set me up.” I saw this one coming. George is defined by his anger and quick violence. As far as I could detect during our time together, George has a deep and enduring need to lash out. Why? I cannot say, but I do believe that confinement is a good fit for George.

1. **Leslie.** Leslie is a convicted murderer. When first arrested, tried, and convicted, Leslie never showed any remorse for having brutally murdered innocents. She appeared to enjoy the attention she received in jail and in the courthouse. Though I do not personally know Leslie, I do know someone who is currently serving time with her. Leslie has made a remarkable recovery, and her rehabilitative efforts are a matter of public record. In the nearly five decades of incarceration Leslie essentially grew up. She has become a remarkable example of rehabilitation to all who know her, both inside and outside the prison walls. Soon after her incarceration, Leslie began to look within herself, and—like some others doing serious time—did not like what she saw. Within five years of her incarceration, Leslie began attending group therapy sessions. After only a few years of these sessions, she was asked to start leading the discussions. Leslie pursued and obtained a college degree, assisted many to prepare themselves for release and reintegration into society, and is viewed as a model inmate by staff.

Leslie was recently recommended for release by the board of prison terms. In every aspect I have been able to know, Leslie is now a good person, if one defines such as anyone who admits when they make a misstep, even those of which are the darkest, owns all of the guilt, pain, and consequence of their misjudgment, and spends a lifetime doing what can be done to make amends. Leslie has done and continues to do this. If there was a perfect example of rehabilitation, Leslie would get my vote for such.

2. **E. E.** was convicted of a sex case and is serving a twenty-year sentence. E. met and married the first man she dated. She mar-

ried a man terribly troubled with paranoid delusions at the psychotic level. Having had no experience in relationships prior to meeting this man, she was unprepared for all the challenges he would eventually place before her.

After a few years of intense grooming, E. was led to commit acts. E. defended her psychotic husband and would not make a deal to turn over evidence against him. She was given a lengthy sentence as a result and sent to prison. E. was able to see herself and her actions more clearly only after she was free of her husband's influence. After regaining her reason, she fell into a depression for having committed such acts, none of which she believed she ever would have considered on her own. She petitioned and received a divorce from her husband and began intense therapy classes. E.'s behavior in these classes was exemplary to the extent that she was asked to lead many of the discussions. E. now accepts full responsibility for her actions, though her therapist would often attempt to soften such responsibility, owing to her naiveté and to her former husband's strong influence.

E. believes that the acts that she committed to get to prison were truly terrible. Her biggest challenge is forgiving herself. Yet for all the pain her conscience brings to her, she is grateful to the criminal justice system for waking her up and for assisting her to mature in a way that perhaps would never have been otherwise possible. E. continues to serve her sentence and has another six years to go.

Looking at It from the Inside

I chose these five men and two women because I knew them well and I believed that I could, with some accuracy, share their views on the justice system as they see it. I met many hundreds of inmates during my time away from free society, and I listened to their views, moderate and extreme, on the same subject. Though many of their views regarding law enforcement and the criminal courts were skewed away from any norm I had before encountered, what was interesting to me was how much like any other group their perspectives were regarding the everyday conversational topics. There should be no doubt that a prison

society is, in many respects, like any other, a differing viewpoint for every person, but with regards to criminal justice, perhaps inmates see things with a sharper, more personally practical focus.

For myself, I spent over two decades in prison. Unlike most others I met behind “the wall,” however, I began my personal re-evaluations while still in county jail, before sentencing. Though I did commit every crime I was convicted for, a major difference between how I viewed myself, and how many of the inmates I got to know viewed themselves, differed by the degree of how little I could defend my actions.

Most inmates become defensive when approached about their crime and the person they were when they committed it. In my case, I could not defend that person, the person I had been. I could not tolerate hearing myself minimize my past criminal actions in any way. This was a significant difference between those I lived with and how I saw myself changing. Because I could not defend the person I had been, I became willing to find out how I had developed those criminal tendencies. By the time I reached state prison, I viewed the time I was sentenced to serve as an opportunity to pay a needed debt and to attempt to rehabilitate myself, beginning with a severe self-analysis.

Most inmates spend their time passing it. They watch tv, play cards and board games, hustle contraband, play yard sports, or stay in their beds and try to sleep their sentence away. I tried to use my time to re-focus my attention onto building a new life for myself. Though I did exercise (I ran laps around the track), I spent most of my time reading, meditating, self-analyzing, attending self-help groups, speaking with others openly about my crime and what I believed had caused my criminal behavior. But what I believe was the real beginning of my rehabilitation was when I began to choose to submit to the justice system.

I got into more than a few arguments about submitting to the system that had locked me up. Most of those around me believed in fighting their conviction by appeal and by non-compliance to the rules. They looked at my submissive attitude as weakness, or as just giving up. It did not matter to them that they or I were guilty, not just before the law, but in actual point of fact. All that mattered to most of my fellow inmates was their physical freedom. I could not see it that way, not anymore.

I knew that I had committed those crimes. I knew that I hated the fact that such behavior came out of me. I wanted to stop being someone who could act that way. And I also believed that there would be no

way to adequately reform myself without first owning what I had done.

I came to believe that the act of opening myself up to the review of others was sometimes painful, but it was also inevitably helpful. I have been off parole now for nearly six months, and in that time I have found a renewed sense of purpose to my life and a zeal for achieving a depth to my views on myself and on others. I am enjoying life again, and hope to continue to do so for some time to come. Though apparently counter-intuitive to those with whom I did my time, I attribute my current positive take on things directly to my willingness to allow the criminal justice system to play out in my life.

Like anything else in life, if you want to be educated in a subject, find someone already immersed in that field. With inmates, male or female, the daily routine will bring the practical side of the justice system to the front of their minds.

Most inmates are counted five times a day, at least one of those counts is a mandatory standing count. If you wish to eat, then you must walk single file to the chow hall at specific times, eat for only ten minutes, and then walk back single file to your housing unit and remain there until you can be released for dayroom or yard. You are never, ever alone. You are always under supervision. If you are a level three or higher, you will be under gun coverage.

In California there are five security housing levels:

Level I is for those within 18 months of release and with no violence on their record. They can be outside of the electrified fence. They live in cramped dorms but have the maximum amount of freedom of movement within the prison facility.

Level II is for those with some security restrictions, but who have proven to be willing to follow the prison program. They have few restrictions but must always stay within the electrified fence.

Level III inmates are under gun observation. These are high time, high risk inmates, most who are just beginning their prison sentence and have not yet proven to be programmers. They live in two-man cells, most of which are little bigger than the average walk in closet.

Level IV is considered a SHU (Security Housing Unit) kick out program, where those who have had serious violations within prison (fighting and or stabbing fellow inmates) are housed after completing their disciplinary time. Housing units here are divided up into thirty

person pods. There are rules against the grouping of any more than five at a time. Serious gun coverage is always mandated with no warning shots given.

Level V is the highest security, reserved for those thrown into the Hole (Administrative Segregation) or the SHU programs at Corcoran I or Pelican Bay. This is where they keep everyone single celled and under constant gun coverage. The intense scrutiny of level V can, and most times does, have its ill effects on the inmates. The complete lack of freedom, or even being alone to one's own thoughts, brings about a "group think" tendency. It is thought that within this sociological phenomenon where much of the trouble with recidivism originates.

Group thinking can be found in every social cluster. School classrooms, political gatherings, sports, and even family reunions show signs of thought grouping. It is part of human nature to gravitate into groups for identity and protection. But when the gathering group is comprised of the world's worst, then one's identity is found at the lowest of common denominators. A paroled man or woman, who will have spent years programmed by their peers to think criminally, will likely have trouble thinking responsibly when released.

For example, recurrent national recidivism rates ought to interest even the least interested in criminal justice, since those living in free society will be the inevitable victims at a statistical rate of 83% over a nine-year period. According to the US Department of Justice, "Five in 6 (83%) state prisoners released in 2005 across 30 states were arrested at least once during the 9 years following their release" (2018).

With about 2,298,300 people incarcerated, 95% of whom will eventually be released (Ahalt et al., 2018), how those locked up view the adherence to or the breaking of the rules and regulations which led to their confinement should interest everyone.

I invite you to think about this issue reasonably. If you were found guilty of a felony and sentenced to years in prison, what changes might take effect in your mental state surrounded by a pervasive criminal element? How do you believe you would view our criminal justice system while living as a ward of the state? By empathetically considering yourself in this light, perhaps you might consider the problem of recidivism with the needed sensitivity to gain useful perspective. Crime is never excusable, but by understanding some of its roots, possible solutions can be imagined.

Conclusion

I have looked briefly into the lives of seven inmates, and I have made some comparison with my own experience and evolving attitude on criminal justice. Two of those will never parole, but five will. How many of those future parolees will recidivate? Can their current views on criminal justice, regardless of the origin of those views, be linked with recidivistic probability?

I am no expert in sociological forecasting. I cannot interpret current views as future behavior. I can, however, judge my own performance based on how I have witnessed my own views change in these regards. I can make reasonable comparisons between my own successes and failures, and those I met and got to know during my incarceration.

I know how prison works on the mind. I know how those in authority there sometimes exacerbate an already stressful experience by “working the convict.” Having experienced prison, I no longer wonder why those who do the time resent everything associated with the justice system. Though I chose a different course, I understand why others think like they do.

I hope that this paper has provided you with fuller views of those who think about this issue every day of their time. This paper has provided you with real views of real inmates who will one day parole and one day, perhaps, become your neighbor.

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Perception vs. Reality: Contributions to Criminality in Provo, Utah

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Abstract

Provo, Utah, is a mid-sized city covering approximately 44 square miles in Utah county. It has a total population of approximately 116,000 as of 2017, and, having lived here for most of my life, I have found that it maintains its reputation as a “double bubble”: a city that is sheltered doubly more than the rest of the state, which may be considered sheltered and naïve to the ways of the world, due to the prevailing religion and the followers’ belief that they are to be in the world but that “they are not of the world” (John 17: 15-17. New King James Bible).

Within the city’s population is a revolving group of approximately 36,000 individuals who attend Brigham Young University and the nearby Utah Valley University (DataUSA, 2016). Though only 23.6% of the entire city’s population, this student population represents a large portion of Provo’s victims in thefts throughout the years. This paper will discuss the crime statistics, including student responses and responses from my fellow law enforcement officers, as well as the possible causes for this over-representation of the city’s population in regard to victimization, such as student naivety, varying perceptions regarding the severity of crime, and lack of adequate enforcement techniques. Finally, the paper offers some possible solutions to this problem while taking into account the barriers the solutions may face.

Provo’s Theft Rates

According to College Factual (2020), Brigham Young University’s overall crime rate is just slightly above the country’s average at other universities. This is supported by my law enforcement survey (Coombs, J, 2020K), which found that 69.57% of officers who responded to calls

feel that our vehicle burglary problem in the south campus area is above average. Part of that problem could be attributed to surveyed students' views. 55.17% feel the problem is only average (Coombs, 2020D). The lack of safety awareness will be addressed further in this paper with suggestions on ways to combat the student safety mindset—or the lack thereof.

Trend-wise, the rate at which vehicle burglaries and property crimes are committed tends to remain relatively stable. Based on an average of five months of statistics given in operational meetings at the Provo City Police Department (hereafter PCPD) (PCPD, 2019A-D, 2020A-B), Provo's overall vehicle burglary rate is 39.4 per month. There are spikes when new students are moving in and vehicles are left unattended with large amounts of property while people are carrying items into their new apartments. There are downturns during summer and Christmas breaks when students go back home and the availability of soft targets is lowered, but the overall monthly rates tend to stay the same. For example, vehicle burglary rates for December in 2017, 2018, and 2019 were 50, 40, and 42, respectively, (PCPD, 2019C) throughout the entire city of Provo.

My threat analysis for the vehicle burglary issue, which seems to match my personal thesis, predicts a slight uptick in the number of vehicle burglaries throughout the city and especially in the lower campus area of student housing. Now that the new bus system in Provo is completed, it takes people right through south campus and then directly to the Frontrunner station, where thieves can go back to Salt Lake City, quickly create distance from the area where they committed the crimes, or just leave Provo temporarily to avoid getting caught by students and/or law enforcement.

My thesis is supported by the slight increase in vehicle burglaries from December 2018 to December 2019. There were also 44 vehicle burglaries in January of 2020, while the previous year only saw 23 reported incidents (PCPD, 2020B). The UVX bus system had a soft opening in August of 2018, and according to the crime statistics from the November 2019 operations meeting at the PCPD (2019B), the year before the UVX opening saw only 29 vehicle burglaries. Just two months after the mass-transit system opened, November of 2018 saw 64 vehicle burglaries city-wide, an increase of 120% in the space of 60 days as shown in *figure 1*.

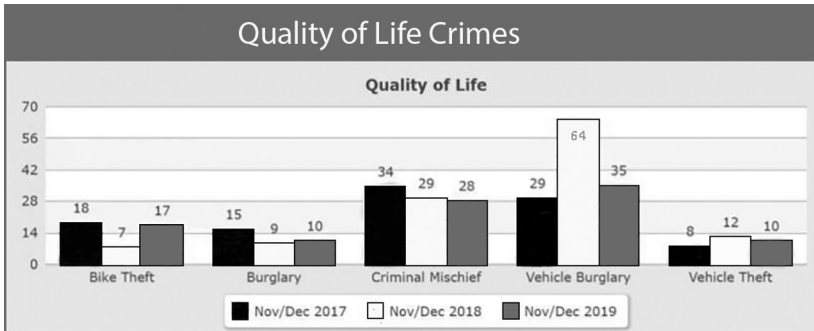


Figure 1. Crime statistics showing spike in vehicle burglaries after UVX implementation.

Over the three-year period of 2017 to 2019, the total number of vehicle burglaries throughout the entire city of Provo was 333 per year. Of those, 122 were in the south campus area alone, an area between Center Street and 800 N. and University Avenue and 900 E. That equates to 36% of all vehicle burglaries occurring in this 72-square block radius (PCPD, 2019C). Of those 122, 65 victims admitted that their vehicles were unlocked, 12 said they did not know whether their vehicles were locked or not, and 12 claimed their vehicle was locked but there was no damage to the vehicle. Those 65 incidents alone amount to 53.3% of vehicle burglaries involving unlocked doors throughout the entire city. (PCPD, 2019B).

Victim Information

In 2020, a survey I conducted among my fellow students at Utah Valley University who were also in the Criminal Justice baccalaureate program garnered information regarding ages, mindsets involving general safety of the city, their behavior regarding protecting themselves and their property from theft, as well as how often they were victimized. Sadly, it seems that there is only an average response rate of 25%, which means that, while informative, these statistics do not come from a large enough group to amount to a truly representative sample.

This survey shows the age ranges of my classmates who participated in the survey. Some 39.29% are between the ages of 20 and 25, while 32.14% are between 25 and 30 years of age (Coombs, 2020A).

Among the questions I asked was how often vehicle doors are left unlocked. According to students who responded, 85.71% claimed to always lock their doors. The remaining 14.29% said they lock their

doors about half of the time and none of the respondents said they lock their door “sometimes or never” (Coombs, 2020B).

When asked how often they leave valuables inside their vehicles, whether visible or not, 46.43% of students admitted to leaving their valuables in their vehicles all or some of the time (Coombs, 2020C).

Regarding student perception of the theft problem, about 53.57% of the student respondents feel as though Provo has an “average” theft and vehicle burglary problem, while 39.29% feel it’s a larger problem than average (Coombs, 2020D).

I was most interested to know just how many of the participating students have been victimized. Interestingly, only 21.43% of the students said they had been victimized by theft of any type (Coombs, 2020E), of those victims, 66.66% said they have only been victimized once, while the remaining 33.33% have been victimized twice (Coombs, 2020F).

Another statistic that I was interested to know was how much value was lost from the students that were victims of theft and vehicle burglaries, i.e., how valuable were the things they were leaving in their vehicles? 33.33% of victims stated they lost between \$50 and \$150 and another 33.33% lost between \$150 and \$500. The remaining 33.33% reported a loss of less than \$50 (Coombs, 2020G).

Part of the problem I have observed over my law enforcement career is the staggering amount of crime that is not actually reported to law enforcement. So, my survey asked whether when a student was victimized they reported it to police. Of the roughly 22% of victims from my survey, only half of them reported the crime to the police. This means that approximately half of theft/vehicle burglary crimes are not being reported, which doubles the actual number of crimes happening in Provo (Coombs, 2020H). While this conclusion is being drawn from a non-representative sample, the US Bureau of Justice Statistics found that roughly 34% of property crimes were not reported to the police (Gramlich, 2019).

University students are busy and have different priorities than law enforcement regarding safety and security, so there are times that a vehicle burglary or theft can go unnoticed for some time—for example, if the student went home for the holidays but left their bicycle locked up at the apartment complex, or if they got a ride to the airport and

their vehicle was still in a parking lot or parking garage. Sometimes these students will return after weeks or months only to realize the property was stolen somewhere in that time. This skews law enforcement statistics and makes it difficult to accurately track crime and allow for more focused enforcement and patrols during high-crime times. I asked the students how much time had elapsed before the crime was noticed and I found that just 16.6% of the time months had passed before the crime was noticed. As shown in *figure 2*, I was pleased to see that 50% of students discovered the crime within 1–6 hours and 33.33% within 12 hours to 24 hours. (Coombs, 2020I).

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Mintues	0.00%	0
1-6 hours	50.00%	3
6-12 hours	0.00%	0
12-24 hours	33.33%	2
Days	0.00%	0
Weeks	0.00%	0
Months	16.70%	1
Years	0.00%	0
TOTAL		6

Figure 2. Time elapsed before crime is discovered.

Finally, is one gender more prone to victimization or not? 50% of my respondents were female and 46.43% were male. Due to the small sampling size it is not viable to conclude one way or the other regarding gender and victimization and this would warrant more research in the future (Coombs, 2020J).

Officer Perceptions

I created a survey specifically for my fellow officers working in Provo to provide statistical input regarding their views on the severity of the theft and crime problems in Provo, specifically in the south campus area, as well as to provide any insights as to why students are being victimized more often and any suggestions they might have in order to combat the problem in the south campus area. Unfortunately, as with the student survey, the rate of response from officers was approximately 25%. While this matches the average response rate from students

and provides a balanced view, it does not rise to the level of proper scientific research either.

While I was interested to see how officers viewed the size of the problem in the south campus area, I did not expect to be very surprised by the responses because I number among those patrolling the streets of Provo city and responding to take reports. Having talked to my fellow officers after some of these calls to lament the lack of personal safety awareness by the victims, I have learned what the general opinions are among the PCPD, and, frankly, I share those views as well.

True to my expectations of police officer experience, 63.16% of the officers who responded felt that Provo City had an “above-average” problem with thefts and vehicle burglaries compared to surrounding jurisdictions and nationwide (Coombs, 2020K).

According to Neighborhood Scout (2008A), the crime index in the neighboring city of Orem is a 30 out of 100 with an annual number of crimes totaling 1,936. This rate is compared to the Provo statistics from Neighborhood Scout (2008B), which shows that Provo has a crime index of 27. This reinforces officer opinions because the annual number of crimes in Provo totals 2,472, nearly 22% more than in Orem, which shows there truly is a higher crime rate in Provo, especially when coupled with the crimes reported solely to the BYU police department (Collegefactual, 2020), totaling 101 for the past year.

Regarding the frequency of unlocked vehicle doors, 42.11% of officers felt that victims left their doors unlocked between 61-80% of the time. These percentages matched my view as well, and most recently our department’s statistics match that opinion with the most recent crime reports. Though, due to the Coronavirus and the city’s response to the threat, including limiting staff that are allowed in the department building, it was too difficult to obtain a graph showing this rate. It was 26.32% of responding officers that felt that victims left their doors unlocked 81–100% of the time (Coombs, 2020L). However, as evidenced by *figure 3* (PCPD, 2019D), the average rate that doors are reported as “left unlocked” does show that the majority of victims left their vehicles unlocked. The percentage varies, however, depending on whether or not you include vehicles the victims reported as “unknown” or where there was no evidence of forced entry.

VEHICLE BURGLARY STATISTICS	
HOW ENTERED	
Door pried	1
Said locked but no damage	4
Door broken	1
Unknown	9
Unlocked	22
Window broken	4

Figure 3. Total number of burglaries and the how entry was gained.

The big question was: did responding officers think that it was possible to lower the theft rate in the south campus area? 73.68% of police respondents felt that it was possible to lower the overall theft rate and I was interested to know what their thoughts were regarding those solutions (Coombs, 2020M).

The overwhelming majority of officer ideas for lowering the crime rate in south campus centered on educating the student population so that they could protect themselves and become hardened targets, evidenced by responses such as, “Education of students, reminders, locking doors! Better security/lighting,” “Coordinate with BYU to educate students and get them to lock their cars,” and “education about the high risk of vehicle burglaries and teach people to lock cars and keep valuables hidden or bring them inside” (Coombs, 2020M).

My viewpoint matches those of the majority of officer respondents. I think that educating the student population, especially those that are just coming into Provo to begin their time at the university and may not be aware of the problem and any ways that they can prevent being victimized. Without educating the students, the problem continues as their behavior does not change and this leaves the burden of patrolling and responding to calls to the police department, including the BYU police department. I have other ideas for possible solutions that will be discussed shortly.

Coming up with solutions to problems requires an understanding of the causes of the problems themselves. Officers’ responses regarding why students get victimized so often focused on student naivety or

ignorance. This viewpoint explains the belief that education would be a viable solution to lowering the crime rate as seen by responses from officers regarding reasons for the crime rate such as, “ignorant students,” “[a] large number of transients combined with large number of out of state students who have a higher trust to leave themselves/vehicles vulnerable to theft,” and “student population with a warped idea of the safety in Provo” (Coombs, 2020O). Other causes for the rate of victimization included the population of transients in the area that are often involved in drug use and use theft and vehicle burglaries as a way to procure property that can be sold or traded in order to obtain drugs to further their habit (North & Pollio, 2017).

My ideas for solutions to the problem mostly involve the ignorance and naivety of students, lack of proper mindset regarding what actions need to be taken to protect their property, the population of transients that are aware of the easy pickings in the south campus area, and the new addition of the UVX buses, which shuttle suspects from the Front Runner station to south campus and then allow them to leave via the same route afterward. In the summer of 2019, a group of theft suspects were caught in the northern portion of south campus, near the UVX bus platforms. They admitted that they would sometimes come down on the last train of the evening and wander the area all night stealing what items they could until the bus lines started back up. They would then leave the area before most of the student population awoke to discover the crimes. This new influx of transients from SLC due to the ease of the Front Runner trains and UVX buses has, in my opinion, contributed significantly to the victimization of students as is shown earlier in *figure 1*. While this issue is not one that can be changed, the education of students would lower the opportunities that thieves have.

One of the biggest problems caused by theft is the overall cost to victims and to the criminal justice system. Officer views on the amount lost per theft were relatively close to the student perception: 57.89% of officers feel that between \$20-100 is lost per vehicle burglary and theft, which I tend to agree with given that often the reports I take involve the theft of loose change, charging cables, and other small electronic items (Coombs, 2020P).

According to Science Direct (McCollister, 2010), the United States saw more than 23 million criminal offenses committed in 2007. This resulted in approximately \$15 billion in losses to the victims and \$179

billion in government expenditures on police protection, judicial and legal activities, and corrections. The article also discusses not just the financial costs but the intangible costs such as emotional trauma to the victims. Though most often amounting to only misdemeanor crimes, thefts and vehicle burglaries prove to cost more than just a broken window or the replacement of stolen items. They amount to time spent patrolling, investigating, prosecuting, and incarceration or other sanctions. But how can this problem be controlled, or at the very least, lessened?

Solutions

Based on the information and statistics that I have obtained, it appears that overall, the yearly issues of theft and vehicle burglary throughout Provo, Utah, especially in the south campus neighborhoods, remain relatively steady. From personal experience, I know that the reason for the lower rates in 2017 were because of a department-wide focus on the south campus neighborhoods. This constant enforcement resulted in lower crime rates, and I will cover this as a potential solution in just a moment.

The overwhelming response from officers who participated in my survey was that the crime rate regarding vehicle burglaries could be reduced through the education of the students (Coombs, 2020N). The issue with education is that new students are constantly coming into the area as they begin their schooling at Brigham Young University or Utah Valley University. This solution would require consistent and renewed efforts to educate newly arriving students.

Another issue with education is figuring out what will work best and then implementing a program that is consistently followed. In the past, the Provo Police Community Oriented Policing Officers have gone out and placed pamphlets on students' vehicles. I have personally done that, as well as patrolling in underground parking structures and locking vehicles that I have observed to be unlocked, especially if there are valuables visible inside. The cost of the pamphlets could be an issue for the department, although a possible way to alleviate the costs would be to split them with Brigham Young University, since the problem directly affects them as well.

The biggest issue with this solution would be the need for cooperation from BYU Police and apartment owners in the area to allow for

the posting of these flyers and pamphlets. UTA Police could also allow for posting inside of their buses and trains. Since so many students commute, this would provide more opportunities for students to see and retain the information due to the repetition of seeing it. Additionally, the criminals that are coming down on the trains, using the buses to get around south campus, and then escaping back up to Salt Lake on the trains will hopefully see that effective action is being taken and that it may not be worth the effort.

Another potential solution would be to produce interesting videos that will catch the attention of the younger generations and stick in their minds regarding the safety of locking their vehicles and bicycles and hiding valuables. These videos could be posted on both the Provo and BYU police department social media pages, and on televisions that are mounted throughout the BYU campus. This could be relatively simple since Provo city already utilizes their own channel and video production crew in the form of Channel 17. The problem behind this is the lack of followers on the department's social media. Not many people follow their local police departments, especially the younger generations that are already moving away from Facebook. Given that the department's social media presence is pretty weak, it would be difficult to get more followers interested in the page.

BYU already has safety briefings at the beginning of the school year, but this does not necessarily change behavior as the rates for vehicle burglaries remain relatively constant year-to-year (PCPD, 2018). The trick with education will be teaching students to alter their behavior and mindset, who at such a young age tend to be naïve and do not prioritize safety and security because "the job of protecting kids most often falls to parents and caregivers, and it is up to them to familiarize themselves with safety risks in and around their homes and communities" (National Safety Council, 2020).

Another solution to this problem would be more video surveillance. This would undoubtedly be a difficult solution due to the massive cost of equipment, cameras, and hard drives to store the data, but it would certainly be one of the better solutions since it would allow for possible 24/7 monitoring, despite adding to the cost since implementing video surveillance would require more staff.

This solution also would provide more opportunities to identify and catch suspects. This is evidenced by more and more citizens having

video doorbells which allow officers to view footage of nearby crimes as well as lower the number of crimes occurring when the cameras are visible (The Community Policing Dispatch, 2020).

Another issue with this solution, however, would be the concern from the public about the government watching them. There would need to be a campaign to educate them and show that the system would not be used like England uses theirs: for facial recognition (BBC News, 2020). It would also be important to make sure the cameras are only in public areas, where people have no expectation of privacy in the first place.

Finally, there needs to be consistent and targeted enforcement in the area, especially with the graveyard shift since the majority of these crimes seem to happen in the early morning hours.

This solution would not be too taxing since officers are already on duty and there tends to be a lot of downtime on graveyard shifts since less citizens are putting in calls for service. There may need to be a mandate from the supervision that requires extra patrols from each officer during the shift, or a planned day where officers team up and walk the south campus neighborhood in the “hotspots” (Kappeler et. al., 2020, p. 316) that are identified by the latest crime statistics.

One issue with this solution is that while it could potentially lower the crime rate because people will get caught and taken off the streets, word could get out that officers are focusing on that area. This targeted enforcement might just push the problem somewhere else in the city.

Conclusion

Overall, this is a complex problem that has seen many attempts to solve it over the years, some including those that I have mentioned above. I have seen firsthand that through targeted enforcement, the rate of vehicle burglaries in the south campus area has gone down, but once we stopped placing flyers, locking vehicles out of courtesy, and doing extra patrols in the neighborhoods and underground parking structures, the problem returned. The solution, I believe, will take an amalgam of things to ultimately lower the crime rate. The biggest hurdle to overcome would be the necessity for the cooperation from many different agencies, due to the difficulties created by bureaucracy and communication issues. City departments such as zoning and streets, and the Provo City Police Department, the BYU Police Department,

the UTA Police, apartment owners, and perhaps most importantly the public itself, will have to come together in order to develop an effective program or plan to combat theft and vehicle burglaries. This first plan may not work, and another will have to be tried until, through trial and error, a viable solution is formed that works long-term. But the work will not end there, because going forward, standardized and consistent enforcement and action will need to be taken in order to prevent the problem from creeping back into the community.

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Educating Teens on the Warning Signs of Human Trafficking and Exploitation

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Growing up in southern New Mexico, I was one of the few people I knew of that were aware that human trafficking was affecting our community; many believed it was something that only affected those outside the United States. Many knew that people were being trafficked locally and that there was a demand for it within the US. However, not many knew that there are thousands of Americans who are affected by human trafficking. I knew, since I was a teenage girl who walked home alone, walked around the mall by herself, and even went out into the desert alone. I had to be aware of my surroundings.

Once I got into high school and began discussing with my peers and teachers that combatting human trafficking was the career choice I wanted to move towards, they were surprised. People in my hometown never knew that human trafficking could occur within our own communities. When we first started this class, I learned that traffickers tend to target teenage girls, and even ones that are in middle and elementary school. One of the major issues I came to realize was that no one had ever discussed the warning signs with me when I was in middle and high school. This paper will be part research, part interview, and part educational material for young women and men.

First, we must know that human traffickers tend to aim their tactics towards younger females who may not have a strong social and family life. Living on the border was one of the most prevalent distinctions about my community and school population that made them what they were. I lived outside the city in a decently nice, well-off neighborhood. My school, however, was in an area where a majority of the population came from broken homes, and many were involved in gang activity. We were a border town and only a thirty-minute drive from Juarez, Mexico,

where the cartel was extremely prevalent. I knew so many girls in my town who would do anything to feel cared about or loved. Most kids my age would do anything for money so they could get drugs. There wasn't much to do where I grew up, so engaging in illegal activities was basically all there was for teens who didn't have good family home environments.

Being that there wasn't much to do meant there wasn't much to look forward to in terms of good jobs or money. When I was in high school, I got a letter about a job opportunity and thought it was interesting. I found out that most of my female friends had received the same thing, yet none of my guy friends had. Then during my senior year, I learned that these so called "job opportunities" were part of a human trafficking scheme across the US under the name of Vector. In my Combatting Human Trafficking class we were discussing the different indicators in recruitment and advertising that traffickers use to grab a victims attention, and I realized that had happened to me when I was a teenager.

Those job opportunities looked like they were out of a human traffickers' handbook. They were offering to pay us in cash, choose our own hours, and extremely high pay for a low-level job.

After a post about a so-called "job opportunity" through a fake company called Vector went viral, people my age and younger became more aware of the probability that trafficking was happening in their own communities. I have noticed that in addition to that post, so many more posts are circulating Facebook regarding the actuality of people being trafficked. So many of them are moms who are at grocery stores with their kids and they see men and women following them around the store or around the parking lots. Some have had these people approach them and they immediately have a feeling something is wrong. I believe these posts are creating a way for teenagers and younger kids to see that something is wrong in their communities. It's not a great way to bring awareness to trafficking, however, it is a way that connects with them because it is all over social media.

Right now, in the state of New Mexico, there is no universal educational material for teachers. The Attorney General of New Mexico, Hector Balderas, started a human trafficking task force within the last three years that some teachers from around the state are involved in. Since it is just getting started, many teachers do not even know this

resource exists for them to take advantage of. The educational material that he has for educators is a video of a presentation that was done two years ago. (Balderas, 2019). Since that time there has been more updated research on the topic. In the video, the AG and agent in charge tell stories of educators and how they helped save a little girl from trafficking because they intervened due to knowledge learned in one of the task force's presentations. It also shows that the only reason there is a law regarding human trafficking in New Mexico is because of that one male agent, who while an officer, went on a domestic violence call and saw that there were signs of human trafficking when no one else on the scene did. At that time, he went directly to the attorney general and was appointed the agent in charge of the state Human Trafficking division.

Since then, the attorney general has been bringing awareness of human trafficking across the state to those involved with kids who may be at risk. This agent has secured a grant that covers the cost of conducting human trafficking cases in the state since the government does not have a specific budget for these types of cases. Before the task force was created, and before he secured this grant, each individual county had to work on these cases alone. Now they are able to work with other agencies and use a victim-centered approach. In previous cases, the children were placed with children's services case workers and it was on the case workers to get the children into foster homes. Today, they have agents who are there specifically to take care of the victims. They take them to get clothing, food, and if possible, housing. If not, they are there to find family or friends who would be willing to take them in and help them find legitimate jobs to get them back on their feet.

There were also no laws prior to 2008 in New Mexico regarding the specifics of human trafficking until this grant was secured. Today the state trafficking task force conducts about 50 cases a year, using new statutes that have been put in place in order to prosecute traffickers to the fullest. Most of these cases are due to the presentations that the agent has done for medical personnel, teachers, victim advocates, and law enforcement who call the task force because they are now aware of what to look for. The task force was even gifted Joey, an electronic detecting canine, by a federal sponsor who wants to see this task force do the most it can. Joey has been used in multiple instances of crimes against children and is able to detect cameras in walls and any

other electronic devices that may be used as evidence (Balderas, 2019). New Mexico has made amazing strides in the fight against human trafficking, but there is still work to be done.

To figure out the best way to form a curriculum for high school students, I had to find out what kind of curricula were already out there. The only one I found that was designed specifically for middle and high school students was called “Not a #Number” and was created by a group called LOVE146. Their curriculum was designed to help “youth recognize recruitment tactics, understand vulnerability, and develop and practice skills to safely navigate risky situations” in order to avoid human traffickers (Bozack, 2019). This curriculum was designed to be taught in schools in coordination with health classes. It is made to include male, female, and those who identify as LGBTQ+.

“Not a #Number” is a five-module series that focuses on a different topic for each one. The first is an overall introduction to human trafficking, exploitation, and what they actually consist of. The youth learn how other youth have become involved in commercial sex, the negative effects of that involvement, and how to recognize those who may be affected by it. They also learn to recognize the red flags of grooming and recruitment, much of which is what we discussed in my Combatting Human Trafficking class concerning the Romeo pimps and ads that are aimed at teenagers. Romeo pimps are men who act sweet and caring towards girls in order to get the girls to “fall in love” with them so the girl will do whatever the pimp says.

The second module discusses force, fraud, and coercion, as well as the strategies that traffickers use to recruit kids. Early on, the students are taught that there is nothing in these situations that could ever make it the victims’ fault. However, they do learn there are possible consequences to risky and dangerous behavior.

The third module dives into the specifics of red flags in relationships. The students learn the characteristics of and differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships and how unhealthy ones can lead to potentially harmful situations. They also learn how to get help safely and how to leave an unhealthy relationship; they discover that the act of leaving in itself is very complex. The students learn about the resources available to them, either through school or shelters.

Fourth, they learn about vulnerability and resilience. That consists of identifying personal and peer vulnerabilities in case one of their

peers cannot ask for help. By learning this, the students can get their friends help safely. They also learn ways to reduce their risk in physical and digital (social media) settings.

The fifth, and last module is about reducing risky behavior and getting help. The students are shown ways traffickers use social media to recruit kids, and how to make sure that they use it safely. They are also taught how to locate local resources in case anything was ever to happen to them or a peer.

I also found the website “Be the Jam: Stop Human Trafficking,” but it has not updated since 2014. It has very little information on trafficking, and it says it is just “ways of moving people from freedom into slavery” (2014). I decided to add it because it does explain the different ways traffickers try to get girls, whether it be from a guy who wants to be their boyfriend, gets a girl to trust him, then sells her to a trafficker, or someone you meet on social media, meet up with, then the traffickers drug you and sell you to someone. There is nothing about warning signs now that social media has progressed, and traffickers have gotten smarter. They also have nothing in regard to resources other than the National Human Trafficking Hotline on the main page. The way this website is made, it looks like it is aimed towards middle school girls. While I assume “Be the Jam” has good intentions, it has become out of date and has very little information and few resources.

Jenee Littrell, administrator of safe and supportive schools for the San Mateo County Office of Education in California, has spoken out recently about what should be done regarding human trafficking education in schools. First, make sure the administrators and teachers understand trafficking and the warning signs. They should be aware that warning signs in teens usually consist of bruises, tattoos, branding, and unexplained absences in school.

One of the examples she gives is that of a student who had been missing classes on Mondays and Tuesdays. Littrell explains this could be an indicator that their trafficker is requiring them to travel.

The second example Littrell uses is that the integration of human trafficking education into the curriculum is extremely important in order for the students to grasp the full topic. I agree. It is not something that can be covered to the fullest in one school assembly or over one class period. It needs to be discussed frequently within the curriculum and over an extended period of time. Littrell explains that the best way

to do this is to find “...individuals and groups with a service provider background, who know how to use appropriate terminology, are mindful of students who have experienced trauma and strive to create a safe environment” (Pannoni, 2017).

Lastly, she warns to be aware of school culture when teaching this topic. For example, human trafficking can be traced to multiple gangs across the US. When I was in high school, I knew multiple people who were members of gangs. If a teacher begins talking with a girl about trafficking, and her trafficker is part of that school in any capacity, whether it be student or faculty, that girl could possibly be put in a dangerous situation. Littrell said that this was the reason she began looking into trafficking within schools across the US, because when she was a teacher in San Diego, she learned that more than a few of her students were being trafficked by others in the school body.

Educating students at preteen and teen ages is crucial when teachers are beginning to see it happening within their own student body. When I found the “Not a #Number” curriculum, I realized it was exactly what I wanted to create and implement in schools. Right now, there are only 3,000 people trained to teach this curriculum in the US and the UK. Those include law enforcement, medical professionals, and teachers. I believe that if there was a way to reach out to more teachers and get this curriculum to students as a preventative measure, it would be the most beneficial. Right now, it is more adults using it to prevent trafficking of their students and help identify those survivors and get them the support they need.

To make sure this curriculum is the most beneficial it can be, I would recommend fitting this into a health class in either high school or middle school. Since most states require students to take it both in middle school and high school, it could be modified for each specific age group. In a yearlong class, the five modules can be spread across five weeks of the course, time and school curriculum allowing. If it is a one-semester class, it can be taught during five different class periods. I know that many believe these topics to be too much for middle school students to learn about, but in this day and age social media is reaching younger and younger people, which also means that traffickers now have the ability to reach younger and younger at-risk kids.

Every year, teachers have mandatory training in how to recognize students who may be being abused, assaulted, and/or experiencing

other issues at home. Implementing this curriculum at the beginning of the school year, along with their leadership and main curriculum training, would allow them to see other warning signs that they might not otherwise be aware of. In high school, students tend to be less inclined to approach teachers about issues at home, but this would allow the teachers to initiate the conversation and let the students know that they have a safe space to talk about their experience and possibly get help.

I believe the outline of “Not a #Number” is a great way to go; however, the curriculum itself, if taught in schools, should be more in-depth and detailed. Looking at the first module, I realized it simply defines exploitation, human trafficking, and vulnerability. I believe that explaining the history can help give the students an understanding of what human trafficking is. In class, we discussed the history of brothels and child labor. If students can see the historic examples and compare them to acts that are being done in their communities today, I believe it would help them better understand rather than just defining words and not seeing how those words are enacted. It would also be beneficial to explain the effect trafficking has on a survivor’s life in terms of trauma and neurobiology. This would be especially helpful for high school students, because people in their age group would be able to understand the concept. Explain that not all people are able to fight back. Explain the part of the fight, flight, or freeze concept.

Module two goes over the culture and societal sides of trafficking. One thing I noticed in this module was the use of the word “risky.” It was used to describe the behavior of young people that entice traffickers. For me the word “risky” has more of a negative connotation when describing an act. In my mind, I would think it would make anyone affected feel like it is their fault even when it is not. I would make sure that the curriculum would explain that there are some behaviors that traffickers look for, rather than make it seem like whatever the victim/survivor has done is their fault because what they did was risky and there was a chance they would be trafficked. This culture part is where I would begin talking about how the culture of law enforcement and the judicial system are working on ways to change laws in order to protect the victims rather than prosecute them for illegal acts they may have done under duress or force.

The discussion of “risky” behaviors and changing that connotation moves us into module three, where we discuss red flags in and out

of relationships. Control, whether it be financial, behavioral, or physical, is one of the major ones. When I was in high school, I didn't know these were red flags until it was too late, specifically the behavior of those who are called "Romeo Pimps." Explain that they will make them feel special and make them love them and immediately do a 180 to where, "if you love me . . ." you'll do something and use other words like that. It is important for young people to see that and be able to get out before it is too late for them. Tell them that it is okay to leave those unhealthy relationships even if it might be hard, because no matter what happens they will be safe and able to find comfort in someone else eventually where it is a healthy relationship.

Module four delves into vulnerability and resilience. Explain the types of behaviors that traffickers look for in young people. Those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, those who may have issues at home, girls who post specific types of photos on social media, and those who deal with substance abuse. Describe how to look for these in their own lives and to recognize them without making them feel at fault, because they are not. It will also teach them how to recognize them in their friends' lives and hopefully give them a way to reach out and offer help even if they may not express that they want it, without pushing them too hard. This module will also help them see the types of tactics used by recruiters. Explain that fast cash, a place to live, and travel all being offered to them by someone they met online or for only a minute in person are all warning signs. Also, helping them to identify ways to change their behavior and posts on social media will help lower the chance that traffickers will try to contact them. Explaining that not communicating with random people significantly lowers their risk. Also, explain to women that by posting certain kinds of photos on social media, even if it feels empowering, traffickers use that in a way to target them and make them feel good.

Module five is where they will learn about resources and getting help whether they have been trafficked or are currently being trafficked. Resources within their communities will be emphasized, along with those such as the National Human Trafficking Hotline. Each state will be given a different section on this because each state may not have the same resources as their neighbors. It is important that this curriculum is also online. Even if the student has a physical copy of it, there is the risk that their trafficker will find it and retaliate. One of the major

things that could help with this is what I found on the Joyful Heart Foundation website. They are a foundation that is bringing awareness to sexual assault and domestic violence. They also started the “End the Backlog” movement that has picked up in the last few years. Their website, on every screen, has a button one can push that will immediately close the screen and erase it from the history so the abuser cannot see that whoever was using the computer was searching for help and a way out (JHF, 2019). I believe that implementing this on every resource website would be helpful because victims and survivors would have the confidence that they could look and reach out for help without their trafficker or abuser finding out.

For the purpose of this paper, there are not many specific details for each aspect. However, with work, I believe that using the curriculum formed within this paper in schools here in America will make a way for teens who are possibly being trafficked to find ways that they can leave their situation if they decide to. It will also help bring awareness to those who have never thought about the negative implications of social media and different aspects of life that would make them more susceptible to traffickers gearing their tactics towards them. I believe that the first line of defense against traffickers would be to get to their possible targets first to ensure that there are fewer girls and others being trafficked. That is one of the only ways we can combat this issue and ensure the safety of young people in the future and the ability to get help to those who may already be victims of human trafficking.

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Mass Shootings

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Abstract

In the United States, there has been a vast upsurge in the number of mass shootings that happen each year. Why is this happening? Mass shootings have been blamed on everything from stricter gun control, to video games encouraging violence, and the mistaken assumption of mentally ill people being violent. However, none of these reasons have the research to back them up, just the opposite in most cases. Instead, possible suggestions to explain this are that people have an overinflated sense of entitlement, the media gives too much attention to the shooters, and banning guns from specific locations creates easy targets. To find solutions and reduce the number of mass shootings that happen, we need to debunk the standard ideas and research these new concepts. Some of the possible solutions include teaching responsibility and a hard work ethic for a person's actions, eliminating gun-free zones, ceasing to blame false issues, and changing the way our media outlets report such tragic occasions. But, most importantly, we need to stop using these events for political gain and instead band together as a nation to help those suffering families and communities heal. If we can do these things, we as a nation can help reduce the number of these atrocities and lower the number of fatalities that occur from them. We need to take accountability and do whatever we can to stop mass shootings from happening.

Mass Shootings

Mass shootings have been a serious problem in the United States for many years. Publicly, politicians and lawmakers have blamed this on guns themselves being evil, violent video games, and mental illness.

However, the reality is much different. I believe there are three arguments that help explain why mass shootings are occurring. These reasons are, people have an overinflated sense of entitlement, the media gives too much attention to the shooters, and banning guns creates easy targets. How can we decide how to fix this problem if we cannot agree on the cause of the issue? I think we need to focus more on taking responsibility for our own actions rather than placing blame on others and inanimate objects.

Politicians seemingly argue constantly over the issue of guns. They often say that the legality and access to guns are the reasons for mass shootings. They seem to forget about the person wielding the weapon and focus on the gun itself. My research is aimed at the cause of mass shootings and what everyday Americans believe to be the reasons behind them.

This is a personal topic for me and has been for many years. When I was in junior high, we had a lock down because of a shooter near campus. I was terrified for my siblings who also attended my school. I thought for sure that this was going to turn into another school shooting, and I would lose my family. Luckily, the shooter did not care about the school or students at all. Rather, he was focused on the man who was having an affair with his wife. The two men just happened to be fighting in the field directly across from the school when the gun was fired. All students and faculty were safe, but this day changed my life. I had never thought something like this could happen at my school—it was something that only happened in big cities or places with high crime rates. I have learned that is not true. Since that day, I have thought about the reasons why mass shootings occur. If we can find the root cause, we can work on a solution.

I have my own ideas about this. People feel more entitled to get what they want and throw fits by shooting others when they do not succeed. The media does not help when they broadcast the shooter's name and information, giving glory to the act and reinforcing the attention a shooter will get for killing people. We are putting up signs that read, "gun-free zone," but in essence we are telling shooters to pick that location because there is no one armed to stop the attack. These are my thoughts and feelings. However, I need research to back up my ideas and give me new ones or disprove my theories. I want to know what the public thinks, so that we can start to fight back. Too many lives have

been lost to mass shooters. This research is designed to help stop the destruction.

In trying to discover what the causes of mass shootings are, I have found a few different opinions. Some of them are like my own, while others are things that I had not thought of. In some cases, the possible causes have been disproven, and some have begun to research these ideas, but additional research is needed. Some of these possible causes include video games, mental illness, attitudes of entitlement and selfishness, the implementation of gun-free zones, and the way the media covers a mass shooting story.

Shortly after every mass shooting the politicians get up and call for stricter gun control. They want to raise the age requirements, enhance background checks, and limit the type and quantity of guns that are allowed. They use these tragedies to further their own agenda. However, the problem with this is that it is not the people who legally purchase guns that are committing the crime. Criminals are not going to care about the legality of the weapon they use:

Numerous studies conducted by academic researchers and by the federal government have shown that criminals do not use legal markets to obtain guns. Their primary findings were that criminals get guns from their “social network,” i.e., friends and persons known to them, but generally not from the various legal sources available to them. This study illustrates that laws and regulations only impact the law-abiding. (Ila)

Laws are there to keep honest people honest, but they do not stop the criminals. So, changing the laws to make it harder for law abiding citizens to own firearms will not help reduce mass shootings or any other gun related offense. There will always be a way for people to get their hands-on illegal guns. A comparable example would be drugs. There are many illegal drugs, however, those who want to will find a way around the law.

Another often blamed cause of mass shootings is violent video games. This idea has been around for years, and no studies have been able to prove correlation or causation between video games and real-life violence. Many people have claimed that the more kids play violent video games, the more likely they are to grow up with aggressive behavior and commit violent crimes. This has been used to explain

teenagers and young adults' actions when they participate in mass shootings. However, researchers at Oxford found there was no correlation between videogames and violence:

A 2004 report conducted by the Secret Service and the Education Department found that only 12 percent of perpetrators in more than three dozen school shootings showed an interest in violent video games. Despite a continuing lack of a link, lawmakers and public figures continue to blame the gaming industry.

At the height of the reflex to blame video games—following the Columbine High School shooting in 1999—a Gallup poll found that 62% of adults nationwide believed entertainment was the major catalyst for the tragedy and that 83% supported restrictions on the sale of violent media to children. (Wan & Bever, 2019)

If you want to say video games cause children to spend less time outdoors, or from getting the amount of exercise they need, researchers will agree. But video games do not cause people to become violent. It does not seem to matter that studies reject the theory of violent video games causing school shootings, it is an easy target and will not hurt the election or reelection campaign for politicians if they blame video games. But it can hurt them to blame mental illness. Regardless, many have done this.

Mass shootings are such an awful thing, and most of us cannot imagine the mindset that someone would need to be in to commit such a horrible act. It is simple and easy to accept the hypothesis that there would be a correlation between violence and mental illness. However, most people who suffer from mental illness are not violent in any way. Mentally ill individuals are more likely to be the victims of violent crime rather than the perpetrator.

In a 2018 report on 63 active shooter assailants, the FBI found that 25 percent had been diagnosed with a mental illness. Of those, three had been diagnosed with a psychotic disorder. In a 2015 study that examined 226 men who committed or tried to commit mass killings, 22 percent could be considered mentally ill. (Wan & Bever, 2019)

Putting the blame on mental illness does more harm than good. Lawmakers talk about taking away the rights of people who have a

mental illness. They also talk about bringing back mental institutions and locking away the mentally ill to keep our society safe. It has been hard work to change the stigma of mental health issues and blaming the mentally ill for criminal acts and suggesting to lock them away takes us back to negative stigmas. This is dangerous as it discourages people from getting help when they need it for fear of negative repercussions. It also makes those who seek help feel like pariahs and attaches shame to their condition. Every single person has had some form of depression in their lives. Whether it is clinical depression, situational, or just a really bad day. But that does not mean we all turn violent. This is the case for any mental illness, not just depression. So why do people still think that someone must be mentally ill if they shoot and kill innocent people? Or that the mentally ill are dangerous?

The United States is experiencing a public health epidemic of mass shootings and other forms of gun violence. A convenient response seems to be blaming mental illness; after all, “who in their right mind would do this?” Such ideas are utterly wrong. Mental illnesses, certainly severe mental illnesses, are not the major cause of mass shootings. It also is dangerously stigmatizing to people who suffer from these devastating disorders and can subject them to inappropriate restrictions (Leshner, 2019).

It is easy to find simple and surface answers to the problem, but the real issues run much deeper. There is a sense of entitlement people have now. What I mean by this is that people seem to think that the world, life, and/or society, owes them and they should not have to work for things. When life does not go their way, they throw a temper tantrum and in extreme cases, this can lead to mass shootings.

A world of perceived entitlement has created the idea that things should be handed to people instead of earned. This causes anger, depression, and frustration when life does not turn out how you want it to, and takes away the willingness for people to have a good, strong work ethic. For example, if a child is bullied in school, the parents, teachers, and other significant people should be involved and try to stop the bullying; however, I do not believe the child should just be transferred to a different school in most cases. Parents should teach their children how to deal with opposition and how to adapt. There will always be people that you do not get along with, but learning to adapt and work with that person can be very beneficial and teach valuable life

lessons. If the child is transferred, it seems more like running away rather than finding a solution to the problem.

They also do not work hard for things they want to achieve. They have come to expect to be given a “participation trophy” for showing up, rather than having to earn a prize for a job well done. I think this causes people to get more upset by challenges and take more drastic measures, such as shooting others, to cope with it and show others their frustrations.

Part of this problem of using murder to get attention is the effortless connection we have with others across the nation and the world. When a shooting happens, the media is right on scene as fast as possible to cover the story and share it with the world. While we want to keep updated about what is going on in the world and share about our own lives, this has become a double-edged sword. The problem is that the media is giving the shooter exactly what they want. Unintentionally of course, but it still happens. Shooters want notoriety, popularity, and attention among other things. “Studies indicate that the more media attention a shooter gets, the more likely the event will inspire a future mass shooter” (Pew, Goldbeck, Halsted, & Zuckerman, 2020).

When we broadcast to the world exactly what happened, it can teach others that shooting people will accomplish that goal. We focus so much on the shooter instead of the victims. There is a natural, yet morbid curiosity to learn as much about a person who would commit a crime such as this. We study their background, mindset, and reasoning for their crimes. This only encourages others to seek fame through the same method.

To control shootings, many locations have created gun free zones. This was supposed to stop anyone from bringing guns into that location. But only the law-abiding citizens care enough to follow the law. If someone is looking to kill another human being, are they going to care about other laws about where they can legally have a gun? They are already breaking the most serious and heinous crime by committing murder, what does it matter if they have a gun in a gun free zone. They are either going to be caught, killed by the police, or themselves. I propose, and research has shown, that gun free zones create easy targets for mass shooters. There are many examples as examined by this study that show killers and potential killers plan on using gun free zones for their crime.

In 2016, Dearborn Heights, Michigan, ISIS supporter Khalil Abu Rayyan had an online discussion with an undercover FBI agent in which he discussed his plan for a “martyrdom operation” by attacking a Detroit church. He told the agent that this would be an easy target because “people are not allowed to carry guns in church.” Fortunately, Abu Rayyan was arrested before he could achieve martyrdom.

Similarly, in 2015, Elliot Rodger murdered six people in a Santa Barbara, California, gun-free zone. In his 141-page “manifesto,” he explained that in planning his attack he had decided against launching it in other locations where someone with a gun might be present to cut short his killing spree. (Parry, 2019)

Banning guns from certain locations, such as schools, was intended to stop people from bringing guns onto campus at all. Instead, it has made those locations more vulnerable to attack. “According to the Crime Prevention Research Center, between 1950 and 2018 97.8 percent of all mass public shootings occurred in gun-free zones” (Parry, 2019). So if creating gun free zones has not helped the problem, we could try the opposite.

Instead of no guns allowed, letting teachers and other staff members who want to and have their concealed carry permit carry weapons can provide protection for that location. No staff member should be expected or forced to carry a weapon; it would only permit those who want to carry, to have the right. These employees could also have mandatory training they have to go through if they want to carry during school hours. If potential shooters must take the chance that there are people who could stop them from accomplishing their agenda, they may choose a different location for their attack. It may also give students, parents, and faculty a better feeling of safety in their schools.

It is easy to place the blame on other things, but guns are not the cause of mass shootings, they are just the means used to fulfill that goal. Unfortunately, the same thing could happen with knives, bombs, and vehicles as with guns. It is a tool to be used and not the perpetrator of the crime.

Part of the reason mass shootings continue to happen is the perception of the public. Every time a shooting occurs, politicians and gun activists fight over the role of the gun in the situation. Politicians are

continuously arguing that gun control is the answer. If assault rifles are outlawed and gun permits require more extensive background checks, then less people would own guns. This would result in less access to firearms and shootings will be reduced according to this viewpoint. On the other side the NRA (National Rifle Association) continues to fight for the right of American citizens to own firearms and not have as many government regulations.

This takes the attention from each shooting and turns the conversation to gun control instead of looking at the root of the problem. It uses tragedy as a political platform to further gun control agendas rather than taking care of and helping the hurting community. It also relieves the shooter from personal responsibility for their actions and gives them an out. That they committed these acts because they had access to guns, not that they made a bad decision.

It would help fix this if politicians stopped taking the opportunity to put themselves in the spotlight and highlight their own agendas, and instead took the time to find out what the affected area needs. Do they need grief and trauma counselors brought in? Do families need help to pay for funeral costs? Does the school need help to rebuild, remodel, or repair that facility? The people in power could make a huge difference in the recovery of the traumatized community. But they would have to be willing to change what message they project during the aftermath of a shooting.

Another thing that could be done to help reduce mass shootings would be to encourage the media to change their approach to how they cover those events. For instance, the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training team, in collaboration with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, has developed the “Don’t Name Them” campaign. “The campaign aims to curb media-induced imitational mass shootings and suggests minimizing naming and describing the individuals involved in mass shootings, limiting sensationalism, and refusing to broadcast shooter statements or videos” (Meindl & Ivy, 2017).

Other suggestions have also been published, things such as media outlets present the shooter’s actions in a negative light, and not giving them the positive attention they are looking for. Another option would be to stop describing the shooter’s frame of mind, and reasoning for their actions as it gives the idea to do the same to people who feel the same as the shooter. Thirdly, and the one I think is the best option, is

to decrease the amount of coverage these shootings receive in the media. When potential shooters see that they will not get the recognition that they want by committing murder, they are less likely to follow through with those acts.

Along with this is limiting, if not eliminating the live coverage of shootings. This creates more excitement and hype around the event that could inspire copycats. Overall, we need to be careful with what is being broadcast to the public and make sure we are not encouraging more shootings for attention. The less detail given is better and sticking to just the facts rather than speculating on the shooter's background, intentions, or motivations will help reduce the number of people who are inspired to imitate these acts (Meindl & Ivy, 2017).

In trying to reduce the number of mass shootings, the public has inadvertently become more vulnerable. Politicians are using the tragedies to further their own agendas. Gun free zones have created targets with vulnerable people left unable to defend themselves. The way the media reports shootings has given shooters the publicity, notoriety, and fame they want, and has encouraged copycats. To fix this, politicians need to stop vying for attention and instead looking to see what they can do to help those afflicted. Gun free zones should be abolished, and qualified citizens should be allowed to carry weapons to protect themselves and others. The media should change how they cover an attack to put the focus on the victims rather than the shooter.

Putting away the mentally ill or restricting their rights will not help either in most cases, it will only be taking away from people who have done nothing to deserve it and cannot help the illness that they have. Placing the blame on violent video games and taking them away may be a solution to other issues, like kids going outside to play, but it will not stop the killing.

The entitlement attitude of thinking you should get everything you want, the media hounds being ready, willing and able to broadcast the story, and gun free zones making easy targets, it explains why there are so many mass shootings throughout the country. We need to take a stand and stop giving these shooters what they want, and make sure we are protecting ourselves.

These changes could potentially impact and reduce the number of mass shootings that occur, as well as the number of fatalities at each further attack, and reduce the fear that grips our country every day in

the wake of each attack. But most importantly, we need to stop using these events for political gain and instead, band together as a nation to help those suffering families and communities heal. If we can do these things, I believe, we as a nation can help reduce the number of these atrocities and lower the number of fatalities that occur from them. We need to take accountability and do whatever we can to stop mass shootings from happening.

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