Student Perspectives of Safety at the University of Vermont:
An Analysis of Fear in Burlington, VT

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A thesis submitted to the faculty at the University of Vermont in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in the College of Arts and Sciences Department of Geography and Geosciences

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Abstract

Urban college campuses introduce complex dynamics that affect how students navigate their campuses and cities. This study employed a critical geographic perspective to discover the nature and extent of safety concerns for University of Vermont students living in Burlington. The primary research methods to gather and analyze data included surveys, traditional interviews, and walking interviews, as well as analysis of summary campus safety data provided by the project's community partner, the Office of Student-Community Relations. The main goals of this research were to highlight student voices, provide recommendations to the university, and add new insights to this field of study.

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Introduction

In my first year of college, my roommate's dad gave me my first pepper spray. He said, "As a young woman in college you can never be too careful." Three years later while a man tried to break into my apartment in Burlington, Vermont one random Wednesday night, I was holding that same pepper spray in my hand. This experience was not unique to just me. For the majority of university students, college is their first experience living away from home. This means new freedoms, new people, and new dangers that many have yet to encounter. Colleges attempt to create a safe environment for their students with resources such as campus police, self-defense classes, and strategically placed emergency call buttons, and yet safety is still far from a guarantee in the college experience.

College students' experiences with safety concerns and the geographies of fear have been a long-studied research topic and there is considerable existing research on related issues. There remain, however, significant gaps in the literature that this research sought to address. For example, while there have been some studies of the gendered experiences of college students within similar towns, these studies have generally been framed by the concept of binary gender identities. This research expands on the prior studies by exploring the experience of non-binary and otherwise identifying students regarding safety within and nearby a campus environment. Additionally, this research asked questions including, but not limited to: (1) Where and at what times of day/week do University of Vermont students feel safe or not safe, and why?; (2) What kind of crimes are students most concerned about?; (3) What actions do students take to feel safe?; (4) How do these safety concerns affect students living on campus versus off campus?; (5) How do respondents' own positionalities influence their feelings of safety?; (6) What safety

resources exist for students and are they aware of them? and (7) What suggestions do students have to make UVM and the areas around UVM feel safer?

This research is especially timely with Burlington's rising opioid crisis, several recent shootings in the Burlington area, new safety features and plans implemented by UVM, and media coverage of a number of controversies concerning the Burlington police department, which in turn have contributed to lower levels of trust for some residents. In addition to analyzing and finding trends in students' experiences, one of the main goals of this research was to highlight UVM student voices and insights as well as provide the university with recommendations for possible next steps to mitigate the safety concerns of its students and improve community relations.

To conduct this research I used a mixed-methods approach which allowed me to do a broader sample size as well as dive deeper into the experiences and stories of students. These methods consisted of a pilot study, surveys, interviews, walking interviews, and an analysis of summary campus safety data provided by the project's community partner, the Office of Student-Community Relations. These methods were chosen to provide details about experiences and social processes as well as identify the extent of perceptions of fears from a larger participant pool. Using these methods, I found that, as UVM students are navigating the campus and the city of Burlington, they are experiencing a wide range of safety concerns of varying levels in various locations.

Positionality

There were many times throughout this research process when I asked myself if I was the right person to lead this study. I never doubted the importance of the research I was doing but I questioned if I, someone who transferred to this school their sophomore year and never lived on campus, could appropriately tell the stories and opinions of University of Vermont students when I myself did not have a full UVM experience. Not until the end of the first month of the Fall 2023 semester did I truly believe in my own validity as the primary researcher.

This research idea came to me because of the experiences I was hearing from close friends of mine who had their bike stolen, or their car stolen, or their house broken into, and the struggles they were dealing with handling these incidents and continuing to be full-time students. In September of 2022, a good friend's house was broken into in the middle of the day, thankfully no one was home at the time. The man shattered the glass portion of their front door to unlock it, subsequently getting blood all over their home while he continued to steal thousands of dollars' worth of goods. While this incident was horrible within itself, what made it that much worse was their landlord failed to get them a new door for four months, claiming the wooden plank they had nailed to the existing broken door was sufficient. While worrying about their door and the safety of their home, they also had to deal with filing a claim with the police as well as insurance companies. All of this happened as they were trying to finish their final year at UVM, search for jobs after graduation, and find a new place to live for the following year.

This incident is something I thought about frequently as I was building this research project and thinking about the questions I wanted to ask UVM students. However, just like the experiences of students who attended UVM for all four years and knew what it was like to live on campus, experiencing crime in Burlington, Vermont was thankfully something I only knew

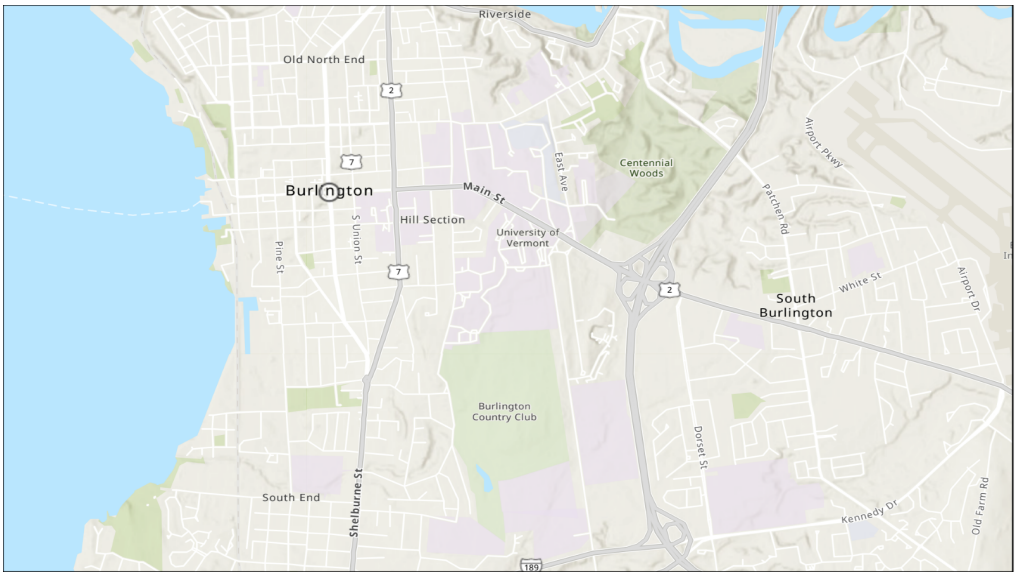
about second-hand. That was until the first month of my final fall semester when a man tried to break into my apartment. The incident happened on a random Wednesday night around eight pm. Since my housemates and I were all home at the time, the lights in the apartment were on and some of our curtains were open. The man could tell we were in our home but still tried every door and window in our apartment to see if he could get in. He only left upon hearing the sirens of the police I was forced to call as he refused to leave after multiple attempts of my housemates screaming at him to go away.

After this experience, I knew what it was like to feel unsafe in my college apartment. What it was like to deal with the police and notifying our landlord. What it was like telling my professors I would not be in class for the rest of the week because I was unable to fall asleep in my own bed for a while. Thankfully, nothing really came of the incident, he was never actually able to get into our home, and we have since added extra security measures. However, I now, unfortunately, understand what it is to be a student at the University of Vermont, dealing with extreme safety concerns, and navigating how those two experiences interact and influence each other.

Setting

To better understand the dynamics analyzed in this study, one must be familiar with the many layers of the geography of the city where the research is being conducted. Located on the eastern shoreline of Lake Champlain, Burlington is the most populous city in Vermont, with 44,595 people inhabiting its fifteen and a half square miles (US Census). The city of Burlington is segmented into multiple distinct districts referred to colloquially as The Hill, Downtown, The South End, The New North End, And The Old North End. The Hill section is dominated by the University of Vermont where, located above most of the city, one can see the lake from many viewpoints. While Burlington is home to multiple colleges and universities such as Champlain College, the University of Vermont is the largest institution of higher education (with 10,925 undergraduate students) and also the focus of this study.

The other areas of Burlington are primarily tourist destinations and residential areas. Downtown serves as the heart of Burlington and is home to the famous Church Street which is a pedestrian-only street containing many popular restaurants and businesses. Large numbers of tourists visit this part of Burlington for activities such as leaf peeping, skiing, and snowboarding on the nearby slopes, and the many maple-flavored treats that are created by the surrounding maple producers (Fry, n.d.). The south end is farther away from the busy downtown but still has many coffee shops and breweries and hosts the Burlington Farmers Market which has been running since 1980 (*Burlington Farmers Market*, n.d.). The New North end is the most suburban part of the city with many parks and walking trails. Finally, the Old North End, the oldest part of Burlington and often referred to as the ONE, is where the majority of off-campus UVM students rent their apartments (Yang, 2024).



(Figure 1: Map of Burlington, VT)

Beyond the layout of the city, there are also factors that affect how people perceive the safety of their place, namely the influence of recent drug use trends and its relationship with local law enforcement. In recent years, Burlington, like many cities in the United States, has been hit hard by things like the COVID-19 pandemic and extreme climate events that have changed the overall safety of the city. However, one of the most acute challenges this city has faced is the opioid crisis which was named the city's top public and safety priority by the City Council in 2023. In Chittenden County, the 619 square mile county that Burlington is nestled within, there have been 150 fatal overdoses from January 2020 to July 2023, the highest in any county in Vermont (Crowley & Petenko, 2023). Additionally, from just January 2023 to October 2023, the Burlington Fire Department responded to 422 reported overdoses (Crowley & Petenko, 2023). As the impacts of this crisis still resound within the community, residents are forced to face issues of open-air drug dealing and suspected drug-related crimes including multiple gun-related incidents and two homicides (Crowley & Petenko, 2023 and Sabet & Keays, 2023).

In the midst of an uptick in crime in Burlington, citizens have also experienced waning trust with the Burlington Police Department (BPD), which has further exacerbated the problem of drug-related crimes. In June 2020, the Burlington City Council voted to cut the BPD by almost 30 percent due to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests and subsequent reforms instigated by a national wave of murders of Black men by the police caught on social media, most notably the killing of George Floyd (Siegel, 2021). After the Burlington vote, many additional officers chose to leave BPD claiming they did not feel valued by the community. Since then, there have been additional votes to bring back the number of police officers as a lack of staff requires officers to elevate higher-priority issues (an example being car accidents) rather than quality-of-life issues, thus leaving the city to hire a private security firm to patrol areas such as City Hall Park (Siegel, 2021). However, to get BPD back to full staffing it is reportedly going to take several years (Corkery, 2022). Despite this more recent push for increased police presence, constant staffing changes and some negative media coverage have caused many residents to still harbor a lack of trust towards the BPD and some continue to argue for even more changes or proposals such as a community control board (Crowley, 2023). With the police department being the first line of care in many drug-related incidents, the problems between the community and the department are more evident than ever before. Overall, the physical landscape as well as the social and political landscape of Burlington have contributed in many ways to the safety of the city.

History of Safety at the University of Vermont

In order to appropriately explain the context of safety and crime for University of Vermont students one specific incident must be acknowledged. On October 7th, 2006, University of Vermont student Michelle Gardner-Quinn was murdered near campus by a thirty-seven-year-

old man named Brian Rooney. Michelle had last been seen the night of the 7th after going out with some friends and leaving to walk back home. While walking home, her cell phone died, and she asked to borrow Rooney's (Russell, 2008). Michelle was reported missing the next morning when she failed to meet up with her parents as planned (The Vermont Cynic, 2006). Michelle's body was found six days later by hikers on October 13th at Huntington Gorge, nearly 15 miles from where she was last seen (Russell, 2008). Rooney was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole (Russell, 2008).

The University of Vermont campus was rocked by this death and multiple vigils were held in memory of Michelle. This tragedy also made UVM students question how safe UVM and Burlington truly were (The Vermont Cynic, 2006). UVM President at the time, Daniel Fogel, attempted to assure his students of the safety of the campus as well as the surrounding town. "Ours is a close-knit and very caring community. We continue to feel that it is a relatively safe one, on and off campus, but our regular reviews of campus programs to support public safety will gather urgency from this tragedy" (The Vermont Cynic, 2006). As shocking and horrific as this death was, it is questionable if today's students know about Michelle due to the continuous changes in population that come with a college campus.

Current Safety Initiatives

Over the years, UVM has made many changes to its safety initiatives. For almost twenty years, UVM has used a Blue Light system which is "a series of alarm or panic stations that students can use to communicate with Police Services in an emergency" (Stern, 2019), but these are being phased out as other technologies are implemented. To keep the campus safe, UVM relies on both campus police as well as security measures such as the LiveSafe app and security cameras. To notify students of any active threats, UVM uses a mass notification system, called

CatAlert. CatAlert's goal is to "help keep UVM's community informed and updated during emergency situations by providing timely actionable information through a variety of modes" (*Campus Safety & Security Initiatives,* 2023). These include text messages, phone calls, and emails. The CatAlert is maintained by the UVM Department of Emergency Management and is activated by either UVM Dispatch or UVM's Emergency Operations Group (*Campus Safety & Security Initiatives,* 2023).

One of the most visible security features to UVM students is the UVM Police Force. For many decades, UVM used an unarmed security service that had auxiliary status to the Burlington Police Department (*Research and Review of UVM Police Services)*. In 1992, UVM President Tom Salmon replaced UVM security with the UVM Police Force (*Research and Review of UVM Police Services*). The UVM Police Force is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc. (CALEA) meaning it is in compliance with "nationwide standards covering all aspects of law enforcement, policies, procedures, practices, and operations" (*About Us | UVM Police Services*, 2024).

The second major and newer security feature that UVM relies on is the LiveSafe app. The LiveSafe app reportedly "provides campus community members the ability to share information with campus safety partners, including calling or messaging Police for emergency help from anywhere" (*Be UVM CatSafe*). The app also has features that allow for anonymous reporting, connecting students with different departments such as Campus Victim's Advocate and mental health resources, as well the SafeWalk feature that "provides a 24/7 virtual escort tool for walking, biking or riding" (*Be UVM CatSafe*). The main purpose of creating the LiveSafe app for the university was to replace the Blue Light system on campus with something they consider to be a virtual Blue Light. UVM's Department of Emergency Management claims that the effect of

a cell phone is a larger deterrent to criminal activity than the Blue Light system and that the Blue Light system is most often only used for false alarms or hoax calls. For these reasons starting in the summer of 2023, UVM has begun removing 20% of Blue Lights each year from service (*Campus Safety & Security Initiatives,* 2023).

Additional safety features UVM has implemented are Campus Safety Week and recurring campus safety talks and presentations. The most recent Campus Safety Week occurred from September 11th to September 15th, 2023. It was a week of "information sharing, training sessions, and fun activities sponsored by the Division of Safety and Compliance" (*Campus Safety Week*). Students could experience lessons on active threat response training, fire extinguisher training, drug harm reduction, etc. UVM also has a website dedicated to safety and security tips for students. It includes information on personal safety, transportation safety, technology safety, fire safety, and winter safety as well as what UVM considers to be the four tenets for personal safety: 1) Be alert and aware 2) Display confidence 3) Trust your instincts 4) Know how to call 911 (*Campus Safety Week*).

UVM Crime Statistics

As with any postsecondary institution that participates in federal student aid programs, UVM must comply with the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Crime Statistics Act (Clery Act). The Clery Act requires all postsecondary institutions to collect and publish crime statistics and other public safety information. The act, originally named the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act, was passed by Congress in 1990 and then renamed in 1991 in memory of Jeanne Clery who was sexually assaulted and murdered in her Lehigh University dorm room in 1986. The main purposes of the act are to "ensure public disclosures of crime on college campuses, to help students and employees protect themselves from campus crime, and to

assist prospective students and employees with considering public safety when choosing a college or university" (*2022 UVM Annual Security Report*, 2023). While the act has been amended many times over the years, the most recent change was the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2022 which "expanded reporting and prevention requirements for certain sex crimes" (*2022 UVM Annual Security Report*, 2023). In order to comply with the act, UVM releases an Annual Security Report detailing all crimes and other offenses that occur within a two-year period. In the report for 2020-2022, the number of reported crime incidents was lower than in the 2018-2020 period in almost every category except for arson, motor vehicle theft, and burglary. Arson had an increase of eight reported incidents, motor vehicle theft had an increase of eight reported incidents, and burglary had an increase of one (*2022 UVM Annual Security Report*, 2023). (The full statistics from the Annual Security Report are included in Appendix A).

(Table 1: Partial List of Statistics in UVM's Annual Security Report)

	On Campus	**Public Property**	**Non-Campus Property**	**Annual Totals: All Geography**	**Student Housing Facilities**
Burglary					
2020	7	0	0	7	2
2021	14	0	0	14	10
2022	19	0	0	19	16
Motor Vehicle Theft					
2020	4	0	0	4	0
2021	7	0	0	7	0
2022	7	0	4	6	0
Arson					
2020	8	0	0	8	7
2021	4	0	0	4	2

2022	5	0	0	5	5

Crime in Burlington, Vermont

Similar to the UVM annual security report, the Burlington Police Department also releases an end-of-year report detailing staffing & structure, incident volume & incident data, major events, and plans for rebuilding (2023 *Preliminary Year-End Report*, 2024). Overall, incidents in 2023 went up by 22% compared to 2022 and by 43% compared to 2021 with a total of 30,760 (2023 *Preliminary Year-End Report*, 2024). The following table shows the percentage increases and decreases for crime incidents comparing 2023 to a five-year average from 2018-2022. While UVM's campus is reporting lower crime incidents in almost every category, the opposite is true for Burlington crime statistics.

(Table 2: Burlington Police Department Crime Statistics)

Crime Incident	**Increase/Decrease between 2018-2022 & 2023**
Sexual Assault	*Decrease* 36%
Disorderly Conduct	*Decrease* 34%
Domestic Disturbance	*Decrease* 17%
Domestic Assault	*Decrease* 15%
Aggravated Assault	*Increase* 4%
Mental Health Issues	*Increase* 9%
Robbery	*Increase* 18%
Simple Assault	*Increase* 26%
Burglary	*Increase* 33%
Gunfire	*Increase* 33%
Crash w/ Injury/Fatal	*Increase* 41%

Larceny	*Increase* 70%
Stolen Vehicle	*Increase* 144%
Overdose	*Increase* 252%

Major Incidents

One of the most major incidents of crime to note that occurred in 2023 was the shooting of three Muslim Palestinian men. On November 25th, 2023, Jason Eaton shot Hisham Awartani, Kinnan Abdalhamid, and Tahseen Ahmad, severely injuring all three. The shooting made national news, as Easton was charged with three counts of attempted second-degree murder, and many questioned if he should also be charged with a hate crime (Sundby & Chasan, 2023). While this incident did not occur on the UVM campus it happened extremely close to campus (around 0.3 miles from John Dewey Hall), on a road many students walk to get to and from their apartments. UVM students were notified of the attack through the CatAlert system, and Michael Schirling, UVM's Chief Safety & Compliance Officer, held a campus safety meeting in the subsequent weeks.

As UVM students move around Burlington and experience both campus life and city life they are relying on these protocols and resources to protect them. While clearly both the University of Vermont and the City of Burlington consider crime and safety to be a serious matter, it still is a topic that affects UVM students on a daily occurrence as many students in this research detailed experiencing a crime while living in this city.

Literature Review

The Familiar City

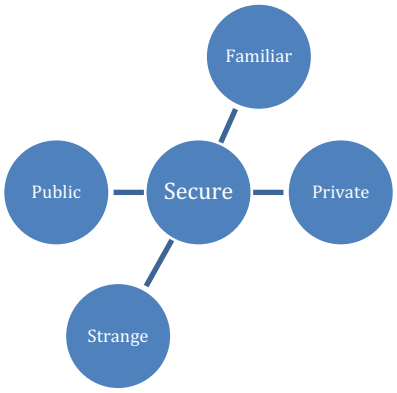
Scholars from disciplines ranging from history to geography to sociology have studied, discussed, and written about cities for millennia. This tradition represents a wide range of approaches and focuses, often with an underlying pursuit of defining exactly what a city is. When researching cities, it becomes clear they are not just large towns— they contain distinct characteristics that make city life unique from everything outside their limits. For example, cities are often diverse with many different people and cultures, they have bustling activities and busy nightlife, as well as a constant flow of people coming into and out of the city. Although no one definition captures the entire essence of a city, for the purpose of this research I will employ the Chen et al. definition of cities as places that are "fundamentally human and social constructions that change and evolve over time" (Chen et al., 2013, 15). This definition recognizes that cities have the ability to provide residents with a sense of belonging by fulfilling an array of social needs such as identity, community, and security (Chen et al., 2013). Focusing on the third social need, Chen et al. argue security is tied to *belonging* and how connected we feel to a place and the people therein because of the belief that we are surrounded by individuals we can trust (Chen et al., 2013). When people do not have that sense of belonging, when they are in an unfamiliar place with unfamiliar people, they are less able to feel secure in their surroundings.

College campuses that are located within cities offer more complicated conceptions of belonging. In this type of setting, the definition of connections and familiarity needs to be nuanced because there are varying levels of *strangeness*. On college campuses, the idea of a stranger can be stratified into two groups: students (including those who are off-campus), and non-students. While not every student in a college environment knows each other, they are

generally familiar with each other through recognizable markers of their shared status as university students (age, wearing college insignia, common patterns of movement and activity such as walking to class or going out at night, etc.). Areas of the campus that are populated primarily by students offer more of that sense of belonging because they are filled with people considered to be more familiar, or "safe strangers." This is not to say that every single student falls into this category because the possibility of unsafe strangers who are also college students still exists. Nonetheless, the majority of non-student residents are typically people students do not know, who are even less familiar because of their lack of university affiliation, thereby relegating them to a heightened level of "strangerness." This level of strangerness can be perceived as more threatening thereby making the area feel less secure for students.

Private versus Public and the Presence of Strangers

The spectrum of familiar to strange intersects with the range of public to private space and how safety is perceived along those lines (as shown in Figure 2). Public and private spaces can be seen as occupying ends of a spectrum, with a variety of blended or nuanced spaces along the transect, and are produced in both material and conceptual ways. For example, imagine a continuum running from the street to the sidewalk to the front yard to the porch, into the front doorway, and ultimately to intimate spaces such as bedrooms and bathrooms. Socialization and cultural practices create and maintain social rules about expectations for the spectrum of public and private spaces including who is allowed to use the space, in what circumstances, at what time of day/night, and engaged in what kinds of behavior. The physical space also contains cues to their use and level of publicness/privacy with such accouterments as signs, fences, locks, and curtains.



(*Figure 2. Public-to-Private & Familiar-to-Strange Spectrum)*

The notion of the "public" can exist in two distinct, but related, forms: the public sphere and the public space (Mitchell, 1995). The public sphere is a conceptual theory where citizens come together to debate and discuss public opinion. The actual physical space is not necessary for the public sphere to function, as it solely relies on the idea of democracy and the communication of ideas (Mitchell, 1995). Public space, however, is material as it is "an actual site, a place, a ground within and from which political activity flows" (Mitchell, 1995, 117). It is imperative, therefore, that citizens use the public sphere in order to create and sustain their public spaces.

The right to these spaces or "The Right to the City" involves two principal ideas: the right to participation and the right to appropriation. The right to participate in these public spaces means that citizens should be able to "play a central role in any decision that contributes to the production of urban space" (Purcell, 2002, 102). The right to appropriation is based on the belief that inhabitants have the right to "full and complete usage" of urban space in everyday life. This right exists in the public space when residents can "physically access, occupy, and use urban space" (Purcell, 2002, 103). Connecting these theories to the idea of familiar and strange, we can recognize that while it is also a spectrum, familiar lands closer to the side of private while strange is closer to public. In public space, the ideal is that anyone and everyone can be in and

use that space. This means being around people who are unfamiliar. In the ideal private space, however, we are surrounded by things and people who are familiar to us, which therefore makes us more comfortable and secure.

College campuses add interesting aspects to the discussion of public-to-private. The campus can be viewed as both public and private because in some areas it is open for public enjoyment and use while, in other areas, it is exclusive to the few who are labeled as the authorized users of the space. The campus creates a new set of dynamics based on relationships and tensions between the familiar and the unfamiliar. These dynamics are influenced by their relation to physical and social spaces created by the college and how each resident chooses to navigate the city. Therefore, public and private university spaces can also be defined by the presence of students and/or strangers (familiar vs unfamiliar), thus making the divide between public and private more fluid. Scholar Blake Gumprecht argues that the campus is very much a public space for all residents of the city to enjoy (Gumprecht, 2007). However, if instead we think of the college campus as a place which is publicly accessible but privately owned, containing a range of levels of access which themselves vary by time of day and year, we can see how the spectrum that public and private exist on can affect the inhabitants of the space.

When a city is home to a college or university, the campus often becomes the center of life or the hub of that city where non-students participate on the campus almost as much as students (Gumprecht, 2003). The campus is home to bookstores, gyms, concert halls, sports stadiums, residential areas, and large open green spaces (Gumprecht, 2003). Along with these physical sites, the college campus adds an additional schedule of events and bustling activities that make it seem like a self-contained city itself (Gumprecht, 2003). Additionally, the university adds a level of population and density that support local businesses, public transportation, and

generate vibrancy. In this sense, the college campus is a public space open for public use. However, these buildings and the movement between them create high concentrations of traffic for students. Therefore, even if the geography of the campus is distributed throughout a city and seemingly open, the abundance of other students can blur the lines between forming a public space and a private one, thereby allowing all different types of strangers to come into contact with each other.

In order to maintain access to the aforementioned physical and social infrastructures, college students commonly congregate in specific dense, campus-adjacent neighborhoods of the city as they are more likely to rent and live in group housing, thus reproducing another place that toggles between public and private (Gumprecht, 2003). Due to the traditional lifestyle of college students, many city residents and even college faculty and staff prefer not to live near these dense areas of student rentals (Gumprecht, 2003). This often causes tensions where the relationship between a college and the city is not entirely amicable. With the large demand for student housing, landlords often buy owner-occupied houses to turn them into rentals. This can transform entire neighborhoods of a city to operate in favor of the college student over the long-term city locals, thereby creating exclusionary housing networks for students (Gumprecht, 2003). Additionally, universities can create transiency in the city where college students are always coming and going and it is common for them to move away once graduation day hits. In many places home to a college campus, the majority of the population is originally from somewhere else and not local to that city (Gumprecht, 2003). This can also lead to a lack of community and connection among students and residents. All of these factors shape the strangeness created between the campus, its students, and the city's residents, which affects safety.

In terms of overall safety, college campuses in urban settings face two unique problems in comparison to other urban centers, in part due to the blurring lines of what constitutes student areas and what constitutes the rest of the city. Firstly, the bar districts in the city often experience an influx of issues with rowdy college students which creates trouble for local police and university officials who are unable to regulate student behavior (Gumprecht, 2003). It is important to note that while these behavioral problems are not the focus of this thesis, they do add to the distrust fostered between students and non-students, further creating the divide between familiar and strange. This brings us to the second safety problem: crime surrounding the university spilling over into the campus and criminals targeting the university and its students (Tomsich et al., 2011). In colleges where there are high crime rates in the adjacent neighborhoods, there can be an increase in fear of crime and consequently negative perceptions of safety for the students (Braaten et al., 2022). These sets of relationships impact how students and residents decide to navigate the city and its inhabitants.

Geographer Gill Valentine closely studied this relationship between fear and mobility in public spaces in two different studies located in England in 1989 and 1990. She found that people who experience fear in public places create mental maps as a defensive tactic to protect themselves from possible harm (Valentine, 1989). These mental maps are put together through personal experiences but are also informed through shared secondary information of friends or family (Valentine, 1989). With these mental maps, residents can choose how to adjust their path or pace by crossing the road to avoid alleyways or walking faster through areas they feel unsafe in (Valentine, 1989). Residents also look for places that are seen as neat or litter-free as a better option to walk through rather than places with vandalism, graffiti, or excessive trash on the ground (Valentine, 1989). The places that are most often marked as unsafe on these maps and

therefore avoided if possible are areas with large open spaces or enclosed spaces with few exits and hidden and dark corners (Valentine, 1989). Poor designs in public spaces such as enclosed areas can allow for criminal behavior to go unchecked which gives users of the space the notion that nobody is in control and therefore, they are unsafe (Ceccato & Nalla, 2020). Overall, the way public space is architectured is imperative to feelings of safety in individuals because fear limits the use of these spaces and consequently its 'publicness.'

These mental maps are essential because as either college students or local residents, the citizens of a city are expected to navigate dense urban areas full of strangers and still keep a sense of safety on their daily commutes. While the overall safety of a city is very subjective based on one's positionality (race, gender, age, dis/ability, etc.), in general experiences of fear and safety concerns dictate how residents choose to navigate the streets and neighborhoods as well as how they interact with the people they encounter. These choices not only reflect safety but also how citizens perceive the different sets of strangers (familiar vs. unfamiliar). As urban theorist Jane Jacob puts it, for people to feel safe in a city, there need to be "eyes on the street" at all times (Jacobs, 1992, 35). This means that on the public streets, the people we see are ideally providing us with a sense of community, belonging, and security. Even though strangers can be perceived as a threat, many people feel safer in the physical presence of other people, even if it is someone they don't know, because they assume a possible offender would be deterred by the intervention of a bystander (Valentine, 1990). This follows the idea that the key to feeling secure in a city is being surrounded by individuals you trust (Chen et al., 2013). A general sense of safety is strongly related to how at ease a person feels in their environment and this often comes from social or familial ties in the neighborhood as well as long periods of residence (Valentine,1990). Since long periods of residence and family nearby are not usually an option for

college students, they must often depend on who they consider to be familiar or "safe strangers" to provide them with a sense of security as they navigate urban areas.

In summary, college campuses within cities introduce complex dynamics to a city that will in turn affect how students understand their safety. The density of campus buildings, activities and events, and housing can create a distinct entity within the city that can lead to antagonist perceptions of the school. As universities invest in these student-oriented spaces, residents have to contend with unruly behavior but may be in favor of the money students bring into the city. Additionally, students have to contend with residential crime leaking over into the college campus which then can cause students to distrust their surrounding city. This can also further the idea that the college is actually a private space that is invaded by the public. The fluidity of these different types of space encourages students to generate a mental geography of safety that favors routes that provide safer and more familiar contexts and avoids those that feel more unsafe. All of these dynamics feed into how students and residents choose to navigate within the city and campus along with their projection of safety built upon their perceptions of physical spaces. However, students' understanding of safety is not just dependent on the city and its residents, but also on the university itself.

Different Levels of Strangeness: Identity's Effects on Safety

While there is a general understanding that there are areas the majority of students feel safer in (places where they are surrounded by familiarity), experiences vary with different facts of positionality. Identity plays a large role in how people interpret the safety of strangers and public spaces and it also plays an important role in how students interpret their own personal safety. Gender is a major variable in determining how people understand their safety with respect to strangers, but race and lifestyle are also important factors.

As a whole, female students are significantly more likely than male students to be afraid of crime, perceive the campus environment to be unsafe, perceive their risk of campus victimization to be higher, and engage in constrained behaviors at higher rates to protect their safety (Tomsich et al., 2011). Even though male students have higher rates of victimization they are significantly more likely to have high perceptions of overall campus safety (Tomsich et al., 2011). They are also more likely to assess a situation like being alone in a park as relatively safe compared to their female counterparts who qualify it as unsafe (Brownlow, 2005, 585).

In general, men, specifically young men, and men of color are overwhelmingly perceived as worthy of fear by women (Day, 2006). This fear happens most often in outdoor public places (Day, 2006). In these public places, men are labeled as the dangerous stranger who has the potential to cause harm. The experience of being feared in public spaces "has significant implications for individual men and for society" (Day, 2006, 582). Being feared based solely on perceptions can cause psychological scars that change the understanding of how men, particularly men of color, view themselves in society as well as in a "racialized hierarchy" (Day, 2006, 582). This also can change how men believe they should act in public spaces as well as how society believes they should act. The fear of crime in public spaces "is frequently framed as a women's problem," which, although seemingly glib, is often true (Day, 2006, 583). However, the position of being feared necessitates that men figure out how to navigate others' perceptions of them. This means, "For men, not being targeted by such fear is part of the 'right to public space'" (Day, 2006, 582). In general, while women are surveying strangers as different levels of threats based on their identities, men conversely have an imperative to portray themselves as non-threatening in order to navigate public spaces and to stay safe themselves.

However, both male and female students have similar safety concerns when they are in large open spaces: involuntary, violent encounters with male strangers (Brownlow, 2005). While women often adopt avoidance strategies as their principal means of handling safety concerns, Brownlow found that male students prefer confrontation, aggression, and control (Brownlow, 2005). Male students often rely on their youth, physical strength, and speed to be key protective measures in any dangerous situation (Brownlow, 2005). This is a stark difference from female students who reportedly rely on their full set of senses and perceptions to judge a space or situation as safe or unsafe (Brownlow, 2005). Therefore, not only does positionality affect how people (such as students) understand the safety of spaces, but also how they respond to them.

As mentioned above, another factor that impacts safety perception for university students is race. Looking specifically at perceptions of safety on campus, one study conducted at two universities in the southern and northeastern regions of the US found that while Black and Latino students do not have lower perceptions of safety compared to White students, students whom they classified as "Other Race" (Asian, Native American, and students who chose "Other") are less likely to perceive the campus as safe (Braaten et al., 2022). Additionally, having conservative political views and having negative perceptions toward police effectiveness are additional variables found to influence the levels of fear and safety concerns in non-White students (Boateng & Adjekum-Boateng, 2017).

The lifestyle choices of students (namely group housing) can also impact safety concerns. Students who live in an off-campus location have higher perceptions of safety concerns than students who live on campus (Crowl & Battin, 2016). These are also students who are then around more of the general public rather than living around other students. In one study done on an urban college campus, the authors found that for female students, involvement in social

activities reduced fear but for male students, it reportedly had the opposite effect and increased fear levels. However, they note this is possibly due to the types of social activities each group is participating in (Steinmetz & Mark, 2014). Therefore, even though a variety of lifestyle choices that students make can affect their sense of safety, gender still plays a role. As a whole, however, students who "refrain from engaging in risky or potentially dangerous lifestyle activities are more fearful of crime than students who engage in such activities" (Crowl & Battin, 2016, 210).

In general, positionality affects how students feel in public spaces and how they choose to interact with other people. In the discussion and study of safety, men's safety has taken the backburner, but even less research has been done on the perspectives of individuals who identify as non-binary and gender fluid. This research attempts to limit that gap by providing the perspectives of nonbinary and transgender students. Literature shows that both men and women have fear of other men in public areas with different methods of handling these fears. However, what is almost entirely ignored is the impact of being "feared" by others while existing in these public spaces (Day, 2006). The fear of men in public affects men in psychological ways that change how they perceive themselves and how they choose to act in public spaces. Additionally, even though male students have a statistically higher rate of victimization, female students feel fear at higher rates. However, the fear of different types of crimes differ between genders as male students are more likely to victimizes of physical assault such as a fist-fight while female students are more likely to be concerned about sexual assault. Other aspects of identity such as race and lifestyle affect how students experience fear as well. Despite the variability of how different students perceive safety, there are still common trends in the crimes that they experience.

Experiences of Crime and Student Safety Strategies

Although every college student's experience with crime and safety varies, there are certain trends of criminality on city campuses. College students have expressed a multitude of specific safety concerns, existing both on and off campus, with the most common being any form of theft or larceny where their money or possessions are taken from them (Steinmetz & Mark, 2014). Other crimes that frequently come up are: being sexually assaulted, being threatened with a weapon, being physically assaulted, and being murdered (Woolnough, 2009). Statistically, the most common form of violence occurs in an off-campus location and involves minor acts of physical assault among males (Hart & Miethe, 2011). This statistic furthers the idea of safety concerns and fear in public spaces.

In terms of when they occur, safety concerns for college students happen during both day and night but perceived risks have a higher frequency and severity during the nighttime (Hites et al., 2013). Notably, for many students, there is only a moderate fear of safety risks happening on their university campus, however, that perceived risk doubles at night (Tomsich et al., 2011). Students are more likely to avoid being on campus alone at night than during the day and many students have specific places on the campus they avoid traveling through at night (Woolnough, 2009 & Maier & DePrince, 2020). This is because during the day students feel the protection of having a large number of other students around but at night with dwindling numbers of people walking around on campus, that protection goes away. Many students have also had to ask someone to walk with them at night due to safety concerns (Maier & DePrince, 2020). Beyond trends of the 'what, where, and when' of the crimes themselves, this violence has specific patterns of consequences for student populations.

While fear of crime or having increased safety concerns are problems that many big-city residents face, they can sharply affect a student's college experience. Concerns for safety can

cause some students to engage in "avoidance behaviors that are detrimental to academic progress, preclude social integration into the university culture and community, and reduce the students' overall quality of life" (Hibdon et al., 2016, 83). Extreme safety concerns can also impact the overall college environment as well as the public's opinions about campus security (Woolnough, 2009). This causes students to experience two sets of consequences: the general distress that crime can impart, and its effects on their educational experience. To increase their resilience and deter possible threats, students have developed their own tactics to counter crime.

To mitigate safety concerns, students have taken up a variety of strategies to feel protected and safe. Many students use mental maps when navigating college campuses to avoid areas they perceive as unsafe. Students have commonly pointed out areas where the campus boundaries are unclear as places of perceived safety risks (Hites et al., 2013). These areas of perceived risk are also in places of high vehicular traffic and remote locations with little pedestrian traffic (Hites et al., 2013). Areas where people who are seen as a possible threat, such as vagrants, panhandlers, and houseless people, are typically present are also considered a safety risk for many students (Hites et al., 2013). These people are all labeled unsafe strangers who exist in public spaces that are perceived as dangerous for students. These perceptions of houseless populations challenge housed peoples' (including students') own assumptions of their right to different kinds of spaces.

To deal with this uncertainty, one study done at a university in a high crime area where the majority of students live off-campus showed that students change their paths or avoid certain locations, drive when possible, avoid traveling alone, avoid enrolling in night classes, and some students carry protective devices such as mace (Maier & DePrince, 2020). Additionally, the authors found it is more likely for students to use avoidance tactics than to adopt strategies such

as carrying a self-protection device, using campus-sponsored prevention services such as escorts or emergency phones, or carrying their keys defensively (Maier & DePrince, 2020). Another study at an urban university found that while female students are more likely to engage in self-protective behaviors (avoiding areas with poor lighting and lots of shrubbery and avoiding being alone on campus during the day or night) male students are more likely to carry self-protection devices (Woolnough, 2009). However, the author found that the self-protection devices male students are most likely to carry are pocket knives and many do not consider the primary purpose of the device to be for protection from victimization (Woolnough, 2009). As these defense measures demonstrate, students' different backgrounds and experiences reflect different understandings of safety.

A More Familiar Stranger: The Role of Universities in Students' Safety

Although they have created their own strategies to combat crime, students also rely on their universities to provide a sense of security. Safety is an important factor even before a student attends their first class on campus. For colleges to attract and retain students, they must meet the expectations of both prospective students and parents, and that often means expectations for a safe and secure campus environment (Hites et al., 2013). The decision to attend a certain university can largely depend on how they feel about campus security measures and campus crime for many potential students (Tomsich et al., 2011). Not unexpectedly, high crime rates on the campus or in the surrounding town can deter students from selecting an institution to attend (Tomsich et al., 2011). This priority for safety encourages colleges to invest in and advertise how they keep their students safe.

Even after matriculation, safety still affects students' feelings towards their chosen universities. For most students, the more satisfied they feel with campus security, the safer they

feel on campus. However, one study shows that students also feel like some safety measures fail to acknowledge that students are not isolated within the confines of the campus and do in fact, routinely interact with the surrounding communities (Braaten et al., 2022). Another study indicated that many students acknowledge their university's efforts at crime reduction and safety measures but overall do not have positive perceptions of the ability of such efforts to prevent crime (Maier & DePrince, 2020). To help alleviate anxieties about crime, college students want better communication regarding campus safety and campus safety resources, more campus police presence, better lighting on campus, as well as better "visual differentiation between locations considered to be 'on-campus' and those that are considered to be 'off-campus'" (Hites et al., 2013, 353). Therefore, even though universities are conscious of the importance of safety, students are often dissatisfied with their strategies to protect them. This has led to students making more demands concerning their campus' safety, which are determined by what they believe to be the most threatening.

Conclusion

In this research, I asked questions such as where and when students feel unsafe, what crimes students are most concerned about, how identity affects feelings of safety, what actions students take to feel safe, how students feel about safety resources provided by the university and the city, and what changes do student want to see in order for them to feel safe. In a city, the discussion of public and private spaces and the spectrum in which they exist informs how students feel about safety because, as residents navigate different areas, they are always changing between public and private spaces. In these spaces, students encounter countless people who also exist on a spectrum of familiar and unfamiliar. In the case of college students living in a city, the public and private spectrum as well as the familiar and unfamiliar spectrum are ever-changing

and affect students' perceptions of safety and security. In order to answer these research questions, I had to acknowledge the fluctuation and flow between these spectrums and how geography, identity, and other factors can influence where a place or a person might land on these spectrums.

Methodology

I used a mixed-methods approach to identify and analyze the experience of safety concerns for UVM students. To answer my research questions, the methods I chose to use were a pilot study, surveys, sit-down interviews, and walking interviews.

In the Spring of 2023, in partnership with the Office of Student and Community Relations (OSCR), I applied for and received the Simon Family Summer Research Fellowship through the Fellowship, Opportunities, & Undergraduate Research (FOUR) office. In this partnership, I promised to provide OSCR with my data on student opinions as well as assist with the creation of new student surveys. In return, OSCR allowed me to look through past surveys they have collected that had any relevant information for my research on students' opinions about safety.

The next step of the process was to gain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Since this was my first time working with the IRB, there were many back-and-forth conversations as I continued to learn what was needed to gain human research approval. Once I received the final go-ahead in June 2023, I was able to start collecting data. The data collection started in July 2023, with a pilot study. A pilot study is defined as an "abbreviated version of a research project in which the researcher practices or tests procedures to be used in a subsequent full-scale project" (Hay & Cope, 2021, 429). Knowing I would have limited time and flexibility to collect my data for the main study in the Fall Semester, I decided to use a pilot study in order to reveal any weakness in the questions or research procedures before it was launched in the full project (Dunn, 2021). My pilot study tested every method I used in the main study.

(Table 3: Breakdown of Methods)

	Pilot Study	**Main Study**

Surveys	19 Participants	93 Participants (69 finished surveys)
Interviews	3 Participants	18 Participants
Walking Interviews	2 Participants	5 Participants

Surveys

In both the pilot study and the main study, surveys were my first method for data collection. While interviews provided me with details about experiences and social processes, surveys allowed me to identify the extent of perceptions of fears from a larger participant pool. For the pilot study, I used personal connections to recruit but, for the main study, I also sent out the survey to multiple student organizations at UVM. I also went to four classes and spoke about my research to ask students to fill out the survey.

In order to attain the widest range of demographics for this study, I specifically chose to send my survey to different affinity groups on campus. These included: the UVM Prism Center, the UVM Mosaic Center, the Interfaith Center, and the Women & Gender Equity Center. Additionally, in two instances I had my advisors reach out to students who they thought might be interested in providing a voice in this research for minority populations on the UVM campus (e.g., Transgender students & Black students).

Using Qualtrics I created a survey that had a combination of closed and open-ended questions for students to fill out (full list of questions in Appendix B). The closed questions were designed to “seek quantitative information about respondent attributes or behaviors" (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2021, 247). One example of a closed question students were asked to answer when taking this survey is “On a scale from 1-10 (1 being extremely unsafe & 10 being extremely safe), how safe do you feel walking alone on the UVM campus during the day?” Other questions were open questions designed to “give voice to respondents" (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2021, 248).

“Are there specific places near downtown Burlington where you feel less safe? Please elaborate” is an example of an open question respondents were asked to fill out.

Additionally, the survey contained combination questions that “request comment on the option chosen in a closed question” (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2021, 248). In one example of a combination question respondents were asked was a “yes” or “no” question asking “Have you experienced a crime while living in Burlington Vermont and attending UVM? (e.g., robbery, violence, stalking)?” If the respondents answered “yes” to that question they were then prompted to answer “Can you please elaborate on that crime if you feel comfortable.” If respondents answered “no” to the previous question then they were moved directly to a new set of questions.

Overall, when creating the survey questions, I kept in mind the four distinct types of question content:

1. Attributes: “Attribute questions aim at establishing respondents’ characteristics;”
2. Behavior: “Behavior questions aim at discovering what people do;”
3. Attitudes: “Questions about attitudes seek to discover what people think is desirable or undesirable;” and
4. Beliefs: “Questions about beliefs aim at establishing what people believe to be true or false or preferred” (McGuirk & O'Neill, 2021, 246-247)

The main issue I came across using surveys in the pilot study was that even though Qualtrics counted 19 survey respondents in the pilot, not all 19 people answered every question, leaving multiple questions entirely blank. To rectify this problem for the main study, I put a “force response” feature on every question. This feature is supposed to ensure respondents are not able to continue on the survey without putting a response to the question they are currently

working on. However, this did not entirely fix the issue as in the main study, 93 eligible students started the survey but by the final question, there were only 69 responses, meaning 24 students exited the survey before finishing and did not return to it. Since this survey consisted of 59 questions, I would consider it an extra-long survey which meant when I was distributing the survey, I tried to give the caveat that this would take around 15 to 20 minutes to finish answering. By giving this caveat I had hoped to avoid the problem of large numbers of people not finishing the survey but unfortunately, it did not work as much as I would have liked. Overall, though, the survey was successful in providing me with my main source of data from the student population and reached a much wider audience than the interviews.

Sit-down Interviews

In total, I conducted 21 sit-down interviews for this research. Three were conducted in the pilot study and 18 were conducted in the main study. Because the pilot study was conducted in the middle of summer, many of the UVM students who took the survey were not currently residing in Burlington and therefore were not willing at the time to do an interview. However, I felt that the three interviews I conducted in the pilot study were worthwhile because they gave me enough practice and information to make changes to the questions and know what to expect going into the main study.

The final question in my survey asked, "Would you like to be contacted for an additional sit-down interview on this subject? If yes, please leave your school email address." This question was included as a way for me to recruit interview participants. In this question, 22 respondents provided their email for me to contact them. While I emailed every student who left an email, not all participants responded to that email or the follow-up email, leaving me with a total of 18 interview participants in the main study.

The interviews used a semi-structured approach which has "some degree of predetermined order and topical prompts but maintains flexibility in the way issues are addressed by the informant" (Dunn, 2021, 149). I used a list of ten predetermined questions that could be changed and adjusted depending on the conversation with the interviewee (full list of questions in Appendix C). Using the same list of questions for every interview allowed me to easily compare and contrast the responses between the interviews. These questions ranged from asking about the interviewee's daily routes to their opinions about the overall safety of Burlington, Vermont. While creating my interview questions I kept in mind the four main purposes for research interviews:

1. To investigate complex behaviors and motivations;
2. To collect a diversity of meanings, opinions, and experiences;
3. To show respect for and empower the people who provide the data; and
4. To fill a gap in knowledge that other methods, such as participant observation or the use of census data, are unable to bridge efficaciously (Dunn, 2021, 149-150)

Using interviews in tandem with surveys allowed me to first ask basic demographic questions with a few short-answer responses and then in the interview, go deeper into the trends I initially saw from the surveys. The interviews also allowed me to have conversations with the participants, which meant they could provide me with more information than what they were willing to write down in the survey.

The interviews were all done in person and were recorded with audio only and then transcribed and put in my laptop in a secure folder. All interview participants' names were changed to pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants. Through these sit-down

interviews, I was also able to find participants for the next method I used which was the walking interviews.

Walking Interviews

The walking interview, otherwise known as a go-along interview, has experienced a recent revival in Geography (Gergan & Smith, 2021). The walking interview is led by the participant who chooses what path they would like to take, and with minimal prompting, what direction the conversation will go in. I conducted a total of seven walking interviews; two in the pilot study and five in the main study. Even though the walking interview takes a similar time commitment to the sit-down interview (approximately fifteen to thirty minutes), fewer people were willing to sign up to participate in this method. For the most part, I believe this is due to the location of the interview. Almost all of the sit-down interviews took place on campus meaning students could participate in between their classes when they had some free time. For the walking interviews, however, at least five of them ended in an off-campus location so travel had to be taken into consideration for participants.

Since there were smaller numbers of people willing to participate in the walking interviews, I tried to get the widest variety of demographics possible. The walking interview participants were: one male student who lives off-campus, one female transgender student who lives on campus, one female student who lives off campus (we walked toward the direction of her home), one female student walking in downtown Burlington, and one non-binary student who lives off-campus. Additionally, since I only had one on-campus student participate in the walking interview, I started almost all of the interviews on campus to include their opinions on feelings of safety in the campus environment.

Walking interviews are an especially useful interview technique when asking participants to talk about both past experiences and current feelings. On the walks, I would prompt participants to talk about any memories our path brought up for them but also how they felt in terms of safety in that current moment. Since walking interviews "introduce elements of sensory reactions to weather, sights, and smells" (Gergan & Smith, 2021, 46) many participants brought up feelings or stories they forgot or did not mention during our sit-down interview.

In one study on disabled people's experiences of social discrimination in their everyday lives, walking interviews were used as the main technique because the researchers believed the method was "well suited to observing in real-time individuals' embodied, sensory, and emotional experiences of, responses to, and relationships with, places, and people" (Hall & Bates, 2019, 102). For these reasons, walking interviews were an instrumental technique in my research looking at students' personal experiences with feelings of safety.

Analysis

Once all of the data was collected, I then had to analyze my findings. For this, I used the coding method which serves three main purposes: "data reduction, organization and the creation of searching aids, and analysis" (Cope, 2021, 361). To code, I reviewed all the interview transcripts and survey responses and pulled out information to group into codes. The two types of codes I used were descriptive codes and analytic codes. The descriptive codes "reflect themes or patterns that are obvious on the surface or are stated directly by research subjects" (Cope, 2021, 360). The analytic codes "reflect a concept or themes the researcher is interested in or that has already become important in the project" (Cope, 2021, 360). These codes helped to organize the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of UVM student's opinions of safety in Burlington Vermont, and at UVM.

I chose to code all of the data from this research two times. In the first set of codes, I went through the survey responses, and both sets of interviews and put them into seven categories: conditions, people, feelings, places, transportation, security, and crime. In the *conditions* code, I included any piece of data that I considered to be conditional such as "I feel afraid when it is dark outside." For *people*, I included any data where students were referring to a specific person or specific groups of people. In the *feelings* code, the data I included was anything where a student mentioned a specific emotion or sensation such as scared, unhappy, or fearful. The *places* code included any data that referred to a specific area and the *transportation* code included any mention of safety in reference to a mode of transportation. The *security* code had two sets of data. The first was any mention of security resources such as the police or Blue Lights. The second set of data included in the security code was any time students mentioned changes to security measures that they would like implemented. Finally, the *crime* code had any data where a student mentioned either experiencing a crime in Burlington or knowing someone who experienced a crime in Burlington. These seven codes helped to organize the findings from all sources of data collection.

The second time I coded this data was during the process of writing the findings chapter when I noticed a trend in the data where most information could be split into two main categories: data that was in reference to people walking and *going out* around Burlington and data that was in reference to fear or crime *at home*. These sets of inductively derived codes are explained further in the findings chapter but, overall, I found it was the most useful way to organize the data.

Limitations

The main limitation this study had was a sparse sampling of student voices from certain minority groups at UVM. I tried to rectify this problem by reaching out to affinity groups in hopes of getting more diverse student voices but since white, cisgender students are the majority of students attending UVM, they were also the majority of participants in this study.

Another population that was not included in this study was first-year students. During the IRB approval stage, I made the decision to exclude first-years from this study because I knew that, since I would be collecting data in the fall, these students would have only been attending the school for around two months, meaning they would only be able to provide me with their first impressions. Additionally, some of the questions in the survey asked students to talk about their experiences of their living situation from last year and first-years would not have been able to answer these questions in relation to this study. While first-year students' early impressions of campus safety are important, they did not meet the criteria for this study.

The final limitation was the total amount of students who were able to participate in this study. If I had more than one semester to collect all of the data, it might have been possible to gain a larger pool of participants and therefore more individual interviews and walking interviews with students. However, even though a larger pool of respondents may have been ideal, I feel as though I was able to extrapolate from and make conclusions based on the number of participants I had in my study.

Findings

In order to best present the results from my surveys and interviews, I have organized student responses into two main categories: Going Out and Staying Home. I chose this framework to analyze my findings because I was struck by the tendency of UVM students to emphasize feelings of fear when going out and moving around Burlington when statistically, more threats to safety occurred while they were at home. This reveals an interesting dichotomy of what students perceive as more unsafe versus what is actually more unsafe. This discrepancy has real implications for how students choose to navigate their physical and perceptual geographies.

Within the broad categories of Going Out and Staying Home, I identified three interrelated themes that were mentioned often by the students surveyed and interviewed: other people/strangers, gender and sexuality, and security. Interestingly, the term "other people" – or what I have called "strangers" in previous sections – was expressed in both positive and negative ways as strangeness exists on a spectrum of familiar and unfamiliar. In some cases, strangers caused fear, while in other instances they created a sense of relief. This difference in how this term was represented was most often related to whether the students were talking about other students or non-students, thereby reflecting different levels of strangeness based on university affiliation. In the Going Out Section, I refer to perceived unsafe people as strangers because when walking around Burlington, most people that UVM students perceive as unsafe are closer to the unfamiliar side of the spectrum as strangers they have no affiliation with. In the Staying Home section, I refer to them as Other people because many of the people they perceive to be unsafe are not true strangers, such as a roommate, and therefore closer to the familiar side of the spectrum.

Additionally, the evidence suggests that gender and sexuality are two of the most impactful reasons for increased fears and safety concerns and often modulate the level of fear of strangers. Safety concerns targeting people of specific gender or sexuality presentations appeared in many different forms and in many different locations across campus and Burlington. Most significantly, they impacted the access to perceived safe mobility, in other terms, the ability to move around the city of Burlington and the UVM campus and feel safe doing so.

In the face of all these threats, it is clear that students have a profound lack of trust in different safety measures. UVM students seem to be aware of the resources that are provided to them by the University of Vermont and by the City of Burlington and yet, they still often express feelings of distrust or lack of efficacy in these measures. Overall, these three sub-themes (other people/strangers, gender and sexuality, and security) demonstrate that UVM students experience safety concerns at all different levels and situations that impact the way in which they choose to move across and within their homes, UVM campus, and Burlington.

Race & Ethnicity's Impact on Safety

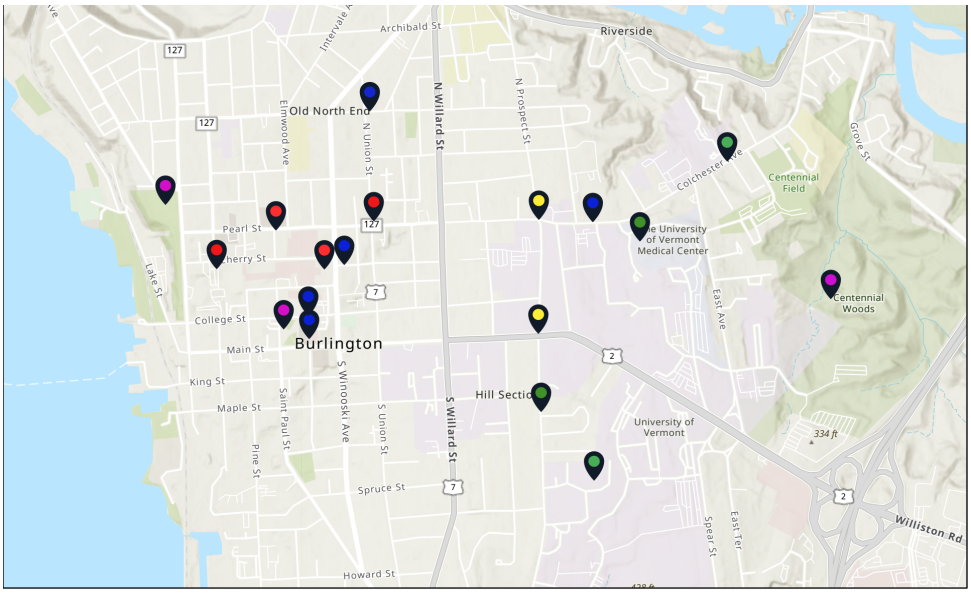
An additional finding is the impact race and ethnicity have on safety. I am including these findings separately not because they are not incredibly important, but, because of the demographics of students participating in this research I was only able to obtain small quantities of data that I believe is still imperative to present.

The majority of mentions of the impact of ethnicity came from Jewish students who have either experienced some form of antisemitism or feel fearful due to incidents of antisemitism they have heard about. One student in the survey described a friend's experience on the eve of Rosh Hashanah when someone shouted at them from a car saying "Fuck you, Jews!" and threw things at them.

Additionally, two Asian students and two Hispanic students in the survey described feelings of being "othered" in situations where they are the only Asian or Hispanic person present. The same sentiment was offered by a Black student in an interview where he said "I fully sit and realize I am an aggressive minority in Vermont and Burlington standards and I recognize that I am often the only Black person in the space and that makes me a little hyper-vigilant about both my actions and the actions of the people around me." These sentiments of students of color and marginalized ethnic and religious groups suggest that even though there was only a small percentage of students in this research who felt their race or ethnicity affect their safety, the ones who did experience this concern feel it on a regular basis, being a minority at both UVM and in Burlington in general.

Hotspots of Fear

The final finding that provides additional underlying framework for the two main sections is the geographies of fear or hotspot locations that were identified by students in this research. All of the locations on the map were places that were mentioned three or more times by students at any point in this study. These locations included UVM-affiliated areas (green), parks/green spaces (purple), general areas of Burlington (blue), specific businesses in Burlington (red), and pedestrian/car intersections (yellow).



(Figure 3: Hotspots of Fear in Burlington, VT)

The UVM-affiliated areas on the map are Trinity Campus, UVM Medical Center, a pathway behind the UVM Interfaith Center, and Fraternity Row. The three parks/green spaces included are Battery Park, City Hall Park, and Centennial Woods. Students also mentioned general areas of Burlington that as a whole caused them to feel fear and these included the Old North End, Colchester Avenue, the top and bottom of Church Street, and the bottom of Buell Street. Specific commercial sites that were found to cause fear are two downtown parking garages, the Downtown Transit Center, and a liquor store called Pearl Street Beverage. Finally, the two yellow points signify places where students feel unsafe because of poor walking infrastructure and dangerous drivers. Both of these points are in locations connected to the UVM campus. Many of these locations are also further discussed in the following sections as they were found to cause fear and safety concerns on a regular basis.

Going Out

University of Vermont students do not exist solely in the bubble of the campus boundaries. They move around the city as active participants in society as students, workers, and

consumers. As they transcend the line between “students” and “Burlington residents” they must also navigate different safety concerns in many different places and levels. In this section, I show how mobility is affected by the presence or lack of strangers, different genders and sexualities, and access to effective security measures.

Strangers

The notion of strangers was a topic that was brought up by participants multiple times at every step of this research. However, even though participants used the same term, it often meant different things. While some people use the term to mean something that could make a certain situation or a place safer, in other circumstances the term was used to mean something else. This discrepancy seems to be informed at least in part by whether or not the other people were students or non-students. Even if not explicitly mentioned, this student status was often tied to the geographic boundaries of campus: student strangers were associated with campus which was understood to be a familiar space and therefore closer to the private side of the public-to-private spectrum, while non-student strangers were often encountered outside the university limits in places considered to be on the public side of the spectrum. As students were going out, they would navigate areas where these categories were in flux. However, feelings of fear were not solely based on geographic locations but first- or second-hand experiences that were projected onto strangers.

For some students, having other people around helps them to feel safer. Areas such as the UVM campus were considered to be a safer location for some students because they knew no matter the time of day, there were always going to be other people around. When walking, some students said they try to stick to areas of Burlington where they know there is foot traffic from other students. For many students, these student strangers constituted a form of community

where there were always people checking in on each other. One student named Zoya notes, “I think community gives you people with similar interests that care about your well-being and will just go that extra mile to make sure everyone gets home safe and that’s what's needed” (Zoya). In a conversation on a walking interview with one student who works on Church Street, she said she would much rather work nights on a weekend rather than a weekday because she knows on a weekend there will be other people around when she is walking home late at night. Another student acknowledged that while it might not be true that other people actually make her safer, it still gives her a general sense of security, saying, “Having a group of people around actually decreases the chance that you’ll get help because they’ll be like ‘Oh someone else will do it’ but it just makes me feel safer” (Amy). Therefore, there was a common increase in perceived safety in the presence of strangers on and near campus because students appear to be comforted by the presence of other students even if they do not necessarily believe other students would actually intervene to help in a dangerous situation.

Despite these feelings of community and safety in numbers, students overwhelmingly reported feeling unsafe when encountering strangers who were not students. Time of day, personal experiences, and second-hand accounts often informed perceived levels of threats from these strangers. It was during times when it was dark outside that many students demonstrated a lack of trust in other people even while acknowledging that this fear often came without any real evidence or reason. Students expressed that they were “freaked out” by random people when crossing their path at night which meant they often switched sides of the road to avoid areas where people were congregating. One student noted, “I think it’s just there's a lot of uncertainty and I think also we as a society, we’ve always had a fear of nighttime” (Izzy). Many people justify this feeling of unsafety during nighttime because other people might find it easier to get

away with harming others since any crime would be harder to witness. To protect themselves, students say they only go out at night if someone else is with them and when they walk, they always check behind themselves for other people. When one student recalled her exercise routines, she said, “I run alone either early in the morning or early in the evening and always find myself constantly checking my surroundings, especially when there are less people/eyes on the street” (Faith).

In addition to factors such as proximity to campus, the presence of other people, and darkness, UVM students are also more likely to perceive non-students as a threat because of personal or second-hand experiences. Multiple students in this research had stories of interactions with houseless people in Burlington that made them feel unsafe. In one walking interview with a student on Church Street, she led us over to City Hall Park where many houseless people are known to camp out overnight. As we walked past the park we were approached by a woman with a shopping cart full of belongings who pushed the cart in our path. We avoided the interaction by stepping into the street but the student, Sarah, shared that this was not her first interaction with this woman. Previously the woman had pulled Sarah’s roommate into a verbal altercation with a third individual.

Other students told stories of being yelled at or cursed at by houseless individuals when they said no to giving them money. One student explained, “I don’t want to be near them by myself and I don’t want to have to interact with them. I hope they get help and all that, but I don’t personally want to interact with people who are unpredictable like that” (Chloe). These interpersonal interactions have created a trend of fear and uncertainty for students who don’t know what to expect and would rather avoid houseless people, who are more commonly found

outside the boundaries of campus and therefore in more unfamiliar spaces with unfamiliar people.

In addition to these open public places, strangers were mentioned frequently on public transportation, especially when talking about public buses. One student had an experience on the bus where the passengers and the bus drivers were yelling at each other which made them feel unsafe. “It’s always kind of awkward if they [strangers] try to talk to you or whatever because you don’t know what to say so you just kind of ignore them. And then it’s like when is the stop? When can I get off and get out of this awkward and uncomfortable situation?” (George). Multiple other students spoke about how they feel uncomfortable on the bus because other people try to talk to them and there isn’t any escape until their stop comes and they can get off. This fear, however, could be related to a lack of experience with public transportation as two students in interviews who grew up using similar forms of public transportation said that they did not mind taking the bus in Burlington as it felt familiar. Nonetheless, this fear of strangers in public spaces contrasts with the feeling of community and security in numbers that participants felt with other students on campus.

To a concerning degree, many students in this research detailed experiencing a crime at the hands of other people. One survey response recounted how “two good friends of [the participant] were brutally attacked downtown a few weekends ago. Both went to the hospital, and one was in the ICU for weeks and has since gone home indefinitely.” Others spoke about having guns pulled on them and their belongings stolen. Additionally, many students have experienced being followed home by strangers. The majority of crimes reported in interviews and surveys were not committed by students (with few exceptions such as robberies in the dorms) and furthered feelings of fear towards non-student strangers.

Beyond personal experiences, it is evident that accounts from friends also construct students' understandings of safety. A few people mentioned friends who were violently attacked when walking downtown. Notably, there was one particular series of assaults on Colchester Avenue, which runs along and through the northern side of campus, that generated a communal sense of fear. In September 2021 two separate incidents occurred where a strange man went up to two women and forcibly kissed them—he has since been known as the Colchester kisser. "This man was going around and assaulting freshman women, it was horrible," one student remembers (Izzy). He was mentioned multiple times in the interviews and in the survey, Colchester Avenue was mentioned as a place people tend to avoid or feel nervous walking on, despite the fact that none of the people experienced unsafe incidents themselves in this location. It is clear that students' perceptions of the safety of non-student strangers were largely influenced by their own experiences, as well as those they hear from their student community. This knowledge impacted whether or not they felt safe moving across and within (often public) spaces where incidents occurred.

While for some students, student strangers on or near campus create a sense of safety by providing familiarity through their shared university status, the presence of strangers does not guarantee feelings of safety. Students in this research have described violent encounters with other people that have left them fearful for their safety. At night, trust in other people diminishes with higher levels of uncertainty of what can happen in an encounter. Students actively avoid public areas in which non-student strangers, whom they do not trust, congregate, and some students avoid doing things like taking public transportation because it feels like there is no escape from other people who possibly pose a threat. Overall, students report feeling the safest when there are other students around them (usually near campus where they perceive it to be a

more private sphere) and the least safe when surrounded by non-students (usually off-campus in more public settings). While this is a general statement about place-based safety, many factors including identity can affect those feelings of safety in these geographic designations.

Gender & Sexuality

As students move around Burlington, gender and sexuality are two of the biggest factors taken into account when assessing safety. I found that female, non-binary, and transgender students (for whom will be using the term "non-male identifying" in the remainder of this paper) all expressed concerns for their physical well-being. To deal with these concerns they have adopted tactics such as concealing their gender identity to make them feel safer when they leave their house. While male students acknowledge that there are reasons to be fearful of living in Burlington, they generally report that they have never felt as though their gender identity has negatively impacted their safety, but they are also less knowledgeable about general safety resources.

In the survey, when asked if their gender identity has ever made them feel less safe, fifty-three UVM students who identified as female or non-binary said yes. When moving around Burlington, Vermont, students who identified as female in this study said they seldom feel safe walking alone, especially at night. Some female students expressed specific fears of being kidnapped, raped, or murdered when walking around Burlington and, although none of the women interviewed or surveyed personally said they experienced physical violence, many reported instances of being catcalled or followed by strange men. When describing why they felt unsafe, women often spoke about their physical size as a component of their safety, usually referring to themselves as "small."

Another key part of women's experiences was the need to stay hypervigilant and identify possible threats when they were going out, which often correlated to staying attuned to strangers and their geographic context. Many participants reported that they would often avoid areas where they believed there were large numbers of non-student strangers, such as City Hall Park. However, it was not only student status that informed women's perception of whether or not somewhere was safe. Areas with groups of men were mentioned multiple times as something to be considered a safety risk for non-male-identifying students with one student saying, "When I cross a lot of men at night, I do feel very scared and I do feel a bit threatened, just innately by social structures and how it's very easy for me to be taken advantage of…." (Izzy). This fear was ascribed to the ability of large groups of men to exert physical and social power over others. The main fear for non-male-identifying students is the fear of sexual assault or rape. While this fear is most often connected to strangers with the fear of "stranger rape," statistics show that people are more likely to be raped by someone they know.

Places that are stereotyped or have reputations for being dangerous to females (such as on-campus fraternities) were also designated as safety risks for non-male-identifying students. This finding shows the fluctuation of the familiar and unfamiliar spectrum as even people who are grouped into students' category can be pushed towards the unfamiliar side and therefore less safe. Student status is not the only factor that influences whether or not students feel threatened; rather, students constantly negotiate between different factors to delineate their own sense of safety based on their own identities, experiences, and sets of knowledge. Therefore, although non-student strangers were often mentioned as primary concerns for safety, it is important to note that gender plays a distinct role in how students perceive non-students and student strangers

on and off campus. These sets of constant threats have encouraged groups of students to protect themselves.

To try and mitigate those fears, many of the female students adopted different safety devices, both physical and mental. These included tucking long hair into the back of a jacket to appear more masculine, not smiling at strangers if they are walking alone because they don't want to invite any unwanted attention, dressing in baggy clothing to hide the shape of their bodies, never wearing headphones late at night so they can always hear the people around them, avoiding eye contact, putting on a "resting bitch face," and carrying a knife or a taser. In addition to masking their gender to appear more masculine, female students reported arming themselves either with implements or self-defense techniques. One student survey participant reported using both sets of tactics when they wrote, "Anywhere I go as a woman I have to adjust my behavior to mitigate the risk of murder, rape, or assault. I have a knife on my keychain, emergency numbers on speed dials, and a martial arts background." Therefore, there is not only a perceived need for women to present as less feminine but also to arm themselves with one or more lines of defense due to threats based on their gender in some spaces and social contexts.

Concurrently, transgender and non-binary people also expressed feeling unsafe because of their gender identity and coped in similar ways, thereby reiterating feelings of fear based on a more feminine gender presentation. In one walking interview with a transgender student, she described having to choose specific types of clothing depending on her mode of transportation to protect her safety. For something like walking alone or taking the bus, she would dress more masculine and avoid any form-fitting feminine items such as dresses or skirts. "As a transgender individual, speaking to my own experience," Josie said, "I know some other friends who are a little braver than me, but in terms of my own presentation I do definitely police it a bit and kind

of restrict clothing and stylistic choices I'm making…." (Josie). Another student who physically presents as a woman but does not identify as one says their more feminine appearance makes them feel unsafe. One student who identifies as a more masculine presenting female said they have on multiple occasions been called homophobic slurs by strangers, thereby demonstrating how gender presentation intersects with perceived non-heterosexuality and how sexism intersects with heteronormativity. Generally, like many cis-gender women, trans and non-binary students who identified and presented as more feminine felt that their perceived gender and sexuality drew unwanted attention that could ultimately lead to some sort of threat to safety, or even violence. This led them to both emphasize their masculinity through tactics such as non-form fitting clothing and cloak the aspects of how they presented that appeared more feminine and/or queer.

Interestingly, in a walking interview with Zoya who is non-binary, they described feeling nervous walking on their own, in fear of accidentally being perceived as a man, which they perceived to be more vulnerable to violent crime. They also expressed fears of holding their girlfriend's hand in case someone is "going to have a negative reaction" after experiencing being called a slur on a previous occasion. Zoya, therefore, experienced both sides of the fear around gender and sexuality—the threat of being perceived as a man, which could lead to an altercation, and the threat of being perceived as deviating from heterosexuality, which could attract unwanted attention and violence. It is clear from these findings that students who identify as cis-fem, transgender, and non-binary feel unsafe because of their genders and sexual identities. Although all their experiences and perceptions are unique and vary based on those identities, many of them sought strategies to manage presenting as more feminine and physically protecting themselves. These experiences heavily contrast with those of their cis-male counterparts.

No male student in this study reported feeling like their gender identity has ever made them feel unsafe and, in fact, many identified their gender identity as something that allowed them to feel safer while moving around Burlington and UVM. Most men reported the exact opposite experience to female students—while female students thought their physical size was a hindrance, male students believed their physical size to be a positive asset for protecting their safety.

However, just because male-identifying students did not perceive their gender to negatively impact their sense of security, this did not mean that they did not understand the role that gender played in perceptions of safety. Some male students thought that, because of their gender, they would be the safest person to be walking around in comparison to students who don't identify as cis-male. One student said that this same privilege also meant he did not feel much of a need to be aware of the safety resources provided by the school, saying, "I feel like that is somewhat of a privilege because I'm a little less of a target than other people would be so I'm privileged to not need to know all of those [safety resources]" (George). Multiple male students also acknowledged that if they were female or feminine-presenting, they would likely feel the need to be more aware of their surroundings in order to protect their safety. Due to this imbalance, men expressed feeling the need to be the "protector" of the group when going out, especially in groups with female students. This dynamic was confirmed by female students, who noted that they often feel safer when walking with a male friend and believe that they experience fewer things happening to them such as catcalling. Therefore, although men do not have the same experience as non-cis-male students, gender still impacts the way that they understand safety.

In summary, gender plays a large role in perceptions of safety, whether it is the person who is feeling unsafe or the person who is being perceived as a threat. To protect themselves, many female, transgender, and non-binary students have adopted tactics to conceal their gender identity and/or sexuality. This is often due to past experiences and encounters with other people. Additionally, while men in this study did not feel like their gender identity caused them any reason to consider it a safety concern (in fact it often provided comfort) in the context of gender identity, it does not mean that they feel completely safe all the time or do not consider gender when navigating Going Out.

Security

With the amount of safety concerns mentioned in this study, there were also significant concerns with security measures, including technological measures and law enforcement. As previously mentioned, students feel safer on the university campus because they believe there are "safe" other people around. Additionally, students said they feel safer because of security measures such as the Blue Lights, a physical marker that designates an on-campus space (again suggesting that on-campus is perceived as a safe space for many students) and provides a rapid response from campus police. Despite the relative popularity of Blue Lights, UVM has introduced a plan to remove them and replace them with the LiveSafe App. Many students did not approve of the plan, especially due to fears of their phone dying or finding it just too hard to navigate an app when they are in an unsafe situation. One survey respondent took the time to write out this specific scenario: "If I'm running for my life at night to avoid being raped or murdered (worst-case scenario and an unlikely one, but still) then I would much rather be able to smack a physical button on the blue lights than try to fumble with my phone, trying to log in, messing up because I'm running and sacred & trying to not trip, finding my way to the app,

navigating to the correct buttons, etc." While this scenario assumes that the student would be on or near campus in an emergency and close to a Blue Light, many other students recommended adding additional Blue Lights closer to downtown which is further addressed in following chapters. In addition to finding LiveSafe difficult to navigate, two students in the interviews had broken phones and explained how they felt like it was an extreme hindrance to their safety because they could not call anyone in an emergency. Overall, the sentiment from students was they found no real use for the LiveSafe app because they would rather just call 911, but they still want the Blue Lights as a physical reminder of a safety resource.

Although these forms of technology call upon campus and local law enforcement, students did not hold favorable opinions towards these institutions. One student said they are beginning to feel less safe on campus due to how the police and university handled incidents such as the Colchester Kisser. "I used to think when I first came here that we were pretty soundly located in a safe space. I don't know, I was pretty naive and then hearing about the Colchester kisser, the story that everyone heard that immediately kind of shocked me, and the fact that it took a while to find him…" (Ben). This student explained that he felt that the campus was beginning to be overwhelmed by violence, especially following the recent shootings of Muslim Palestinian students near campus.

Questions about the police, specifically UVM PD, were raised many times by students, such as if they are allowed to help students once they are beyond campus property. "I think that the second students step off campus, the line of what you can actually ask UVM PD for help for and what you can't gets really blurry…" (Alex). This leaves off-campus students in a situation where they feel like they can only call the Burlington Police Department (BPD) in an emergency. In the survey, students were asked on a scale from one to ten, ten being the safest, how safe

seeing UVM PD walking around makes them feel. The average response to this question was 5.8 showing that in general, students don't feel safer knowing UVM PD is around. Students also expressed feeling like BPD was tired of being called to emergencies, especially overdoses, and how it is not unusual for the police to take a long time to respond to a call. "I think that they're sick of responding to it, and they also don't have enough resources to respond…" (Sarah).

Overall, students expressed concerns about all aspects of safety resources. Specifically, they questioned the university's decision to remove the Blue Lights in favor of a phone app, which they do not think is adequate. Additionally, students are beginning to feel that generally there is more violence on campus and that the UVM PD and BPD are not resources that they can count on to protect them.

Staying Home

While UVM students expressed significant safety concerns when moving around Burlington, many additional concerns were raised based on the home environment. The majority of UVM students live on-campus in dormitories for their first two years and then move into off-campus housing for their junior and senior years. This means that they experience living in different parts of the city, often with multiple people at a time. In this section, I show how the same factors that influenced feelings of safety while moving around Burlington, also influence feelings of safety in students' own homes.

Other People

When students discuss strangers in the context of staying in a dormitory or residential locations, most of the time they are referring to the population of Burlington who are not students, however, there are a few outliers such as random roommates and fraternity members. Yet in general, the threats that seemed the most prominent were non-students, much like the

findings from the previous section. Overall, when talking about strangers specifically in a housing situation, most comments were marked by a negative connotation. However, students did speak about how, when they are moving off-campus and into an apartment, they look in areas where other college students live so they know there will always be "safe" other people around who are their age. Participants differentiated between students and non-student strangers when they are staying home in similar ways to when they are going out.

In most circumstances, when participants talked about strangers while they were staying home, it was in the context of fear, such as the fear that someone would break into their house. Students also cited incidents of people throwing glass bottles outside of their homes or drunk students smashing things inside dorm hallways as reasons they felt unsafe in their homes. One student reported "Two nights ago, someone, I don't know if they were angry or if they were just trying to get through the recycling… but they were throwing bottles and smashing things at three in the morning which woke me up" (Lauren). There are also specific times in the semester when students' fear spiked. One off-campus student noted, "I think I'm most nervous for when we all go away for the holidays and people know that the college students are away and I feel like someone's going to break in." This demonstrates once more the distrust of other people both students and non-students.

Living in dorms was frequently mentioned in connection with strangers, but these concerns were related to unfamiliar students. Many students spoke about living with random roommates who made them feel unsafe. One participant noted that, "When you're living on campus and you get stuck in a housing situation that you don't like, in some ways it feels like hazing. It's like, can you make it through your first bad living experience? Can you survive or are you going home? But on the other hand, it feels totally unnecessary to put people through

that for no good reason" (Jess). Additionally, students mentioned fears of letting non-student strangers or student strangers who did not belong to their dorm into the buildings. Multiple students also mentioned break-ins and robberies in the dorm buildings. "Someone broke into my dorm and urinated everywhere before running away" (survey response). Even though dorms represent relatively private, on-campus spaces, there were still feelings of fear towards non-student strangers mixed in with potential unfamiliar roommates.

Overall, students have expressed extreme distrust of strangers in the context of many different living situations largely due to past negative experiences. However, students still expressed increased trust with student strangers in comparison to non-students, particularly in off-campus housing. As when students described concerns when moving into spaces that blurred the lines between city and campus, students in off-campus housing found comfort in student strangers while encountering intimidation from non-student strangers. Unlike going out, however, students also reported uncomfortable or dangerous situations with student strangers while staying home. These vulnerabilities were highlighted when discussing experiencing gender- and sexuality-based fear.

Gender & Sexuality

While gender and sexuality play an important role in consideration of safety concerns when walking and moving around Burlington, they also play a role in on and off-campus housing. There was evidence of safety concerns in the dorms, especially in situations such as suites, which are configured with multiple bedrooms and shared living space and bathroom. One student I interviewed is a woman who was living in a suite their first year with a nonbinary roommate. In their second semester, they were assigned three men to the other half of their suite. This caused fears in their living situation as their male roommates were constantly bringing in

other strange men into the common areas and they felt like they had no control over who could and could not enter their home spaces. “We started locking the door to our room as opposed to just the door to the suite,” she recalls, “We just didn’t know who could wander into our room so that was not a comfortable time” (Jess). A student in the survey said they experienced multiple instances of queerphobia and homophobia in UVM living spaces. Despite being on campus and surrounded by other students, some participants noted that their gender and sexual orientation put them at higher risk for either physical or sexual assault, and sometimes resulted in hate speech.

Like on-campus housing, off-campus housing also causes female students to feel unsafe. When moving off-campus students expressed that the rushed and stressful process of finding an apartment and roommates often meant they moved into a situation where they did not feel completely safe because of certain unfamiliar strangers living near or even in the same house that they were renting from. One female student unknowingly signed a lease for an apartment next to a fraternity house. In our walking interview, she said, “I was like oh shit, they’re going to harass us if they see that we’re women…it’s like if they see we’re all female presenting, what does that mean for us overall?” (Izzy). This has caused fears and anxieties for her due to the reputation of sexual assault and physical violence that is associated with fraternities. Besides the unfamiliar male students that she walks by next door, this participant also felt that the familiar male student she lived with also posed increased threats. She explained that her male housemate does not feel the same level of urgency to keep their doors locked at all times, which she attributes to the gender difference and increased fear that was discussed in the section above. Even though this housemate is someone who is familiar to her and exists in a private space, he still has the ability to cause safety concerns and fears showing again the spectrums that these identities exist on.

These situations show the fluctuations in the familiar-to-unfamiliar spectrum where women who live off campus must contend with male students and non-students in a variety of contexts.

Reminiscent of the observations concerning fears of going out, female students had little reprieve when staying home. Female students voiced concerns about the dangers of roommates in different housing contexts and how they could increase safety concerns. There were also specific geographic areas (namely areas where fraternity houses are located) that women felt the need to avoid in order to protect themselves against gender-based assault. In these cases, the student status of a stranger did not offer the kind of protection that was discussed in the context of going out. They also expressed concerns about being assaulted in their homes by strangers (students and non-students) and that their fears are much worse when they are home alone. One survey response summed up the exasperation of having to contend with safety risks while going out *or* staying home: "As a woman, we are constantly in fear of being assaulted whether publicly or in our homes. Law enforcement do not take us seriously when crimes are reported and we are constantly in survival mode. It is exhausting" (survey response). Therefore, in both contexts, gender plays a significant role in whether or not a student feels safe in proximity to other strangers.

Security

Security was another big concern when discussing housing. Many students expressed fears while living on campus in the dorms as well as off-campus in downtown apartments. In the survey, students were asked to rate how safe they felt in their living space during the previous academic year on a scale from one to ten, ten being the most safe. The average response was a seven which shows that while in general students feel safe, there are still some concerns. Many of these fears were of break-ins either because of personal past experiences or experiences of

friends. Students also expressed a lack of resources they can access in an unsafe situation or lack of trust that the resources they know of, such as the police, will actually help.

In the dorms, there are security measures that are both technological and institutional. One of these measures is swiping an ID badge to get into the building, which provides students with a sense of security in that only UVM students who live in the dorms can access them. However, students still expressed concerns about not having enough supervision in the dorms as well in some dorms such as Living and Learning (L/L) where any student can enter the building without swiping during the day. One survey participant reported, "Living in L/L was terrifying. Knowing that anybody could walk into my building during school hours? Awful. A dangerous person could have walked in, gone up the stairs, and knocked on my door at any time and my roommates left my door unlocked so anyone could come in anytime." This highlights that the ability of strangers to access students' living space is considered a huge threat.

Beyond the technological measures installed to protect students, students are supposed to be able to call their Resident Assistant (RA) when having a concern, but some mentioned that they never saw their RA or that they were not willing to help. In an interview with a student named Jess, she told me a story of her friend who was living in a dorm and her roommate was making racist comments to her that made her feel unsafe. They ended up having to get the university's Mosaic Center involved because the RA was not doing anything about it. This experience caused Jess to believe that "whether or not you're safe within your home, whether or not there are systems in place to help you deal with that kind of thing [problematic roommates], I don't think UVM is a very safe campus" (Jess). Despite certain university procedures intended to make students feel and be safe, many respondents were skeptical about just how protective they really are.

For students in off-campus housing, there were very few security measures, if any. Students who were getting ready to move off campus expressed fears about the lack of resources because they felt like UVM couldn't do anything for their safety once they were living off campus. Students who have already moved off campus repeatedly said that UVM did not prepare them for the dangers of living off campus. This caused many students to feel like there was a substantial difference in levels of safety based on housing, with one student saying, "I think that particularly for students living off campus it's essential to know that you're not as safe as you think you are, and certainly not as safe as you were on campus" (Alex). Therefore, as students start to live in areas with more student strangers and no university resources, students feel less safe. These feelings of insecurity and lack of campus institutions require students to rely on public law enforcement to protect them. However, similar to students' responses describing going out, students staying in also did not have high confidence in the BPD.

Fears of living off campus are increased because students expressed a lack of trust that the police take their concerns seriously. One survey response simply read: "Last year I lived in the Old North End. There were car and home break-ins every day. Landlords and police did nothing." Students reported feeling like BPD did not have the capacity to help university students and if they did show up when called, they didn't do anything to truly help the situation. "When we called 911 the first time they actually showed up which was surprising based on what a lot of people we know have experienced," one student notes, "but [the police officers] didn't really do much and seemed kind of annoyed that they even showed up at all" (Lauren). There was also a sentiment amongst students who lived off-campus that the BPD did not prioritize them because they were only temporary residents who would leave in a year or less. Echoing the

findings discussed in the previous section, students created adaptations to cope with this profound lack of trust towards local law enforcement.

To still feel safe without the protection of BPD or UVM PD, many students have taken measures into their own hands. This includes installing extra window locks and Ring cameras at their own expense. One student who has had two attempted break-ins to their apartment now sleeps with a butcher knife and pepper spray in their bedside table and their roommates have hockey sticks in their rooms. Many students reported feeling the need to double-check all the locks on their doors every night before going to sleep, saying "I have a door in my bedroom that goes to the outside so every night I'm checking it and rechecking it to make sure that it's definitely locked…" (Lauren). The use of these safety precautions by students once again shows their lack of trust in strangers in all scenarios.

The idea that you are unsafe in your home in Burlington seems to be a sentiment that is felt by many students in this research. One student summarized this feeling by saying "I feel like there's not really an area where I ever feel totally safe in Burlington…I mean in my own house, I don't even necessarily feel safe" (Lauren). This is not without cause either, a large number of students in this research reported experiencing a crime or knowing someone who has experienced a crime in their living situation. These included home break-ins or attempted break-ins, property theft like items being stolen off their porch or cars taken from the driveways, and vandalism of their homes. One student reported that they often have to listen to their upstairs neighbors' arguments and one time the women smashed the windshield of their partner's car in their driveway, leaving glass everywhere. This, combined with tense relationships with local law enforcement, has caused people to start adopting tactics to defend themselves. Overall, students

reported feeling unsafe in their living situation, both on campus and off campus, to a concerning degree.

Conclusion

In all aspects of the college experiences, University of Vermont students have expressed concerns about their physical safety and well-being. In general, UVM students do not feel safe around unfamiliar other people, especially non-students, which means they actively avoid any situation or scenario where they would be forced to interact with strangers. These fears happen for a multitude of reasons such as the context of place and location, identity and positionality, past experiences, and the ability to access safety resources. All these findings then beg the question, what does it mean for the university and its students if they are unable to feel safe while attending UVM and living in Burlington?

Analysis

Many of the findings from this study align with previous insights from this field of research. The most prevalent theme is that students feel more comfortable around students who are strangers than they feel around non-student strangers, thereby establishing a distinction between different strangers and the levels of threat they introduce. However, despite the generalized fear of strangers that most students expressed, the feelings of being unsafe changed based on a number of factors including geography, identity, and security measures available. Based on their own experiences and knowledge, students had to avoid, navigate, and mitigate situations that made them feel unsafe. Chen et al. (2013) who defined a city as specific sites that shape the lives of humans introduced the theory of security being tied to belonging and how connected we feel to a place. In the case of Burlington, Vermont, and its university, the question of security and belonging is at the forefront of this research. This means that for University of Vermont students to feel secure and safe both on campus and in the rest of Burlington, they must feel a sense of belonging and have trust in the people they are surrounded by. This, however, is not the reality for many students surveyed for this research.

Just as Blake Gumprecht (2003) describes other colleges that reside in a city, UVM often acts as the center of life or the hub of Burlington. There are often non-students using the campus amenities such as the library or coffee shops. While the campus itself is mostly contained in one section at the top of the hill, UVM students occupy places all around the city and are active participants in city life. Just as the outside world bleeds into the campus, the university affects the rest of the city, with some of the busiest days for the neighborhoods being move-in weekend and graduation when students and families flock to downtown to explore, eat, and support local businesses. This co-mingling, however, is not always positive as there remain tensions between

local residents and students even though the university has been around for almost 233 years. As Braaten et al. (2022) found, high crime rates in adjacent neighborhoods create an increase in fear for students; this was true for UVM students with both the Colchester Kiss and the shootings of the Muslim-Palestinian men which happened just on the outskirts of campus. Additionally, for decades, the university and students have been blamed by local residents for the lack of affordable housing in the city, creating ongoing tensions that are only partly moderated by the work of OSCR. Therefore, the ways in which UVM students feel a sense of belonging in Burlington is once again questioned as students have less trust and faith in non-students due to both of these situations.

This lack of belonging can mainly be ascribed to a distrust in other people and strangers because to feel secure, students need to be able to trust the people they are surrounded by. Students in this study expressed similar fears and concerns about other people compared to previous studies, especially in reference to men in public places and houseless individuals. Hites et al. (2013) found in their study that students are more wary of areas in which vagrants, panhandlers, and houseless people are present as they are seen as a possible threat. In this study, encounters with houseless individuals were a great concern for UVM students due to their unpredictable nature, which can often be tied to the opioid crisis Burlington is facing. This fear is not unfounded as multiple students recalled unfavorable memories or incidents with houseless individuals in Burlington and during one walking interview the participant and I were forced to avoid a possible threatening situation with a houseless woman in City Hall Park.

Additionally, the fear of men was present for many non-male identifying students especially when encountering large groups of men at one time. This fear occurred both with student strangers and non-student strangers as having to pass groups of men while walking

downtown and encountering men in/near fraternities were both mentioned. While no student in this study explicitly said they ever had a personal dangerous encounter with a fraternity male, the fear was still expressed, most likely due to stereotypes, rumors, and the shared experiences of other individuals. These fears of other people mean that students have to be consciously wary of where they are traveling, who they are traveling with, and what groups of people are safe to interact with.

Feelings of belonging in the city are especially called into question for non-male-identifying students, as female, non-binary, and transgender students experience safety concerns more acutely than their male counterparts. While past work only included female and male identities, researchers repeatedly found a pattern of female students disproportionately experiencing discomfort and safety concerns due to their gender identity (Tomisch et al., 2011 & Brownlow, 2005, & Braaten et al., 2022). One major difference found in my research compared to past work is which gender identity group experiences the highest rate of victimization (the act of singling one group/person out for cruel or unjust treatment such as a crime). Tomish et al. (2011) found that male students have the highest rate of victimization and that the victimization most often happens in an off-campus location (Tomsich et al., 2011). However, I found that at UVM male students do not experience more victimization; rather, female, non-binary, and transgender students are more likely to experience incidents such as stalking or catcalling, which increase their likelihood of victimization. Extrapolating from my study, it appears many students experience feelings of fear based on their gender identity, thus making Burlington feel less secure which impacts their sense of belonging.

The same can be argued for students of color who participated in this study. Due to the lack of racial diversity in this study and at UVM in general, not many insights on race's impact

on safety can be discerned. Bratten et al. (2022) found that Black and Latino students in their sample did not have lower perceptions of safety compared to White students. In this study, I found that while the Black, Asian, and Hispanic students (not necessarily Latino) who participated did not express lower feelings of safety, they did experience safety differently than their White student peers. For non-White students, race is a factor that can affect safety negatively on a daily basis because they often feel like "others" in a social space due to structural racism and ethnic biases. This impacts the sense of belonging for students of color as they are constantly having to navigate how their race affects their safety in different situations.

Fears and safety concerns exist in "public" and "private" spaces both on the campus and in the rest of the city as public and private spaces are flexible and ever-changing in the college environment. While Gumprecht (2007) argues that the campus is a public space for all residents of the city to enjoy, some parts of the campus are supposed to be private such as dormitories. Acting as the home away from home for first- and second-year students, dorms at UVM should technically be private and secure spaces but that safety is often diminished by other people's presence. This happens with both students and non-students as they invade the private spaces in different ways. In this study, students reported fearing that non-students or students who did not belong to their dorm were able to get into dorm buildings that are not always properly locked, and they also reported fears of other students doing dangerous activities in the dorm that could affect their safety. Similar fears were expressed in "private" off-campus apartments where students had experiences or worries of home break-ins. When public spaces become unsafe for students to exist in as they have in the case of Burlington, students look for private spaces to feel secure but unfortunately, as evidenced by the results of this study, there are not many truly safe places to be found.

In order to navigate these safety concerns, students adopted coping strategies. Similar to the way Gill Valentine describes mental maps in her 1989 study *The Geography of Women's Fear,* UVM students use what they know about their surroundings to create a safer path to travel around their city. This includes avoiding areas that feel uncomfortable or where they know people perceived as unsafe often congregate. When traveling by themselves, students will pick areas where they know other students usually are. They will also pick specific areas in the city to live in based on their assessment of that area and the people who live there. Places like campus are deemed safer in their mental map because students know there are resources they can go to such as the Blue Light system in emergencies when there are no other safe people around. With the removal of the Blue Light system, it is possible campus will soon seem less safe. Despite providing comfort, these navigational techniques render Burlington less secure as students feel that they need to be extremely cautious and alert when among strangers.

Beyond avoidance of certain people and places, students have adopted coping strategies such as carrying or owning self-protection items in order to feel safe among other people. These include anything from pepper spray and tasers to knives. In the home, they also use ring cameras, window locks, and door stoppers to prevent strangers from breaking into their homes and stealing from them or harming them, all at their own expense. In my findings, non-male students were more likely to carry or own self-protection items, likely due to the disproportionate feelings of fear non-male-identifying students experience. This is in contrast to what Woolnough (2009) found in her study where male students were more likely to carry devices, specifically pocket knives. Additionally, gender differences in self-protection are prominent as non-male students report feeling the need to have a constant awareness of their surroundings while male students showed less wariness. This same gender difference is seen in how students perceive their

physical size: non-male-identifying students perceive their size and strength to be a hindrance to their safety while male students almost solely rely on their size and strength to protect themselves. This matches what Brownlow (2005) found in a study on how people of different genders react to unsafe areas. These defensive mechanisms reflect the levels of fear of danger that students experience on a daily basis.

Even with their own safety devices, students on campus and off campus look to the university to provide safety resources, though many students expressed dissatisfaction with the resources currently in place. Students expressed major worries about the effectiveness of the LiveSafe app and questioned the university's decision to remove the Blue Lights. Similar to what Maier and DePrince's (2009) study found, UVM students acknowledge the university's efforts but overall do not have a positive perception of the ability of campus safety to prevent crime and therefore keep them safe. Additionally, as Braaten found, students feel that university safety measures fail to acknowledge that students are not insulated within the campus boundaries. Students report feeling that the university failed to prepare them for the dangers of living off campus and left them with few resources to turn to as UVM PD is only for on-campus incidents. Further, due to the lack of staffing at BPD, students are unsure if they will receive assistance if they call 911.

For all of the reasons discussed in this study, students want and need changes to university safety policies. Currently, students believe it is not possible to be entirely safe while living in Burlington, Vermont as a UVM student.

Student Recommendations

In addition to analyzing and finding trends in students' experiences, one of the main goals of this study was to obtain suggestions from UVM students on what changes need to be made for them to feel safer both on campus and in the rest of Burlington. As evident from the findings in this study, UVM students are not happy with current university safety resources and policies. They also expressed worry that the Burlington Police Department either does not have enough resources to protect them or that they care enough to police areas of Burlington that are majority students. For these reasons in both the survey and interviews, I gave space for UVM students to provide recommendations for changes they would like to see implemented.

While students did acknowledge the effort that UVM has done to create safety initiatives, that does not mean that they always believe them to be effective. One major policy that students loudly disagree with is the removal of the Blue Lights in favor of the LiveSafe app. Countless students in this research said bluntly, "Bring the blue lights back!" and they also recommended fixing any broken Blue Lights, which was another source of unease. Other students also recommended adding more Blue Lights closer to downtown and near fraternity houses, thereby indicating a certain level of reliance and trust in the current system. However, it is important to note that students did not necessarily ask that the university completely abandon the new app, but rather implement LifeSafe *in addition* to the Blue Lights so they could have multiple resources.

This desire for multiple technologies was highlighted by students' worries about the ability to access their phones in the event of an emergency if LifeSafe was the only available resource. The fear of not having a working phone in emergency situations was something that multiple students expressed with one student in the survey saying "It [LiveSafe] IS NOT a replacement for the Blue Light system. I use it when walking alone at night. In that respect it is

helpful, but what if my phone died?? I might be dead." Others said that LiveSafe is too complicated to use or figure out if they were in an emergency and should be rethought and redesigned with the assistance of students. Therefore, in terms of technology meant to protect students as they are moving from and within campus, there is a strong preference for not only maintaining the Blue Lights but possibly expanding their reach. And, although students did not completely want to discard the app alternative, many questioned their access to LifeSafe, as well as its user-friendliness.

Outside this issue, there were many recommendations for specific security measures such as other technologies and campus police relations. These included putting in more area lights on campus, investing in better security cameras, having the campus buses run later into the night, and getting better locks on the entrances to the dorm buildings which was a fear that was mentioned many times in this research. Additionally, some students recommended "more student and police interactions in non-threatening environments, so that students can meet the officers." This was in the hope that by fostering an environment where the students are able to get to know the campus police officers the students will feel more comfortable calling them in an emergency. If students are unable to reliably access these different forms of security, they would also like the university to provide other levels of defense such as pepper spray, personal alarms, and free self-defense classes. It is clear that students want to feel as though the university is investing in their safety and want to believe that the university is open to hearing what they have to say on changes to their safety policies. These series of recommendations can be related to safety measures that respond to unsafe situations, but other suggestions were more preventative.

Some other changes that students recommended were more foundational and tackled issues such as off-campus housing, the presence of Greek life on campus, and Title IX policies.

Currently, it is only required for first and second years to live on campus and the majority of upperclassmen and transfer students over the age of twenty live in off-campus housing. Many students said they feel unsafe living downtown which is why they think UVM should provide the opportunity for students to live on campus all four years. One student in the survey said, "I would encourage UVM to make changes to how they do housing in general because some of my friends don't feel safe walking to campus because the only way they can afford to live here is to live in less safe neighborhoods or their walk to campus goes through less safe neighborhoods." Students also say that the university failed to properly inform them of the dangers of living downtown and failed to give them resources that they could go to. "UVM hasn't done a great job of saying here's what resources are available to you…I think UVM should just help ease that transition [from on-campus living to off-campus] a little bit like these are the services you can call and this is what community things are available to you" (Alex). For these reasons, multiple students in this study recommended providing information sessions or more emails containing information regarding safety resources or concerns they should be knowledgeable about when moving off-campus.

As mentioned previously in the finding and analysis sections, fraternities instigated a specific fear in non-male-identifying students, mainly surrounding fears of sexual assault. Multiple students said they would feel safer without Greek Life at UVM. One student in the survey specifically said that fraternities are a major cause of sexual assault on campus, "Please crack down more on the sexual violence that happens on campus, I want frats to be held accountable for this and I want women to feel safe." While other students acknowledged that they did not truly think it would ever be possible, they still hoped it was a change that could be made in the future with one response dictating: "Too drastic of a change to actually take effect,

but get rid of frats." Mentions of Greek life go hand in hand with the next set of recommendations concerning Title IX.

Students in this study want to know there is a safe place for them to go to in the event that something happens to them, and at this point, many feel like the Title IX office does not provide this. One student when talking about changing the policies of how the Title IX office responds to incidents of sexual assault said "I think the Title IX office needs to be restaffed honestly and I think they need to write up new procedures for how to deal with people who are experiencing trauma and need help because it's not working and it's not good enough, and frankly, I think we have the money to do better" (Izzy). This sentiment was felt by students in the survey as well those who also shared that they felt like the office did not appropriately listen to survivors or properly discipline abusers.

Overall, students have multiple changes they would like to see implemented by the university to create a safer and more secure environment for all students. As demonstrated by this research's findings, in order for students to feel safe, they need to be able to trust the people they are surrounded by, which many do not. For these reasons, students want the university to change their safety resources, housing policies, Greek Life policies, and Title IX policies so they can feel safe in their surroundings and know there are people they can go to in the event of an emergency.

Conclusion

When starting this research, I set out to find how University of Vermont students experience safety concerns and if those concerns have any harmful impacts on their overall college experience. To do this, I created seven main questions that I wanted to answer in the span of this research. These included: (1) Where and at what times of day/week do UVM students feel safe or not safe, and why?; (2) What kind of crimes are students most concerned about?; (3) What actions do students take to feel safe?; (4) How do these safety concerns affect students living on campus versus off campus?; (5) How do respondents' own positionalities influence their feelings of safety?; (6) What safety resources exist for students and are they aware of them? and (7) What suggestions do students have to make UVM and the areas around UVM feel safer?

Throughout this process, I have had the chance to survey and interview over 100 UVM students on their thoughts and experiences with crime and safety in Burlington. These students have shared their stories, their feelings, and their hopes for changes. From these, I have learned that students experience safety concerns at different levels in all different areas of UVM and Burlington. These concerns happen at all times of the day/week/year but have a higher frequency when it is dark outside and when students are alone. Additionally, many of these concerns are created by the fear of other people who exist on the spectrum of familiar-to-unfamiliar with concerns happening at both ends. These fears also occur in both public and private spaces, where unfamiliar people and places have a tendency to create more fear than private areas. Non-male-identifying students including female, nonbinary, and transgender students experience fear at much higher levels and frequency than their male-identifying peers which means they often have to adopt strategies such as concealing their gender identity in order to feel safe. Other strategies students have adopted include mental maps, avoidance, and self-defense techniques in order to

mitigate fears of safety concerns. Finally, while the university and Burlington do provide safety resources for UVM students, many students believe they would be/are ineffective in real emergencies which has led to students suggesting added resources or changes to already existing resources and policies to create an overall safer environment.

Connecting these findings and analysis back to the original theory framework, University of Vermont student do experience feelings of belonging, however it is very dependent on the area they are in and the people they are interacting with. Students experience feelings of belonging the most in perceived private spaces surrounded by familiar individuals. This means that on-campus and in their own homes, fears of safety concerns decrease as they are around individuals who share the common identify of being a UVM student. That sense of belonging begins to dimmish as students move around the different districts of Burlington, away from the Hill, and as they are interacting with unfamiliar strangers. On the continuum of the public-to-private and familiar-to-strange spectrum, security and belonging for UVM students is in constant fluctuation as they are in constant movement between private and public spaces interacting with both familiar and strange individuals.

In general, the point of this research was never to make the university or the city the villain in this story, nor was it to create a further divide between UVM students and Burlington locals in an "us versus them" battle. Instead, I hope this work will be successful in shining a light on an important problem that is negatively affecting large populations of students and their overall college experience. Negative perceptions of safety can overall affect a student's college experience in their ability to thrive and be successful with fear causing a lack of sleep, the inability to focus on school work, and missing out on experiences such as late-night study sessions in the library. As hard as the University and the city try to protect their students and as

hard as students try to protect themselves, this research shows that safety while at the University of Vermont is still a work in progress.

Next Steps

This research will be shared with my community partner, the Office of Student-Community Relations, in the hope that these findings and student recommendations can make a change to the experiences of future UVM students and perceptions of safety in Burlington. There are many additional topics I wish I had more time to explore in this research and I hope to have the chance in the future to expand on what I have found. Future research should include more voices on the effects of race and ethnicity in terms of feeling safe or unsafe. Additional studies on the effects of physical disabilities would also be valuable as these are all crucial components in this field of study that deserve to be further researched. Finally, in order to make Burlington an overall safer city, more work should be done to assist in the ever-growing battle against the opioid crisis that Vermont and much of our Nation is currently facing.

Appendix A: UVM Annual Security Report

Primary Crime Statistics: 2020-2022

	On Campus	Public Property	Non-Campus Property	Annual Totals: All Geography	Student Housing Facilities
Murder/Non-Negligent Manslaughter					
2020	0	0	0	0	0
2021	0	0	0	0	0
2022	0	0	0	0	0
Manslaughter by Negligence					
2020	0	0	0	0	0
2021	0	0	0	0	0
2022	0	0	0	0	0
Rape (3)					
2020	9	0	1	10	5
2021	10	0	0	10	8
2022	3	0	0	3	2
Fondling					
2020	2	0	0	2	0
2021	3	0	0	3	3
2022	3	0	0	3	2
Incest					
2020	0	0	0	0	0

2021	0	0	0	0	0
2022	0	0	0	0	0
Statutory Rape					
2020	0	0	0	0	0
2021	0	0	0	0	0
2022	0	0	0	0	0
Robbery					
2020	0	0	0	0	0
2021	0	0	0	0	0
2022	0	0	0	0	0
Aggravated Assault					
2020	0	0	0	0	0
2021	0	1	0	1	0
2022	0	0	2	2	0
Burglary					
2020	7	0	0	7	2
2021	14	0	0	14	10
2022	19	0	0	19	16
Motor Vehicle Theft					
2020	4	0	0	4	0
2021	7	0	0	7	0
2022	2	0	4	6	0
Arson					
2020	8	0	0	8	7

2021	4	0	0	4	2
2022	5	0	0	5	5

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Offense Statistics: 2020-2022

	On Campus	**Public Property**	**Non-Campus Property**	**Annual Totals: All Geography**	**Student Housing Facilities**
Domestic Violence					
2020	2	0	1	3	0
2021	2	1	0	3	1
2022	7	0	1	8	7
Dating Violence					
2020	0	0	0	0	0
2021	0	0	0	0	0
2022	0	0	0	0	0
Stalking					
2020	3	0	1	4	0
2021	7	0	1	8	2
2022	14	0	0	14	9

Weapon, Drug, and Liquor Law Violation Statistics: 2020-2022

	On Campus	**Public Property**	**Non-Campus Property**	**Annual Totals: All Geography**	**Student Housing Facilities**

Arrests: Weapons-Carrying, Possessing, etc.					
2020	0	0	0	0	0
2021	0	0	0	0	0
2022	0	0	0	0	0
Disciplinary Referrals: Weapons-Carrying, Possessing, etc.					
2020	0	0	0	0	0
2021	0	0	0	0	0
2022	0	0	0	0	0
Arrests: Drug Abuse Violations					
2020	0	0	0	0	0
2021	0	0	0	0	0
2022	1	1	0	2	1
Disciplinary Referrals: Drug Abuse Violations					
2020	127	0	0	127	113
2021	127	0	0	127	106
2022	141	0	0	141	113

Arrests: Liquor Law Violations					
2020	0	0	2	2	0
2021	0	0	0	0	0
2022	0	0	0	0	0
Disciplinary Referrals: Liquor Law Violations					
2020	336	1	0	337	226
2021	407	6	0	413	367
2022	290	5	0	295	266

Appendix B: Survey Questions

Q1. Are you a current student at the University of Vermont in your sophomore, junior, or senior year?

Q2. How old are you as of September 1st 2023?

Q3. Do you live on campus or off campus?

Q4. Can you comfortably walk to campus from where you live? (If selected “off campus”)

Q5. How many minutes does it take you to walk to campus? (If selected “off campus”)

Q6. What mode of transportation do you use most often to get to and from campus? (If selected “off campus”)

Q7. Why do you prefer that mode of transportation? (If selected “off campus”)

Q8. How many times a week do you leave campus? (If selected “on campus”)

Q9. When you leave the UVM campus, where else do you go in Burlington? (e.g. Church Street, Interval, North Beach, Leddy Beach, Pine Street, etc.) (If selected “on campus”)

Q10. What modes of transportation do you use when you are leaving campus? (If selected “on campus”)

Q11. Why do you prefer those modes of transportation? (If selected “on campus”)

Q12. Are there specific places on the UVM campus where you feel less safe? Please elaborate.

Q13. On a scale from 1-10 (1 being extremely unsafe & 10 being extremely safe), how safe do you feel walking alone on the UVM campus during the day?

Q14. On a scale from 1-10 (1 being extremely unsafe & 10 being extremely safe), how safe do you feel walking alone on the UVM campus at night (after dark)?

Q15. On a scale from 1-10 (1 being extremely unsafe & 10 being extremely safe) how safe did you feel in your living space during the previous academic year? (2022-2023)

Q16. Thinking about the last academic year, on a scale from 1-10 (1 being extremely unsafe & 10 being extremely safe), how safe did you feel walking home from campus during the day to your apartment or dorm?

Q17. Thinking about the last academic year, on a scale from 1-10 (1 being extremely unsafe & 10 being extremely safe), how safe did you feel walking home from campus at night (after dark) to your apartment or dorm?

Q18. Thinking about the last academic year, on a scale from 1-10 (1 being extremely unsafe & 10 being extremely safe), how safe did you feel walking in the area where you lived? (approximately a five-block radius/half mile)
Q19. Thinking about your entire time as a UVM student, have you ever felt unsafe in your home/dorm room while living in Burlington, VT? (Broken window, rowdy street, landlord not taking safety concern seriously, etc.) Can you please elaborate?
Q20. Are there specific places near downtown Burlington where you feel less safe? Please elaborate?
Q21. On a scale from 1-10 (1 being extremely unsafe & 10 being extremely safe) how safe do you feel walking alone on Church Street during the day?
Q22. On a scale from 1-10 (1 being extremely unsafe & 10 being extremely safe) how safe do you feel walking alone on Church Street during the night?
Q23. Are there other places in Burlington where you feel less safe?
Q24. Please elaborate on your last answer regarding safety in specific areas of Burlington, VT. (If selected "yes")
Q25. Do your safety concerns about this area mean you are less likely to frequent these places? Please elaborate. (If selected "yes")
Q26. Do you think concerns for your safety mean you change anything about the way you live in Burlington? (e.g. not going out at night alone, not walking on certain streets, not having night classes on campus)
Q27. Can you please elaborate more on your previous answer regarding change of habits due to safety concerns. (If selected "yes")
Q28. Have you experienced a crime while living in Burlington Vermont and attending UVM? (e.g. robbery, violence, stalking)
Q29. Can you please elaborate on that crime if you feel comfortable? (If selected "yes")
Q30. Can you please elaborate on where this crime took place? (If selected "yes")
Q31. Has your perception of that place changed since that incident? (If selected "yes")
Q32. Have you known anyone who has experienced a crime while living in Burlington Vermont and attending UVM? (e.g. robbery, violence, stalking)
Q33. Can you please elaborate on that crime if you feel comfortable? (If selected "yes")
Q34. Can you please elaborate on where this crime took place? (If selected "yes")

Q35. Has your perception of that place changed since that incident? (If selected “yes”)
Q36. Do you carry a personal safety device? (e.g. pepper spray, taser, sexual assault whistle)
Q37. What kind of personal safety device? (If selected “yes”)
Q38. How often do you have it on your person? (If selected “yes”)
Q39. Do you have the LiveSafe app on your phone?
Q40. What are your thoughts about the LiveSafe app? (If selected “yes”)
Q41. Does having the LiveSafe app on your phone make you feel safer? (If selected “yes”)
Q42. If you were a victim of crime on the UVM campus, would you call the authorities? (e.g. campus security or 911)
Q43. Can you please elaborate on your answer on why you would choose not to contact the authorities? (If selected “no”)
Q44. If you were a victim of crime in a place off the UVM campus, would you call the authorities?
Q45. Can you please elaborate on your answer on why you would choose not to contact the authorities? (If selected “no”)
Q46. On a scale from 1-10 (1 being extremely unsafe & 10 being extremely safe) how safe does seeing UVM campus security walking around make you feel?
Q47. Please elaborate on your previous answer regarding campus security
Q48. Have you ever felt as though your gender identity has made you feel less safe living in Burlington, VT? (e.g. female, nonbinary, male, etc.)
Q49. Can you please elaborate on your answer?
Q50. What is your gender identity?
Q51. Have you ever felt as though your sexuality has made you feel less safe living in Burlington, VT? (e.g. gay, straight, bisexual, asexual, etc.)
Q52. Can you please elaborate on your answer?
Q53. What is your sexuality?
Q54. Have you ever felt as though your ethnicity, race, or religion has made you feel less safe living in Burlington, VT?
Q55. Can you elaborate on how your ethnicity, race, or religion made you feel less safe living in Burlington VT? (If selected “yes)

Q56. If you could make changes to UVM policies to make you feel safe, what changes would you make?

Q57. What is the most effective way to inform UVM students about safety resources provided by the University?

Q58. Do you have anything else you would like to add on the subject of safety as a UVM student living in Burlington, VT?

Q59. Would you like to be contacted for an additional sit-down interview on this subject? If yes, please leave your school email address. Thank you!

Appendix C: Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me about the daily routes you take? (i.e. walking to campus, going to the grocery store, going out with friends?)

2. Do you think you change any routes to avoid places that make you feel unsafe? Explain?

3. Are there places on the UVM campus that make you feel unsafe? Explain?

4. Are there places in downtown Burlington or the Burlington area that make you feel unsafe?

5. Do you make any changes to your person to make you feel safer? (i.e. not wearing headphones, wearing a sweatshirt over your clothes, not walking alone)

6. Have you ever experienced personal crime while living in Burlington Vermont and attending UVM? Can you tell me about it?

7. Do you think Burlington Vermont is a safe place? Explain?

8. Do you think the UVM campus is a safe place? Explain?

9. Do you think you could pinpoint where the UVM campus ends and where the rest of Burlington starts? Do you change your behavior if you know you're on campus versus off-campus and vice versus?

10. Do you know of any UVM resources that protect student safety? Any UVM resources for students who have experienced crime? Any UVM programs to make Burlington/UVM a safer place?

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