Integrating personal safety into the management and maintenance of the built environment of university campuses

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Importance of Research Topic

“campuses need to be safe. Campuses are places to learn and grow. A community of violence is incompatible with these requirements.”

(Hoffman et al. 1998: xv)
Aerial view of Glamorgan campus
Previous campus safety research

• Based mainly on quantitative research techniques
• Crime statistics – ‘dark figure of crime’ (Maguire, 2002)
• Crime surveys condense perceptions to fit into predetermined and narrow rating scales
• Techniques do not provide insight into contextual, social, personal or emotional influences on crime
Adopting a qualitative approach

- More accurate gauge of safety concerns than using objective crime data
- Subjective perspectives remain untapped
- Approach allows in-depth discussion of user concerns and issues
- Provide important contextual details that are not revealed in crime data
- Revealing insights into how the design and maintenance of campus facilities impact on personal safety
Methodology

• Questionnaires
• Route identification
• ‘Virtual-Reality Panorama Tool’ to film routes across campus
• Focus groups
• Analysis
Route identification using PhotoShop – Stage 1

University of Glamorgan
you live, you learn
Route identification using PhotoShop – Stage 2
Route identification using PhotoShop – Stage 3
A focus group

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Key findings:

The main determinants influencing perceived campus safety
Aesthetics and maintenance

ID3: Neglect means ‘oh we don’t care’. If it’s proficiently presented it means they care about the environment, they care about the buildings, they care about us. FG7 R2 STAFF
Enclosed spaces and alleyways

ID6: Like I would never never go down there but if I did have to go down there I’d run. FG7 R1 STAFF
Hard security devices

ID6: If there was CCTV around then that would make me feel safer as well because I think if there was any dodgy characters, if somebody in the gatehouse or security was watching me – that would make me feel a bit better.

FG7 VISITOR
Isolated places

R5: The quieter areas seem to be more of a threat. FG4
STUDENT
ID8: A couple of street lights would be quite good just so you could see. I mean being able to see what’s going on all around you is a big part of your sense of personal safety.
ID6: People from anywhere can walk in and they're never apprehended at all so you could be anybody - nobody knows who is actually on campus and who is not. I think that's quite a big issue.

FG1 STAFF
Vegetation

ID9: I’d want to pick up my pace a bit just because of the bushes either side of you. FG7 R3 STAFF
Facilities management

Key issues:
- User-led design and management solutions
- Findings can be used to support objective data
- Provides specific environmental characteristics to target
- Important to assess potential impact of campus improvements
- We are currently working with Glamorgan’s Facilities Manager to introduce some of the recommendations onto our campus
Conclusions

• Methodology useful in probing subjective perceptions of an environment
• Provides a richer and more profound insight into personal safety issues confronting campus users
• Campus relatively safe in the day but issues to be remedied at night
• Methodology is highly versatile and has uses beyond personal safety exploration