

Library Research Award for Undergraduates - Reflective Essay

For this project I aimed to utilize research strategies learned through my studies in both Law, Societies, and Justice (LSJ) and Urban Ecological Design. Rarely has my coursework in these fields overlapped, yet my passion for the ways design impacts legal and social institutions sits directly at their intersection. Typically my research is in the field of disability studies, where I examine at the impacts of the built environment on rights access for members of the disabled community. This research often requires applying disability theory to a specific site analysis. In winter 2017 I took an LSJ class on surveillance and the law and began to think about ways to apply the same approach I'd used in disability studies, combining academic theory with site analysis, to rights violations outside of disability. My submitted research paper aims to use this approach towards the topic of sexual violence. I developed the specific paper topic over two courses, LSJ 490: *Sexual Violence and the Law* and LSJ 361: *Civil Liberties*. In both law courses I found that none of the assigned readings addressed the ways the built environment was impacting law and policy. My research question developed from this window of opportunity to apply site specific analysis to the impact of the built environment on sexual violence policy and culture.

In order to shape my thesis I began researching three core topics: the impact of environmental design on perceptions of safety, perpetrator data, and CTPED case studies. To get information on these three topics I utilized a wide breadth of sources, including academic articles, research journals, government reports, court cases, news articles, books, agency websites, and in person interviews. In defending my argument I found each of my research topics were best represented through different types of source material, and ultimately I believe the

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diversity of sources used and my mix of both academic and popular sources strengthened my research paper's argument.

In researching my first topic, the impact of environmental design on perceptions of safety, I wanted to find studies that used both qualitative and quantitative data. Perception is difficult to gauge, and therefore I felt both approaches to data gathering were needed to defend my argument. In order to find an effective source I searched the library's subscriptions to journals of public health, criminal justice, and environmental psychology. Ultimately it was the *Journal of Environmental Psychology* where I found Kristen Day's article *Assault Prevention As Social Control: Women And Sexual Assault Prevention On Urban College Campuses*. This study provided both quantitative data on university spending and campus specific sexual assault statistics and qualitative student interviews about their perceptions of safety, sexual violence, and university efforts. Another way I aimed to showcase perceptions was through relevant popular sources. Given that media is often a voice of perception I used newspaper articles and headlines, as well as the campus notifications sent from UWPD to students, to highlight the everyday language used when discussing safety and sexual violence.

In gathering perpetrator data I relied primarily on Government and Nonprofit Reports. I found it important to supplement the data in government reports with data gathered by nonprofits that specialized in sexual violence advocacy. Often times victims of sexual violence do not report their assaults, skewing the results of some government statistics that rely primarily on police reports. Nonprofits aim to acknowledge this gap in police reporting and resolve it through data collection methods like self reporting. While neither method of data collection had perfect results, I found utilizing reports from both provided the most balanced representation of

perpetrator data. Much of my framework for analyzing this data came from the essay *Never Innocent: Feminist Trouble with Sex Offender Registries and Protection in a Prison Nation* by Erica Meiners. The way she used data to defend her argument that sex offender registries perpetuate rape myths provided a strong base for formatting my argument that the design of public space perpetuate rape myths.

In choosing my primary case study I decided that a local site would provide greater opportunity for in person site analysis, a component core to landscape architecture research. Freeway Park was both an accessible and widely documented example of CPTED in Seattle. By choosing Freeway Park I was able to do in person interviews with local experts for my research. Through speaking with one of the landscape architects who worked on the parks redesign, as well as a member of the Freeway Park Neighborhood Group, I was able to gain direct insight into the motives behind the redesign. I used the College of Built Environments library to access design documents for Freeway Park and locate books on the practice of CPTED design. The book *Design guidelines for creating defensible space* by Oscar Newman served as the basis of my site analysis when visiting Freeway Park. By choosing a local site I was able to apply Newman's design principles to the CPTED goals identified by the City of Seattle Police and Design Commissions as outline on their website. These first person interviews and site visits enhanced the site analysis in my research paper's core case study.

This research paper is the product of a cross-disciplinary research process that utilized techniques I've learned in both Law, Societies, and Justice and Urban Ecological Design. Access to the university library's books, archives, and journal subscriptions where critical to conducting

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my research. By mixing academic and popular sources with first person interviews, data, and site visits I was able to defend my argument from multiple angles.